

# **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER**

A PLAY BY

**Todd Kreidler**

BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY BY WILLIAM ROSE

**BROADWAY**  
— LICENSING —

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## **Cast of Characters**

MATILDA BINKS, 55, black. “Tillie” has worked 27 years as a domestic for the Draytons.

HILARY ST. GEORGE, 43, white. Associate Director of the Drayton Gallery.

CHRISTINA DRAYTON, 64, white. Runs the Drayton Gallery.

MATT DRAYTON, 67, white. Publisher of San Francisco newspaper, *The Guardian*.

JOANNA DRAYTON, 23, white. “Joey” recently interned for a medical research hospital in Hawaii.

DR. JOHN PRENTICE, 37, black. A medical research doctor.

MONSIGNOR RYAN, 75, white. Longtime family friend of the Draytons.

JOHN PRENTICE SR, 63, black. Schoolteacher.

MARY PRENTICE, 59, black. Department store clerk.

## **Setting**

Set in the spring of 1967 in the home of the Draytons, a house on a hill in San Francisco.

## Acknowledgments

*Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* was produced at True Colors Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia in 2012 (Artistic Director Kenny Leon). The production was directed by Kenny Leon and featured the following cast and staff:

MATILDA BINKS ..... Andrea Frye  
HILARY ST. GEORGE. .... Elizabeth Berkes  
CHRISTINA DRAYTON ..... Tess Kincaid  
MATT DRAYTON ..... Tom Key  
JOANNA DRAYTON ..... Bethany Anne Lind  
DR. JOHN PRENTICE ..... Tory Kittles  
MONSIGNOR RYAN ..... David De Vries  
JOHN PRENTICE SR. .... Afemo Omilamic  
MARY PRENTICE. .... Phylicia Rashad  
  
Set Design. .... Kat Conley  
Lighting Design. .... Andre C. Allen  
Costume Design ..... Jonida Beqo  
Sound Design. .... Joseph Monaghan III

*Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* was produced at Arena Stage in Washington, DC in the 2013-2014 season (Artistic Director Molly Smith). The production was directed by David Esbjornson and featured the following cast and staff:

MATILDA BINKS ..... Lynda Gravátt  
HILARY ST. GEORGE. .... Valerie Leonard  
CHRISTINA DRAYTON ..... Tess Malis Kincaid  
MATT DRAYTON ..... Tom Key  
JOANNA DRAYTON ..... Bethany Anne Lind  
DR. JOHN PRENTICE ..... Malcolm-Jamal Warner  
MONSIGNOR RYAN ..... Michael Russotto  
JOHN PRENTICE SR. .... Eugene Lee  
MARY PRENTICE. .... Andrea Frye  
  
Stage Manager ..... William E. Cruttenden III  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Michael D. Ward  
Set Design. .... Kat Conley  
Lighting Design. .... Allen Lee Hughes  
Sound Design. .... Timothy M. Thompson  
Costume Design ..... Paul Tazewell  
Wig Design. .... Anne Nesmith

*Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* was produced at Huntington Theatre Company in Boston, Massachusetts, in 2014 (Artistic Director Peter DuBois). The production was directed by David Esbjornson and featured the following cast and staff:

MATILDA BINKS . . . . . Lynda Gravátt  
HILARY ST. GEORGE. . . . . Wendy Rich Stetson  
CHRISTINA DRAYTON . . . . . Julia Duffy  
MATT DRAYTON . . . . . Will Lyman  
JOANNA DRAYTON . . . . . Meredith Forlenza  
DR. JOHN PRENTICE . . . . . Malcolm-Jamal Warner  
MONSIGNOR RYAN . . . . . Patrick Shea  
JOHN PRENTICE SR . . . . . Lonnie Farmer  
MARY PRENTICE. . . . . Adriane Lenox  
  
Production Stage Manager . . . . . Emily F. McMullen  
Stage Manager . . . . . Jeremiah Mullane  
Set Design. . . . . Dane Laffrey  
Lighting Design. . . . . Allen Lee Hughes.  
Costume Design . . . . . Paul Tazewell  
Sound Design. . . . . Ben Emerson

# GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

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## ACT ONE

### Scene One

*(The lights fade up on the Drayton house on a mid-Wednesday in spring, 1967. A house on a hill in San Francisco, the home feels like a sanctuary, the interior painted by the sun. There are no dark corners in this open floor plan.)*

*From the front entrance, a high-ceilinged foyer, then a step down to a sunken living room of contemporary elegance. Works of modern art are on display. Encased behind glass doors, the formal dining room looms, with a round table. Offstage are CHRISTINA's home office and MATT's study. Also off are the kitchen and an entryway to the parlor. The staircase that winds up to the bedrooms may or may not be seen.*

*A terrace wraps the house, offering a jaw-dropping view of the red suspension bridge. Down from the terrace, a desert garden of flowering cacti.*

*It is nearing lunch as TILLIE prepares for the arrival of an important guest. The doorbell rings. TILLIE answers. HILARY rushes in carrying a large parcel.)*

**HILARY.** Could you— In my car are the easels. I'll take care of the paintings. Please don't touch the paintings—you're not insured by the gallery. I'll take care of the paintings. But if you could . . . the easels. Will everything be ready? You do know how important Mr. Cazalet is, don't you?

**TILLIE.** Good afternoon to you too, Mrs. St. George.

**HILARY.** *(Sniffing the air:)* Mmm . . . You made one of those sinful pies, didn't you? You're wonderful, Tillie.

*(She begins to unwrap the parcel. TILLIE exits into the kitchen.)*

I do hope Christina tells you that every day. If you worked for anyone but the Draytons, I would steal you, Tillie. Steal you all for myself. The easels are in—

*(She realizes she's left alone. CHRISTINA enters from her office.)*

**CHRISTINA.** Hello Hilary.

**HILARY.** When were you last at the Cazalets'?

**CHRISTINA.** Not since Charles remarried and moved out to Napa. Old friends never survive new wives.

**HILARY.** I worked a charity there last month. You should see their new foyer. All Italian marble. The entire foyer . . . not a stone from Danby! This painting suits him.

*(HILARY uncovers the painting, a contemporary pastoral landscape.)*

**CHRISTINA.** Where's the new William T. Wiley?

**HILARY.** Mr. Cazalet loves the Renaissance. This won't be a shock.

**CHRISTINA.** Charles claims he's ready to join the twentieth century.

**HILARY.** We can't force three centuries down his throat at once. Here's a spoon.

**CHRISTINA.** Get the Wileys.

**HILARY.** I'll keep this handy in case he chokes.

*(TILLIE enters from the kitchen.)*

**TILLIE.** *(To CHRISTINA:)* When should lunch be served?

**CHRISTINA.** Shortly after Mr. Cazalet arrives.

**HILARY.** Good . . . We'll have him eat first. Show the paintings. Finish with dessert.

**CHRISTINA.** At the least Charles will learn to appreciate Tillie's blueberry pie.

**HILARY.** *(To TILLIE:)* Would love if you could write out the recipe for me. Give me all your little secrets.

*(The phone rings.)*

**CHRISTINA.** Hilary, hide that fuddy landscape and get out the new Wiley paintings.

*(HILARY exits.)*

**TILLIE.** *(Answering:)* Hello, Drayton residence . . . Hold on, Miss Hutten . . . *(Looks to CHRISTINA, who shakes her head.)* I'm sorry but Mr. Drayton's gone for the day . . . All I know is he shouldn't be bothered . . . I will. *(Hangs up.)*

**CHRISTINA.** *(To TILLIE:)* I appreciate all the extra fuss you've given our lunch meeting. You earned the night off.

**TILLIE.** Glad I won't be here. Don't want to be around tonight after Mr. Drayton gets whooped again by the Monsignor.

**CHRISTINA.** Matt started golfing to calm down.

**TILLIE.** Only time he's peaceful is sleeping.

**CHRISTINA.** Not even then. (*Begins to exit.*) I need to put out a call to Sao Paulo before it gets too late there.

(*CHRISTINA exits to her office. TILLIE exits then re-enters to finish setting up for lunch. HILARY returns bobbling three easels.*)

**HILARY.** Do you know Mr. Cazalet owns 75 percent of San Francisco? He has enough to buy the rest but that would be greedy. Think . . . Soon he'll be standing right here. It will be inspiring to be so near a great man.

**TILLIE.** If you want to be near greatness, go stand by Mr. Drayton's door. But don't bother him.

**HILARY.** Matt with the newspaper is quite impressive. But Mr. Cazalet has 23 on his house staff and I'm certain at least a dozen for the apartment in New York. Oh you don't know, Tillie, Charles Cazalet is one of the most charming, philanthropic—

**TILLIE.** This year Charles Stetson Cazalet III ranked one down from Rockefeller's grandson. Number 19 on Forbes List. He's rich. Big deal.

(*A voice calls from offstage.*)

**MATT.** (*Offstage:*) Tillie! Tillie, did you pick up that call? Tillie . . .

(*MATT enters from upstairs.*)

Who was on the phone?

**TILLIE.** Joey didn't call.

**MATT.** Was it the paper? What did they want?

**TILLIE.** Your clubs are waiting in your trunk. Now get going. Don't make the Monsignor wait. You make him wait, he'll get mad and play better.

**MATT.** Who called?

**TILLIE.** It wasn't Joey. Now get going. Leave that telephone alone. You don't need to pick up nothing in your hands today but them clubs.

**MATT.** You shouldn't be lifting my clubs.

**TILLIE.** If you don't get going, I'm gonna lift them out to the course and play with the Monsignor myself. The newspaper don't need you

in the way today. Don't need you fiddling on the phone. They know how to put it together and get it printed up. You can look at the paper when it lands on the front porch tonight.

(MATT *walks away from* TILLIE.)

**MATT.** Afternoon, Hilary. I understand you have a very important guest coming for lunch.

**HILARY.** You should join us, Mr. Drayton. When were you last at the Cazalets'? I was at a charity there last month. Charles is a pillar.

**MATT.** Champion of humanity.

**HILARY.** He has aided scores of homeless and abused dogs.

**MATT.** If only he took so kindly to cats.

**HILARY.** Oh, Matt. It was a marvelous event. Marvelous music. Charles had one of the four Platters sing for us. Why don't you stay for lunch?

**MATT.** Can't stomach the sight of Chuck anymore.

**TILLIE.** Old friends never survive new wives.

**HILARY.** He's undergone quite a change since he remarried.

**MATT.** Men that rich never change. And when they start messing in politics . . . Chuck's doing serious damage supporting this war. Our country hasn't been this wrong since we stole Texas. I can't wait till time kicks Chuck, kicks all the war criminals in Washington to the wrong side of history.

**HILARY.** I'll give Mr. Cazalet your regards.

(HILARY *exits*. MATT *picks up the telephone as* TILLIE *enters*)

**MATT.** (*Into the phone*.) Operator, this is Pacific eight-o-o-two-o. Could you give me the switchboard to *The Guardian* please?

**TILLIE.** What's that in your hand?

**MATT.** Mr. Drayton for Edie Hutten.

(TILLIE *exits to* CHRISTINA's *office*.)

Edie? How's the layout look? . . . What about page three? Did Richard cram it with too many ads? . . . Remind Richard we're not publishing a magazine . . . Any calls—no, no, no—I'll deal with those tomorrow. Any important—has my daughter called? . . . You're certain Joey hasn't—

(CHRISTINA *enters*, TILLIE *following*.)

Never mind . . . No more business today. I'll see you tomorrow.  
(Turns away.) . . . Anything urgent, reach me at the club. Thanks, Edie.

(Hangs up. To CHRISTINA:)

I've worked a day and a half. Today only counts as a half day.

**CHRISTINA.** Two and a half days and it's Wednesday.

**MATT.** Yesterday was a board meeting.

**CHRISTINA.** Three days. We agreed three days a week.

**MATT.** This week might be four.

**CHRISTINA.** And last week was back up to six.

**MATT.** I have a newspaper to run.

**CHRISTINA.** Matt, you promised the doctor you'd slow down. How many men never get a warning? How many race off to work on a Wednesday, the next day their wife has to call your paper to list their husband's name in the obituary?

**MATT.** Three days is not enough time.

**CHRISTINA.** Three days means three days. We agreed. I don't want to be stuck here by myself.

**MATT.** Why hasn't Joey called? You realize Sunday came and went.

**CHRISTINA.** Letting her stay was not a mistake.

**MATT.** She always calls Sunday. It's been ten days. Her internship was over two weeks ago. Why the hell's she still in Hawaii?

**CHRISTINA.** She's been cooped up in that hospital all year. Let her be twenty-five.

**MATT.** You want me to rest? Friday we're going to Hawaii.

**CHRISTINA.** Joey will be home next week.

**MATT.** If you talk with her today—

**CHRISTINA.** I'll have her call you at the paper *tomorrow*. Now go golf before you bump into Charles Cazalet and get more worked up. Why not invite the Monsignor to dinner tonight? Tillie's off and I'm taking us out.

**MATT.** There's a new Algerian restaurant in the Mission.

**CHRISTINA.** We already have a reservation. The host said we must try the crepes.

**MATT.** Crepes? That's all that's left of the French in Algeria. I'll be home by five. Tillie . . . Thank you for getting my clubs. Have a good night off.

(MATT *exits.*)

**CHRISTINA.** Sound a call for progressive political change, Matt races to the vanguard. Sound a call about his health—beat the drum, yell till you're blue—the man does nothing.

**TILLIE.** He knows how to wrestle politics. But nobody can wrestle getting old. Time betrays everybody the same.

(HILARY *enters with the rest of the paintings.*)

**HILARY.** I must say I'm pleased we have a backup plan. Always have a backup because I truly can't imagine Mr. Cazalet wanting to buy these Wiley paintings.

**CHRISTINA.** We must both encourage him to take them home for a trial.

**HILARY.** I say we sell soon as he shows a flicker of interest. Don't give him time to judge. He may regret these in the morning.

**CHRISTINA.** Our job's to make a marriage not arrange an affair.

**HILARY.** At worst he can give these to the MOMA. Write-off the divorce.

(CHRISTINA *begins to leave.*)

**CHRISTINA.** I'll be in my office till he arrives. Please no disturbances while I try to get this call through to Sao Paulo. Getting a sculptor to answer the phone is hell.

(CHRISTINA *exits.*)

**HILARY.** Tillie, could you—

**TILLIE.** I got a pie to look after.

(TILLIE *exits.* HILARY *finishes setting up the paintings then begins "improving" TILLIE's lunch preparations. Suddenly the front door bursts open! JOANNA enters carrying travel bags.*)

**JOANNA.** Tillie! Tillie . . .

**HILARY.** Why—Joey . . . Joey, darling, what a surprise!

**JOANNA.** Oh . . . Hilary . . .

**HILARY.** What are you doing home? Christina said you weren't back till next week.

**JOANNA.** Is my mother here? I thought she'd be at the gallery?

**HILARY.** Has something happened? Is anything wrong?

(JOHN enters carrying JOANNA's luggage.)

**JOANNA.** Mrs. St. George, may I introduce Dr. Prentice.

(Beat)

**HILARY.** So nice to meet you.

(JOHN reaches out his hand to shake hers.)

**JOHN.** Pleased to meet you, Mrs. St. George.

**JOANNA.** Mrs. St. George runs my mother's gallery.

(TILLIE is heard from offstage as she enters.)

**TILLIE.** Been gone so long I don't recognize the girl's voice no more—

(TILLIE stops at the sight of JOHN while JOANNA wraps her in an embrace. She pulls out a fresh-flower lei and crowns TILLIE's neck.)

**JOANNA.** Tillie! . . . I missed you so much. There's so much to tell you. So much has happened . . . Tillie, this is Dr. Prentice. John, Miss Matilda Binks.

**JOHN.** (Taking her hand:) I feel I already know you, Miss Binks. Very pleased to meet you. Joanna's been teaching me your songs but I'm afraid I can't sing. My singing scares people.

**TILLIE.** Your folks didn't know you were coming.

**JOANNA.** It will all make sense soon. Very soon. Where's Mom?

**TILLIE.** On the phone and she don't want nobody bothering her.

**JOANNA.** John flew his appetite here to taste your chicken fried steak and mashed potatoes. Could you please make that for dinner tonight?

**TILLIE.** I get this lunch on, I'm going home.

**JOANNA.** No . . . No, please Tillie . . . You can't. John has to fly to New York tonight and I want us to all have dinner here.

**TILLIE.** My pie's gonna burn.

(TILLIE exits. Beat.)

**HILARY.** Do you live in San Francisco, Doctor, or are you here for a visit?

**JOHN.** Just passing through.

(Beat.)

**HILARY.** Your mother's on an overseas call but I'm sure she'll want to know that you're here.

**JOANNA.** We can wait.

**HILARY.** (*Retreating toward CHRISTINA's office:*) I'll let her know soon as she's off her call. Good to meet you, Doctor.

(*HILARY exits.*)

**JOANNA.** That's just the way Hilary is. (*At the paintings:*) They must have a client coming today. My mother's a matchmaker.

**JOHN.** Has she ever tried finding you a match?

**JOANNA.** Never. I was raised on Ralph Waldo Emerson. Self-reliance.

**JOHN.** (*Looking at a family photo:*) When was this taken?

**JOANNA.** That's one you're not supposed to see. I don't want you to see me being mean yet.

**JOHN.** Lucky the camera caught you before you punched that poor kid in the face.

**JOANNA.** I did punch him. That's Judy's brother. They used to vacation with us.

**JOHN.** Where's Michael's picture? You said your father took thirty pictures a day.

**JOANNA.** They're all upstairs, put away. If we have time, I'll show them to you later.

**JOANNA.** Come . . . I want you to see something . . .

(*Leads JOHN out to the terrace.*)

This is where I would pray if I did.

**JOHN.** Man . . . We're above it all out here. Nothing can touch us. Up here you can feel the peace. The monks in Tibet don't have it better.

**JOANNA.** This is where I came while Michael was sick upstairs. Once Michael was gone my mother started planting these cactus. They really are the ugliest of plants most of the year. But catch them in bloom . . . See that big, lumpy, twisted one? Looks like a monster. It'll open in a burst of yellow like the sun exploding. But that cactus only blooms once a year at night. Miss it and all you find are dead petals, sharp prickles. My dad calls this garden "The Booby Trap." Be careful . . .

**JOHN.** You should've called ahead.

**JOANNA.** My parents love surprises. Surprises make them listen.

**JOHN.** I should call my parents. Won't have another chance for days.

**JOANNA.** I feel terrible, horrible you don't have time to visit them now.

**JOHN.** You didn't seem too troubled the past ten days.

**JOANNA.** There's a phone here in the living room. (*JOHN looks at her.*) But if you want to talk about me you can use the phone in my father's study. Down the hall, second door to your left.

(*JOHN exits to study. JOANNA goes to her bags and begins searching through them. TILLIE enters.*)

**TILLIE.** What's going on here?

**JOANNA.** Oh, Tillie, don't you know what's happened? Can't you see? I love him.

**TILLIE.** Who the hell is he?

**JOANNA.** One of the most important doctors in the country.

**TILLIE.** He tell you that before or after he asked you for money?

**JOANNA.** We met at the hospital.

**TILLIE.** Where's his suitcases? Don't tell me a doctor don't need a suitcase.

**JOANNA.** At the airport. I told you he flies to New York tonight.

**TILLIE.** What's he doing in the study?

**JOANNA.** Making a call.

**TILLIE.** I don't trust a nice-acting man in a new suit except if he's in church. He got designs on something.

**JOANNA.** He bought a suit to come home with me. Don't start judging him yet. Wait till you get to know him, you'll see—

**TILLIE.** I ain't getting to know him! (*Tearing off her lei:*) I seen all kinds of life happen you don't understand. Who's he think he is?

**JOANNA.** You're the last person in the family I expected to act like this.

**TILLIE.** You don't know like I know. He ain't got no business getting mixed up with you.

(*CHRISTINA enters.*)

**CHRISTINA.** Joey!

(*JOANNA runs to her. TILLIE picks up the scattered flowers from the broken lei.*)

**JOANNA.** (*Overlapping:*) I'm so happy to see you!

**CHRISTINA.** (*Overlapping:*) Is everything alright? What's happened?

**JOANNA.** Everything's wonderful! Come let me tell you what's happened. I'll explain everything.

(*JOANNA leads her to the living room.*)

**CHRISTINA.** Hilary was being very mysterious. She said you were here with a friend and that she thought you might have a surprise. Now what does that mean? Who's this friend?

(*TILLIE exits to the kitchen.*)

**JOANNA.** You'll see. He's in Dad's study making a call. Oh, Mom, I'm so happy. I've never been so happy in my life! I'm just . . .

**CHRISTINA.** Bursting. I see. I'm so happy for you already and don't even know why yet.

**JOANNA.** Here I am acting the center of the world and I've arrived in the middle of your work.

**CHRISTINA.** My daughter's home. Charles Cazalet can wait.

**JOANNA.** Mr. Cazalet? . . . (*Looking at the paintings:*) Only you . . . You're the only one in the world who could persuade that rich old curmudgeon to buy these crazy paintings.

**CHRISTINA.** This friend, Joey . . . Do I know him?

**JOANNA.** We met at the hospital.

**CHRISTINA.** But you told us about all your friends.

**JOANNA.** I didn't know it was happening myself. We sat at lunch together once. The next day again. We never planned it but found ourselves eating together every day.

**CHRISTINA.** Many hearts have met over food. I gained seven pounds while your father wooed me with scoops of Boysenberry ice cream.

**JOANNA.** I didn't know what was truly happening until ten days ago. The hospital staff surprised me with a goodbye cake. My real surprise came when I discovered how angry I was that my lunch friend didn't come to the party. He knew it was my last day. By the time we were cleaning up, I decided to cancel my vacation and come straight home. I was so mad and hated Hawaii. The party was over— I'm stuffing plates in the trash when I look up and there he stood out in the hall, halfway hid behind the doorway. I could only see half his face and wondered why he was standing back. It wasn't until he stepped into the room that I could see in his eyes he was

shy. That's when I went straight up and kissed him. Kissed him right there in the hospital lounge. People must've stared but I didn't notice. That was ten days ago. Only ten days ago but in that ten days is everything. He's supposed to be in New York now but changed his plans and we haven't been apart since.

**CHRISTINA.** The whole world has changed in ten days.

**JOANNA.** Add ten days plus all the lunches plus everything we both were until we met and that's how we fell in love.

**CHRISTINA.** Where's he from? Was he in the same intern program as you?

**JOANNA.** There's something I should tell you . . . You should know straight upfront. *(Beat)* He's older than me. Not much. Eleven years older to be exact. And John's a . . . doctor. A very important doctor—Where's Daddy? John was married before and he had a son and—it was so tragic—both his wife and his son were killed in a train accident in Belgium, eight years ago. But John— I haven't even told you his name yet . . .

*(JOHN enters and stops in the entryway in full view of CHRISTINA, behind JOANNA.)*

It's John Wade Prentice. Do you like his name? Prentice . . . *(Beat.)* There's something else. John's really the one concerned. He's worried what you and Dad will think . . . whether you'll be upset—

*(From behind, JOHN puts his hand on her shoulder.)*

Now you see. Mom, this is John, and—

**CHRISTINA.** Dr. Prentice . . . I'm so pleased to meet you—

**JOHN.** *(Taking CHRISTINA's hand:)* I'm pleased to meet you, Mrs. Drayton. I take it from the look on your face that Joanna's busted out with the big news—

**CHRISTINA.** Well, she—she has told me a great deal, Doctor—

**JOHN.** Mrs. Drayton, I'm medically qualified, so I hope you won't think it presumptuous if I say you ought to sit down. Before you fall down, I mean.

**JOANNA.** He thinks you're going to faint.

**CHRISTINA.** I don't think I'll faint but I'll sit down. *(Sitting:)* Can we all sit down?

*(They sit. Beat.)*

**CHRISTINA.** I suppose it would be all right to say "my goodness," wouldn't it? Well . . . My goodness . . .

**JOANNA.** Do we mind her saying “my goodness”?

**JOHN.** My goodness.

**JOANNA.** What did your parents say?

**JOHN.** We didn’t talk long. I’ll write them on the plane.

**JOANNA.** You didn’t tell them?

**JOHN.** Of course I did.

**JOANNA.** What did they say? What did they ask about me?

**JOHN.** They could tell we were serious.

**JOANNA.** You told them everything?

**JOHN.** You understand it came as quite a shock.

**JOANNA.** Were they upset?

**JOHN.** My mother has wanted me to meet someone for years. But she didn’t think it would happen for me again. Neither did I.

**JOANNA.** I truly am feeling guilty now that you gave up your visit. *(To CHRISTINA:)* John’s parents live in Sacramento and he was supposed to stop over to see them on his way to New York. That was his plan ten days ago.

*(HILARY enters from the office.)*

**HILARY.** Excuse me . . . I hate to interrupt but . . . Christina . . . I wanted you to know—

**CHRISTINA.** *(Standing up:)* Mr. Cazalet will be here any minute.

**HILARY.** Don’t worry . . .

**CHRISTINA.** We have to get—

**HILARY.** I called and cancelled.

**JOANNA.** You didn’t need to do that.

**HILARY.** *(To CHRISTINA:)* I told Mr. Cazalet that your daughter had returned home unexpectedly. That there was a family situation. I’ll call his secretary later and talk us back onto his calendar sometime next week.

**CHRISTINA.** Yes . . . Thank you, Hilary . . .

**HILARY.** I’ll get these paintings back to the gallery. Unless you want to keep them here?

**CHRISTINA.** No . . . We’ll . . .

**JOANNA.** I don't know about anybody else but I'm starving. We haven't eaten since the plane.

**CHRISTINA.** Good idea. (*Calling:*) Tillie . . .

(*TILLIE enters.*)

Mr. Cazalet is no longer coming but we'll still take the lunch.

(*TILLIE exits.*)

**JOANNA.** I've told John all about Tillie's cooking. Why don't we eat on the terrace?

(*HILARY begins wrapping up the paintings.*)

**CHRISTINA.** Good idea. (*Calling:*) Tillie . . .

(*TILLIE enters.*)

We'll have lunch out on the terrace.

(*TILLIE picks up the coffee service tray from the living room and marches out to the terrace. JOANNA follows.*)

**JOANNA.** I love eating out here. Everything looks new to me now.

(*JOHN follows CHRISTINA out to the terrace. TILLIE continues back-and-forth to set out the lunch. HILARY listens in as she wraps up the paintings in the living room.*)

**JOANNA.** Mom, what's that cactus? The one that looks like a bugle. What kind is that? . . . Look . . . John, come here. I want to show you something. See that aloe plant . . . Big and fat. The old queen of the garden. My parents have had that aloe plant since they were first married. (*To CHRISTINA:*) Tell John the story . . . Mom . . .

**CHRISTINA.** Easter lily . . . The new cactus is Easter lily. Supposed to attract hummingbirds. No hummingbirds yet.

**JOANNA.** Tell John about the aloe plant. When you and Dad were first married.

**CHRISTINA.** It healed your father.

**JOANNA.** Tell the best part . . .

**JOHN.** Perhaps another time.

**JOANNA.** They lived in a little one-room apartment in the Mission and Dad burned his hand. Mom ran across the street to a little Mexican market and snapped a leaf off that aloe plant then ran back to rub aloe on the burn. Didn't the man run out yelling after you, mom? . . . When Dad asked her where the rest of it was she told him they didn't have money for plants. Something about that bothered Dad. The next morning that aloe plant was sitting in their kitchen.

We must get a cutting. I'd love to start a garden when— Mom, I haven't told you everything yet.

**JOHN.** Mrs. Drayton, please . . . I advise—

**CHRISTINA.** Yes, Doctor, I'll sit down.

**JOANNA.** I want to wait to tell you and Dad together. When will he be home? It's important we all have dinner together. John has a late flight to New York then leaves the next morning to Geneva for three months of research. He's head of tropical medicine research—

*(MATT bursts in the front door—sees suitcases.)*

**MATT.** Tillie? Tillie! What's wrong? What happened?

**JOANNA.** That's him!

**TILLIE.** You better sit down.

**MATT.** What?

**TILLIE.** You better sit down.

**JOANNA.** Daddy!

**MATT.** Joey! What're you—?

**JOANNA.** I want you to meet somebody. This is Dr. John Wade Prentice. This is my dad.

**JOHN.** So good to—

**MATT.** Doctor? What's wrong with her?

**JOANNA.** There's nothing wrong. What are you so worried for?

**MATT.** Tillie left a message at the club to come home right away. Then you're here and there's a doctor . . .

**JOANNA.** Dr. Prentice and I met in Hawaii.

**MATT.** I thought something was seriously wrong.

**JOANNA.** Why don't you join us for lunch?

*(JOANNA sits at the table.)*

**MATT.** Monsignor Ryan's at the club wondering why I've run off. *(To TILLIE:)* Why did you leave me that message? *(To CHRISTINA:)* Why did Tillie leave me that message? Are you all right? You look a little pale.

**CHRISTINA.** I'm . . . fine.

*(Both women are seated. MATT and JOHN are standing before one another.)*

**MATT.** Good to meet you, Dr. Prentice. Welcome . . . Are you practicing in San Francisco? . . . Please sit down.

**JOHN.** (*Sitting:*) No, sir. I'm only here for one day.

**MATT.** Where is your practice? In Hawaii?

**JOHN.** No, I'm not established in any one place. I've been working in tropical medicine, mainly in Africa for the past few years.

**MATT.** That sounds very interesting.

**JOANNA.** Everything about Dr. Prentice is interesting.

**MATT.** I'm sure it is . . . Please, if you would excuse me a minute. (*Calling:*) Tillie! . . .

(*MATT walks through the living room and notices HILARY packing up.*)

What happened to your lunch?

**HILARY.** (*Privately:*) I took care of everything.

(*TILLIE enters.*)

**MATT.** (*To TILLIE:*) What's going on here?

**TILLIE.** Go out there and find out.

(*TILLIE exits. MATT returns to the Terrace.*)

**MATT.** What the hell's going on?

**JOANNA.** I've been trying to tell you.

**MATT.** Tell me what? What is this? (*To CHRISTINA:*) Chris, what are you three playing at—

**JOHN.** (*Standing:*) I should tell you, Mr. Drayton.

**MATT.** Let's hear it.

**JOHN.** Rather, I should ask you.

**MATT.** Ask me what?

**JOHN.** You see . . . We've got a . . . situation here. Joanna and I didn't just meet in Hawaii. We've known one another several months and in the last ten days discovered that I've fallen in love with her and she's fallen in love with me. We're here to see if you and Mrs. Drayton have any objections if . . . if we got married.

**CHRISTINA.** It helps to sit, Matt.

(*MATT sits. A long Beat.*)

**JOANNA.** Say something . . . You're making us nervous.

**MATT.** Am I? Well, I wouldn't want to do that. I certainly wouldn't want to make anybody nervous. What about you, Chris? Are you nervous? Sit down, Doctor, before you make me nervous. (*To JOHN:*) What did her mother say when you told her? She raise any objections?

**JOHN.** Not exactly.

**JOANNA.** I know it's a shock because it's all so sudden and unexpected. It never occurred to me I would fall in love like this. But how can you prepare for love?

**MATT.** What do you expect me to say? If you want to know what I think you'll have to give me time. The doctor says you have a situation. You certainly have. If you're looking for any sensible statement from me you'll have to let me think. That sound reasonable?

**JOHN.** Perfectly reasonable—but not quite practical.

**JOANNA.** There's another problem . . .

**CHRISTINA.** Should I lay down on the ground for this one?

**JOHN.** I'm flying to New York tonight then on to Switzerland the next day—

**JOANNA.** And I plan to join him in Geneva in two weeks so we can marry.

**MATT.** What the hell's the rush?

**JOANNA.** We know we want to get married. We don't need any more time to decide. And being apart even two weeks is too long. John and I aren't going to change our minds.

**MATT.** Then what you're saying—what you're telling me—

**JOANNA.** We want to know that when we get married we'll have your blessing.

(*MATT stands.*)

You can't go back to the club now.

**MATT.** I need time. And I should leave a message for the Monsignor. Excuse me . . .

(*MATT exits to his study.*)

**JOANNA.** That's my dad. Do you like him?

**JOHN.** I don't know. Does he like me?

**JOANNA.** When he gets like that nobody can tell what he's thinking. Let's get out of here. (*To CHRISTINA:*) Mom, may I borrow your car?

(To JOHN:) Let's go meet Judy. (To CHRISTINA:) I want John to meet Judy. That'll give Dad time to brood.

**JOHN.** I'd love to meet her but not now. I'd rather, if I could, stay here . . . maybe freshen up.

**CHRISTINA.** Of course, Dr. Prentice. You can use the guest room.

**JOANNA.** You're spoiling my fun. I want Judy to meet you.

**JOHN.** I believe we've already made all the introductions the day can hold.

**JOANNA.** That's alright. I'll stay. I can tell her tomorrow.

**JOHN.** No you go ahead. There's something I need to take care of. Tell Judy I look forward to meeting her soon.

**CHRISTINA.** (To JOHN:) Up the stairs to your right, the last door on your left. I'll have Tillie bring up fresh towels.

**JOHN.** Thank you, Mrs. Drayton.

(JOHN exits. HILARY has finished packing up the paintings.)

**HILARY.** I'll get the paintings back safe to the gallery now. If you need me, I can come back.

**CHRISTINA.** There's no need. Thank you, Hilary. I'll see you tomorrow.

**HILARY.** (Privately to CHRISTINA:) I'll be at the gallery then home all night. Call me if you need anything. I'm here for you.

**JOANNA.** Goodbye, Hilary.

**HILARY.** Goodbye, darling. So good to see you.

(HILARY exits out the front door with the paintings. JOANNA crosses to a small table in the foyer.)

**JOANNA.** Should I take the blue set of keys?

**CHRISTINA.** Are you sure about all this? Positively sure?

**JOANNA.** How long did it take you to fall in love with Dad?

**CHRISTINA.** May I ask you something then? Something I've no right to ask but— These ten days . . . Ten days that you haven't been apart. How deeply are you and— How deeply involved are you?

**JOANNA.** You mean have we been to bed together?

**CHRISTINA.** I really don't have any right to— You're not ready— you don't know yet how that will excite . . . but really can distort how you feel.

**JOANNA.** We haven't.

**CHRISTINA.** God that's a huge relief, Joey . . .

**JOANNA.** John wouldn't. He insisted we wait. There is no doubt I'm ready. I'll be back soon. Thank you for letting me use your car.

*(JOANNA exits out the kitchen. TILLIE enters.)*

**TILLIE.** What's he doing upstairs? He ain't staying overnight.

**CHRISTINA.** He's using the guest room to freshen up. If you could make sure he has clean towels and please, Tillie, stay on for dinner. Take the next day, the whole next week off. But please stay with us tonight.

*(MATT enters from his study with something in his hands.)*

**MATT.** What's this? Who was in my study? I found two dollars and twenty cents by the telephone.

**CHRISTINA.** Dr. Prentice made a call to his parents.

**MATT.** So he's not a freeloader . . .

**TILLIE.** Civil rights don't mean you trust everybody.

*(TILLIE exits up the stairs.)*

**MATT.** That's all we know about him. Who's this supposed doctor from Hawaii?

**CHRISTINA.** Joey says he—

**MATT.** Joey believes panhandlers use her dimes to ride the bus.

**CHRISTINA.** Matt . . .

**MATT.** I have Edie checking the AP and police files. We can't begin to think about this situation until we know something about the man. He told us absolutely nothing about himself.

**CHRISTINA.** They're both serious. They mean what they're saying.

**MATT.** They have no idea what the hell they're doing.

*(JOHN enters from upstairs.)*

**JOHN.** Excuse me . . . If I'm not intruding I'd like some time with you.

**MATT.** We'd like that.

**JOHN.** After meeting you both I've decided something and I mean for this conversation to stay between us. Joanna thinks our whole future is determined no matter what happens here today.

**CHRISTINA.** What you told us before isn't true?

**JOHN.** What we feel and our intentions are very true. But the marriage isn't set.

**MATT.** What are you trying to pull? You've told us you plan to be married. What's to misunderstand?

**JOHN.** Unless you two approve without any reservations at all, there won't be any marriage.

**CHRISTINA.** Why have you decided this?

**JOHN.** Joanna and I will have to face all the problems of any relationship plus many, many more. And we simply cannot get married if you're also going to be a problem.

**MATT.** How are we the problem?

**JOHN.** Your attitude. Yours and Mrs. Drayton's. See . . . I don't believe all happy families are alike. Happy families are very few. Your relationship with your daughter is precious. Yet I know she'll still marry me even if you both are against it. But if by marrying me she destroys her relationship with you, over time the loss will grow larger than love. Joanna doesn't understand . . . not having your approval will rip us all apart.

*(The phone rings.)*

**MATT.** Excuse me . . . *(Answering:)* Hello? Edie, could you hold on?

*(MATT puts down the phone.)*

**JOHN.** Don't misunderstand me. There's nothing I won't do to try to keep your daughter as happy as she was the day I met her. But if we don't have your approval we don't stand a chance of surviving. That's why I'm asking before I leave tonight for the clearest possible statement of what your attitude's going to be.

**MATT.** I appreciate that, Doctor. But it's almost in the nature of an ultimatum.

**JOHN.** Not quite. You'll still have Joanna either way. Thank you for letting me speak my piece.

**CHRISTINA.** Thank you . . .

*(JOHN exits up the stairs. MATT returns to the phone.)*

**MATT.** *(Into the phone:)* Edie? . . . Yes, yes, all of it. What did you find out? . . .

*(CHRISTINA comes over to MATT and they share the earpiece to listen to the report.)*

**MATT.** No . . . no, Edie . . . That's all right. No need . . . No, I can pick up a copy of Dr. Prentice's book myself . . .

**CHRISTINA.** Now we know why he's too shy to talk about himself.

**MATT.** Who'd believe him?

**CHRISTINA.** Our daughter's exactly the way we brought her up to be. Think a minute. We answered her questions and she listened to our answers. We told her it was wrong that white people are somehow superior to black or brown or red or yellow people. And that people who think that way are wrong—sometimes hateful, usually stupid, but always wrong. That's what we said. And when we said that to her, we didn't say, "But don't ever fall in love with a colored man."

**MATT.** Tell me something, Chris. And make this answer honest in your heart. When you imagined looking through Joey's wedding pictures, did it ever remotely—ever wildly occur to you that the man standing beside her would look like him?

*(Beat.)*

**CHRISTINA.** Never.

**MATT.** My goodness.

*(The lights fade down on the scene.)*

## Scene Two

*(The lights fade up two hours later on MATT and JOHN.)*

**JOHN.** You were there? You were at the fight? You were there?

**MATT.** One of seventy thousand packed in Yankee Stadium. I was a reporter then, covering the fight. I'd like to say in my heart I knew Louis would win but Schmeling looked giant. Hitler's great Aryan. That night the devil wore purple trunks. We were all so damned scared. Everybody knew war was coming soon. Joe Louis fought for America that night.

**JOHN.** According to my grandmother's porch, the Brown Bomber was fighting for us.

**MATT.** He was fighting for everybody. You couldn't find a single true American—no matter what color—who didn't love Joe Louis.

**JOHN.** For one night thirty years ago.

**MATT.** You don't understand. Right before the bell, we all sucked in our breath. There were people in the stands too scared to watch.

They closed their eyes but I watched so hard the fight moved slow. Circling and circling and circling . . . Suddenly Louis hit hard with a left— Another left took Schmeling to the ropes. A dozen arms swinging— Then Schmeling dropped. Louis dropped him again and again and it was done. One round. Two minutes. Joe Louis standing. I swear the man glowed.

**JOHN.** I'll never forget it, sir. We went down to my grandmother's house to listen to the fight, her big old Montgomery Wards radio lugged outside. My cousins ran around the yard, punching each other's arms but I listened on the porch with the grownups. My father, my uncle, even my mother, my aunt, my grandmother— All listening like they were sitting in church.

**MATT.** There's never been anything like it. Even when the war ended. This whole country truly came together that night.

**JOHN.** I remember people came running out from their houses yelling, banging pans. I don't know why but everybody started moving. Nobody thought about it, we all started moving through the streets. Even the white folks marched along with us. That night . . . my father . . . my father pulled me up on top of his shoulders, above the crowd and called me his Little Brown Bomber. Told me "Little Brown, you learn to hit with your brains. You use your head to knock them out!"

**MATT.** We need a night like that again. Joe Louis was America that night.

**JOHN.** America forgot all about Joe Louis. Left him in the desert. Now he's a doorman in Vegas.

**MATT.** I'm of the generation that slipped between the wars but I've tried to take up my fight through the newspaper. Fight the fascism that breeds here.

**JOHN.** The *Guardian's* one of the few American newspapers they trust to read overseas.

**MATT.** That's why I want you to know . . . About what you've come here with today— I want you to know first of all that . . . I want you to know that I don't see there's any difference between us—

(JOHN *laughs.*)

**MATT.** What? . . . What, Dr. Prentice? Did I say something funny?

**JOHN.** No, sir . . . Actually . . . Yes, actually you have . . . I understand what you're trying to say . . . But you certainly saw some kind of difference when you found out I was more than just a visitor.

**MATT.** No difference I mean as in we are both men.

**JOHN.** Of course there's a difference. We do share our humanity. But we are a different people, Mr. Drayton. Have you ever seen *American Bandstand*? Look at the kids dancing. Who do you think are the better dancers? Tell me truly what you think.

**MATT.** Hell, you can see it too! Don't tell me you can't see it. The colored kids dance better than the white kids. It's right there on the television. You can't argue against that.

**JOHN.** But *why* do you think that is?

**MATT.** They clearly have a special, inborn sense of rhythm. A better sense of timing, of movement.

**JOHN.** No, that's not it at all. It's because it's our music. It's our dancing. We brought it here. I mean—you can *do* “the Watusi”—but I *am* the Watusi. The dance floor would look entirely different if everyone was dancing the polka.

**MATT.** You're an intelligent man, Dr. Prentice, but do you have any idea what you and Joey are getting into? Would you plan to have children?

**JOHN.** Children give marriage meaning.

**MATT.** Have you thought about the problems your children are going to have?

**JOHN.** I know there will be many sleepless nights ahead.

**MATT.** How does Joey feel?

**JOHN.** She says, “All of our children will be President of the United States—and they'll all have colorful administrations.” You raised her, Mr. Drayton. I only met her six months ago.

**MATT.** But how do you feel about it?

**JOHN.** Quite frankly, I think your daughter's a radical optimist . . . Maybe Secretary of State—

**MATT.** There are towns—cities in this country where you cannot, by law, drink from the same goddamn water fountain. Hell, it's in the Supreme Court right now—there are states where what you propose to do is illegal! Regardless of the law . . . laws won't protect you when you get pulled over. You cross the wrong county line . . .

**JOHN.** I know all about America, Mr. Drayton. Why do you think I work overseas? Most major research labs here would only let me inside to push a broom.

**MATT.** This quick decision about whether we approve is unfair.

**JOHN.** Joanna almost had me believe there wouldn't be any problem. She said, "My dad? My dad is a lifelong fighting liberal who loathes race prejudice and has fought against every form of discrimination. My parents will welcome you with open arms."

*(JOANNA enters from the front door.)*

**JOANNA.** Hello! . . . I'm home! . . . *(Heads out to the terrace:)* What happened without me? Judy sends her love, says she wants to fly to Geneva with you and Mom for the wedding. Daddy, don't give me that face. What time's dinner?

**MATT.** Tillie's planning six o'clock.

**JOANNA.** Can we say seven?

**MATT.** Take that up with Tillie. I welcome the extra hour.

**JOANNA.** When you come to Geneva you should do a story on John and his research. You said you want to get back to writing more.

**MATT.** There's certainly a story to tell here but I don't know I'm the one to tell it. I need to talk with your mother. If you'll excuse me, Dr. Prentice.

*(MATT exits to CHRISTINA's office.)*

**JOANNA.** Judy said of course I ended up with a doctor because I never went out hunting for one. *(Beat.)* I have no idea how your conversation went.

**JOHN.** I believe your father would happily support the idea of a mixed couple featured on the front page of his newspaper. But when the idea appears in the flesh in his home and that flesh wants to marry his daughter, your father pulls out his editing knife.

**JOANNA.** Well imagine if this were a hundred years ago.

**JOHN.** Your father would've rounded up his friends and went looking for rope.

**JOANNA.** A hundred years ago I would've been considered his property, forced to get his approval to marry.

**JOHN.** And I would've been on the auction block. . . . I'm sorry. But we do want his blessing . . . How about we begin climbing your mountain of photo albums?

**JOANNA.** Haven't you had your fill of the Draytons today?

**JOHN.** I want to see how you looked winning the California spelling bee.

**JOANNA.** I proudly wore pigtails.

**JOHN.** What was your final word?

**JOANNA.** "Synecdoche." S-y-n-e-c-d-o-c-h-e. "Synecdoche."

**JOHN.** Like how the whole of the Drayton family is part of you.

**JOANNA.** And vice versa. (*Beat*) Are you worried me being home is changing my mind? Is that what's wrong? Are you scared I'll discover here I don't want to marry you?

**JOHN.** Not at all—

**JOANNA.** John, I can tell you're worried . . . Then I'll leave with you tonight. That will give your heart, your mind peace. We'll fly to New York together and I'll go with you tomorrow to Geneva. It's settled.

**JOHN.** But you've got things to do . . . You said there were all sorts of things—

**JOANNA.** My passport's in order. I'll pack what I pack, whatever I need I'll get over there. What's wrong? Are *you* having second thoughts?

**JOHN.** No—not about us . . .

**JOANNA.** You know once I make up my mind I only see ahead.

**JOHN.** I need to speak with your father.

**JOANNA.** You just did . . . What else is there to say?

*(The doorbell rings.)*

**JOANNA.** (*Yelling out:*) I got it, Tillie!

*(JOANNA answers the door. MONSIGNOR RYAN enters.)*

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Joey! Look at you. Something's happened . . . You left here a "Joey" and come home a "Joanna."

**JOANNA.** Monsignor Ryan . . . How good to see you!

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Your father left me a message at the club about a problem at home. Nothing serious I hope.

**JOANNA.** Monsignor Ryan, this is John Prentice. Dr. John Wade Prentice.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Dr. Prentice . . . Oh! Now I see . . . You're the problem!

**JOHN.** Yes, sir. How do you do?

**JOANNA.** We met in Hawaii and the two of us are going to be married!

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Are you indeed? I take it you mean to each other? I knew nothing of this. Why hadn't your parents informed me?

**JOANNA.** They didn't know either. We flew in this morning.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Prentice . . . There's a Dr. Prentice I've read about. Doing some amazing research work in Africa. Do you know who I mean?

**JOANNA.** He *is* that Dr. Prentice.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** That's impossible! Let me see your driver's license. You must be his son.

**JOANNA.** He's the youngest, most important doctor in the world.

**JOHN.** Joanna exaggerates—

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** No, no, doctor . . . I'm quite impressed. Read an interview you gave but had no idea you were so young. I do hope we have time to sit down together. My youth was spent in Togo on mission work.

**JOANNA.** I'm afraid you can't have him now. We're going upstairs to look through all our family albums.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Don't overwhelm him already, dear. (*To JOHN:*) Her father always had a camera ready to capture every moment of growing up.

**JOHN.** Actually, Monsignor, it was my idea. I have twenty-five years to catch up on.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Then get to it. Never let an old man stand in your way.

**JOANNA.** John, if you want to go ahead up in my room, across from the guest room. The photo albums start in order on the top left of my bookshelf. If you could reach up and get them down but don't look yet. I'll be up in a minute.

**JOHN.** Good to meet you, Monsignor.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** You too, son. We're both in the business of healing.

*(TILLIE appears at the top of the steps.)*

**JOHN.** Hello, Ms. Binks.

*(TILLIE walks down the stairs past JOHN.)*

**TILLIE.** *(To MONSIGNOR RYAN:)* Good to see somebody with some sense has shown up around here, Monsignor. Maybe you can set this girl to thinking straight.

*(JOHN exits into the bedroom.)*

**JOANNA.** Tillie . . . I don't know why you're so mad at everybody.

**TILLIE.** I ain't mad at everybody.

**JOANNA.** I have a surprise and I need your help. How many steaks did you get for tonight?

**TILLIE.** I got four cause I was told four.

**JOANNA.** Could you get two more? John's mother and father should be here by seven.

**TILLIE.** Oh hell no. His mother and father? Coming here?

**JOANNA.** I want it to be a surprise. Will it be any trouble? Can we hold dinner till seven? I'll run for the steaks if you like. But please don't say anything to anybody.

**TILLIE.** Monsignor, I'll let the Draytons know you're here. This ain't a churchgoing house but we need some higher help here tonight!

*(TILLIE begins to exit.)*

**JOANNA.** Why are you acting like this, Tillie?

**TILLIE.** I'll order two more steaks.

*(TILLIE exits to the office.)*

**JOANNA.** John wasn't able to visit with his parents as he had planned so I decided to invite them for dinner. They're driving in from Sacramento. They seem very nice and said they can't wait to meet me. You won't say anything . . .

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Secrets come with the cloth.

**JOANNA.** You should stay for dinner too. I'm sorry I wasn't thinking. I was so excited about the surprise.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** No, no . . . Tonight make your new family. Break bread together to honor life sustaining . . . Drink wine together to celebrate its survival.

*(CHRISTINA and MATT enter from the office.)*

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** *(To CHRISTINA:)* How long since I said you are the loveliest woman I've ever known? All these years I've told myself there must be a brand of envy that is in no way sinful.

**CHRISTINA.** Good to see you, Mike.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** *(To MATT:)* Today counts as a forfeit. I'm on a winning streak.

**JOANNA.** Excuse me . . . John's waiting upstairs. Good to see you, Monsignor.

*(JOANNA exits upstairs.)*

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Little Joey's become a woman now. I met the beau . . . Wakes my tired heart.

**MATT.** Aren't you a bit shocked?

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Shocked? Why should I be shocked?

**MATT.** Why's everybody suddenly gone blind?

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** I've known a good many marriages between races. Curiously enough, usually works out well. Perhaps because it requires a special quality of effort, more consideration and compassion than most marriages seem to generate these days.

**CHRISTINA.** That's a beautiful thought. I'm glad you said that. You do have beautiful thoughts, Mike.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** But beautiful acts are the true struggle. Look at the lad here . . . *(To MATT:)* You making heavy weather of it? Seems to me Joey's not at all the sort of person to make a serious mistake about anybody. She was almost too careful a child. The fact she's obviously mad about the fellow should be recommendation enough for anyone who knows Joey. But he's really quite famous in his own right.

I take it you know that.

**CHRISTINA.** Matt had a criminal check run on him.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Dr. Prentice's research in tropical medicine is world-renowned. It has saved thousands of lives. Remarkable work, especially for one so young.

**MATT.** I don't know. I don't know, Mike. I wish I didn't have this—my whole life I've trusted my gut . . . My gut tells me they'll never make it. That the whole idea's impossible.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Let me ask you this. If your daughter had come home with a suitor who was a perfect gentleman, a world-renowned doctor and his skin was white—wouldn't you be in their face right now with a camera?

**MATT.** Don't try to make me the devil in this. I'm the one person here willing to stand up to the reality of the world. All the trouble they're bound to face. Both of them are about to have their futures destroyed.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** You feel that, do you? You're really thrashing about, then. That's very interesting, indeed.

**MATT.** I know the world as it really is out there. Not life sheltered atop this hill or protected by a pulpit.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Under different circumstances, this might be amusing. Amusing to see an old phony liberal come face-to-face with his principles. Of course I've always suspected that inside that fighting liberal facade there must be some sort of reactionary bigot trying to get out—

**MATT.** Go to hell— Are you and your crowd still preaching hell?

*(The doorbell rings.)*

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** If Joanna and Dr. Prentice know what lies in store for them and they still want each other enough to accept it— then it's plain as anything they love each other very much. I believe you have to say to any two people who love like that, many blessings and good luck—

*(TILLIE has answered the door and HILARY enters.)*

**CHRISTINA.** Hilary . . . What's the problem?

**HILARY.** Forgive me for interrupting. I rescheduled with Mr. Cazalet's secretary.

**CHRISTINA.** You could've called.

**HILARY.** But you know how important this is— How many clients Mr. Cazalet's business could bring us . . .

**CHRISTINA.** You didn't need come here to tell me that.

**HILARY.** I want to talk with you privately.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** *(Starts for the front door.)* I should be off. I may be able to save a few souls before supper. Obviously nothing much I can do here . . . *(Stops.)* But Joey did mention dinner. I told her I wasn't free but now I understand this may be a calling.

**CHRISTINA.** Please come, Mike. It would be good to have you here. Six o'clock.

**TILLIE.** Seven now. Joey's changed the time. She's upending everything.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Nothing from the Psalms or from Shakespeare comes to mind now, but in this case I believe the Beatles say it best: "We can work it out, we can work it out. Life is very short, and there's no time . . ."

(MONSIGNOR RYAN *sings as he exits the front door.*)

**CHRISTINA.** Tillie . . .

**TILLIE.** I know, one more for dinner tonight. Getting more and more like a holy-rollers meeting every minute.

(*TILLIE exits.*)

**MATT.** Think it's too early for bourbon?

**CHRISTINA.** Yes. Where are you going?

**MATT.** I need to clear my head.

(*MATT exits out the front door.*)

**CHRISTINA.** What's the problem, Hilary?

**HILARY.** Christina . . . Since I left here this afternoon I've felt so ashamed of myself.

**CHRISTINA.** It's understandable, Hilary. This surprise hasn't brought out the best in any of us.

**HILARY.** We've known each other for so long and it was shameful, truly shameful how I ran out of here earlier without giving you my full support.

**CHRISTINA.** That's thoughtful of you but there's nothing else you could've done.

**HILARY.** I've heard of this happening . . . Oh darling, actually, I know of this happening . . . My cousin—distant cousin—ran off like this three years ago. Now my aunt's home is very religious and I believe suffocating piety's what drove my cousin away. But my aunt was able to handle the situation perfectly and in the end it all worked out. The situation can end a happy one but I'm afraid you'll have to practice the patience of a martyr.

**CHRISTINA.** But that's part of the problem. The situation doesn't give us any time.

**HILARY.** He's going to Geneva tomorrow and she plans to follow in a couple of weeks. Right? . . .

**CHRISTINA.** Even if I felt I should stop her . . . .

**HILARY.** It's good they're leaving the country . . . actually better for you and Matt. Now what you need to do is give Joey your full support.

**CHRISTINA.** I've always—

**HILARY.** Embrace the situation. What that will do is disarm her. This will also give you the opportunity to set a condition.

**CHRISTINA.** What sort of condition?

**HILARY.** That they wait a year to marry. Ask her to honor that condition and make certain she visits her doctor before going to Switzerland. The plan will be ruined if she gets pregnant.

**CHRISTINA.** I don't quite understand, Hilary . . . How will this plan help the situation?

**HILARY.** Time will let escape some of the steam heat of forbidden animal attraction.

**CHRISTINA.** Hilary . . .

**HILARY.** It worked perfectly for my aunt. My cousin ran off to Pittsburgh only to return home a few short months later. In time the chocolate lost its flavor. My cousin now teaches Sunday school and last Christmas married a real American man. Voila! The problem solved . . . What you must be going through . . . (*Suddenly embraces CHRISTINA.*) My dear, what a shock for you! A shock . . . why I couldn't live with myself if I didn't come back to see you.

**CHRISTINA.** (*Pulling herself from the embrace.*) Thank you, Hilary. At least I feel certain about one thing in my life.

**HILARY.** Of course it goes without saying . . . I'll keep this our secret. We've both worked too hard developing our gallery's reputation. Can you imagine Mr. Cazalet walking in here this afternoon and seeing him here with your daughter? I must say I'm proud how I handled the situation. I believe I earned my Christmas bonus today.

**CHRISTINA.** You certainly did, Hilary. I do know what you can do for me. (*Ushers HILARY toward the front door.*) First, I want you to go straight back to the gallery. When you get to the gallery, tell Jennifer she will be looking after things temporarily. She's to give me a ring if there's anything she can't handle herself. Then go into the office and make out a check for cash for the sum of five thousand dollars. That's ten times a Christmas bonus. Then carefully, but carefully, Hilary, remove absolutely everything that might subsequently remind me that you had ever been there. I'm certain my family's not the sort of people you can afford to be associated with.

**HILARY.** Christi—

**CHRISTINA.** Don't speak, Hilary. Just—go.

*(HILARY exits as MATT enters with a freezer bag with ice cream.)*

**MATT.** What did Hilary want?

**CHRISTINA.** To offer her support.

**MATT.** Look what I found. I can't remember the last time I had Boysenberry ice cream. I needed something certain . . . Something I knew exactly what it would be when I tasted it.

**CHRISTINA.** They still make Boysenberry ice cream?

**MATT.** Think how long it took us, Chris. All the Boysenberry ice cream we ate together. All the time it took us to fall in love.

**CHRISTINA.** Less than ten days.

*(They share Boysenberry ice cream as the lights fade down on the scene.)*

### Scene Three

*(The lights fade up that evening, shortly before seven. JOHN enters from upstairs to find the living room empty. He looks in on the parlor and finds it empty too. He peeks in the kitchen then begins to pace in the living room. TILLIE enters from the dining room.)*

**JOHN.** Good evening, Miss Binks. Thought I was in the wrong house . . .

*(No response as TILLIE crosses toward the parlor.)*

Smells wonderful. Can't wait to—

**TILLIE.** *(Stops.)* I got something to say to you.

*(TILLIE gets up close to JOHN.)*

What are you trying to pull here?

**JOHN.** I'm not trying to pull anything, Miss Binks. I am looking forward to trying your cooking tonight. Reminds me of my grandmother's house—

**TILLIE.** You can cut that talk out! I know who you are. You want to answer me something? What kind of doctor you supposed to be? Say you work all over but you don't live anywhere. Ain't got a suitcase. No matter how white you talk, how slicked up you dress—I know you're like one of them street hustlers talking folks out of their money peddling prayers or magic medicine.

*(CHRISTINA has entered unnoticed.)*

**JOHN.** Shhh . . . Don't tell. Got this revolutionary elixir . . . Drink three times a day, magically makes me a doctor. Would you care for me to prescribe you some, Miss Binks?

**TILLIE.** You might be charming Little Joey but you ain't charmed me or her daddy for a minute. You listen here. I brought that child up from a baby rocking in her cradle and ain't nobody gonna harm her on my watch. While you're in this house, I'm right here watching. You read me? After you get your dinner tonight, go on wherever you go and don't come around her no more. You bring any more trouble here and you'll find out what black power really means!

(*TILLIE exits into the parlor.*)

**CHRISTINA.** Dr. Prentice . . . I'm . . . I'm—

**JOHN.** You look lovely tonight, Mrs. Drayton. My father taught me to look to a woman's mother to know the woman she will become.

**CHRISTINA.** Thank you . . . I'm sorry this has all been so . . . uncomfortable.

**JOHN.** Not nearly as uncomfortable as it would've been if Joanna had met my father first.

**CHRISTINA.** Oh.

**JOHN.** Are you surprised that my parents would be upset too? Like you and Mr. Drayton.

**CHRISTINA.** I . . . I never thought about it. If you'd like, I can make you a drink. You may have learned by now that Joey's never late exactly but she's never ready a minute early.

**JOHN.** I came down now hoping to have the opportunity to speak with you and Mr. Drayton, to know your minds before dinner.

**CHRISTINA.** Yes . . . We've talked all afternoon . . . And if we could have more time, Dr. Prentice—one more day even. You must understand . . . A little more time will help us greatly. We will have Joey here with us for the next couple weeks and we will have time to . . . What? . . .

**JOHN.** There's something Joanna hasn't told you.

**CHRISTINA.** What? What else could it be?

**JOHN.** She's packing to fly with me tonight.

**CHRISTINA.** (*Calling:*) Matt! . . . Matt, please come down here . . .

**JOHN.** But understand, as I promised, I won't have her come without your approval.

**CHRISTINA.** (*Calling:*) Matt! Come down here now . . . Matt! (*To JOHN:*) I saw her with her suitcase but thought she was unpacking. There's only so much you can find out in a day . . . Matt!

(MATT enters half-dressed with a sock in his hand.)

**MATT.** What in hell? What's the yelling for?

**CHRISTINA.** Please come down here.

**MATT.** I'm getting dressed!

**CHRISTINA.** We need to talk.

**MATT.** We've talked enough.

**CHRISTINA.** Matt . . . Now!

(MATT enters.)

Joey's packing now and is planning to leave tonight.

**MATT.** Tonight? Out of the question! This whole damned situation—now . . . That's out of the question! What the hell is happening here?

**CHRISTINA.** Doctor, why don't you—

**JOHN.** Excuse me. I'll leave you two alone.

(JOHN exits.)

**MATT.** This is out of control! Irresponsible!

**CHRISTINA.** Dr. Prentice stands by his word. He won't let Joey go with him without our— Without your approval.

**MATT.** Chris . . .

**CHRISTINA.** Mike is right. They both clearly know what's in store for them. They've faced ugly prejudice all day right here in what's supposed to be the sanctuary of our home. If they're fully willing to accept what they'll face then I cannot see to do anything else than to stand with them, add to their strength. They're going to need us.

**MATT.** You want to know the difference between us right now? You're thinking in terms of Joey's happiness and I'm thinking in terms of her welfare.

**CHRISTINA.** I don't think that's entirely it with you, Matt.

**MATT.** What the hell does that mean?

**CHRISTINA.** I believe Joey's happiness and her welfare are exactly the same thing because in this situation we're talking about love. And your problem with the doctor is something else.

**MATT.** You want to make me out a Klansman in this? The doctor is welcome in my home, welcome at my table, welcome to live in the house beside me—but he's not welcome to my approval in marrying my daughter. Don't make him out the victim. I'm the one put on the spot. Joey and the doctor and now even you are all trying to pin me

down to something as if I've never had my own mind or have gone the way of a crazy old coot. I know I'm the only one thinking sense today. This whole thing is the doctor's fault. He's a grown man who behaved irresponsibly letting this idiotic thing happen between them in the first place.

**CHRISTINA.** Our daughter's a grown woman.

**MATT.** But still our daughter. And as her father, how the hell can I support this when I know she's bound to run into a real Klansman one day and get her brains beat in with a baseball bat! Now I need a drink . . .

*(CHRISTINA escapes out to the terrace where the last light of the unwelcome sunset glows. She is adjusting her garden when MATT returns with a bourbon in one hand, his sock in the other. CHRISTINA is silent. MATT wrestles on his sock then finally settles.)*

**CHRISTINA.** There's nothing I can say that you don't think you know. But it's important you understand how wrong I think you are. I believe you're making the worst mistake you've ever made in your life. I believe you'll regret this with more bitterness than you've ever known and for as long as you live . . .

**MATT.** Well, you're wrong. You're as wrong as you could be. I'm thinking of Joey. Even the doctor will understand that I'm thinking of her.

**CHRISTINA.** There's something else. And I'm surprised this hasn't occurred to you. John will accept whatever you say to him because he's a terribly sensitive man who will keep his word and accept yours. But Joey won't. The most obvious mistake that you're making is in underestimating your own daughter. She'll fight you and your whole attitude and anything you do and every argument you give her. And one thing more. Until today I would never have believed I could say such a thing . . . But when she fights you, Matt, and for what it may be worth, I'm going to be right there with her. Shall I bring you another drink?

**MATT.** I'll get it myself.

*(The doorbell rings. TILLIE enters to answer the door.)*

**JOANNA.** *(Offstage:)* No! No! Wait . . . Don't answer the door! Don't answer it! . . .

*(The doorbell rings again. JOANNA runs down the stairs.)*

Wait! Wait . . . John! John, come out here! Let John answer the door! John!

(JOHN *enters*.)

John, you should answer the door.

JOHN. Why would I—

JOANNA. Don't question— Please answer the door . . .

*(All focus is on the door. JOHN answers it . . . MONSIGNOR RYAN enters.)*

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Forgive me, I'm a bit early . . . Why, am I the belle of the ball tonight?

JOANNA. You spoiled my surprise . . .

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Sorry, my dear.

JOHN. Why did you want me to answer?

CHRISTINA. What surprise?

MATT. What's going on?

JOANNA. Guess who's coming to dinner?

MATT. Who?

TILLIE. I know—

JOANNA. No, Tillie!

TILLIE. She's expecting the Reverend Martin Luther King!

MATT. Who the hell's coming to dinner?

JOANNA. John's parents should be—

JOHN. My parents . . . My parents are coming here? How?

JOANNA. I called and invited them since you weren't going to have the chance to see them.

JOHN. You talked with my parents? . . .

JOANNA. They are so proud of everything you're doing, John. You do know that don't you? But they really miss you. I don't think they say that to you but I can tell they miss you. They're very excited to see you tonight.

JOHN. They're going to expect someone different.

JOANNA. Do they think I'm older?

JOHN. Darker.

JOANNA. You said you told them everything . . .

JOHN. I was going to write them a letter.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Would anyone else care for a scotch?

**CHRISTINA.** We could all use a drink now.

**JOANNA.** I did this for you . . . And for us. Why are you getting mad?

**JOHN.** It's made everything more complicated.

**MATT.** This is too goddamn much. Simply behaving like nobody's going to have a problem with what is very clearly an enormous problem isn't going to solve it.

**JOANNA.** *(To JOHN:)* Is that how you feel?

**JOHN.** I was going to write them a letter.

**JOANNA.** Does everyone think I'm stupid, unaware of what we're doing?

**CHRISTINA.** Nobody thinks you're stupid, Joey . . . But optimistic . . .

**MATT.** Outrageously optimistic! You don't seem to understand—

**CHRISTINA.** *(To MATT:)* You don't understand that it's her—

**JOANNA.** *(To MATT:)* Don't understand? You don't think I understand . . . I don't think you understand yourself. I understood very well what you wrote last month in your newspaper.

**MATT.** What the hell's that have to do with this?

**JOANNA.** You wrote that the whole world needs a round table. Remember? That gathering over issues and talking best expresses our humanity.

**MATT.** I was writing about the Middle East and Vietnam.

**JOANNA.** Exactly . . . That a round table could save the bloodshed of millions. Not war but discourse is our true nature. You wrote that. Now look at us . . .

*(She embraces JOHN.)*

This is the issue. An issue that should include John's parents. Now look in the dining room . . . There's our round table.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** That's the finest sense spoken today. Strange that it's coming in part from you, Matt.

**MATT.** I have to finish dressing for dinner.

*(MATT exits upstairs.)*

**CHRISTINA.** Mike, I'll join you for that drink.

*(CHRISTINA and MONSIGNOR RYAN exit to the parlor.)*

**TILLIE.** Glad I don't got to sit at the table.

*(TILLIE exits into the kitchen. JOHN and JOANNA are alone together.)*

**JOHN.** I really was going to write them a letter.

**JOANNA.** Now you can say it.

*(JOHN leads her to a kiss. The doorbell rings. He jumps away. JOANNA pulls him to her and they kiss once more. The doorbell rings again. They turn to face the door together as the lights fade down on the scene.)*

***End of Act One***



## ACT TWO

### Scene One

*(The lights fade up seven minutes later to reveal the Prentices, JOHN SR and MARY, seated in the living room. They are stunned into silence. Perfunctory introductions were made what seems an hour ago. JOANNA looks to JOHN, who looks to his hands. Finally, CHRISTINA summons herself to speak.)*

**CHRISTINA.** I trust you had a pleasant drive.

**MARY.** Yes . . . Thank you.

*(Beat.)*

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Amazing . . . Travel . . . Cars . . . planes. Hop hop hop about the country. *(To JOHN and JOANNA:)* To think this morning you were both in Hawaii.

**JOANNA.** And tonight we'll be off— Be all . . . All off having dinner together. Here. In San Francisco. Amazing . . .

**CHRISTINA.** Mr. Prentice, how long is the drive from Sacramento?

**JOHN SR.** Two hours, eighteen minutes.

*(Beat.)*

**CHRISTINA.** And how far is it?

**JOHN SR.** Ninety-seven miles.

*(Beat.)*

**CHRISTINA.** Do you live far from the freeway?

**JOHN SR.** Yes.

*(Beat.)*

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Think if the freeway revolt had won. I-80 wouldn't be here. How long would your drive have been then?

**JOHN SR.** Ninety-seven miles

*(Beat.)*

**CHRISTINA.** My husband will be down in a minute. He's upstairs changing.

*(Beat.)*

**JOHN.** I was going to write you a letter.

**JOHN SR.** How do you think your mother feels walking blind into this? I knew something was wrong the minute we started driving up the hill to this neighborhood.

**MARY.** John.

**CHRISTINA.** This situation has . . . surprised us too.

**JOHN SR.** Surprise was my retirement party. This here's an ambush.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** (*Finishing his scotch:*) Would anyone care for a drink?

**JOANNA.** I shouldn't drink very much, I haven't finished packing yet.

**JOHN SR.** (*To JOHN:*) She's traveling with you?

(*Beat.*)

Damnit son, what the hell's going on here? Don't let me stand here the fool any longer.

**JOHN.** Joanna's traveling to New York with me tonight then on to Geneva in the morning. There we're planning to be married.

**MARY.** When John? When?

**JOHN SR.** Who's this? Who's this standing here?

**MARY.** John, please . . .

**JOHN SR.** Where's my son? (*Getting up:*) Is this *Candid Camera*? Is that what this is? Where's the smiling white guy hiding?

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** (*Standing:*) Might I suggest we all have a drink? A touch of spirits makes a fine social lubricant.

**JOHN SR.** Good God Almighty.

(*JOHN SR exits to the terrace.*)

**JOHN.** Excuse me.

(*JOHN exits out the front door. MARY exits to the terrace. JOANNA exits upstairs*)

**CHRISTINA.** A thumping great martini. Mike . . . We're in trouble.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** My dear . . . They just found out. I'm sure the look on even your lovely face was the same. Give them a couple hours. A couple hours and a couple drinks.

**CHRISTINA.** I can only worry about my family right now. We're in terrible trouble. It's Matt . . .

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** To wipe the stoic disappointment off his old mug may take a some months and a case of good bourbon.

**CHRISTINA.** We can't wait that long. John's told us that he won't marry Joey unless we approve the marriage with no reservations.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Given their situation that sounds strangely old-fashioned.

**CHRISTINA.** John believes their future together depends on our approval. Joey knows nothing about the terms and now she's decided to go with him tonight.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** And Matt won't approve.

**CHRISTINA.** He's not himself, Mike.

*(TILLIE enters from the kitchen.)*

**TILLIE.** What about dinner?

**CHRISTINA.** Nobody has much of an appetite right now.

**TILLIE.** Should I even set the table?

**CHRISTINA.** Of course. Why would you ask?

**TILLIE.** Cause I don't understand nothing no more.

*(TILLIE exits to the kitchen. Throughout the rest of the scene, she will appear in and out of the dining room, setting the table for dinner.)*

**CHRISTINA.** I don't understand nothing no more neither.

*(MATT enters from upstairs.)*

**MATT.** How'd his parents take it?

**CHRISTINA.** As well as we did.

**MATT.** Are they still here?

**CHRISTINA.** They're on the terrace.

**MATT.** I need to talk with John. I'll tell him before dinner.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** It took the miracle of a talking donkey to set Balaam straight. When the stubborn donkey spoke he said, "I am here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one."

**MATT.** Save it for Sunday, Mike. I'm not telling the doctor that they can't get married. I have no right to.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** So you've suddenly changed your mind? A miracle it is then!

**MATT.** You have to understand. They've got me boxed into a hell of a corner here. He doesn't have the right to come in here insisting I be happy about something any reasonable man—

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Don't fool yourself, Matt. Know exactly what it is that you're about to do. You not supporting the marriage is you stopping the marriage.

(JOHN SR and MARY enter.)

**JOHN SR.** Mr. Drayton?

**MATT.** Yes . . . Mr. Prentice. Mrs. Prentice. Pleased to meet you. (*Beat.*) How was your drive?

**MARY.** Pleasant.

**MATT.** How long did it take?

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Oh lord . . .

**JOHN SR.** Mr. Drayton, I don't know you at all and don't want to offend you . . . But are you some kind of lunatic?

**MARY.** John . . .

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** We were just coming to that conclusion.

**CHRISTINA.** Mike . . .

**JOHN SR.** You approve of what's going on here?

**MATT.** I wouldn't say—

**JOHN SR.** Maybe you can afford to be out of your mind. Sitting up here in this fine house where the police, your money and your skin protect you. But I'm speaking to you as someone who lives out in the world. Telling you my son mixing with your daughter is crazy! You should've told them off the minute they walked in here.

**MATT.** If you calm down enough—

**JOHN SR.** Calm down? Mr. Drayton, do you know who my son is? What he's done for himself? Marrying your daughter would be throwing away everything!

**MATT.** Now wait a minute—

**JOHN SR.** This would destroy—

**MATT.** I agree with you. You're the first person who sees eye-to-eye with me.

**JOHN SR.** What have you told them?

**MATT.** Essentially that I feel the same way as you. The world's not ready for this.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** It's you that's not ready, Matt.

**JOHN SR.** Then why am I standing in your house now? How did it get this far?

**MATT.** Mr. Prentice, I know that you've only had a few minutes with this and I first flew off the handle as quick as you. But I will tell you I've learned today that they are very serious about this and we're about to make for them a hell of an unhappy situation.

**JOHN SR.** How was my son dumb enough to get himself trapped.

**CHRISTINA.** Trapped?

**JOHN SR.** She's not . . . Is she in trouble?

**CHRISTINA.** Not a chance. If you'll excuse me, I need to go be with my daughter.

*(CHRISTINA exits up the stairs.)*

**MATT.** At least I've had all afternoon to deal with this. You should have some time to talk with your son. Use my study, down the hall, the open door to your left.

**MARY.** *(To JOHN SR:)* I'll let John know you wish to speak with him.

**JOHN SR.** I apologize for coming off too hot. Good to know you're a reasonable man, Mr. Drayton.

*(JOHN SR exits into the study. MARY exits through the front door)*

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** A reasonable man? . . . Since the seminary, I've always preferred Augustine over Aquinas. It's that faith in reason alone—

**MATT.** Leads to the devil? Keep the devil to yourself tonight.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** The only devil I'm really concerned with is the devil in man himself.

*(JOHN and MARY enter.)*

**JOHN.** Mr. Drayton, I'll need to speak with you and Mrs. Drayton soon.

**MATT.** Of course, son. Right after you speak with your father.

*(JOHN exits to the study.)*

**MARY.** I'll be on the terrace.

*(MARY exits to the terrace.)*

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Matt, you're on the point of destroying all the happiness there is in one of the only happy families I've ever known. Have you any appreciation at all for what Christina—

**MATT.** Have you any appreciation for how she's behaved today? It's like she's thrown common sense out by the ear and embraced this without ever thinking.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** Do you really believe that's what she's done? She's thrown open her arms with an empty head and said to Joey, "Oh, really? Oh, darling, how absolutely splendid! Wherever will we find enough orange blossoms to fill the reception hall?" Is that really how Christina's handling this?

**MATT.** All my life I've held unpopular views and I'm used to standing alone.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** You've been alone? Nobody beside you?

**MATT.** Don't give me that God making footprints in the sand crap.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** I'm talking about your wife. For the first time in your life, Matt, you're fighting on the wrong side of the battle.

**MATT.** I've heard enough of your goddamn pontificating!

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** I'm trying to remember when I've seen you so angry. You don't even get this hopped up out on the golf course.

**MATT.** Get another goddamned drink. Your glass is empty.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** I see it now . . . You're mad with yourself because in a single day, you've been thrown. You're the last person in the world I'd have expected to behave as you're behaving. You're off balance. You don't know who you are. That's your trouble— You don't know who or what or why. You've gone back on yourself . . . And in your heart you know it—

**MATT.** There's a limit to what I'll take, even from you!

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** For more than thirty years there's been no man I've admired more or respected. You know that. But for the first time in all those thirty years, you are a sorry disappointment.

(CHRISTINA *enters from upstairs.*)

**MATT.** You aren't capable of putting yourself in my position. Unless you've got four or five children of your own somewhere that haven't shown up in the records, can you really understand how a father might feel about something like this? Joey is all I have now. You can't understand. I happen to believe—I happen to know—that they wouldn't have a dog's chance—not in this country—not in this stinking world!

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** They are this country. They'll change this stinking world!

**MATT.** They can't. One day we might change the surface of things but underneath—

**JOHN SR.** Don't you walk away—

**JOHN.** I don't need to hear this again.

*(Shouting from the study erupts onstage as JOHN opens the door of the study and storms into the living room, his father hot on his heels.)*

**JOHN SR.** I'm talking to you!

**JOHN.** I've already heard it!

*(MARY enters from the terrace. TILLIE, who has been in and out of the dining room setting the table, is also drawn in by the argument and bears witness.)*

**JOHN SR.** No! Not like this. Listen to me! Son . . . I'm looking at man who's gone blind to the mirror. Locked up inside your hospital in your white lab coat you're safe. Safe till the minute you step back out on the streets. What's in the mirror then?

**JOHN.** Where would I be if I stayed in Sacramento? Doctoring a handful of patients in a run-down hospital.

**JOHN SR.** What you don't understand, son, is that all this country will ever do for you is steal your research and steal your skills and steal your knowledge and steal and steal as it has stolen through history. The work you do for a white man won't make him treat you any different.

**JOHN.** I work where I have the tools for my research. Since I first went away to school you told me keep my eyes down, stay away from white folks. You telling me that got in my way as much as every bigot who's called me "boy."

**JOHN SR.** They're gonna do worse if you go out walking the streets with his daughter. He's as much against this as me! Look at your uncle. They had to cut flesh off his ass to piece his face back together cause a white woman said he looked at her too long. What do you think they're gonna do to you if you go out and marry that girl? You're not just marrying his daughter. You're marrying every white man in America's daughter. And that White Only sign on her never came down. I know you. If you think that's what she wants, you're gonna try to be white. But she's gonna always be white. And she's the one gonna wake up mad one morning and call you a nigger.

**JOHN.** Go to hell!

**JOHN SR.** I will knock the . . .

**MARY.** No John. No.

**JOHN SR.** Whatever you did for yourself was because I busted my ass to make it happen. All day taught at that school then tucked my education up in my hat and punched in as a night watchman. That meant I had to wake up in the same dark I laid down in so you wouldn't end up stoking a furnace or running the streets.

**JOHN.** You tell me what rights I've got and what I owe to you for what you did for me . . . I will tell you now I owe you nothing! You did what you were supposed to do! Because you brought me into this world and from that day you owed me everything you could ever do for me. Just as if I ever have any more children, I will owe them everything. But you don't own me. You can't tell me when or where I'm out of line or try to make me live according to your rules because you don't even know who I am—or what I believe or what I feel . . . And if I tried for the rest of your life I couldn't explain it to you. Your whole generation believes that the way things were for you is the way they've got to be forever! And not until your whole generation has lain down and died will the dead weight of you be off our backs! Don't you understand, you've got to get off my back!

**MARY.** John! . . .

**JOHN.** Who put up the "Colored Only" signs? We didn't. I'm not blind when I look in the mirror. My skin is black, I know exactly where I come from. But "colored" is what some people say to limit us. What you can't see . . . You still think of yourself as a colored man. And I think of myself as a man.

*(The lights fade down on the scene.)*

## Scene Two

*(The lights fade up seven minutes later. All have retreated to the parlor except TILLIE who resumes setting the table for dinner and JOHN who is in private reverie out on the terrace, singing a children's rhyme to himself.)*

**JOHN.** *(Singing:)* Is it all hid? (No, No!)  
Is it all hid? (No, No!)  
I went down to the Devil's town,  
Devil knocked my daddy down  
Is it all hid?

(JOANNA enters cautiously, looking around. Hearing JOHN, she runs out to the Terrace.)

JOHN. (*Singing:*) Here I come  
Willie Willie Wee  
Look out for me  
Here I come  
Like a bumblebee—  
Is it all hid?

JOANNA. What are you singing?

JOHN. Nothing.

JOANNA. How's it go?

JOHN. Joanna . . .

JOANNA. It's me . . .

JOHN. It's a game my grandmother used to play. She stood on her porch and sang out, "Is it all hid?" and if we were still running about hiding, we'd yell back "No, No!" Then when the time came she sang the line and nobody answered, she'd come off the porch, try to find us.

JOANNA. I heard what your father said about me.

JOHN. Ever since the accident my father's been angry with me, with choices I've made.

JOANNA. With all you've done with your life?

JOHN. It's an old argument. Tonight I tried to say something new.

JOANNA. When I saw you fighting I got so worried for the first time about us. I was getting sick, thinking I was coming between you and your family. I can't bear feeling that.

JOHN. Joanna, there's something I need to tell you. I told your parents we wouldn't marry without their approval.

JOANNA. Oh John . . .

JOHN. I know. But your father—

JOANNA. My father's not the man I told you about. Coming home today there're many things I see different. Not that I love them any less but I imagine it's because there's been a change in me. You know what I've found I can't stand? It may seem petty but I can't stand they call me "Joey." Whenever they call me that now it's like the Joey they're talking to is someone else. I don't think they realize themselves that they never called me Joey until after my brother died.

**JOHN.** Joanna, I'm afraid without your parents' blessing we'll never make it.

**JOANNA.** Look John . . . Look at the cactus.

*(A night-blooming cactus has burst open red and yellow.)*

**JOHN.** Your father's booby trap.

**JOANNA.** The monster . . . It bloomed just for us. It's like us. Like how we'll survive in spite of this ugliness. *(Beat.)* Is it all hid? (No, No!) *(BEAT.)* Let go, John. *(BEAT.)* Is it all hid?

**JOHN.** No, No!

*(JOANNA gets him to play the game.)*

Is it all hid?

**JOANNA.** No, No!

*(JOHN turns around and JOANNA races to the living room to look for a place to hide.)*

**JOHN.** Is it all hid?

**JOANNA.** No, No!

**JOHN.** I don't count but one more time  
Then I'm going to quit this rhyme

*(Beat.)*

Is it all hid?

**JOANNA.** No, No!

**JOHN.** Willie Willie Wee

Look out for me

Here I come

Like a bumblebee

Is it all hid? . . .

*(No response. JOANNA's hid herself under the dining room table with TILLIE's help—the tablecloth pulled down, touching the floor. JOHN enters from the terrace ready for the fun of the hunt until he sees TILLIE . . . She points under the table— JOHN grabs JOANNA)*

**JOANNA.** Tillie! Tillie, you helped— You told him I was here! *(To JOHN:)* I'd have stayed under there all night. You know I wouldn't have come out. What if you never found me?

**JOHN.** My grandmother had a song for that too. Something she would sing when she got tired of looking for us kids.

**JOANNA.** How did it go?

**JOHN.** I don't remember but soon as she started singing we'd all run for the porch. First one there got a penny.

**JOANNA.** You don't remember the song at all? Any of it?

**JOHN.** Run home children, run home . . . And something about a starry crown.

That's all I remember.

(*TILLIE begins to sing . . .*)

**TILLIE.** Run home children,  
More room there  
Run home children,  
More room there  
I'm going home,  
More room there  
I'm going home  
O let's run  
I'm going home  
O let's run  
Run home children,  
More room there  
And try on my robe,  
More room there  
And my starry crown,  
More room there  
Run home children,  
Run home!

(*As she finishes singing, JOANNA runs up and embraces her.*)

**JOANNA.** Tillie . . .

**TILLIE.** I'll be at your wedding.

**JOANNA.** Oh, Tillie.

**TILLIE.** I'd like to talk to John.

(*JOANNA starts up the stairs.*)

**JOANNA.** I should finish packing. I'll be done before dinner.

(*JOANNA exits. TILLIE looks to JOHN.*)

**TILLIE.** Switzerland. I hate to fly. (*Beat.*) My father was like yours. Couldn't breathe under the weight of him. That's why I left Georgia. There's lots of good reasons not to trust white folks. Good reasons not to trust black folks too. We make each other distrustful. In some ways it's getting better but in other ways it feels forever the same.

**TILLIE.** But whatever you think of Mr. Drayton, don't get your mind set on him yet.

**JOHN.** It's very clear to me who that man is.

**TILLIE.** It wasn't but a month after he lost his son that my mother died. I was too scared to fly on a plane and it was Mr. Drayton . . . The same Mr. Drayton you met today who rode the train all the way home with me. Imagine the two of us together on that trip. Tried to teach him to play whist on the way but he don't have a head for cards. Rode all the way to Atlanta on the train with me and he was with me when I buried my momma. That's Mr. Drayton.

*(MARY enters from the parlor.)*

**JOHN.** How is he?

**MARY.** Ready to leave. I need to talk with you— If you can stand my dead weight.

**JOHN.** It's not you, Ma, it's him. The man's been rolling over me since I could walk.

**MARY.** The only weight he ever laid on you is love. Whatever burden you feel— Thanks to your father that weight's a generation lighter. He still carries you on his shoulders, Little Brown.

**JOHN.** The man doesn't know me anymore.

**MARY.** I don't know you anymore. You have never been disrespectful to your father.

**JOHN.** I'm sorry.

**MARY.** Tell that to your father. And while you're at it, tell me what's happening here?

A white girl, John? You've never been reckless with your heart.

**JOHN.** Since the accident— My heart, Ma . . . My heart's been buried in my work, buried with Faye and Anthony. But look at me now . . . Try and see what's happened to me. When Joanna and I met, started having lunch, our conversations so effortless, so easy, we weren't expecting anything to happen between us. Then she started popping up in my head when I thought of something funny, when I discovered something new. One day she came to lunch, her hair tied back with a piece of blue rubber from medical supply.

**MARY.** A piece of blue rubber?

**JOHN.** Yeah, Ma . . . Her hair tied back with blue rubber . . . she looked so goofy . . . beautiful. See? . . . I noticed her hair, the piece of rubber. Since Faye's been gone, the women I've dated— I couldn't pay attention to their lives, I didn't care about their details— Details were

for my research, details were for my memories of Faye, memories of our son. And Joanna understands that part of my life too. But now . . . Ma, I've stopped crying at every child I see. Don't you see this means the possibility of another grandchild? I have only been reckless—by not telling you the whole truth when I called. And by asking the Draytons for their approval to marry.

**MARY.** John, what are you going to do?

**JOHN.** Grab Joanna, get the hell out of this house.

*(JOHN exits up the stairs. MARY is hesitant to return to the parlor. TILLIE enters the dining room, humming/singing "Run Home Children.")*

**MARY.** *(Hums along with TILLIE then:)* I must have been a child the last time I heard my mother sing that song. Miss Binks . . . Is your family from the South?

**TILLIE.** My mother grew up in Meridian, Mississippi.

**MARY.** My family's from right near there, in Livingston, Alabama.

**TILLIE.** Song's been passed around.

**MARY.** Reminds me of doing chores. Seemed nobody had to work as hard as we did. When my mother sang that from the porch you ran home and get straight to work on your chores or she'd come looking for us with her switch. I hated that damn song.

*(CHRISTINA enters from the parlor.)*

**CHRISTINA.** Mrs. Prentice . . . I do wish we had met under different circumstances.

**MARY.** How? How else do you think we would've ever met?

**CHRISTINA.** Yes . . . But I mean—

**MARY.** Mrs. Drayton, you don't know our lives. I can count on one hand how many times I've said anything to white folks other than, "Here's your change. Thank you. Have a good day." We stay away from you as much as you stay away from us.

**CHRISTINA.** Then I take it then you don't approve either.

**MARY.** I've come to understand there's no way to control how we get introduced to things in life. How we're introduced to one another, introduced to love or to hate and yet we all have a funny idea no matter how smart we are—like my son—that we can plan for everything. You know that saying, you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans. This certainly was not the plan. Especially after all my son's been through.

**CHRISTINA.** Yes . . . Joey's told me. I know how horrible—

**MARY.** Oh Mrs. Drayton please— You can try to sympathize. Don't try to relate.

You don't know what it's like— His wife was a daughter to us and that little boy never got to try being a man.

**CHRISTINA.** We lost our son fifteen years ago. Fifteen years, seven months . . . Six days.

**MARY.** I'm sorry, most people don't know, Mrs. Drayton . . .

**JOHN SR.** (*Entering:*) Get your coat. We're leaving now.

**TILLIE.** Oh, hell no, not before dinner. (*Calling out:*) Dinner's on! Everybody get in here now. Get yourselves to the table. Come on now! Get to the table!

(MATT, JOHN SR, and MONSIGNOR RYAN enter from Matt's Study.)

**MATT.** What the hell . . .

(TILLIE begins singing "Run Home Children")

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** (*To TILLIE:*) You got quite a voice there, lass . . .

**MATT.** What's gotten into you, Tillie?

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** I'd like to learn that one. I'll trade you for one of mine.

(*Sings:*)

In Dublin's Fair City  
Where the girls are so pretty  
I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone . . .

**JOHN SR.** (*To MARY, over MONSIGNOR's song:*) I'm not staying here for dinner. John wants me out of his life we'll start now.

**MONSIGNOR RYAN.** (*Sings continuously:*) As she wheeled her wheel barrow  
Through streets broad and narrow  
Crying cockles and mussels alive, alive o!

**MATT.** (*Over the singing:*) What the hell's happened in this house? Everybody's gone out of their mind!

**MONSIGNOR RYAN and TILLIE.** Alive, alive o!, alive, alive o!  
Crying cockles and mussels alive, alive o!

**MATT.** Goddamn it, Mike! You're making the problem worse!

(MONSIGNOR RYAN quits singing. MARY crosses to MATT.)

**MARY.** Mr. Drayton, what problem? What problem is it for you? All you have to do is tell my son that you're against the marriage and this is all solved for you.

**JOHN SR.** Come on, Mary.

**MARY.** I don't know your daughter but my son . . . With all that he's gone through and with what he's said to me tonight . . . Mrs. Drayton, I don't really know how to answer you about whether I "approve." But I will tell you that my heart aches for our son.

**JOHN SR.** Don't tell me you support this!

**MARY.** I would rather trust them and you'd rather see them hurt. It's as if the two of you have forgotten everything you ever knew about everything in this life that really matters.

**JOHN SR.** We're leaving.

**MARY.** I'm staying. I'm staying here for our son.

**JOHN SR.** I won't stay in this house a minute longer.

*(JOHN SR goes to the door.)*

**MARY.** John! . . . What happens to men when they grow old? Why do they forget everything? I believe now that those two young people need each other the way they need the air to breathe. Anybody can see that by looking at them. *(To MATT:)* But you and my husband are—you may as well be blind men. All you see is that they have a problem. Do you really know what's happened to them or how they feel about each other? I believe that men grow old and that when the—when sexual things no longer matter to them they forget it all. Forget what true passion is. If you ever felt what my son feels for your daughter you've forgotten everything about it. My husband has too. The strange thing—for your wife and me—is that the two of you don't remember . . . If you did, how could the two of you do what you're doing?

**JOHN SR.** Don't fool yourselves . . . Whatever you talk out in this house on a hill tonight won't change the hearts in homes across the country. That day will never come.

**MARY.** John, please . . .

**JOHN.** I'll be out in the car.

*(JOHN SR exits. JOANNA and JOHN enter carrying suitcases.)*

**MATT.** Listen, Joey—

**JOANNA.** Please don't call me that. Every word you said to me . . . Every word you wrote or thing you did— All that . . . Every single

thing has been proven false today . . . I don't know what's worse . . . That you're a phony or that you're a bigot!

**CHRISTINA.** No . . . Don't you dare! Everybody, anybody gripes and complains but your father's out there fighting and he has never been a phony! And he's never been a bigot.

(MATT is looking at CHRISTINA.)

**JOHN.** Mr. Drayton, I know I promised—

**MATT.** Hold on . . . I haven't told you anything yet. All day long I've been held to the fire of your question and now have one of my own. What is your great rush in this? You've had ten days together. What's another ten days? Why do you have to leave tonight?

**JOANNA.** What is ten days? Ten days is first ten days you were in love with Mom. Ten days is the first ten days after Michael was born, the first ten days of me. It is also the last ten days of Michael's life, the last ten days of John's wife and son. You ask why not leave in ten days? Because the next ten days are the start of our life together and if they happen, we will count them as a gift because everyone in this room has experienced how suddenly our ten days can end.

**MATT.** Wait a minute. This afternoon I told Dr. Prentice that I would have something to say to him about how I felt. Would anyone care to listen?

(They sit.)

Now this has been a very strange day. I don't think that's putting it too strongly. I might even say an extraordinary day. It began when I ran home from the club this afternoon and walked in here and Tillie said to me, "You better sit down." Naturally, I asked her what she meant by that and then I met John. After some preliminary guessing games, at which I was never very good, it was explained to me by my daughter that she had decided to get married and that her intended was the young man before me who I'd never met before and whose skin was black. Now I think it's fair to say that I reacted to the news in just about the same way that any father would have reacted. In a word, I was flabbergasted. And was informed by my daughter—a very determined young woman and very like her mother—that the marriage was definitely on no matter what her mother or I might feel about it. (*Beat.*) Then the next rather startling development occurred (*To JOHN:*) when you came in and told us that unless we, her mother and I, approved of the marriage there'd be no marriage—

**JOANNA.** John didn't have the right to say that and you don't have the right to decide.

**MATT.** This may be the last chance I ever have to tell you to do anything so I'm telling you— Joanna . . . pipe down.

It was then clear to me that we had one single day to decide just how we felt about the whole matter. So what happened? My wife, typically enough, began thinking with her heart which made her, in my view, totally inaccessible to anything in the way of reason. But she made a number of statements that obviously seemed reasonable to her. The last of which was that if I didn't approve of the marriage it wouldn't matter anyway because there was bound to be a big fight in which she of course (*To JOANNA:*) would naturally be on your side. (*Beat.*) I haven't referred as yet to His sozzled Reverence, who insulted my intelligence by mouthing three-hundred platitudes and ended just recently threatening me as if he stood before me on the path as the angel of Death.

Now at the same time my daughter, having suddenly decided to simplify the situation by leaving with the doctor tonight, reveals that as a surprise, she's invited the in-laws for a little dinner party before we all dash over to the airport to wave goodbye.

All right . . . Mr. Prentice says that he has no wish to offend me and asks if I'm some kind of lunatic. He finally decides everyone under this roof's crazy and leaves us to go sit in the car. Then Mrs. Prentice says that like her husband I'm a burnt-out old shell of a man who can't even remember what it feels like to love a woman the way her son loves my daughter. And strangely enough that's the first statement anybody's made to me all day on which I feel truly qualified to take issue.

(*To MARY:*)

Because I believe you are wrong and as wrong as you could be. I admit that I hadn't considered it. I hadn't even thought about it. But I know exactly what he feels for her. And there is nothing your son feels for my daughter—nothing at all—that I didn't feel for Christina. Old, yes. Burnt-out, certainly. But I tell you, the memories are there, clear and intact and indestructible, and they'll still be there if I live to be a hundred and ten. Where John was wrong was in attaching so much importance to what her mother and I think about this thing. Because in the last analysis it doesn't matter. The only thing that really matters is what they feel and how much they feel for each other. And if it is even half what we felt . . . Then that is everything.

As for you two and the problems that you are going to have—it seems to me they're almost unimaginable. But you'll have no problem with me. You must know—I believe that you do know—what you're up against. Your father is right about the world outside this house.

There'll be a hundred million people right here in this country who will be shocked and offended and appalled by the two of you. And the two of you will have to ride that every day for the rest of your lives. You can try to ignore all those people. Maybe you can feel sorry for them and sorry for their prejudice and bigotry and their blind hatreds and their stupid fears. But where necessary you will just have to hold tight to each other and say screw all those people.

Anybody can make the case, and one hell of a strong case, against your marriage. And I believe now that no matter what kind of case some old, phony, liberal bastard could make against your getting married there'd still be just the one thing that would be worse. And that would be if, being what you two are, and having what you two have, and feeling what you two feel—you didn't get married.

*(A long beat, after which MATT looks to JOHN and JOANNA.)*

Are there any more unanswered questions?

*(MARY rises to embrace her son and JOANNA)*

**TILLIE.** Is anybody gonna eat dinner?

*(JOHN SR has re-entered unseen.)*

**JOHN SR.** I'm sitting out there in the car and it dawned on me . . . somebody's gonna call the police, think I'm trying to rob the place.

**JOHN.** Dad, we need you at the table.

*(JOANNA slowly crosses to JOHN SR and takes him by the arm.  
The family gathers around the table . . .  
They begin to sit as lights fade down on . . .)*

*End of Play*