

the dreamer examines his pillow

SCENE 1

A rough dirty whitewashed concrete basement room. Only the rear wall is visible. In the wall is a door. On the wall, fixed with four big hurtful nails, is a crude, violent drawing of a man's face. The face has one big eye and one small eye, it's painted with black strokes, and has a drop of red and a faint smudge of green. There are long cracks in the wall, emanating from the nails.

At rise, Tommy is sitting in his busted recliner looking at his dirty refrigerator. He's unshaven. He's drinking a can of beer. He's in dirty white garb.

TOMMY. Hail to you, O my refrigerator. Is my self in you? Can this be right? I guess this is something I gotta exist through. Makes sense. It's a tense drag, though. *(A loud knocking at the door.)* Who's that?

DONNA. *(From off.)* It's Donna.

TOMMY. Donna? Hah. Why do you honor me, Donna?

DONNA. *(From off.)* Open the fuckin door.

TOMMY. Alright. Since you put it that way. *(He gets up and opens the door. There's Donna, an intense girl inside a black dress with a few white polka dots.)*

DONNA. You.

TOMMY. You look great.

DONNA. You've got to be fucking kidding me. Get outta my way. I'm comin in. *(She pushes past him and takes the place in.)* What a shithole.

TOMMY. I call it "Home."

DONNA. You do, huh? How do you think 'em up? You got somethin to drink? Somethin protected? A glass a bottled water or somethin?

TOMMY. How 'bout the rest of my beer?

DONNA. How 'bout a fresh one, doghead?
TOMMY. Charming. Alright. (*He goes and opens the refrigerator.*)
DONNA. I hope nothin's livin in there.
TOMMY. And me, I hope just about the reverse. (*Gives her a beer.*)
DONNA. How long you lived here now?
TOMMY. Four months.
DONNA. This place got bugs?
TOMMY. Yeah.
DONNA. Do you got bugs?
TOMMY. I don't know.
DONNA. You used to be clean, Tommy.
TOMMY. Yeah, well. That's the way I used to be. This is the new me.
DONNA. What's with you?
TOMMY. Nothing.
DONNA. What kinda number you doin?
TOMMY. I'm not doin nothing.
DONNA. Don't gimme that shit, professor. You think I got nothin up above? You think you're dealin with one of your dipshit know nothin chippies at the local disco? I'm hearin shit. I'm seein shit. I'm smellin the smoke somethin's burnin don't you tell me there's no fire. YOU ARE HITTIN ON MY SISTER.
TOMMY. So you heard.
DONNA. I heard.
TOMMY. These things happen.
DONNA. Other things happen, too. I forsee your ass with a foot in it. The foot is wearin my shoe.
TOMMY. I don't see how you're involved.
DONNA. Don't aggravate me, please?
TOMMY. You're out of it, right?
DONNA. Outta what?
TOMMY. My life?
DONNA. I thought so.
TOMMY. You're not sure?
DONNA. You've been sittin here waitin for me, ain't you? Ain't you?
TOMMY. I've been sitting here.
DONNA. How long you been seein Mona?
TOMMY. Who says I've been seein her? I don't even feel like

answering you. A month.
DONNA. She's sixteen.
TOMMY. Just sixteen. I'm twenty-seven. So what? Life's short. Let's have fun.
DONNA. We both know what's going on here.
TOMMY. A man's gotta do what he's gotta do. You look good.
DONNA. You always thought too much.
TOMMY. I don't agree.
DONNA. Look at this junkyard. What're you doin? This ain't a good lifestyle.
TOMMY. So you're right. Which don't make you feel no better. When you comin back?
DONNA. I ain't comin back.
TOMMY. What're you doin out there without me?
DONNA. I'm gettin by.
TOMMY. (*Revealing himself.*) WELL HOW 'BOUT ME?
DONNA. HOW 'BOUT YOU?
TOMMY. I MISS YOU.
DONNA. YOU LEFT ME.
TOMMY. I LOVE YOU.
DONNA. YOU'RE HITTIN ON MY SISTER.
TOMMY. What? You expect me to die? I could. I'm tryin to do somethin to keep goin. You're gone. There's nothin . . . I gotta make my heart pump the blood. Understand? You're gone.
DONNA. *You left me.*
TOMMY. So that was somethin I did.
DONNA. I don't know how to react to you. You boggle my fuckin mind. What're you sayin? You want me back?
TOMMY. NO. No. That I cannot do. That way's just that fuckin killin pain. I can't . . . I don't know what to do with you, Donna. But if I don't see you, I'm starvin dyin lost like a a a feelin of a lackluster world but . . .
DONNA. Why are you breathin on my sister?
TOMMY. It's all you.
DONNA. Mona ain't me even in your demented eyes. She's sixteen.
TOMMY. What else could I do? I don't got all that many options.
DONNA. You didn't have that option, either. That was just

criminal shit you did outside the bounds. What's the picture for?

TOMMY. That's a picture a me.

DONNA. Who by?

TOMMY. Me.

DONNA. It's terrible. Why the one eye big and the other small?

TOMMY. That's what I look like.

DAD. Oh, it is, huh?

TOMMY. You don't think it looks like me?

DONNA. No.

TOMMY. Then it's like I thought. You know the before but not the after.

DONNA. This is what you've changed to?

TOMMY. This is what I've always been like, really. Different moods. But this is the basic guy.

DONNA. This looks like some monster done outta crayons by an ungifted child. And look how you got it up there. A little scotch tape woulda done the trick. Ain't you got no respect for your walls?

TOMMY. No. None.

DONNA. Well, you should.

TOMMY. The nails holdin it there is part of it. I don't know why I'm tryin to explain. You've always been hostile to anything you didn't understand in the first three seconds. Life just isn't simple enough for your basic approach. Just sayin somethin's over don't make it so. It just puts a lid down so the pressure can build to where everything's bent. There's lightning screwed in a jar in here.

DONNA. You were the one ended it.

TOMMY. So I fucked up. And I don't know what to do even now. I look bad, don't I?

DONNA. You look bad. But you look okay. (*Indicating picture.*) You don't look as bad as that.

TOMMY. Yes, I do.

DONNA. You are crazy. Listen. Tell me somethin. You been with Mona?

TOMMY. I've seen her.

DONNA. Have you been with her?

TOMMY. Yeah.

DONNA. (*In sudden extreme pain.*) How? How could you do that? Do you hate me?

TOMMY. No.

DONNA. She's my sister and you . . . did that?

TOMMY. I didn't. Really.

DONNA. What? But you just said you did.

TOMMY. It happened.

DONNA. But Tommy, who happened it?

TOMMY. It just did though. Happen.

DONNA. Don't gimme that shit. That is the worst. That is my most unfavorite lie.

TOMMY. Your sister did it.

DONNA. My sister did it. And where were you at the time? Chinatown?

TOMMY. I was there, too.

DONNA. I want a promise. You won't touch her again.

TOMMY. Why do you care so much?

DONNA. She's my sister.

TOMMY. It's cause a what you feel for me.

DONNA. Felt.

TOMMY. You still love me.

DONNA. Yeah, I love ya. I dote on ya. I hate your fuckin guts. I'm lost how to proceed with you. You're like a nut. You see everything through this slot. It kills me. I thought you loved me.

TOMMY. I do.

DONNA. I don't get it. How could you love me and drag my family down into this shit?

TOMMY. Why do you think I'm sittin in this garbage can? Huh? Cause everything's cool an I'm in good shape? Huh? Look at me. Look at my picture I did. That's me. One eye sees too much one eye can't get big enough to see my way out of how I feel, I'm holdin my face up with nails. Everything's you. I see everything and everything's you. (*He grabs her and crushes her. They kiss passionately.*)

DONNA. I'm scared.

TOMMY. God.

DONNA. I'm shaking.

TOMMY. I want you, Donna. I wanna take you right now.

DONNA. I can't do this.

TOMMY. I know. I'm scared, too. But I can't help myself.

DONNA. (*Pulling away.*) No. Maybe you can't help yourself, but I gotta help me. I really can't. I'm gonna go crazy if I get sucked back in with you.

TOMMY. Comon. It's what we both want.

DONNA. You can't leave me, go to my sister, and then come back to me, too. What am I if I let that happen? I ain't talkin about how it would look. I'm talkin about what it would be. I'd be lost. No life. Just part a whatever you happened to feel. I ain't no figment in your blood and if you don't get off Mona, I'm gonna kill you. I'm gonna give you the gun. Can you hear me through the mud? I'll kill you.

TOMMY. Hey. Calm down.

DONNA. Why? Why should I?

TOMMY. You'll make yourself sick.

DONNA. You amaze me. You're amazing. I'm amazed.

TOMMY. There's only you. You and only you. Nobody else knows me.

DONNA. What about Mona?

TOMMY. I never talk about you to her.

DONNA. No?

TOMMY. No.

DONNA. Am I supposed to be grateful?

TOMMY. No.

DONNA. You can talk about me if you want. I don't give a shit.

TOMMY. I don't want to.

DONNA. I talked about you to my girlfriend. Judy? Judy thinks your poison. Your picture's in her post office. She spits on the ground when your name is mentioned.

TOMMY. What did you tell her?

DONNA. The truth.

TOMMY. It must've taken a long time to tell.

DONNA. Not that long.

TOMMY. Then it wasn't the truth. The truth about us is long.

DONNA. I kept the story together. I just left out the tears.

TOMMY. I'm sorry.

DONNA. You said that before and so what? You go right on steppin on my neck. Even now. You're gone and you're still just doin vile shit that affects my life. Screw in my sister. It's like diabolical. I mean, what's wrong with you?

TOMMY. I don't know. I really don't.

DONNA. You oughta find out, man. That should be your mission.

TOMMY. I don't know.

DONNA. You're sittin in this place. You got it like the Black Hole a Calcutta. You make this horrible picture of yourself and you put it up and you drink beer and you look at it. You go out in the street. You mess with my sister. You come back here and you wait for me. You want me to think you're crazy? Is that it? I won't do it. I hold you responsible for every single thing you done and I always will. I don't buy this crazy alibi it's been goin around. "I killed her cause I was crazy." I don't give a shit you killed cause you was crazy. All I care was you killed. You killed her. And if you're that crazy it's gonna be the death a you.

TOMMY. Killed who?

DONNA. I'm tryin ta say something but I'm too upset.

TOMMY. Take it easy.

DONNA. This whole thing with you from beginning to end has just worn me down. How long's it been now?

TOMMY. A year.

DONNA. I gotta get some shots or something. Life's too short. Bail me out, Tommy. Leave me alone.

TOMMY. You know I can't do that.

DONNA. You selfish thing. Then gimme another beer.

TOMMY. Alright. (*He gets her another.*)

DONNA. How much rent you pay?

TOMMY. Two hundred.

DONNA. How you pay it?

TOMMY. Different ways.

DONNA. You robbed your mother.

TOMMY. She told?

DONNA. She didn't want to, but she thinks I drove you crazy so she bitched to me.

TOMMY. You don't understand. Why d'you just keep jumpin right in when you don't understand?

DONNA. You don't feel it, do ya? Like the Nazis. I'm talkin to you while you're havin an out-of-body experience somewhere.

TOMMY. Are you callin me a Nazi?

DONNA. No. I wouldn't do that. But I'm reminded.

TOMMY. I didn't do anything with the purpose a hurtin you.

Or my Ma. Or anybody. I didn't have any evil intentions.
DONNA. I could believe you. It just don't matter.
TOMMY. I didn't plan to rob my mother. It just happened.
DONNA. Who happened it, Tommy?
TOMMY. These things that've taken place, they're not what I woulda done.
DONNA. But you done these things.
TOMMY. I didn't choose to. I was compelled.
DONNA. By who?
TOMMY. By somethin in me that's not me.
DONNA. What? You gotta little man livin in there?
TOMMY. Yeah. I got a devil.
DONNA. (*Trapping him.*) You're the devil.
TOMMY. No. I swear to God I'm not.
DONNA. You're the devil.
TOMMY. You don't understand.
DONNA. I see everything.
TOMMY. I get . . . If you get inna car crash. Maybe you're dazed or whatever. You walk around, down a road. You don't choose to walk down the road. You don't know what you're doing.
DONNA. So if you walk away, maybe even there's a girl crashed in the car, and cause you're punchy, then it's alright?
TOMMY. Well, at least it explains why.
DONNA. You hate your boss. You stab him with a knife in the heart. He dies. So? I explained why. You hated him. Does that make it right?
TOMMY. What if I saw red and didn't remember a thing? Came to and just found him lyin there, dead on the ground.
DONNA. You still killed your boss.
TOMMY. I didn't kill my boss. I don't have a boss. This is hypothetical bullshit.
DONNA. You're a bum and you're nuts and you broke my heart even though I loved you, and I hold you strictly responsible. No matter how you squirm under the light. Listen. I don't care. You treat me like shit. You rob your mother. You pork my sister. I don't care. Just so long as you would finally finally cop to bein the prick who did that stuff. But this standin above outside like like it happened and ain't that a shame but I don't act that way it musta been somebody else, Mister Crazy Mister

Compulsed Mister Explanation Mister Nobody's Home—that line of shit drives me totally insane. In which condition I may cut your throat. But if I do, I did it. Just exactly me. God, I miss you. I'm so lonely for you. I wish you'd wake up. I wish you'd kiss me when you're awake.
TOMMY. I am awake.
DONNA. Maybe you even believe that.
TOMMY. What do you want from me?
DONNA. Nothin I can have.
TOMMY. What?
DONNA. This is sad. This is so sad. Maybe I should go.
TOMMY. No.
DONNA. There's no point to this. You don't want me back.
TOMMY. Yes, I do. I want you back.
DONNA. Huh? You just said a minute ago that you didn't.
TOMMY. I know.
DONNA. And now you do?
TOMMY. Yes.
DONNA. I don't know how to feel.
TOMMY. Don't think about it. Just feel.
DONNA. I can't. I'm emotionally confused.
TOMMY. I believe in God now.
DONNA. Oh no.
TOMMY. Things got so bad. I was just rippin up. Everything I was doing, it was just like to get out of a burning house. A crazy jump out the nearest window and you land where you land. One night it all hit me. Everything I lost. You. And the soul . . . When I left you, a fuse got lit. I didn't know. The other end was my soul I didn't know I had. And then one night the fuse that got lit all those days before reached my soul. And it just combusted ta fuckin daylight. My ribs swung open like two sets a fingers, like two hands that'd been holdin in the sunlight, the solar system, comets, fire big and old like my share a the beginnin of the universe. My soul fallin out. Like all the crown jewels spillin outta some old suitcase, my body, where nobody knew they were. I was on my knees. All the pain I ducked all my life, I could hear it comin. And I'm here to tell you it's true. There ain't no athletes in foxholes, cause I've been there now and when the bombs go off for real you are weak. I called on God. I called for God, HELP ME GOD. And it

helped. At least by the fact that I believed he heard me relieved the pressure of the too much I was feelin. Let my ribs reach out and get back what got out, what was out there that's supposed to be inside, take it back in and close again. But ever since then, even though the pain went back in, I can see it, glowin out through the long red slots between my bones. And it gives me hope to see it. It lets me know I'm alive, not left over. It gives me hope, Donna, that there may be more to me than my brain and its noise. It gives me hope that I have a light in me that I don't understand and maybe can't even claim.

DONNA. So you believe in God now?

TOMMY. Yeah. Do you?

DONNA. No. But you go ahead.

TOMMY. I kneel down before I go to bed. And when I get up in the morning.

DONNA. And then you go out and rob your mother.

TOMMY. That was a cheap shot.

DONNA. Oh, I can do better than that. I'm holdin back.

TOMMY. I'm tryin to explain somethin to you.

DONNA. You got such total unjustified faith in the explanation ta make things okedoke.

TOMMY. Well, maybe so, but it works.

DONNA. It don't work. Only in your personal hot fever does it work. You know what I hear when you say this shit? Words. Babblin words that don't got the first thing ta do with what you're doin.

TOMMY. So I got only words. What do you got?

DONNA. Me? I got nothin.

TOMMY. I rest my case.

DONNA. But I'm survivin. Better than you, maybe. No, that ain't true, neither. I cry all the time. I'm amazed I got more tears. Seems impossible. Anyway, fuck the melodrama. I came here ta get somethin. Which is a promise solid as steel from you that you will leave my sister strictly alone. Are you gonna gimme what I come for or not?

TOMMY. No.

DONNA. No? Whaddaya mean, no?

TOMMY. No. I won't promise.

DONNA. Why not?

TOMMY. Cause I can't answer for myself at this time. Or

maybe what I mean is, I can't answer for the guy I may be later. I can only talk for me now.

DONNA. Well, what's the guy-you-are-now gotta say?

TOMMY. That Mona ain't here now, so no, I won't touch her.

DONNA. That's it?

TOMMY. That's it.

DONNA. That's the best you can do?

TOMMY. That's right.

DONNA. What are you?

TOMMY. Honest.

DONNA. You are not an adult.

TOMMY. I'm more the adult now than I ever was. At least I'm not lying.

DONNA. You're gonna haveta do better than that. Did you ever hear a law?

TOMMY. You don't get what I'm goin through.

DONNA. You talk about yourself like you were an isotope or somethin. Unstable to the nines. Today I'm Tommy, tomorrow, who knows? A trained seal. A marachino cherry. IDENTITY. Do you know what I'm talkin about? This is important. Identity. What's yours? You got one. Did you know, or is this news out there on your planet? You are somebody. Tell me who.

TOMMY. I don't know.

DONNA. Find out.

TOMMY. How?

DONNA. Law. There's all this stuff that you do and wanna do. And then there's your personal law, that starts and stops you. What's your personal law?

TOMMY. I don't have one.

DONNA. You're fulla shit. You know what I think's the matter? I think that you got more than one set. You got two or more sets a personal law. One's your goodboy law that you learned sometime a long time since, and one's your real law that comes up outta your pitch-dark soul. You talk about your soul. That's good. That's a start. You mean what's down there in the gloom buried under a thousand mattresses, every bed you ever slept on. But you know what it is down there inside the last Chinese box? It's your Identity. He's a little guy you've never been introduced to. And in his wallet, he's got your real per-

sonal law. He's what you're pointing at when you say, that's a devil.

TOMMY. No, don't say that.

DONNA. Your devil is your soul.

TOMMY. Shut up.

DONNA. No. Your devil is your soul.

TOMMY. That devil's what I gotta get rid of.

DONNA. You get ridda that devil you'll be a soulless TV man.

TOMMY. I wanna be good.

DONNA. Yeah, and you believe in God. Good is bigger and more rotten than you know.

TOMMY. Alright then, but you gotta live with that then, too. Cause that's where I nailed your sister from. From there. Where I don't understand. That's where I robbed my mother from. An why I can't talk about what comes next.

DONNA. You gotta get down, Tommy.

TOMMY. I am down.

DONNA. You gotta get down in your identity. You gotta read out from your personal law.

TOMMY. And then after I'm down, then what?

DONNA. You hear what I'm tellin you, you crazy mother-fucker. Know thyself. Then maybe we can talk. And in the meantime, STOP HITTIN ON MY SISTER.

TOMMY. Why?

DONNA. Cause I am speaking to you from me. My law, which I know, says if you fuck with my sister, you, you are fucking with me. Do you hear me?

TOMMY. Yeah, I hear you.

DONNA. And take that picture down. It upsets me.

TOMMY. I need that.

DONNA. This is just somethin for you to wallow in. Somethin ta keep you where you are now, which is really where you were, only you won't let go.

TOMMY. I'm tryin to understand myself.

DONNA. Your tryin ta nail yourself into a picture that'll drive you crazy cause you are not a picture. I've scoped out these would-be thinkers with the books they're pushin on the mornin shows. Some clown tryin to explain some woman he never met to herself. People oughta know better. Why you tryin ta nail yourself into a picture, Tommy?

TOMMY. I'm tryin to understand myself.

DONNA. I think you're tryin ta stand still, rot in this room not movin so's your brain can catch up with you.

TOMMY. How can I do anything till I understand myself?

DONNA. Are you a man or what? Fuck your brain. Did you pork my sister with your brain?

TOMMY. I don't know.

DONNA. You painted that picture with your brain. Where am I in that picture?

TOMMY. I painted that picture to understand myself.

DONNA. Do you wanna be a painter?

TOMMY. No.

DONNA. Are you sure?

TOMMY. Yeah.

DONNA. I didn't think so. A good thing, too.

TOMMY. You're so hard on me.

DONNA. I love you.

TOMMY. I love you, too.

DONNA. No.

TOMMY. Why you say no?

DONNA. My life's so horrible. How'd my life get so horrible? What'd I do? You're the one that's fucked up. Why am I the one that's bleedin? It's unjust.

TOMMY. There's no justice inna relationship.

DONNA. What the fuck did you say to me? Relationship? I hate that fuckin word. That's one a those TV words that beats it all down into the same. Don't use words like that on me.

TOMMY. Comon, it's the lingo.

DONNA. It ain't my lingo.

TOMMY. It's English.

DONNA. Then English ain't my lingo.

TOMMY. What is then?

DONNA. What I say is my native tongue, and what I say comes outta thinkin as I go along. Not repeatin words outta somebody else's life that happens to look like mine at the moment causa love. It's cheap. Like cheatin onna test. That ain't how ya learn.

TOMMY. You make everything so hard.

DONNA. I don't *make it* that way.

TOMMY. Listen, Donna, let's just chuck it. Let's just give up

chewin this same fuckin bone till we got no teeth left. We're comin from nothin, we're goin ta nothin.

DONNA. What are you talkin about?

TOMMY. Relief. Let's take a break. You know when you're not here, when I'm alone, I can feel exactly the flesh of your cheek on my lips. I can smell your hair. I can feel the length of your body under me. When I'm not around, can you feel my body that way?

DONNA. Yeah.

TOMMY. Do you?

DONNA. Yeah.

TOMMY. Can't you feel it, Donna? The whole thing's spinnin and we're in it and we're spinnin, too. There's almost nothin here already. We've busted everything.

DONNA. I gotta get outta here.

TOMMY. Come here with me.

DONNA. No, I tell ya. I'm not gonna get deluded with you no more. I've been up there in the romantic clouds with you. We always gotta come back down to this shithole room or some other shithole room, and I can't feature that no more. I think what I gotta do is I gotta understand the world outside a us.

TOMMY. Why?

DONNA. Cause I part a the way feel the reason we fell in such a deep hole is there's so many deep holes around.

TOMMY. So what if there are? What are you gonna do about it?

DONNA. I think what I gotta do is, I think I gotta go to The Heights. I think I gotta go to The Heights and talk to my father.

TOMMY. Your father.

DONNA. You never met him. He moved to The Heights a long time ago.

TOMMY. What's he gonna do?

DONNA. There's some questions I wanna ask him. And there may be somethin I want him to do. To you.

TOMMY. To me?

DONNA. That's right.

TOMMY. What would you want him to do to me?

DONNA. I may want him to beat you up.

TOMMY. You mean, hurt me?

DONNA. Yeah. I beginning to think that I may have to get very basic with you.

TOMMY. But why would he wanna hurt me?

DONNA. He's my father. And he's Mona's father, too.

TOMMY. Is he strong?

DONNA. Yeah. He's very strong. And he's very smart. But he's got some faults, too. I gotta a couple a questions I wanna ask him. And then I'm gonna ask him about you. (*Donna walks to the door and exits.*)

TOMMY. Donna? Donna? O my refrigerator. Is my self in you? (*The lights fade quickly to black. And the refrigerator door, of its own volition, slowly opens. A blinding light emanates from it, engulfing Tommy. He stares into the light and has a vision.*) I dive into a lake fulla hot water. It doesn't hurt me. It gives me power. I go down to the bottom. There are caves, large fish, extravagant wrecks, underwater birds. One of the birds is Anger. It's faster than anything else. There's music. The ground under my feet is hot food. It crawls part way up my legs as I walk. Electric bolts and submarines bar my passage. Certain caves beckon to me. Old men and women long dead advise me. Crews of skeletons rig the dead ships with wormy sails and rotten ropes. They sing. . . I breathe the water and choke a moment, but then I'm okay. The bird that's Anger lands on my shoulder. My chest becomes larger. I'm wearin less clothes. I was afraid. I am less afraid. I see ahead the possibility of being brave. The caves stand before me. God help me cause that is where my future lies. The caves are mothers and fears and no one will know what will happen to me when I go in there. I have always been before the caves. Gotten my power from them. Gotten my weakness from them. It's time. Enter away from the ordinary extraordinary twilight I have lived in. Don't read the newspapers, be the news. Run no more. Hold yourself away from your own sight no more. Throw people between yourself and yourself no more. Call up the things you have buried. Be free to be hated. Unloved. Alone. Be alone with yourself. In the dark of the mother cave where you have always stood outside. You're not so frightening that you can't be looked on. Call the Being from the tomb you've been carving all your life. You dream of outer space of distant seas of unknown people. What could be further deeper

more unknown than your own tongue whispering the unlying truth in your own ear. You fear no one. You have never feared anyone. Except yourself. Yourself you have feared, subjected yourself to, humiliated yourself for all the days of your life. You have given the power to everyone because you cannot bear to have the power yourself. Oh my oh my oh my. God help me I am a free man. (*Primal drums start beating simultaneous with a blackout.*)

SCENE 2

Donna is heard calling for her father through the primal drums.

DONNA. DADDY. DADDY. DADDY. Daddy? Daddy? I've gotta talk to you. Daddy? (*The lights come up on Dad's Place. The drums cease. Dad's Place is at a physically higher level than Tommy's place. Dad, a powerful, handsome guy, is sitting in a chair. The only chair. He's wrapped in a huge, very soft, old red chamois robe. He's got a big drink in his hand and a bottle of liquor near his slippered foot. Hanging on a redwood wall behind him is a painting of a voluptuous nude woman. It's a good painting with a neo-expressionist feel.*)

DAD. (*To himself.*) Oh no no no no no no. It's my daughter come to make me a parent. (*To the offstage Donna.*) I hear you. Come in. Come on. Come up. Jesus, I even recognize your voice. It's you. Your dead mother's little girl. Come on in and pull up a chair. Have a drink. How long's it been? Six months anyway. Not that I'm ribbin you to the purpose a bein more periodic. Nothin could be further from the truth. I'm thrilled I ain't seen you. I hate kids. Especially my own. At least other kids turn into adults. Eventually. If they live. But your own kids are always your kids. At least that's the common wisdom. And the other thing about your own kids, of course, is when they show up, you know, you know that they want somethin. And also, that they're probably angry. About somethin. Somethin you did and forgot fifteen years ago. But not them. Cause they're your kids. (*Enter Donna.*)

DONNA. Hi, Dad.

DAD. Hi, Donna. Long time no daughter.

DONNA. Yeah, it's been a long time.

DAD. You look like shit.

DONNA. And you look like a big piece a red lint. So fucking what?

DAD. So. You're mad at me.

DONNA. Maybe I am. I don't really know. It ain't central, anyway. To what brings me up from lower Broadway. Where's all the paintings?

DAD. I sold some. Some are in storage.

DONNA. Getta lotta money for 'em?

DAD. Yeah.

DONNA. How much?

DAD. A lot.

DONNA. There were so many. Just the one now, huh?

DAD. Yeah, it's the last holdout. It's an old one, too. I did it what, maybe fifteen years ago. Funny the thing that pops outta the water when the ship goes down. I wouldn'a picked this one, but there we are. Here it is. Cheers.

DONNA. What ship went down?

DAD. Mine.

DONNA. I need to talk to you.

DAD. Oh no you don't.

DONNA. Yeah, I do too.

DAD. You're wrong.

DONNA. What's that on your finger?

DAD. A ring.

DONNA. Whose?

DAD. Mine.

DONNA. You never wore one.

DAD. It was your mother's. I stuck it on and I can't get it off. I may have to chop off this finger.

DONNA. Mona ain't here, is she?

DAD. No.

DONNA. Where is she?

DAD. I don't think she lives here anymore.

DONNA. Don't ya know for sure?

DAD. No.

DONNA. She's only sixteen, Dad.

DAD. So? When I was sixteen, I was eatin outta garbage cans in Philadelphia.

DONNA. That was you. You probably loved it. You get off on

squalor. Mona's different. If she ate out of a garbage can, she'd die.

DAD. And a hellava way to go, too. Adios, mi Mona. Shit-canned at sweet sixteen.

DONNA. I'm glad to see you.

DAD. I can't think a why.

DONNA. Don't be a jerk. You're my father.

DAD. So?

DONNA. So? So don't be so freakin smug or I'll jam that drink up your nose.

DAD. You lay a finger on me, I'll break your back. You know I could and you know I would. So just forget the threats, alright?

DONNA. Is that the booze talkin'?

DAD. Yeah, it's the booze. An several of my primitive ancestors that are jumpin around in my jungle brain.

DONNA. Well, just remember. Your ancestors are my ancestors.

DAD. Shh. Drums.

DONNA. Oh, you hear drums? It's probably high blood pressure.

DAD. The drums say, Fuck off.

DONNA. Why do you hate me?

DAD. I don't hate you.

DONNA. Why are you shutting me out?

DAD. Look, I ain't seen you in a very long time, Donna, which is great. It's put me inna great mood. But don't push it.

DONNA. I've got questions for you.

DAD. I don't answer questions.

DONNA. You'll damn well answer mine.

DAD. Or what?

DONNA. Or . . . I'll move back in. It could happen, Pops. The prodigal could return. Me an Mona could start up our old cat-fights.

DAD. ALRIGHT. I grant you three questions.

DONNA. You grant me three? What is this, a friggin fairytale?

DAD. Call it whatever you want.

DONNA. I got more than three questions.

DAD. So take some away with you an work on em yourself. It ain't my job ta unravel every little thing for you.

DONNA. It ain't a matter a every little thing. There's hard stuff that I . . .

DAD. THREE QUESTIONS. THAT'S MY ONLY FUCKIN OFFER. TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT.

DONNA. Alright. I'll take it. I agree. My first question is How do you see women?

DAD. You want an answer to this?

DONNA. I want your answer.

DAD. Alright. I see all women bald. It started a long time ago. I found I was bein deceived by hair. I was all the time gettin the wrong impression a this woman or that woman cause their hair created a certain mystique. So I made a resolution one New Year's that whenever I looked atta potential woman, I'd shave her clean as a hardball, in my mind, and then I'd look at her and I'd see what I saw.

DONNA. Did it make a difference?

DAD. Shit yeah. In fact, the first woman that I shaved in this way was your mother. And the result was so . . . simple, that I got swept away and married her. The terrible thing was, on the honeymoon, in the mornin, when I woke up, she had all this awful hair. What a shock that was. But, this is how we learn. Women who are not bald have hair. I still do though, see all women bald. I guess it's a weakness a mine now, a dream.

DONNA. I never saw paintings you did a bald women.

DAD. This is not what I did in my art, this is what I did in my life. I've never managed to be as dumb as an artist as I've been as a man. Close sometimes. Perilously close. But I always managed to keep the bald woman out of the picture.

DONNA. Then why don't ya paint no more?

DAD. Oh, I dried up, I got the horrors, I drank myself out of it, I lost interest. I got obsessed with the fact a my own mortality, and every time I looked atta canvas all I saw was my own grave. And then there was the guilt and my nerves and I never got over the death of your mother. And the sight a you and Mona discouraged me, along with the heat an cold. And a tired feelin I got from time to time. And monsters from Jimjam Land. And illness. And fear of failure. And success. And heights. These are some a the reasons I don't paint anymore. Would you like me to go on?

DONNA. Shut up. I have two more questions.

DAD. You count funny, but okay. Would you like a drink?

DONNA. No.

DAD. You didn't learn ta say no from me. That's a good sign. Shows how much good my neglect a you is doin.

DONNA. Second question. What is sex for?

DAD. Alright. Sex is for makin babies. I'll never forget when I figured that one out, I experienced fuckin vertigo. I was thirty years old. Before that I made like I knew, but I was really like one a those primitive tribesman who thinks sex is a gift from the gods and babies come from bugbites. It's when your mother and my girlfriend got pregnant the same week . . . Somethin about all that news hittin me at once gave me the . . . Well, it was like the apple for Newton. What a moment that was. The zipper on my pants became like this major responsibility. I felt like I had the *Space Shuttle* in there. That's the first time sex went dead for me. When I found out what it was for. Has sex gone dead for you yet?

DONNA. No.

DAD. Don't worry, it will. It's a cycle thing. Somethin happens in your brain, or between you an somebody else, an it just goes dead. It's all shellfish. I got this deveined shrimp, and she's gotta shucked oyster.

DONNA. Don't tell me the story a your life an try ta make it pass for wisdom.

DAD. But there's a kicker, see? Cause after it's been dead for a while, an you're sure it's dead, deader than dead, it comes back. Yeah. Like a ghost but flesh an blood. Usually it comes about outta a moment a madness. You go nuts. You figure you can, your sex is dead, what'sit matter you whig out? Maybe you drink too much or you laugh too much. You do somethin ta stoke yourself up. And there's a woman there, usually the wrong woman, just some wrong woman, an suddenly you've got her. In the wrong place. The closet atta party, a bathroom, the storage room where you work at some shitty office job you don't care about an it's the Christmas party. It was dead. It was gone an buried in the cold cold ground, an suddenly you're high an your nailin some teenager like gangbusters against a buncha filing cabinets. Do you know what I'm talkin about? I'm talkin about sex, man. I don't know where it goes when it goes away,

but it's a long ways off. But when it comes back, you don't remember what sex is for, you don't remember a goddamn thing except if you don't get it if you don't get to it, your eyeballs 'ill pop out, they'll pop right out the window, an you'll lose your mind. Then after maybe, you remember what it's for. When you're sittin like a bag a shit in some chair with rollers on it, an notice that your heart every once inna while is hittin your ribs like some youngblood boxer sparrin from the inside. An maybe you think, I coulda knocked her up. That coulda been a knockup I just did. But you just don't care. Cause you just found out that you ain't dead. You're just too glad, too glad too glad, to feel bad about anything. So when sex goes dead for you, and it will. That I promise you. Just remember. It comes back. It resurrects.

DONNA. Dad. Somethin's happened to me. It's made me have a lotta ideas. And I'm very upset. About it. And it's got to do with you.

DAD. How?

DONNA. Well, inna couple a ways. There's this guy. His name is Tommy. I'm in love with him.

DAD. So go kiss him or somethin.

DONNA. He's hurtin me. A lot.

DAD. So then go talk to him.

DONNA. I just did that. Listen. He . . . Well, he's been foolin with Mona, too.

DAD. He's seein you an Mona?

DONNA. Yeah.

DAD. My, my, my.

DONNA. He's all fucked up. He's stealin now. He looks like shit. But all that I can deal with. Even the Mona thing, I think. But this is the thing. In the whole way that this has come down, I thought I knew what I was doin. The me part of it. Till today. Another like level came into it. I always heard that girls went after guys who reminded em of their fathers. An I guess I kinda believed that idea or was spooked by it at least, so . . . I've always made double goddamn sure never ta go near any guy I thought was like you, because then I'd like turn into my mother, right? A thought that makes me think a the phrase, Fate Worse Than Death. Anyways, I always steered clear of this certain kinda guy for that reason. Like this guy Tommy. I'm like abso-

lutely sure he's totally different than you. And then today, I go to him, into this pit where he's livin', and up on the wall is a painting a drawing he did.

DAD. This guy your seein'?

DONNA. An Mona. A really lousy picture, self-portrait. But it scared me. I think more than anything that's ever happened to me. I heard the fuckin' Twilight Zone music. Cause here I am, goin' along, thinkin' things are one way, that I'm choosin' an goin' my own way, an maybe doin' a terrible fuckin' botch a that, but doin' it. An then I see this picture. And I think, Do I really know what's goin' on in my life? Or am I just a complete molecule or some shit. If this guy Tommy is turnin' into you, then I'm in some kinda car I don't even know I'm in, and some guy inna scary mask is drivin', an he's had the route the map since the doctor smacked my ass. Where am I? I'm in love with this guy Tommy. He's drivin' me crazy, yeah. He's tearin' my heart out an steppin' on it, yes. The whole thing I'm doin' looks to be a total fuckup, but I can deal with that I can live with that. But what I wanna know gotta know is IS THIS MY LIFE OR WHAT? Is this my pain? My love? Or is what's goin' on here just like history? You treated my mother like shit. You cheated on her. You lied to her. You humiliated her in public. When you had money, you wouldn't give her any. When she had money, you took it. You walked on her face with muddy shoes. When she was in the hospital, you didn't visit her. And then finally she just fuckin' died. Now I hate your fuckin' guts for that, but I decided a long time since that I wasn't gonna spend my whole life wishin' you dead or different, cause I didn't want my life bossed by your life. I even thought, Maybe she deserved it. I knew I didn't know the whole story and never would an what was it my business anyway? But that was before. Today, I saw that picture on Tommy's wall, an it was writin' on the wall to me, an the writin' said, Watch Out. You could be in the middle of somebody else's life. So that's why I'm here. Because before I thought I didn't have to know about you to do my life, and now I see I better find out a few things. It's like medical history.

DAD. What bullshit.

DONNA. That's what you say when I pour out my heart to you?

DAD. I'm sorry. What you're afraid of just cracks me up, that's all.

DONNA. I don't understand.

DAD. Alright, you want your father's smarts, I'll give you your father's smarts. What you have are women fears.

DONNA. Women fears.

DAD. That's right.

DONNA. I hate what I'm hearin'.

DAD. Well, tough shit. You got women fears. That's what I know and I'm tellin' you. When I talk to a woman, I feel like I'm yellin' across the Indian Ocean. That's cause I'm a man. Do you wanna hear this or not?

DONNA. Yes.

DAD. Women are very concerned about bein' trapped. All women, or virtually, anyway. They worry about it, that's been my experience. So what they do, a lot of em, to feel strong, they trap a man. They trap some guy in their dream. And then they feel trapped cause they gotta guard what they caught. At least let me say, this is what happened with me an your mother. But there's a certain universal here.

DONNA. And men don't feel that?

DAD. What happens with men is a little different. I think that men recognize or make up that they are trapped, already, an what they do is, the man feeling is, they long to be free. Of mother, wife, job, art, whatever.

DONNA. Do you hear yourself? You sound like a total jerk. This stuff you're sayin' can be knocked down by a three-year-old with a feather.

DAD. So what? I'm tryin' to tell you somethin' to get somewhere, somewhere maybe you'd like to get to. Don't think you can get everywhere by algebra, honey. Things ain't that straight. Life ain't at all like the psychological section in the New York Times three-warning-signs-to-look-for bullshit. Things ain't like that at all. If somebody's willin' to talk to you an tell you shit they think is true, don't be so quick to knock it. People don't usually part with the weird shit they personally know because they know how easy it will be to punch holes in. Now I'm tellin' you somethin'. It's for you to poke through the soup an find the meat. So listen up. There's a level where you fear an want that's a woman level. This shit you just told me about bein'

afraid you're turnin into your mother, that's on the woman level, that's a women fear. So my suggestion about that is, you go talk to a woman about that. But there's another place under that place, where men an women can meet an talk, if you know what I mean. It's way down. An it's dark. An it's old as the motherfuckin stars. If you want somethin from me, or if you wanna tell me somethin, that's where we're gonna haveta be. (*A long pause.*)

DONNA. Alright. (*A long pause.*) Tommy an me . . . When he loves me. In bed. When he puts his arms around me, and I can feel his skin, his heart beating, his breath, and I smell him, it's like Africa. It's like, I get scared because all of my guts shake . . . Sometimes I press my hands against myself because I think things are coming loose inside. He just touches me, starts to barely touch me, and I'm so frightened because it's so much, it's so hot, it's so close to losing my mind. It's beyond pleasure. It's . . . He takes me over. Like there's a storm, I get caught in this storm with electricity and rain and noise and I'm blind I'm blind. I'm seein things, but just wild, wild shapes flying by like white flyin rain and black shapes. I feel I feel this this rising thing like a yell a flame. My hair I can feel my hair like slowly going up on its toes on my skull my skull. Everything goes up through me from my belly and legs and feet to my head and all these tears come out but it can't get out that way, so it goes down against my throat swells an through down to where it can get out GET OUT GET OUT. But it doesn't go out, so I, I EXPAND. Like to an ocean. To hold the size of it. An then it's maybe something you could speak of as pleasure, since then somehow I can hold it. I'm this ocean with a thousand moons and comets reflecting in me. And then I come back. Slowly. Slowly. From such a long way. And such a different size. And I'm wet. My body my hair. The bed is just soaked, torn up and soaked. There ain't a muscle left in me. I'm all eyes. My eyes are the size of like two black pools of water in the middle of an endless night. And Tommy's there. And he did it to me. He took me completely. I wasn't me anymore. I was just a blast a light out in the stars. What could be better than that? What could be better? It's like gettin to die, an get past death, to get to the universe, an then come back. In the world where we talk and fight and he fucks me over, it all just seems so unimportant

after that. I don't understand how he can do that for me an then turn around an be such a, well, smaller. It is a small world this world, in comparison to where we go in bed. And I guess we gotta be smaller in it.

DAD. What are you tryin to tell me, Donna?

DONNA. I'm afraid.

DAD. Of what?

DONNA. I'm afraid to leave him or that he'll leave me. I'm afraid to be without the sex we get to. Everything else seems like nothin next to it. But I can't give up who I am to be his love slave. That's what I'm afraid of. That I'll lose myself if I stay with him, and that I'll lose the sex if I get away.

DAD. I've felt that.

DONNA. You have?

DAD. Yeah.

DONNA. But that seems like a woman thing to me.

DAD. Nope. Men have that too. It's a very down thing. It's very near the bottom.

DONNA. In one way, he don't know a thing about me, not really. And in another way, what he knows is the key that lets me outta my life. It's like what he don't know about me is exactly what I don't care about anyway.

DAD. Yeah.

DONNA. You've really had this?

DAD. Oh yeah. I had this with your mother. It's why I always kept a girlfriend on the side. I hadda keep somethin away from her, so I didn't lose everything when we went nuts in bed. And too, because I wanted to protect what we had in bed by havin somethin else goin that was not that intense. Sort've a comparison, a reminder. Somethin common to underline the extraordinary. Your mother was the love of my life.

DONNA. But if that's true, how the fuck could you treat her like you did?

DAD. That bed was what we had. When I got outta that bed, I didn't walk, I ran. When I got outta that bed the most important thing was that my feet hit the ground, found the fuckin ground. Do you understand? If there was gonna be anything else a me outside a that bed, it hadda be without her. Otherwise, she woulda taken me over all the way. I hadda create a second place in me and outta me where I could work. Do my

painting. I got the studio. I got the girlfriend. WHY DO YOU REMIND ME OF THESE THINGS? It's so fuckin' painful. Your mother's dead. My baby's dead.

DONNA. I can't believe this. You mean, you really loved her?

DAD. Shut up shut up. Can't you understand? All I have now is that little bit I kept from her. That little room. I can't even paint anymore. Why would I want to? What do I care what I see, why would I describe it? I hid part a me from her to save somethin' cause I was scared. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I shoulda given her that, too. If I'd given her everything, then when she died, I woulda died, too, and that woulda been the merciful end of it. Why did I save something? What for? It wasn't worth it. What I saved wasn't worth a goddamn thing. If I only known.

DONNA. I'm here.

DAD. I can't stand the sight a you. You remind me just enough ta make it unbearable. At least Mona don't look like her. You. Sometimes, the way you . . . Sometimes you could be her. But you're not. Sure I treated her like shit. I was so angry cause she had so much a me. I thought it was too much to let somebody have. And when she was dyin' in the hospital, sure I didn't go an see her. I couldn't bear it. Don't you get it? I just couldn't bear to watch her leave me. You come here to tell me things you think I don't understand. So maybe you were right. Maybe you are turnin' into your mother. And maybe this guy Tommy is turnin' into me. I don't know. But the big news is you don't know who those people are. I promise you.

DONNA. You never told me.

DAD. It just woulda sounded like an apology for abuse.

DONNA. All my memories seem wrong now.

DAD. Good. Maybe now then you can remember a few things.

DONNA. Who am I?

DAD. Don't worry about it. I think you worry too much.

DONNA. I love this guy.

DAD. Come here, baby. I hate the sight a you, but let me hold you in my arms. (*He holds her.*)

DONNA. I don't see any future for me.

DAD. Good.

DONNA. It's not good.

DAD. You can't see the future anyway. It's a very realistic feelin' you're havin'.

DONNA. Can I move back home?

DAD. No.

DONNA. I want to.

DAD. You probably feel like suckin' your thumb, too. But there's a time an place, an that time an place called home is gone now.

DONNA. What am I gonna do?

DAD. Well, that's a question. You could run away to the circus.

DONNA. This is the fuckin' circus.

DAD. You wanna grapple an go inna single direction and stick with it, ride it out inna straight line right to heaven, the grave or whatever?

DONNA. Yes.

DAD. There's only one thing that goes straight, my baby, and it's not love. It is not love. You can chase that one forever, it won't come to you. It won't bow, it won't serve, it won't do what you want, what it should, it won't be how you thought, or was taught how it was meant ta be. You can't lead it cause it'll be draggin' you wherever it wants. If you wanna go inna straight line, give up people. People are what zigzag. I'd rather predict the weather three months in advance, my sweet girl, then try to tell you one thing about the future of the dullest heart.

DONNA. I got one more question.

DAD. You mean I ain't answered three questions yet?

DONNA. Two.

DAD. Maybe we should call it a day, cause I gotta tell you, I'm startin' ta feel pretty bad. You're makin' me think about things I honest ta God don't wanna recall.

DONNA. Just one more. Why did you stop paintin'?

DAD. Don't ask me this.

DONNA. Why did you stop?

DAD. Same reason I started.

DONNA. And what was that?

DAD. I saw somethin'.

DONNA. What?

DAD. When I started, it was simple. I saw something, an ob-

ject, an I saw something about that object. And I set that down. Imperfectly. And when I looked at the thing I'd drawn, and the object I'd drawn it from, the two things started a quarrel. And that quarrel lasted through every painting I ever did.

DONNA. But then you stopped.

DAD. I hadda dream. One night. Your mother'd been dead about a year and a half. I'd been drinkin a lot. And then one time I went to bed sober. And I had a bad night. I hadda lotta dreams. And then I had one of those big dreams. I went out for a celebration drive with my girlfriend. We were celebrating your mother's death. It was a great night. The cops stopped us. And while they were checkin us, a guy, a petty thief came from nowhere an grabbed a box or somethin. One of the cops started ta draw his gun. And all I could think was Stop the bullet. So I ran in front of the cop and he accidently shot me. So I was killed. I was dead. I was killed. I was dead. I was killed by a single bullet not even intended for me.

DONNA. What did it mean?

DAD. I woke up. My eyes musta lit up the room, that's how it felt. I woke up my girlfriend and I threw her out. That's how we broke up, you know. Right that minute. And after she was out, I went ta the bed, and I looked at the pillow. There was a dent there where my head had been. And I thought, never put your head in that hole again. That's when I stopped paintin.

DONNA. I don't understand.

DAD. You think I do? Yeah, I do. That's the night I found I was alone. That's the night I found out there wasn't a person left in the world I had a thing to do with. So I sold the paintings. Most of 'em. Some are inna warehouse somewhere. And I live on the money. And I go inna straight line. An I do not stink up my world with people.

DONNA. You've got a broken heart.

DAD. You've asked your three questions, and I've answered em. Now leave me alone.

DONNA. It never occurred ta me that you loved her.

DAD. So what? If you'd known, what would you have done?

DONNA. I mighta tried ta comfort you. When she died.

DAD. Then it's a mercy on us both that you didn't have the true drift, cause if you'd tried to comfort me I probably woulda knocked your teeth out.

DONNA. Big tough guy.

DAD. An you, the big tough girl. This guy you've been seein, it seems clear ta me at least that he's been walkin on you. An that's somethin you've been lettin him do.

DONNA. Yeah, I have.

DAD. Big tough girl.

DONNA. I want some a the money you got from sellin the paintings.

DAD. Why would I give you money?

DONNA. I don't know. I'm just tellin you what I want.

DAD. Alright. I'll give you some money. What will you do with it?

DONNA. Maybe I'll go somewhere. Or maybe I'll give it to my sometime boyfriend. Depends on how things go.

DAD. I'll give you money. I won't give Mona any money. Money just makes Mona get more Mona, an that I couldn't take.

DONNA. And now there's one last thing.

DAD. What d'you mean?

DONNA. One last thing I gotta ask.

DAD. I answered yar goddamn questions, and I'm not gonna answer anymore.

DONNA. There's nothin else I wanna ask you about anythin. Now, what I want is, I wanna ask you ta do somethin.

DAD. The answer is fuck no. You're on your own. I'm serious now. What d'you want me ta do?

DONNA. I want you ta go an talk to this guy Tommy.

DAD. I won't do it.

DONNA. I want you ta go an talk ta him because he's all fucked up, an he's been boffin both your daughters, and because he may be turnin inta you.

DAD. No fuckin way would I do that.

DONNA. I want ya ta go an talk to him, an see if he's curable, reasonable, whatever. And he should promise you that he'll stop seein both your daughters, or that'll he'll stop seein Mona only an go on seein me. And if he won't promise ta one a those things, I want you ta beat him up.

DAD. Where the fuck did you come from? You're like a totally medieval bitch.

DONNA. An no matter what he promises, if you take him in an see that he's turnin inta you, I want you ta beat him up till

his skull is ringing like a church bell. Will you do it for me?
Dad? Dad?

DAD. Why would I agree ta do this?

DONNA. Because it's a family thing. Cause I'm your daughter who looks like your wife. And becausa pride. This guy Tommy he's treatin me like a dirtbag, like you treated my mother. Now in your own life you couldn't treat my mother better cause the sex power made you crazy. Well, I can't deal with this guy for the same reason, the same reason that drove ya crazy in yar own life. But here's the chance, see? You take care a me, maybe in another life or somethin, I'll take care a you. You hear what I'm sayin? Maybe that's what the family's for. Maybe this is how you get ta face yourself. Maybe this is how you get ta unfuck your life. Hear me, Daddy. And help me. I can't help myself. An for all intents an purposes, if ya don't do this, your life is over anyway.

DAD. Alright. I'm not promisin anything. But I'll go. I'll talk ta the guy.

DONNA. Before you go, gimme that ring.

DAD. No, it's mine.

DONNA. No it's not. It's on you, but it's my mother's ring, and it belongs to me. Give it over.

DAD. I couldn't even if I wanted to. It's stuck.

DONNA. I'll get it off. (*She twists it off, causing Dad a lot of pain.*)

DAD. Owwww! Holy shit, that was painful.

DONNA. Yeah, I bet it was.

DAD. You're your old man's daughter.

DONNA. Go if you're goin. (*Dad exits. Donna remains. The lights go down. As they go down, Donna thinks.*) So whaddaya know. There is a weird justice. An somebody else can do somethin ta move your life forward. I guess it's what I hoped. I ain't totally alone after all. (*Donna takes the ring and pops it in her mouth. Primal drums of greater urgency begin to sound.*)

SCENE 3

The drums cease. Lights up. Tommy is discovered.

TOMMY. Maybe that's it. There's somethin ta be said, after all, for feeling happy. Maybe God's in his heaven after all. That

would be a first class goof. I guess I always thought if I was left alone to myself long enough that sooner or later I would have a breakthrough. But can you have a breakthrough without thinkin anything new? Just a breakthrough feeling? But fuck, man, there musta been some moment out there in the desert when them wanderin Jews first smelled the milk and honey comin over the hills ahead. Still in the desert, but honey in the air. (*A knocking at the door.*)

DAD. (*From off.*) Anybody home?

TOMMY. Come in. (*Enter Dad, in a tuxedo.*)

DAD. Hi.

TOMMY. Hi.

DAD. What a shithole.

TOMMY. Yeah, ain't it though. I gotta move.

DAD. Yeah, you do.

TOMMY. I guess you must be Donna's father.

DAD. That's right. I'm Donna's father. And I'm Mona's father.

TOMMY. Both.

DAD. That's right.

TOMMY. You come to beat me up?

DAD. Not necessarily.

TOMMY. You're younger than I thought you'd be.

DAD. So you've thought about me?

TOMMY. Not till lately. You wanna beer?

DAD. Sure, I'd take a beer. (*Tommy goes to refrigerator, gets a beer, gives it to Dad.*)

TOMMY. So, you hadda talk with Donna?

DAD. Yeah.

TOMMY. She's some girl.

DAD. Yeah.

TOMMY. So's Mona.

DAD. No, she's not. Mona ain't in the same league with Donna. Donna's a plum.

TOMMY. I know.

DAD. What, are you testing me?

TOMMY. Yeah.

DAD. Well, stop it.

TOMMY. Alright.

DAD. Close your eyes.

TOMMY. Why?

DAD. Because if you keep them open I'm going to suck them out of your face.

TOMMY. Okay. (*Tommy closes his eyes.*)

DAD. What do you see in there?

TOMMY. Donna's face.

DAD. Uh-huh. Okay, let go a that. What else do you see?

TOMMY. Mona's face.

DAD. Good. Now tell that to go away and what else do you see?

TOMMY. Donna's face.

DAD. Hey, don't be lazy. Look around in there. It's a big place.

TOMMY. I can't see nothin else.

DAD. You may be too close to it. It may be real big. I tell you what. Look up. Look way up. Do you see anything there?

TOMMY. Oh. Yeah. I do.

DAD. What is it?

TOMMY. It's my ma. She's big as A&P. Whop. There she goes. MA. No, she's gone. I think she was angry. Donna and Mona were angry, too.

DAD. What else?

TOMMY. Now I see nothin. Dirt. Pollution. Oh, there's Donna again.

DAD. Oh man, you are a case. Okay, open you eyes.

TOMMY. (*Opening his eyes.*) Why'd you want me to do that?

DAD. Never mind.

TOMMY. That was interesting.

DAD. (*Looks at picture.*) You do this?

TOMMY. Yeah.

DAD. Do you think it's good?

TOMMY. No.

DAD. You're right. It's not. It's terrible. If it was strictly infantile it might have a certain charm. It's the adult badness of it that really makes it very bad.

TOMMY. You sound like you know about these things.

DAD. She didn't tell you I was a painter?

TOMMY. No.

DAD. Well, I'm not. But I was.

TOMMY. Why are you wearin a tux?

DAD. Because I am the father of the bride.

TOMMY. Oh? And who's the bride?

DAD. Donna is the bride.

TOMMY. I didn't know she was getting married.

DAD. Well, if that's what I was tellin you, how would you feel?

TOMMY. I'd feel really bad.

DAD. Why?

TOMMY. Cause I'm in love with her.

DAD. I understand you been seein my daughter Mona, too.

TOMMY. Yeah, well, I have seen her a couple a times. But not really. I mean, it was sort've . . . a sick . . . a wrong . . . a mistake.

DAD. Do you have any doubt at all that I could kick your ass from here to the moon?

TOMMY. None.

DAD. Good. Then we're onna a good conversational footing. How old are you?

TOMMY. Ahm. Twenty-seven.

DAD. I understand you've been fuckin over anybody whose shadow fell in your food.

TOMMY. That's right. I have.

DAD. Why?

TOMMY. Because I've been very confused.

DAD. You know about the hitchhiker thing? You're hitchhikin an you get in some dude's car, an you can tell him anything, cause you don't know him. An he can tell you anything. This kinda thing happens all the time. Of course, there's another side to it. I mean, the hitchhiker don't know the driver, an vice-versa. Either one a them could be a homicidal maniac serial killer. After pourin out your heart, it could be goodbye Charlie. Or Tommy. But that's the next step. We don't haveta get to that revelation till we get to it. What I'm sayin is, Tommy, you're not in love with me, and I'm not your father. When I ask you why you've been fuckin everybody over, you can tell me. Now why?

TOMMY. Revenge.

DAD. Revenge?

TOMMY. I don't know why I said that.

DAD. Don't worry about it.

TOMMY. It just came out.

DAD. Well, let it keep comin out. Revenge for what?

TOMMY. I don't know. This world.

DAD. Don't fuck with me now.

TOMMY. No, I'm serious. I don't know about you but me this world has been comin in at me like chaotic madness. Which has caused me a lotta confusin pain. It's kinda been me against the world. I think everybody starts out that way. You know? You're born alone. And the whole world hits you like a bucket a broken glass chucked in your face and I don't get the joke. It's just cruel, you know, it's just cruelty comin from somewhere. And then somebody comes along and you fall in love. I fell in love. With Donna. And then that's like the point at which you get mixed up with the world. She was my introduction to the outside. Or somethin. But since I've been hurt so much and confused so much all my life by everything that was outside, when I finally came face to face with it in the person of this girl, I think I hadda a hunger in me for revenge. What do you think a that?

DAD. Makes sense.

TOMMY. And who gives a shit, right?

DAD. You're still hitchin a free ride.

TOMMY. Anyway, I'd hurt her, an then I'd hurt myself as punishment. Back an forth. Mona came into that. I think people like Mona, her age, it's not uncommon they get into the orbit a somethin that don't truly got a thing to do with them.

DAD. I hadda a girlfriend like that.

TOMMY. Did you?

DAD. Yeah. Alright, Tommy. Now I'm gonna ask you the question. What have you learned?

TOMMY. Well, I'm still not *to* anything. Donna was here, and she dug way into me, an then she left. But after she left, somethin happened. I hadda vision. I mean, I turned the big lights on myself. I looked at myself an forgot everybody. And a funny thing happened. I could feel myself become harmless. I felt like runnin around to these people. To Donna and Mona, and my mother . . .

DAD. Women.

TOMMY. Yeah, women. I felt like runnin around to the women in my life and saying, I'm harmless to you now. Because I don't want revenge anymore. Because now, now I'm lookin at myself.

DAD. Well, Tom. I really hate to be the one to tell you this. I know you've been through a lot. And I know at the moment,

because of this private experience you've recently had, that you're in touch with a certain buoyancy you no doubt feel you've earned, but I'm here to tell you that as a result of all your pain and experience and self-examination you haven't learned zip about dip.

TOMMY. What?

DAD. I know it's hard to take. But there it is.

TOMMY. But what did you think of this stuff I told you?

DAD. I think you're one hazardous motherfucker.

TOMMY. But I just told you . . .

DAD. I heard you.

TOMMY. I'm just like, dealing with myself now.

DAD. Uh-huh.

TOMMY. You don't believe me?

DAD. I believe you believe it. Although that's already probably fadin away.

TOMMY. What are you sayin?

DAD. That you have two problems. Your first problem is that you are very present tense. I mean, I can just see it in your fuckin eye. You're one a these guys who could say you're sorry a thousand times, and mean it. And go right back an do it again. You're like a too typical, too HUMAN kinda guy. It's impossible for you ta learn anything from the history of your own life. If it hadn't been done before, you woulda invented the New Year's Resolution. And you woulda been the first guy to break it, too.

TOMMY. How can you talk about me like this? You just met me.

DAD. Your second problem is you're women-fixed. You don't know who you are cause all you got in your head is women. And you're mad at women cause they're cloggin up your head. The bottom of that problem, which you won't get to for some time to come, is you don't know why you're alive.

TOMMY. You just walked in the door. I think you're talkin out your ass.

DAD. I can talk about you cause I was you. At least this part a you I'm talkin about. You're one a these subconscious motherfuckers. Ninety-nine percent a you operates outta some underground control room you don't know about. You got your own Ministry A Propaganda. Your up-above mind only gets dribbled what it needs to know ta get through the day. When I

was in this same condition, which was in another time in my life—I see that now—I broke the back of every person who loved me. I never thought I'd come face-to-face with me then.

TOMMY. That's a very egotistical way of lookin at it.

DAD. Yeah, so what? The only way I can take everything in is through my body, which makes everything pretty fuckin personal. What we're havin here, Tommy me boy, is a personal conversation.

TOMMY. You think I'm like you?

DAD. Yeah.

TOMMY. I don't know.

DAD. You don't haveta know. I'm tellin you somethin. Humor me.

TOMMY. What are you tellin me?

DAD. You see this picture you did?

TOMMY. Yeah?

DAD. This picture's the beginnin of a lotta trouble for you.

TOMMY. I don't understand.

DAD. I useta have a subconscious situation like you. Then I started ta put pictures out.

TOMMY. I painted this to understand myself, that's all.

DAD. I had the same whim, at least I thought it was a whim. I reached down into the black water where I couldn't see, and I pulled out the first thing I found. It grabs you cause you don't understand it. It's in you, but it's strange ta you. So you put it out there where you can see it. An then it looks at ya. An you look at it. An ya say ta yourself, What is that? And then that's when the change starts.

TOMMY. What change?

DAD. The balance between what you know an what you don't know about what's goin on inside. When ya start reachin across that line, into the dark, an pullin things out before your conscious mind is ready for em, that's when what's awake an what's asleep ain't fixed down anymore. It's like the difference between Newton an Einstein. Neat an not neat.

TOMMY. But it never was neat.

DAD. But you didn't know that.

TOMMY. NO. I just lost my footing. I got confused and I didn't understand a lotta things that I useta do fine with. And the whole area a love was not one I was used to. But my . . .

what I'm gonna do is, I'm gonna find my footing. I'm gonna find the solid ground under me somewhere that I know I know is down there somewhere under me. And I'm gonna walk on firm ground again. I'm gonna be trustworthy again, like I was.

DAD. When you were a kid.

TOMMY. Not exactly.

DAD. Yeah, that's what you mean. Once you reach across that divide, into that black pool where the stuff you don't understand is, the stuff that don't fit, you ain't never gonna walk on firm ground again.

TOMMY. You can't know that.

DAD. You gotta get more honest.

TOMMY. You gotta get more honest.

DAD. Alright. You're right. I do. I'm glad to see you. Cause you're a lot like the way I was. And I can see, cause you're standin there, that I've changed. I really have changed. I'm not the man I was. So you're a comfort to me. If there was somebody who was like that for you, somebody who was like you the way you used ta be before you were the way you are now, we could probably draw a straight line through the three of us and see where we're goin. But there's only the two of us. Like the object an the paintin of it. The difference between the two an argument. The conversation we're havin now.

TOMMY. Why are you wearin a tux?

DAD. You see, I got to the point, I lost the women who were keepin me from askin the question, Why live? That's a long way off from you yet. That may never happen to you at all. When you find yourself alone and when you ask that question of yourself alone, separate from everybody else's needs, it's like pullin the plug on your power, man. It's like lookin into the hole where your art your strength your black water was, an there's nothin there but a dry black dent in a pillow past broken in, past broken down. Cause there is no answer to that question for a man alone. But then Donna came to me today, and she needed somethin from me, somethin that belonged ta her. And she reminded me that she's connected ta me: That things in me belong to other people. That I'm connected. That like it or not I'm not alone and it's not over till it's over. Why Live? Cause it's not neat and the individual life is deceptive and a dream. We

spill over into each other, man. We spill blood and breath and come an time over inta each other like shelves inna water wheel.

TOMMY. Why are you wearin a tux?

DAD. You said you wanted revenge against the world, but what you're fuckin over is women, women. Your mother, my daughters. It's gotta come to an end, Tommy.

TOMMY. It has come to an end. Now I only hurt myself.

DAD. Liar. To yourself a liar, to my daughters a liar, to me a liar. *(He tears down the picture, crushes it, and stuffs it in the refrigerator.)*

TOMMY. Hey, I'm tryin ta face myself.

DAD. I believe you. It's just not enough.

TOMMY. I can't do any more.

DAD. I believe you. It's just not at all enough. *(Enter Donna, in full bridal regalia.)*

TOMMY. Donna.

DONNA. *(To Dad.)* Has he promised not to see Mona?

DAD. No.

DONNA. Is he like you?

DAD. Yeah, he is.

DONNA. Beat the shit outta him.

TOMMY. I promise not to see Mona.

DAD. You can say that, but ya can't stick to it.

TOMMY. Yes, I can.

DONNA. It don't matter if it turns out he's like you. Is he really?

DAD. Yeah.

DONNA. Then bang his head till it rings like a fuckin bell.

TOMMY. I don't know that I'm like him at all.

DAD. You are alright.

TOMMY. How do you know that?

DAD. Cause when I was your age, I painted a picture of myself, and it looked just like that. Except that you have no talent.

DONNA. How could I make such a mistake?

DAD. The same way your mother made it.

DONNA. How did she make it?

DAD. Her mistake which is your mistake is no mistake at all. You went for the guys like me an him cause that's what you like an who you are. And what you hate and makes you crazy is that

it's a mirror and what the mirror tells you. You got this misery built into you.

DONNA. Hit him.

DAD. No. Why don't you stop runnin away from yourself, the woman who's turnin inta her mother? Why don't ya go inta yourself?

DONNA. Why don't you?

DAD. I did my whole life. I cut an cut inta myself, an then one night I hadda dream, and I hit white bone. An I looked at my pillow, where I'd dreamed that dream, I looked at that hole where my head had been dreamin, and I said No more.

TOMMY. No more.

DONNA. No more.

DAD. BUT I WAS WRONG.

DONNA & TOMMY. HUH?

DAD. You can't stop. Once you step off the edge, you're gone. Once your head's been in that place, you can't ever take it out. *(Dad takes off his tux jacket and puts it on Tommy.)*

TOMMY. WHY THE FUCK ARE YOU DRESSED LIKE A BRIDE?

DONNA. NONE OF YOUR FUCKIN BUSINESS.

TOMMY. WHY AM I WEARIN A TUX?

DAD. Figure it out.

TOMMY. DONNA.

I'm not ready, I'm not ready, Me neither, me neither,
I'm not ready, I'm not ready Me neither, me neither . . .
ready . . .

DAD. It's always been this way. It's always been a total fuckin mess. It's never the right time, and it's really horrifyin ta everybody, like a car accident ya see comin. But, there is this problem of time an tide, of mortality, of the woman only havin so many years in which she can conceive—Sex is for makin babies. That picture I kept, that one paintin a mine that I kept. It's of the Wrong Woman. It's called The Wrong Woman In The Wrong Place. That's the non-historical woman that I treasure. That person who wakes you from Death-Too-Soon. You gotta make the big mistakes. Remember that. It makes it easier to bear. But remember, too, that Sex does resurrect. Flyin in the face of the truly great mistakes, there is that consolation. Donna, cough up the ring. *(Donna coughs up ring. Dad takes it and*

forces Tommy to put it on her finger.) I now pronounce you Man and Wife. (*Donna and Tommy look at each other and scream. Dad laughs.*)

TOMMY. This feels totally wrong.

DONNA. (*Looking at Dad.*) It never occurred to me that he loved her.

DAD. BEGIN. BEGIN. Son. Daughter. Self. Stranger. BEGIN. (*To the audience.*) BEGIN.

The End

PROPERTY LIST

3 cans of Budweiser beer (preset in refrigerator)

Tommy's self-portrait (hung on Tommy's wall)

1 litre bottle Stolichnaya vodka-- ½ filled (preset beside Dad's chair)

1 glass (preset beside Dad's chair)

Wedding ring (worn by Dad)

Dad's painting of a nude woman