
Confetti

A Play By Broken Gopher Ink



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C H A R A C T E R S

GEG.....A woman in her fifties.

GARY.....Her thirty-three year old son.

ROD.....Geg's thirty-six year old nephew.

NED.....Geg's sixty-six year old boyfriend.

LINDAHL.....Gary's forty-one year old girlfriend.

MR. BOGED/BUFF.....Small parts that can be played by the same guy.

T H E S T A G E

The play can be staged in the round. The set is composed of an open circle. In the center is GEG's living room. Orbiting this, almost on the periphery, are various other areas for scenes as the script calls for them. Bare bones, suggestion is the key. Not too much furniture is needed, just enough to suggest the location of each scene. Lasers and fog machines can do the rest. (Just joking.) Lights and sound can play a very important part of the overall atmosphere. Sound will be mainly used to set a scene; to take the place of actual stage sets. Some scenes are silent, others cacophic. All music is played live. And LOUD.

The action of the play occurs in and around the home of GEG and her son GARY. It encompasses many moments of their lives over the period of about six months. There are thirty-five scenes.

THANKS TO: Lori Gama, Pete Fadner, Matt Lubich, ATA Theatre, James Jennings, David Kruse, John Camire and 120 Minutes.

Broken Gopher Ink is Michael K. White & Kyle J. Bunch

SCENE 1

(The late morning light comes in through dirty windows. Dogs are barking, answering one another like drunken teenagers.)

Of course, an alarm goes off. In fact, several do. They get off a pleasing cacophony that is not allowed to reach its natural crescendo due to being forcefully and definitively shut off by persons unseen.

A ringing silence fills the room. Then GARY enters in his underwear. He is about thirty-three. This is his mother GEG's house. GARY puts on a Walkman and immediately starts beating on some drums he has set up, beating them in leaden syncopation with whatever is blaring in his ears.

Of course, his drumming brings out his mother GEG. She is a solid woman of more than fifty years. Her face is hard and tense. It would be easy to say that she is crusty on the outside and a marshmallow underneath and in some ways this may be true. But probably she is the doormat she sees herself to be.)

GEG

I'M GONNA SHOVE THOSE FUCKIN' DRUMS UP YOUR ASS!

GARY

What? *(He stops)* Huh?

GEG

(Sullenly)

Where's my cigarettes?

(GARY drops his sticks with a clatter and leaves the drums. He plants himself on the couch and takes a hit off a homemade bong.)

GEG

I want this place cleaned up today. Ned's coming over.

GARY

(Holding in the smoke)

Mom, Ned doesn't care if it's clean or not.

GEG

(Sharply)

You plan on going out to look today?

GARY

Where's Tribbles?

GEG

Never mind about the damn cat. I'm serious Gary. I'm getting sick and tired of you living here. This isn't working for me at all. I have a life and..

(GARY is on all fours talking in a high-pitched baby voice.)

GARY

Tribbles? Wheremybabyboyathuh?

(The phone rings.)

GEG

Oh shit.

GARY

Rod.

GEG

I'm not going to answer it.

GARY

Then don't.

GEG

I should. His mother's dying.

GARY

He's being a pain.

GEG

He can't help it. *(She answers it.)* Hello? Hi Rod..Yeah..No better huh..Well Rod, I don't know what to say to you..*(She sighs.)* Yeah sure..I guess so..no, we weren't..

GARY

Mom!

GEG

Yeah. Okay. See you then. Bye.

(She hangs up.)

GARY

Good going.

GEG

Kim's going to die any time now. I just realized that. It just became real.

GARY

But you hate her.

GEG

Yeah I know. But it doesn't change anything. She still married by brother. And what about Rod? She really fucked that kid up.

GARY

He's a year older than me. He ain't no kid.

GEG

Kim ruined him. That guy's going to be forty and still living at home with her..

(There is an uncomfortable pause.)

GARY

That's just pathetic.

GEG

(Hotly)

You think it's a fucking joke?

GARY

(Equally hot)

What am I supposed to do! Where am I supposed to go! Am I supposed to just pull some kind of life out of my ass?

GEG

Yes! That's what the rest of us have to do! You can get a goddamn job!

GARY

So I'm supposed to live up to your idea, no, your illusion of a perfect life. Something you think up arbitrarily when you're all stoned.

(GEG is in mid-bong hit.)

GARY

(With forced calm)

Look, I'll go down to Ord's and see if there's any gutter work okay? No way am I going back to the cat litter factory..

GEG

You don't have to be a duster! Be a bagger!

GARY

I'm trying to get my chops together! Me and Buff could start playing the bars and make a little money. I gotta follow my heart, mom.

GEG

You're so full of shit Gary. You should listen to yourself. Just like Moe.

GARY

Just like you.

(GARY gets mad and goes back and sits at the drums. He slams a few beats then suddenly stops.)

GARY

I can't believe you'd throw your own son out on the streets.

GEG

And you call Rod pathetic? At least he doesn't write love letters to rock stars half his age..

GARY

I sent a TAPE! And I'm still younger than the Who.

GEG

I'm not going to argue with you. I gotta get ready for work. Ned's all crazy because of the new time card rules. Clean this fucking place up, you hear me?

(GARY hits the cymbal and stares at her. She turns away in disgust and goes off into the dark. GARY shifts himself on the drum stool and the lights come down to a single spot on him. He hits a few beats then faces the audience.)

GARY

I'm a pretty good riffer on the drums. My fills are famous..Don't worry. She's not going to throw me out. She gets this way sometimes..I know it's lame to still be living your mom when you're thirty-three. I did have my own place. I had a band called Cameltoe and we had a little studio we built there. Then we became The Dough Ponies and one of the guys hooked up electricity illegally so he's in prison now. Yeah, it's harsh. A federal offense or something. They made an example out of him. They don't mess around. He took the money he was supposed to pay the electricity bill with and he bought some schwag weed and black powder bullet molds...Hey I pay her rent when I can. I do yard work and mop floors and do dishes. I have a degree but that's pretty fucking worthless around here. .My heart's in other things. I have to try and keep my schedule clear because of my music. I'm a drummer as you can see, but I'm also a singer/songwriter and that's pretty versatile for a drummer. See, all my songs are drum based instead of guitar or piano based. Me and my friend Buff fool around. He plays the organ. That's our sound. Organ and drums. It's pretty good. We got about sixty-nine songs. We recorded at Buff's sister's house, in the garage, and sent the tape to Axl Rose..

(He pulls out a well-worn piece of paper.)

Here's the reply. I'd read it to you but it's kind of personal. My mom said it was just a form letter but she would think that because she doesn't really know what the fuck she's talking about. I mean, it wouldn't mean anything to her. Of course it sounded like a form letter. To someone like her. She accused me of deluding myself. But I call it confidence. And somebody is always trying to take that away from me. If I were just deluding myself why would they want to take it away from me? Anyway you have to be really DOWN with Axl's lyrics to understand what he's REALLY saying in this letter about our tape..I guess you think that's weird. I can see you're skeptical. It's my age, I know. I mean, I see guys my age and they have their own little ruts. House payment. Car payment and kids dragging them down, but that isn't me. I don't know who I am..

(He hits the drums a little bit.)

I mean, my mom works hard. She works a folding machine that folds paper napkins. Can you imagine how mind numbing a thing like that is for someone as intelligent as I am? It's all right for her. No, c'mon I don't mean it that way..She just has no concept of the real world. She lives in her own little place.

(Pause)

I guess you think thirty-three is too old to be a rock star. But then again Bill Haley was in his forties when he hit with "Rock Around The Clock." Music is my life. I'm not

ashamed to say that.. I know it's trite and corny but music saved my life. Literally. I know most people like music and they have their favorite songs and groups and whatever, but it isn't like that to me. It's something for me to believe in...

(Pause)

I'll tell you something I've never told anyone before. Well I told Lindahl, but she didn't understand. It's about the power of rock and roll in my life. I was in the tenth grade. I..I got hassled a lot by certain people who thought they were better than me. So to avoid them I would go to the library and read a lot. One time I found this book. It was called, "The ABCs of ROCK" I read a chapter about the WHO. I had never heard of them before. They had the words to one of their songs printed in there and when I read those words I felt like I had been punched right in the stomach. There was this shock, total utter shock that someone else in the world felt exactly the same as I did. It changed my life forever..

(Choking up, GARY chants the lyrics.)

"Things they do look awful c-cold. I hope I die before I get old."

(He turns away.)

I went into the bathroom at school and cried. And some jocks came in and laughed at me. But I didn't care too much. I made my mom get me a snare drum because I could never figure out how to hold a guitar. And here I am..Want to hear a tune? Well, I'm gonna play you one anyway. I'm not as pathetic as you think I am. My cousin Rod is the pathetic one. His mother is dying of cancer. He's a mama's boy. A meteorologist. All he can talk about is the weather. He whistles to himself all the time. Always the same song. "If I only had a brain.."

(GARY starts playing the drums.)

GARY

This is called "Night Like Avocados."

(He sings.)

She wore the night like avocados
 Blue and gray all over her body
 Like a civil war
 Woah Yeah
 Like a civil war..

LIGHTS DOWN**SCENE 2**

(GEG is seated on her waterbed in her “bedroom.” She’s just lit a cigarette and is exhaling as the lights come up. We hear, deep in the background, a high humming noise, but assume it’s part of the waterbed apparatus.)

GEG

(To the audience)

I decided that today I wasn’t gong to be self conscious in front of you. Normally I’m a very self-conscious person. I don’t even like to look in mirrors. I have his friend who is totally the opposite. He doesn’t care what other people think of him. He’ll do whatever he wants to do as long as it feels good. I admire that. I know it’s hedonistic. I think that’s the word. You know Hedon was this Roman God who fell into a ditch while looking at his own reflection. I know a lot of people like that. But not me..

(Smokes)

I want to make it a matter of trust between us that because I am allowing you access into certain moments of my life that you won’t judge me. I don’t like people passing down their instant verdicts upon me. You can all snicker but what if the situation was reversed and I was the one who could watch all your dirty little moments. Think about it.

(Pause)

You know this house is haunted. The ghost of a little girl resides here. Her name is Rosalie. I see her often. When she died they laid her out in a big dollhouse. I don’t know, between you and me, if I really believe that shit or not. But there is something around here. I’ve never been able to make anything out though. Peripheral movement, a rustle of

her dress. Humming. Ohh!..This is giving me the chills. We're not scared of her, but the cat is.

(Long pause while she takes a deep drag off her cigarette and closes her eyes, as if concentrating.)

We had our car totaled last year. Had to declare bankruptcy. Some drunk demolished it when I was parked on the street. I heard the crash. Man, you know how people say they see something and it won't go away? Well the sound of that crash will never go away from me. It was the beginning of all my bad luck. I do believe in conspiracy. I'm not a fanatic or anything but you won't see me in anybody's fucking computer. But I have to be careful. There's other ways to catch people..

(The buzzing grows louder and sharper. GEG seems more and more preoccupied.)

I can't control myself. I'm too impulsive. Gary's ashamed of it but hell it isn't his credit record. Sometimes I wonder about that kid. Kid! Man! He's in his thirties. The day he moved back in with me was the start of all my bad luck. Don't get me started on that! You know how I feel about it. But what can I do? I can't do anything.

(Pause)

My brother Denny's wife is dying of cancer. Same as he did. Must've been something in the water where they lived. My brother Denny wanted to be a biker. He had the whole trip down but he was afraid of motorcycles. He hid it well though until someone accidentally kicked one over by him. Then he would freak. It had something to do with the noise. He never could handle loud sounds.

(Drumming in the background.)

He said it hit a tone and frequency that hurt his ears. Made him crazy. We never believed him. He was just a coward. He had a good heart though. He's dead. That bitch worked him to death. I shouldn't say that because she's going o die. But fuck her. Denny was my brother. Their son Rod keeps calling and coming over. Don't ask me why. We never were any kind of a family, if you know what I mean.

(She closes her eyes ad tilts back her head, rocking gently back and forth. Then she sighs deeply.)

But he's not a bad looking kid. Kid. He's a year older than Gary. And he doesn't look a bit like my brother, if you know what I mean. He looks a lot more like my brother's best friend Jack Everhart..

(GARY enters nonchalantly, rummaging around on the floor by the bed.)

GEG

Get the fuck out of here! Aren't I entitled to any privacy at all? Can't you see I'm busy?

GARY

I was looking for the cat.

GEG

That fucking cat's not in here! GET OUT!

(Gary exits. GEG shifts around, reaching underneath her and pulls out a long, large vibrator which she switches off. The background humming stops.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 3

(ROD is in a “hospital” room with his dying mother, who we see as a form in a bed under a lump of blankets. Just a suggestion of activity should be evident, a gentle electronic beep or pulsating red light. ROD is curled up on the floor in semi-darkness. It is late at night and he sings to himself. When he stops to catch his breath, another sound takes over. It is the short snorting exhalations of his comatose mother. Her breathing is heavy and fast, filling the room with its sound. ROD hums louder, as if denying the sound of his mother’s breath. A kind of tintinnabulation descends; a kind of music ensues, and then subsides. ROD sits up, out of breath. His mother’s breathing continues to fill the room.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 4

(The rhythmic breathing from the previous scene bleeds into the beginning of this one. GARY is seated at his drums, continuing the rhythm of the breathing on his snare drum. His headphones are firmly in place. His eyes are shut tight, his face is red. He is somewhere deep in his mind. He is totally relaxed and free in his movement; not at all like he is away from the drums. GARY is oblivious, playing with all his heart. The phone starts ringing but GARY doesn't hear it. A dog is barking furiously in the background but it doesn't matter.

The lights dim and GARY can still be seen, but his playing becomes silent. The rhythm is picked up exactly by a "Machine" that we see GEG standing at opposite GARY. It is the machine GEG must operate at work, punching out the exact same rhythm as the breathing and the snare drum. We can't really see it, but what is suggested is immense and overly complicated. Lights flash and the machine roars as GEG mechanically removes stacks of folded paper napkins. The din of the machine starts to die down however and we see an entirely silent scene, a kind of ballet of movements GEG makes a minimum of movement with a maximum of efficiency.

The lights come back up on GARY, still playing the drums, but no sound emerges from him either. He flails his arms and appears to hit the skins. His attitude is almost beatific, while GEG's is bleak and unfocused. Both GEG and GARY are locked into a mechanical, separate epiphany of movement, that both are caught up in, but neither really involved. The sound starts again, first the machine, and then the drums, finally, drowning it all out, is the breathing of the dying woman. Then silence.)

LIGHTS DOWN**SCENE 5**

(GEG's living room, late at night. ROD is sitting on the couch, eating a bowl of cereal, watching cartoons. ROD is a man of about thirty-five; in full and total biker regalia. He is wearing the leather, extra close-cropped hair, army boots and tattoos. GARY is talking on the phone.)

GARY

How much for a QP then? WHAT? I can't sell it for that, even if it is Kind. People are bitching at me as it is...I can go maybe four hundred..

ROD

Four hundred? No way man.

GARY

Yeah..Okay. Well let's do business then. Yeah. Okay.

(GARY hangs up.)

ROD

I spilled milk on my jacket.

GARY

(Taking a hit from the bong)

Take it off then.

ROD

It's only milk. Wipes right off.

GARY

The why'd you say anything?

ROD

Because it scared me.

(ROD takes a hit off the bong.)

GARY

Everything scares you.

ROD

I know. It's weird..

(ROD begins sobbing hysterically, dropping the bowl of cereal onto the floor. GARY is obviously annoyed and uncomfortable.)

GARY

Hey man...you better clean that up.

ROD

(Sobbing)

My mom's gonna die! I just can't believe it! (He starts screaming) Mom! Mom!

(He whips a buck knife out of his pocket and wildly slashes at his wrists. GARY wrestles him down and takes the knife away from him.)

ROD

(Sobbing)

I WANT TO GO WITH MY MOM! I WANT TO GO WITH MY MOM!

GARY

(Calmly)

Maybe you shouldn't have eaten those mushrooms dude.

(GEG enters the room sleepily.)

GEG

What the fuck? Did he see the ghost?

(She sees what's going on.)

GEG

Did you try to kill yourself again?

ROD

(Sheepishly)
Yeah.

GEG

Listen Rod if you want to kill yourself go home and do it. I don't need this shit. Gary's bad enough.

{She has gone back into the bedroom. GARY sits down, taking another hit off the bong and flipping through the channels on TV. The on/off effect of the TV light on his and ROD's face is extreme and revealing.}

ROD

(Sniffing)
Let's smoke another bowl. I'm not high enough.

(They smoke.)

ROD

(Falsely)
You ever tell anyone I cried and I'll kick your ass, man.

GARY

That sounds lame coming from a thirty five year old man.

ROD

Why is everybody suddenly making references to my age? I know how fucking old I am!

GARY

I'm going to bed dude.

ROD

Hey! *(Pause)* Can I play your drums?

GARY

(Frowning)
No.

(GARY goes off. ROD takes another hit off the bong and seats himself at the drum kit. He takes a few tentative swipes at the cymbals, and then starts in bashing. This brings GEG out of her bedroom. She sits on the couch and lights a cigarette.)

ROD

(Stopping)

You couldn't sleep either huh.

GEG

(Sarcastically)

Yeah. I don't know why. Couldn't be because you're pounding on those goddamn drums?

ROD

Gary said it was okay.

GEG

(Looking around)

You seen my cat?

ROD

No.

(He's sitting the cymbals randomly and softly. A beat seems to emerge. Nothing fancy, kind of a slowly accelerating cymbal heartbeat.)

ROD

Hey I really wanted to thank you Geg for letting me hang out here and all..

GEG

Rod, do me a favor and spare me your speeches, okay?

ROD

Okay.

(He suddenly bursts into sobs again. GEG sighs and blows out cigarette smoke. She takes a hit off the bong. ROD blunders his way from the drums to the couch where he collapses into heaving sobs. GEG looks at him speculatively for a moment. Almost appraisingly. Then she very hesitantly touches him. ROD responds instantly and totally, wrapping himself around GEG like a dog on a trouser leg. GEG resists at first, and then she too responds totally, kissing ROD hard. ROD is thrashing around, kicking over things with his combat boots.

GARY enters quietly. He sees what's going on and in one fluid motion swipes up the bong and returns from where he came. GEG and ROD don't even see him when they come up for air.)

GEG

(Breathlessly)

Do you want to take your clothes off?

ROD
(Equally breathless and confused)
What for?

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 6

(GARY and his girlfriend LINDAHL are lying toward the front of the stage, looking upwards. They aren't looking at the sky, but at some glow in the dark stickers LINDAHL put on the ceiling of GARY's bedroom.)

GARY

(Suddenly singing at the top of his lungs)

NOEL JOHNSON

IS A SALAD TOSSING BITCH

I WISH HE WOULD DIE SOON..

LINDAHL

I don't like that song Gary. It's too negative.

GARY

(Stops)

What do I have to look at these glow in the dark paste on stars for?

LINDAHL

You have to pretend. Like we're outside.

GARY

Mom and Ned'll think we're fucking in here with the lights off.

LINDAHL

They're watching TV. They won't care. *(Pause)* You can imagine can't you Gary?

GARY

Right. I have no imagination. Thank you.

LINDAHL

Don't pick a fight. This is our quiet time.

GARY

(Rubs her breast)

I want to do something else for quiet time. This is making me nervous.

LINDAHL

(Ignoring him)

You never want to talk about it. You have to stop being so selfish.

GARY

Why is it when we have these quiet times they turn into you scolding me?

LINDAHL

That's just your imagination. *(She smiles)* Besides, I thought the whole dynamic of our relationship was that I was trying to force you to grow up.

GARY

(Laughs shyly)

I guess it is.

LINDAHL

(After a pause)

Well?

GARY

(Staring up)

I like Saturn the best. Because of the glow in the dark rings.

LINDAHL

No! When are you going to grow up?

GARY

(Jokingly)

Never! I hope I die before I get old!

LINDAHL

I'm serious.

GARY
(Suddenly tragic)
So am I.

LINDAHL
You know you're too old to die young now.

GARY
(Defensively)
I know. (Pause) I guess I'll just have to give up.

LINDAHL
Notice how I used the big ones as planets and how they're positioned? I used the star chart for your birthday. So this is what the night sky will look like on your birthday. See? There's the Little Dipper..

(GEG suddenly barges in. We think she might be drunk. The harsh light and glare from the living room intrude into the room.)

GEG
What the fuck are those things on the ceiling.

LINDAHL
It's the universe!

GEG
Get it off my ceiling. Jesus Christ can't you two just have sex anymore?

GARY
We weren't having sex. Unlike other people I know.

GEG
Do you have the remote in here?

GARY
(Super sarcastically)
No mom.

(GEG leaves muttering.)

GARY
(After a pause, gruffly)
Where's the moon?

LINDAHL

(Unsure)

The moon isn't a planet.

GARY

(Petulant)

I like the moon.

(LINDAHL crosses and folds her arms in exasperation. She stops looking at the ceiling. The spell has been broken.)

GARY

(Conciliatory)

You should have put the moon in there somewhere.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 7

(A “funeral home”. ROD is sitting next to a suggestion of a closed casket. The lighting is expressionistic. All light and shadow; no gray. There is soft organ muzak playing in the background. Real cheerful muzak, like in a grocery store.)

ROD

(Sniffing in full biker regalia)

Well mom..I hope you’re happy now. You get what you want. But what about me?

(He drinks from a beer.)

Hey mom remember that time you got me a vinyl coat for Christmas and I tore a hole in it the next day?

(Another swig.)

Hey mom remember catching me with a joint in my room and you said..

(He dissolves into sobs.)

Well I can’t remember what you said, okay? Is that alright? All of a sudden I can’t remember what your voice sounded like. I’m all pilled up and not very coherent, okay? Is that alright? I’m sorry..I’m sorry..I’m sorry.

(Finishes the beer.)

Hey mom you know one time I woke up and heard you and dad fighting. You said, “What about sex? When are we going to have sex again?” and he said, “What about it. You tell me.” I never knew you had sex..

(He slams his fist down on the coffin lid, screaming.)

MOM! I’m sorry! Mom! I do believe you are blushing!

(A VOICE breaks the scene and lights come up normal.)

MR. BOGED

(False cheerfulness)

Mr. Beeder? Can I call you Randy?

(ROD looks around with piss-eyes. A tight looking man in a suit politely pulls up a chair and sits facing ROD. The man’s name is MR. BOGED.)

ROD

(Confused)

I guess so. If you want to.

MR. BOGED

No Randy, we should discuss the matter of arrangements concerning the internment of your mother, Olum Beeder. I’m afraid we can’t have another scene.

ROD

Quit talking to me like a fuckin’ brochure.

MR. BOGED

All right Randy. Have it you way. Time to go over the fees.

(MR. BOGED is very business-like. He’s using a pencil and a small pocket calculator and a clipboard. ROD shifts uncomfortably, never taking his hand off the casket.)

MR. BOGED

Hmm. Let’s see. The following is an itemized list of arrangements you agreed to day before yesterday.

BODY PICK UP FROM HOSPITAL	\$45.52
BODY TRANSPORT TO FUNERAL HOME	\$45.52
BODY STORAGE	\$50.15
EMBALMING	\$313.89
BODY PREP	\$117.32
COSMETICS AND RECONSTRUCTION	\$122.66
PERPETUA GARMENTS (DRESS & SLIPPERS)	\$77.13
PERPETUA UNDERGARMENTS	\$44.44

DIAMOND DUST FOR HAIR	\$90.02
TIARA (DIAMELLE)	\$108.71
OAKENETTE CASKET (QUEENIE model #321D)	\$3,671.61
CONCRETE VAULT	\$435.31
BURIAL PLOT AND GRASS CARE	\$1,122.50
HEADSTONE (MODEL 3E45D2 ANGELS & CUPIDS)	\$410.78
ONE DOZEN PLASTIC ROSES	\$22.50
SATINIQUE CASKET COVER	\$61.00
SATINIQUE PILLOW	\$37.99
LEAKAGE INSURANCE	\$12.22
CARS TO SERVICE (2)	\$35.09
OBITUARY	\$10.17
GRIEF COUNSELING SERVICES	\$225.25

And that brings us to a total of..\$7,059.78

(MR. BOGED smiles. There is a hideous moment of total silence. ROD stares at MR. BOGED uncomprehendingly. MR. BOGED nervously clears his throat.)

ROD

I don't remember any fucking grief counseling services.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 8

(GEG and her beau, NED are sitting on the couch watching a movie on TV. NED is an elderly man, wearing a plaid sports coat and a hearing aid.)

GEG

Just watch the movie Ned.

NED

All right. Just checking. That's all.

GEG

You make me sick.

(They sit in silence.)

NED

(Finally)

Can I have some ice ream then?

(GEG sighs and nods. NED makes his way to the "kitchen." GARY and LINDAHL enter. LINDAHL is older than GARY, very thin and winsome. She is studiously ethereal.)

GARY

Where's Ned?

(GEG tosses her head toward the kitchen and changes the channel. LINDAHL sits next to her and takes her hand.)

LINDAHL

How are you doing really Geg?

GEG

I'm fine Lindahl.

LINDAHL

Geg, you're a heart person and you feel things more than most people do. I want you to know that you are my friend.

GEG

(Patiently)

I know honey.

GARY

Let's go into my room.

LINDAHL

We can stay out here and visit.

(GARY sits down in a funk.)

GEG

What did you all do today?

GARY

We went to the lake.

LINDAHL

Gary gave me this beautiful shiny balloon.

GARY

It was Mylar.

LINDAHL

I released it over the water and Gary threw rocks at it until it popped.

GARY

(Defensively)

I was just jacking around.

LINDAHL

Can't you see the symbolism of it Gary?

GEG

He's a baby. He'll never grow up.

GARY

How much more growing up am I supposed to do? I'll be forty before I know it.

LINDAHL

And you don't see that throwing rocks at my balloon is a metaphor for a man over thirty afraid to face adult responsibility so he retreats into infantile behaviors?

GARY

Why is everyone picking on me?

(We hear strange noises coming from the "kitchen. NED is moaning.)

GARY

Perfect!

LINDAHL

What was that?

GEG

Ned.

LINDAHL

Is he all right?

GARY

(Quickly)

Yeah.

GEG

(Matter-of-factly)

He's masturbating.

LINDAHL

(Her face frozen)

Oh.

GARY

I tried to tell you.

GEG

It's just something Ned does. It relaxes him and keeps him off my back. No harm done.

LINDAHL

But..he's..in..the..kitchen..

GARY

That's right. In the kitchen. Right where I have to eat.

LINDAHL

Does he know he's being this loud?

GEG

He's deaf.

LINDAHL

Doesn't he ever go into the bathroom and lock the door?

GARY

He has a porcelain phobia.

(NED re-enters the room with a bowl of ice cream, wiping his hands on his pants.)

NED

Who wants some ice cream?

GEG

No thank you.

LINDAHL

No thank you.

GARY

Fuck no..well..okay.

(NED smiles and hands him the bowl. Then he returns to the "kitchen" for some more.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 9

(LINDAHL is at work. She collates papers at a print shop. This means she circles a table gathering and staking various pages from an enormous stack of paper. It looks, and is, mind bendingly dull. She addresses the audience.)

LINDAHL

This isn't as bad as it looks. It's actually quite peaceful doing this as a job. It allows me to appraise myself and bring my inner emotional heart into harmonious balance. But then after the first half hour it can get boring. So I listen to talk radio.

(She collates walking in a circle around the table.)

Don't get me wrong. I appreciate the work. I used to be an elementary school teacher but I felt so restricted there. My flow was clogged by other's unreasonable selfishness so I fled into the simple, unaffected way of life. I can live humbly within my means if I pare down my expectations.

(She works.)

Have you ever read "Walden" by Emerson? Self-sufficiency. Appreciate the little things and let the big things take care of themselves. But then I met Gary.

(She loses her place at the papers and has to start over again.)

..I write so many poems about Gary. When I know you better I'll share a lot of them with you. Gary's such a child. You can see that. He has a lot of emotional problems. I know about his drug problem too. It's only pot but he's addicted just the same. I don't smoke. It serves no purpose to me. I'm adverse to fire and really, I'd rather live life in a pure state of being and not fed by some alterant. Gary says what does it matter how you get there? That's where we're different.

(Pause.)

I'm over forty myself. No much though. I won't ever have any children. The world is my child. Not that I necessarily wanted any. Children. I was never too interested in bringing life into this world as I was in tending to the life that was already here.

(Works.)

This philosophy is the basis of my Heart Poems. They are in conjunction with my heart portraits and my bread. My poems..

(She suddenly holds up an ornate and childishly scrawled poem that looks like a cross between a 13th century manuscript and a 9th grade boy's English homework.)

My portraits..

(She holds up an infantile portrait of GARY, looking like a little kid colored it in art class.)

My bread..

(She holds up a gray lump that looks like a giant turd.)

Are for people with whom I have connected. Heart people. One Christmas I dressed up like Raggedy Ann and went around giving Heart people mayonnaise cookies that I'd baked. I never spoke a word. See, I'm all about communication. Some people when confronted with a silent Raggedy Ann freaked out and treated me like I was crazy. I could tell. But there were other who responded with the proper spirit. That took courage.

(She loses her place again and starts over.)

Gary has a lot of problems with women. I think there's a very strong Oedipal tie with his mother. He treats me as if I were a threat to his security rather than a partner. A mate. A companion. He craves me physically but when we talk, he's condescending and cold..

(She works.)

I don't hold out much hope for the long-term potential of our relationship. Unless Gary grows up and gets his priorities straight. He needs to face life like the rest of us. He needs to stop hiding behind the memory of his youth.

(She trails off, robotically walking around the table, in a perfect collating rhythm, gathering papers.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 10

(GEG's living room, afternoon. GARY is at the drums. A guy names BUFF is playing a cheap Casio organ and ROD is trying to fill in as lead singer.)

GARY

Okay, on three.

(He counts out a beat and they lurch into a "song" that ROD does his best to "sing.")

ROD

I GOT A LOGICAL HARD ON!
I GOT A LOGICAL HARD ON!
THE DEAD CRAWL FROM THEIR GRAVES
TO EAT ANTIFREEZE AND MAYONNAISE!
THEY CRAWL ON THEIR BELLIES
THEY EAT ALL THE JELLY
I GOT A LOGICAL HARD ON!
I GOT A LOGICAL HARD ON
FOR YOU...!

(Mercifully the song disintegrates.)

ROD

(Angrily)

You guys were playing too loud!

BUFF

(Innocently)

But we have to play loud to drown out the vocals.

ROD

(Shaking with rage)

Fuck you Buff!

BUFF

(Menacingly)

You better watch it bitch. Your leather jacket don't mean shit to me.

GARY

Yeah man. Ditch the leather. We're not metal.

ROD

We're not? What are we then? Hardcore? Grindcore?

BUFF

We're punk dude. We're punk as fuck!

ROD

I am not no punk. And you better not tell me to watch it. I got knives.

(The phone rings. GARY answers it. He holds the phone out to ROD.)

ROD

(Suspiciously)

Hello? Yeah oh.. *(Super casual)*.. Yeah hi..

GARY

(To BUFF)

It's my mom. She doesn't want to talk to me. She wants to talk to him.

BUFF

At least he's not singing.

(ROD is doing the best he can to have a private conversation on the phone.)

BUFF

I don't think this dude is working out Gary. My wife's getting pissed about me being over here all the time. She says I'm neglecting her and the baby.

GARY

Women don't understand about a man's dreams. They just think of themselves. And the kids. It don't help you being so pussy whipped and all.

BUFF

No I'm not. *(Pause)* She has a point. I work all day at the limestone crusher at the cat litter factory then I come over here and smoke pot and play my keyboard. Then I usually end up going to the ATM and taking out thirty bucks for a bag of dope I can't afford and smoke it all over here. I got to start thinking about growing up. My kids are going to be starting school soon man.

(BUFF takes a big hit off the bong.)

BUFF

(Holding down the smoke)

When my dad was my age he already had four kids and a heart attack.

GARY

(Annoyed)

So you just give up living? You settle. Then everything we've done means nothing. I can't believe you.

BUFF

Just get rid of that guy! At the very least I still want to have a little fun when we play.

(ROD hangs up.)

ROD

I gotta go.

GARY

(Pointedly)

What did she want?

ROD

(Embarrassed)

Oh that wasn't your mom.

GARY

Who was it then? It sure sounded like my mom.

ROD

It was Shelly Gooble. She wanted to know.

GARY

Dude, I know my own mother's voice.

ROD

(A bad liar)

You're crazy.

BUFF

(Clueless, joking.)

Hey maybe stud here's got something going on with your mom Gary!

(Both GARY and ROD fly at BUFF in unison and start to beat him up. They stop. BUFF lays there moaning. GARY and ROD then face each other, panting. Then ROD leaves. The phone starts to ring. GARY answer it, breathing heavy.)

GARY

Hello? Yeah. He's right here.

(He hands the phone to BUFF who is sitting up.)

GARY

It's for you.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 11

(GEG and NED are at “work.” It is here we realize that NED is GEG’s boss. GEG is loading the napkin folder while NED looks on, clipboard in his hand.)

NED

I hate to mention it but the deadline looms large. That fire put us way behind..

GEG

(Coldly)

I know.

NED

Something wrong?

GEG

No.

NED

I know what it is..

(GEG continues to load the folder, while NED walks around, directing his comments to the audience.)

NED

I've been a bachelor for forty-seven years Geg. Except for that one time, you know. I realize you must think I'm strange, but I'm not. I'm just what you call fiercely independent. And why not? Who says that our generation has to always bend to the younger one? I was dancing before they were born. I was a GOOD dancer. Waltzes. Polkas. You name it. I can still sweep 'em off their feet. But don't get me wrong. I believe in treating a lady like a lady. I just don't know if I'm ready yet, for any, you know, additional responsibilities that fatherhood would entail. What would I do with my house?

(NED walks back over to GEG. The sound of the machinery gets louder.)

NED

You maybe want to get a little bite to eat at the Prancer's Club tonight?

GEG

I'm sick of that place. Same old Gershwin tunes.

NED

What are you saying Geg?

GEG

I'm not saying anything. Okay? I'm just saying it's time for something new.

(NED appears crushed by this remark. GEG melts some.)

GEG

It's not your dancing, okay? I like your dancing.

NED

(Relieved)

Cause I got this new step I been working on..

GEG

Yeah well, you're the one with the deadline.

NED

Cause I could show you..

GEG

Ned..

NED

Yeah, yeah. Maybe you're right. I got things to do myself. Don't think I don't.

GEG

I never said you didn't.

NED

I got plenty of things going on. Big things.

GEG

I'm sure you do.

NED

(As he walks into the shadows.)

Got anywhere from a dozen things I could be doing..

(GEG continues to silently load the napkin folder.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 12

(GEG and ROD are in bed. They lie there in post coital afterglow. ROD is dressed in his underwear and boots. Muffled drumming is heard from the direction of the living room. It sounds like a racing heartbeat. The “room” is lit blue and full of shadows, with the occasional flare of passing car lights.)

GEG

I'm thinking of a color.

ROD

Yeah? So?

GEG

Guess which color.

ROD

What for?

GEG

It's an ESP game.

ROD

(Lighting a cigarette)

I could you know. I'm psychic.

GEG

(Laughs)

Okay. Then what color and I thinking of.

ROD
C'mon.

GEG
I don't want you to go yet.

ROD
Okay. It's blue.

GEG
No. Yellow. Now you try.

ROD
Okay.

GEG
Got it in your mind?

ROD
What.

GEG
A color!

ROD
Oh yeah. Go ahead.

GEG
Red.

ROD
Nope. IT was blue.

GEG
Let's try numbers. Between one and ten.

ROD
Seven.

GEG
I haven't thought of one yet!

ROD
Are we playing this game or not?

GEG

Give me a second! We should be communicating now instead of just..

ROD

I gotta go..

GEG

No. I'm sorry.. I just said that. Forget it. Please..

ROD

Geg I don't know how I feel about all this. It feels good but..

GEG

(After a pause)

A number. Between one and ten.

ROD

(Thinking)

Three.

GEG

(Surprised)

That's right!

ROD

(Smugly)

See, I told you I was psychic.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 13

(GARY is seated at his drum kit. NED is on the couch. GARY is practicing his brush/snare technique while NED fidgets.)

NED

Where did you say she was?

GARY

She went to the store. *(Meaningfully)* with Rod. My cousin.

NED

(Missing the point)

That guy's a little scary all right. He looks like a hoodlum. But I think your mother's shown a real interest in him. I think she's trying to help him feel better.

GARY

(Slamming the cymbal, making NED jump)

I don't know when they'll be home.

NED

Well she won't be long if she just went to the store. *(Pause)* You know Gary it's no secret how I feel about your mom..

(GARY disgustedly puts on his headphones and starts drumming NED out. NED goes on, talking indistinctly, until the drumming sound itself is faded low into nothing. GARY's still pounding away, but there's no sound.)

NED

..and right where the mailman was killed by that truck there was still a puddle of blood and there were a bunch of cats there licking it up. Yep, life is the bully of the soul. You know Gary, the metric system angers me and here's why. It isn't American made. I always buy American made. We're the greatest gosh-darned country on the face of this here earth and our way of measurement is just as good if not better.

(He wipes his eyes.)

NED

I had a car once. It was a 66 Dodge Dart...Getting a little drafty in here. Or maybe my hair's so thin I'm a little sensitive to air currents and the like. Funny though how the air works. Next thing you know they'll think of a way to charge us all for it. We'll all get an air bill from the Public Air Company. You know your mother wanted me to get a toupee when my hair wore thin but that's nonsense. A man can't go around wearing wig. But I got one anyway. For her, you understand. She gets cross with me when I don't wear it, but it's a big pain in the rump let me tell you. First, I have to ye what hair I have to match the toupee. Then I get hair dye all over my hands and it won't come off. I splash it on the sink and walls of my bathroom and she gets mad. But it's messy and I don't like putting the glue on my hair..

(He looks at his watch.)

NED

Yeah she sure likes your cousin there. I think he kind of reminds her of her brother somewhat. She always talks about him. Dennis did this. Dennis did that. Well it's nice she takes an interest in him.

(Looks at watch again.)

NED

I wonder where they are.

(NED fidgets some more, shifting his position. He turns to see GARY isn't even listening to him.)

NED

(Getting up)

I think I'll go into the kitchen and see if there's anything good..

(He walks into the "kitchen." The drumming sound comes back and GARY finishes with a cymbal flourish. He takes off his headphones and looks around for NED. He hears a sound from the kitchen and walks toward it.)

GARY
(Expectantly)
Here kitty kitty..here Tribbles..

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 14

(GEG, GARY and ROD are sitting around in the living room. GEG is fiercely staring at GARY, what at first ignores her, and then calmly stares back. They engage in a brief, juvenile staring contest.)

GARY
(Contemptuously)
What are you looking at?

GEG
I can hold this stare just as long as you.

GARY
You just blinked! I win!

GEG
(After a monumental silence)
I'm not fuckin around Gary. I want you out of here.

GARY
(Meaningfully)
I know why you want me out of here.

ROD

(Defensively)

What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

GEG

(Quickly)

Both of you shut up!

ROD

(Who been trying to tie a tie around the collar of his leather jacket)

How's this?

GEG

Not good.

(She goes to adjust it for him, bringing her face up close to his. GARY watches, shocked!)

GARY

Jesus Christ do you have to do it in front of me?

ROD

(Guiltily)

We weren't doing anything!

GEG

(Turning to GARY)

How dare you interfere with my life? If I want to screw Howdy Doody, it's none of your goddamn business!

ROD

(Quickly)

Not that we're screwing or anything.

GARY

You fuckin' asshole.

(ROD throws a punch at GARY and misses. GEG tries to pin GARY's arms.)

GEG

You're going to have to stop that Rod! It's time for you to grow up and act like a man. Are you a man or are you still a boy?

ROD

Yeah I know. I know you're right.

GARY
She is not!

(She looks directly at GARY. This time their staredown is the real thing. It is simmering and frightful. GARY ends it by sticking out his tongue at her.)

GARY
I'd rather die than end up like you. If growing up means acting like you then fuck it!

ROD
I got news for you man! You're already old!

GARY
At least I'm not fucking my Aunt!

(NED enters.)

NED
What's going on? Playing Monopoly again?

GEG
Nothing Ned. Calm down.

NED
(Who is perfectly calm.)
I am perfectly calm.

GEG
I think I'm a better judge than you about your hysterical overreactions to things you know nothing about.

ROD
(Shaking his finger at NED)
You got no right to judge me! Neither of you!

GARY
You're a shitty fucking singer too! You suck! We're kicking you out of the band!

(ROD lunges for GARY again but succeeds only in knocking NED over.)

GEG
KNOCK IT OFF! *(Pause)* Gary you're not kicking anyone out of the band. Rod, you apologize to Ned for knocking him down.

NED

(Picking himself up)

You boys sure are rambunctious tonight.

GARY

It's MY band! I'll say who's in it and who's not!

ROD

I'm not saying I'm sorry for anything. Because I'm not.

NED

(So suddenly it stops everyone cold)

Well I feel as if his is my family. Aside from N-Boy I have no sons. So I'd like to give the boys here a bit of advice. (Pause) Boys, never take any wooden nickels. That's my advice.

(NED settles himself. All stare at him uncomprehendingly.)

NED

Think about it.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 15

(ROD is at “work;” a cramped little room in the basement of the local animal shelter. He is wearing a t-shirt and baseball cap to advertise this face. The scene is essentially silent except for the constant din of barking dogs.

ROD is miming that she is shoveling something from one spot to another and tossing it into an open door of some unspeakable contraption which hisses menacingly. The barking corresponds accordingly.

After ROD has finished shoveling, he closes the “door” with a sound FX clang. The barking becomes dim and smothered and ROD turns an imaginary knob, again with great effort, which makes the hissing increase in both intensity and volume.

ROD looks at his watch as the barking dies away. He turns the knob again with great effort and the hissing slows down. He opens the “door” to retrieve the corpses with his shovel. As he reaches down, he stops, startled. We hear the weak whining of a lone surviving dog. ROD takes off his gloves and picks “it” up. He reacts as if it is licking his face.)

LIGHTS DOWN**SCENE 16**

(Immediately the lights come up on GARY in his therapists "office." He sits in a chair, facing the audience.)

GARY

I just don't think this therapy is doing any good. Can't you up my medication?

(Pause)

Do you believe in miracles? I don't. Show me one and I'll believe. I WANT to believe. But I know what I see every day of my life.

(Pause)

Do you adjust your methods to fit each individual patient or do you treat everyone with the same rigid and unvarying technique? I mean you can't just treat me like anyone else. I'm an individual. You can't hold me to a set standard and general definitions and then label me for not conforming to societal trends which invariably change.

(Pause)

I'm not being defensive! No..I don't want to talk about what's going on at home. It's too hideous. It's my career I want to talk about. Well I don't care what she told you. I don't care what Lindahl told you either..She's too sensitive. She has no sense of humor. No

sense of fun. She takes everything figuratively when she should take it literally. Listen I'm not going to get personal here so you can start judging me. I don't want that kind of scrutiny.

(Pause)

I don't know what I want to talk about. How about my dreams? I have this one where I'm running from the chalk. You know I hardly ever have any good dreams. Mostly I have nightmares. I don't like to dream. The worst ones are the ambiguous, bittersweet ones. The ones that hang over you all day like a little smell. I smoke myself to sleep every night to keep from dreaming. I worry about a lot of things. It overwhelms me. Like my cat, Tribbles. He's twelve years old and I know he's going to die. I know some mooring I'm going to get up and he's going to be dead under my mom's bed..what? Yes of course I mean marijuana. What did you think? I need it to relax me. What? No, I can handle it. I mean it's not like it's heroin or something. I smoke pot because I like it. It's the only thing in my whole life that consistently makes me feel better. What's so wrong with that?

(Pause)

Oh yeah, my dream. I have this one good dream. No two. The first one was just fruit. Lots of fruit, all exotic and everything just perfect. The color was unbelievable. Like super Technicolor with extra vista vision. The other one, the one I've had a few times has to do with Mt Everest. And that dream is so clear, so sharp it's more real than real. I can smell the air and the smoke and the mountain is so beautiful and it looks like just a walk up a gentle slope. It doesn't look so hard I say to myself in this dream...it doesn't look so hard.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 17

(GEG is sitting alone in the living room. There is a timid knock. She answers the door. LINDAHL is there carrying a small turd-like homemade loaf of bread tied with a black ribbon.)

LINDAHL
Hello Geg. Is Gary home?

GEG
No, he's still at the therapists. He should be home any minute.

LINDAHL
Okay. I'll wait for him.

(The sit together. Uncomfortable.)

GEG
What the hell is that?

LINDAHL
It is bread. I baked it. For Gary. See, it's symbolic. I'm going to slice it.

GEG
Uh-huh.

LINDAHL

(Breaking into tears)

Slice..it..in two..

GEG

Oh. Oh well..*(Uncomfortably)* Well I didn't want any anyway. I'm not really a bread person. I'm more or a pretzel person..*(Pause)* Did Gary hit you? Did he do..something?

LINDAHL

(Through the tragic tears)

Do something to me? Oh Geg! He's drained me of all my emotional and psychic energy. He's like a vampire feeding off my aura and he won't pick up after himself. It's all so hopeless!

GEG

Gary's not perfect honey. But he's not that bad. You meet him halfway and you'll be surprised at how flexible he pretends to be.

LINDAHL

You of all people should understand. I'm still in my life discovery and I'm looking for new adventures but Gary's already settled into a pattern of willful immaturity in middle age with some kind of pathetic adolescent fantasy that you encourage! I thought he might finally be getting his act together when he took that pre-need funeral seminar, but it went nowhere.

GEG

He couldn't handle it. You can't force him.

LINDAHL

It isn't only that. He's not very attentive to my needs. He has no conception of anyone but himself.

GEG

Aren't you being too hard on him? I've heard him speak of you many times, always with fondness. He thinks about you honey.

LINDAHL

I wrote a special poem for us. It's called "Images." And when I went to read it to him, he stopped me at the dedication and said, "Baby, I'm just not interested." I can't say that I was hurt when he said that, because I kind of half expected it. But I also kind of half expected him to say, "Okay, sounds great." I was relieved a little when he said it because at least he was honest in wanting to spare us a few uncomfortable minutes and he didn't lie to me and pretend he was interested. But things haven't been the same since.

GEG

(Defensively)

I don't know what you want me to say. I got him into therapy. I suppose you're saying it's all my fault. I did the best I could..

LINDAHL

(Starting to cry again)

It's so shitty..my dreams aren't coming true..

(Her nose starts to bleed. It trickles at first, then it pours out. GEG quickly hands her some napkins, then finally a roll of toiler paper.)

GEG

You okay honey?

LINDAHL

I'm sorry Geg. I shouldn't be dumping this all on you.

GEG

I know how you feel honey. I got problems of my own.

LINDAHL

(Not listening)

Last week, at the lake, I gave him two balloons..

GEG

(Not listening)

If you knew my troubles you'd thank God on your knees that you aren't me.

LINDAHL

(Not listening)

..and I set mine free over the blue lake water..

GEG

(Not listening)

...but I can't help myself. I see this boy blossoming before my eyes and I can't help it. He's gone from being a thirty-year-old hood to becoming a man and it's the most exciting thing I've ever seen..it's like seeing the most perfect chocolate cake in the world..you have to take your finger and scoop up just a little bit of frosting..

LINDAHL

(Not listening)

..and as it floated past him..*(Cries)*..Gary threw rocks at it! He threw rocks at my balloon! Don't you see the symbolism? Don't you see the foreshadow in that?

GEG

What? He threw rocks at you?

LINDAHL

The symbolism! Life is all symbols Geg. Everything that ever was, is or will be is set out before us in a myriad of omens and metaphors. It is up to us to decipher its meanings..

GEG

But wouldn't that meaning be different for me than it would for you?

(LINDAHL looks momentarily stunned. He removes a bloody wad of Kleenex from her nose.)

LINDAHL

I'm speaking in a symbolic manner..

GEG

(Wistfully)

I wish I had some chocolate.

(There is a pause. LINDAHL holds out the turd-like loaf of bread.)

LINDAHL

We can eat this bread.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 19

(NED and ROD are sitting on the couch in the living room. GARY is playing the drums softly. ROD looks nervous and uncomfortable. As the play progresses, ROD's appearance starts to gradually change. He no longer looks hard, like a hood, he now looks confused and open. His manner of dress has changed. He's now wearing shirts that cover his tattoos. He never says a word through this entire scene but instead fidgets nervously and stress at everything but NED and GARY.)

NED

I do too! Besides this dog was special. Little N-boy number 7. He got to be quite old you know. Used to come into my bedroom and beg me for his heart pills. It was so cute. I think he knew that's what kept him alive. Besides N-boy number 7, N-boy, that's Ned's boy you know. Number 7 yeah he used to pack with the wild dogs on Burnt Mill Road. And one time he came home, I guess he got into a scrap, he came home with his eyeball hanging out. Well I'm no vet but I knew what I had to do. I washed it off real good with some borax and taped him to the floor with duct tape so he wouldn't squirm around. Pushed that old eyeball right back into its socket. But I never really knew if it was right side up but I guess it doesn't matter because he couldn't see out of it after that anyway. I sure did love that little dog....That's not what killed him though. Heck no. It got a little cantankerous but the vet just cut the optic nerve and sewed the eye shut so he wouldn't scratch at it..

GARY

(Mesmerized)

Well how the fuck did he die?

NED

(Fatherly)

You know Gary you'd get a lot farther with the ladies if you cleaned up your mouth a little. There I said it. Got it all off my chest. *(Pause)* How did who get killed?

GARY

N-boy!

NED

Oh..oh yeah. Well anyway, oh yeah. I was sitting on my bed at night after I had given N-Boy number six his heart medication..

GARY

Seven. It was N-boy number 7.

NED

Well old N-Boy was coughing in the other room and it was getting on my nerves and that reminded me to take my own medication, so's I pop in my blood thinner into my mouth and there's that taste..

(NED waits for further inquiry from ROD who is nonresponsive.)

NED

The taste..you know. The heart medicine for dogs! I took N-boy's pills by mistake. HE got my blood thinner. Why, I got my stomach pump for dogs and when N-boy finally comes into the room, it was the most pitiful sight. His poor blood must've really been thin you know? He came in, looked up at me kind of like he was saying thanks for everything..

(NED chokes up.)

GARY

Yeah, thanks for killing me.

NED

He didn't know that. He was just a dog.

GARY

That's not a good dog dying story. I saw a dog get hit so hard by a truck once that its heart came right out of its chest..AND IT WAS STILL BEATING ON THE STREET!

NED

(Scornfully)

Aw you haven't got any finesse in your dog dying story telling! You tell the punchline too soon! One of my smaller N-boys used to love to follow me when I did yard work. I

had these two rentals. Well I used to like it when he wasn't in my way, but sometimes I'd have to kick him to keep him off me. I wasn't cruel or anything like that. Even got to be a game where he'd play with my shoelaces and I'd kick him off. He liked it. He thought he was helping me with my yard work. I'd plant something and he'd go right for it. I'd say, "N-boy get out of there!" Well this one time I started to mow the lawn and he was there nipping at my heels. I kicked him. Maybe a little too hard I admit that. But somehow he ended up in the mower blade. Pretty dang messy and as I sat there in my grief holding his little guts, the neighbors called the police and can you believe it they gave ME a ticket for cruelty to animals. How do you like that?

GARY

Go figure!

NED

By the time I got out of jail the neighborhood had gotten a hold of N-boy's carcass..

(In the background we hear he enthusiastic barking of a puppy. No one says anything about it.)

GARY

That's nothing. I saw this pack of dogs once tear up this little kitten. It was just trying to find some warmth in this shelter I made. After they shredded it to pieces they turned on each other and tore at each other for the pieces they had. One of the dogs fell and the other split his stomach open. I didn't mind the dog so much, but I felt pretty bad for the kitten..

(The barking continues and we hear it suddenly encounter a cat with the usual aural results. ROD gets up, highly agitated and stomps out of the room.)

NED

What's the matter with him?

GARY

I guess he's jealous because he doesn't have any good dog dying stories..

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 20

(GARY and LINDAHL are sitting on the couch. The lights are low. GARY has his shirt off but LINDAHL is dressed and in clutching the turd-like loaf of bread.)

LINDAHL
(Reading from a prepared statement)
...And you used my body.

GARY
We made love.

LINDAHL
We fucked.

(GARY is shocked.)

GARY
You never talked like that before.

LINDAHL
I'm serious Gary and if speaking in you own vernacular will get your attention then I'm willing to do it.

GARY
You know that I love you.

LINDAHL

You think you love me. You get a dopamine rush and your emotions overload. That's not love Gary. *(Pause)* Would you get a job for me?

GARY

(Defensively)

What's that got to do with anything?

LINDAHL

Would you lose weight for me?

GARY

Hey!

LINDAHL

Here. I have baked this bread to symbolize our goodbyes.

(She dramatically breaks the bread in half and takes a deliberate bite, chewing disdainfully. GARY sits there, totally incredulous, as she gestures. He dumbly picks up the other half of the loaf and bites into it. He makes a face.)

GARY

This tastes like shit.

LINDAHL

It's bitter bread.

GARY

Well couldn't we put some jelly on it?

LINDAHL

You just don't get it, do you Gary.

GARY

No, I don't.

LINDAHL

(Dramatically)

We can't see each other anymore.

GARY

Not even for sex?

(LINDAHL Sighs.)

GARY

What have I done? Just answer me that.

LINDAHL

Nothing.

GARY

I must've done something. Always do something.

LINDAHL

No, you didn't do anything. That's what's wrong.

GARY

I feel like Abbot and Costello here..

LINDAHL

I better go.

GARY

No. I don't want you to go. Stay here with me.

LINDAHL

No.

GARY

(After a hopeful pause)

Then could you bring me a glass of water before you leave?

LINDAHL

(Rising)

Goodbye Gary. Someday maybe we can be friends.

(She heads toward the door.)

GARY

Lindahl..baby..

(She pauses, her back to him. Her face is hopeful.)

LINDAHL

Yes Gary?

GARY

Put some ice in it too, okay?

(She storms out of the room. GARY sits on the couch unconcernedly. He waits. Sure enough, LINDAHL returns with the water. She sets it down a reluctantly heads for the door.)

GARY
Lindah..baby..

(She stops again.)

LINDAHL
There wasn't any ice. Someone left the tray out again..

GARY
That's okay baby. I didn't really want the ice.

(She turns around. Hopeful again.)

LINDAHL
(Meaningfully)
What is it you did want? Exactly?

GARY
I want you to stay and sit on my face.

LINDAHL
No. we're broken up now. That was what the bread was for.

GARY
Yeah I know. But it will feel GOOD.

(She stands there wavering.)

GARY
Look. I know I have to get myself together. Don't you think I know? Can't you see how I'm struggling? I don't want to end up like everyone else. I want to be free. You're so hung up on society's definition of success that you can't see I am pursuing something else... There's a lot to me Lindahl, that no one even looks for. I don't know who I am or what I am supposed to be and all of a sudden here I'm the same age as my dad when he dropped dead. Okay! I know. What can I say to you? I hate myself. But I love you.

(LINDAHL stands there and they look at each other. We can see she is going to give in. GARY can see it too.)

LIGHTS DOWN**SCENE 21**

(GEG and ROD are in bed. ROD abruptly stops and rolls over. He is still wearing his boots.)

GEG
What'd you stop for? I was almost there.

ROD
I want to marry you Geg.

GEG
Oh for Christ's sake!

ROD
I mean it. I don't care about anything else. Living in my body is not a safe place.

GEG
Rod! We can't get married. Your father was my brother.

ROD
(Turning)
Is THAT why you do it?

GEG
(Startled)
Do what?

ROD

Fuck me and stuff.

GEG

(Fumbling, lighting a cigarette)

You don't know what the hell you're talking about.

ROD

I know I gotta change Geg. I'm getting older now and it's time to put away childish things.

GEG

I wish Gary would realize that.

ROD

So let's get married. Hell, we can run off. Change our names..make a new life somewhere else..No one will ever know.

GEG

Someone might.

ROD

I thought you were going to say, "I'll know."

GEG

Why bother?

(They lay back in the bed and smoke. They both half enjoy the fantasy.)

GEG

What was that?

ROD

What was what?

GEG

It sounded like a baby crying. Way far off.

ROD

I didn't hear anything.

GEG

Once when I was a teenager we were staying up all night at this friend of mine's. We were listening to the radio and the DJ said that there were reports of a baby crying in a field over on Burnt Mill Road. We went in her dad's car and drove out there. It was right over by the underpass. Anyway we got there and there was this drunk chick on a horse. She had a real bad fur coat on; it smelled and she was ranting about how she heard this baby scream in the field. Just when we were thinking uh-oh, we heard it..

ROD

You heard it?

GEG

Yeah. We just started running. Flat out. Blindly. But this Sheriff's Deputy pulled up in his car and we stopped. Man was he pissed at KDZA. They said the whole thing was a radio hoax. He said what we heard was a rooster. He said all he found was some old clothes. He opened his trunk it was full of old tattered, dirty..baby clothes.

ROD

(Impatiently)

What's that got to do with anything?

GEG

Listen. That happened years before you were ever born. I've spent my whole life here. How am I going to go somewhere and start everything over again? Jesus!

ROD

(After a pause)

Do you believe in ghosts Geg?

GEG

I don't believe in ghosts. The real world is scary enough for me.

(There is a sound, maybe a thump or a crash from the other room. Neither GEG or ROD acknowledge it. Instead they just stare into the dark.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 22

(GARY is at the therapists. He's weeping, crying uncontrollably.)

GARY

Pills? No way. I hear horror stories about those things. Why do you want me to take pills?

(He collects himself.)

GARY

Everyone is pressuring me to do something but I don't know what to do! I don't want to do anything, especially what they want me to do. I don't want to grow up and die like my father did. Work and die like a dog. Like he did. My Uncle Denny, Rod's dad, came and got me. He put his hands over my ears and told me my dad had a heart attack. He drove me to the emergency room. He didn't stop for the lights. He went through gas station corners to avoid stopping. I was afraid I'd be killed. All the way there I was imagining what would happen. I imagined we'd walk into a hospital room and my dad would be out of it and I'd ask him what a heart attack felt like. It didn't even occur to me that he might be dead. Then we got there and I saw my mom. She was standing alone with her fists pushed into her mouth. I went to her and told her everything would be all right, but she looked at me with a wild, unfocused look. She said to me, "you didn't see it." Then a doctor came in. He had such a look on his face. My mom saw him and wailed. "He's dead isn't he." And the doctor just looked at the floor and shook his head. I was surprised. It hadn't occurred to me that he might be dead. Knowing my mother I thought she was just overreacting as usual..

(Pause)

GARY

What you don't understand, what no one seems to grasp is that I'm chasing my dreams here. Sure it might not look like much to you, but what do you know? Just because my dreams are different from yours doesn't mean I'm crazy. Yeah sure I'll take your pills. I'll take them because even if there's half a chance they'll make me feel better then it's worth it. That's why I smoke pot. Because it's never once failed to make me feel better. Okay I'm immature. So what? Is it immature to want to do something more than anyone else? Is it fair to measure me against people my own age who have chosen to have families and pursue material gain? I'm crazy?

(Pause)

So now because I don't want to have kids or make a commitment Lindahl wants to break up with me. She's getting tired of it and there's a part of me that doesn't blame her, but what am I supposed to do? She wouldn't love me if I weren't Me would she? Why do people always want to change you?

(Pause)

That's what I'm here for. So you can change me. Okay. I'll start taking the pills.

(Pause)

But what's so wrong with me?

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 23

(GARY, ROD and BUFF are in the living room working on a new song.)

ROD

(“Singing”)

JOE MONTANA EATS BANANAS

IN HIS PURPLE SHOES

HE BOBS AND WEAVES WITH COUGHS AND SNEEZE

AND IT MAKES THE NEWS

JOE MONTANA

JOE MONTANA

WHAT HAS BECOME OF YOU

(GARY stops the song.)

GARY

This is lame. No one remembers who Joe Montana was. I don't want to play no jock song about football.

BUFF

No man! We were rocking! What's with you Gary?

ROD

Yeah, what IS with you?

GARY

I don't like the song.

ROD

Well me and Buff do. And we're two thirds of Cameltoe.

BUFF

(Diplomatically)

I like the other one too.

ROD

(Stung)

Okay then, let's do the other one. I don't give a fuck.

(They strike up a new song. It sounds just like the old song.)

ROD

BOOGERHEAD STEW BOOGERHEAD STEW
THAT'S ALL WE ATE THAT'S ALL WE HATE
AND I'M STILL LEFT WITH YOU. AND
BOOGERHEAD STEW BOOGERHEAD STEW
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOOGERHEAD STEW
AND YOU?

(GARY messes up again. The song grinds to a halt.)

ROD

C'mon man! Get it together!

GARY

(Flashing)

This is MY band!

BUFF

Actually it's MY band. You answered MY ad.

GARY

(Hotly)

Well it's still closer to me than it is to him!

BUFF

Look Gary you been really weird and stuff lately.

(With a crash GARY throws his sticks down on the drums. The crash reverberates.)

ROD

Great. Nice going. Now we don't have a drummer.

BUFF

Hey man this is all getting a little too heavy for me.

ROD

Let's smoke a bowl and chill.

BUFF

Nah. I don't feel like it.

ROD

(Incredulous)

You..don't..feel..like..it? Wow. I never thought I'd hear that.

BUFF

I'm kind of glad Gary walked out. *(Pause)* It saves me the trouble of quitting.

ROD

(Crestfallen)

What? You can't! *(He regains himself)* Oh whatever. You sucked anyway.

BUFF

You have no conception of real life do you. I got a wife I have to answer to Rod..

ROD

(Suddenly)

I'm getting married.

BUFF

(Surprised)

You are?

ROD

Yeah. So don't cry to me about your commitments.

BUFF

Well you aren't married yet. *(Pause)* Who?

ROD

Geg.

(Longer pause. BUFF looks around uncomfortably.)

BUFF

I can really see now that this band has no future.

ROD

Gary sucks on drums. We don't need him. I got the songs. That's all we need. Look, Gary's a grown man. I'm tired of always watching out for his feelings. It's unnatural to live with your mother for that long.

BUFF

You did.

ROD

Yeah but I don't anymore.

BUFF

Because your mother died dude.

ROD

What's the difference?

(BUFF gets up and starts dismantling his keyboard.)

BUFF

I better get going. My daughter's going to help cook dinner tonight.

ROD

Whatever. Loser.

BUFF

(Taking no offense)

See you later Rod. Tell Gary..tell him I said..tell him I said to go fuck himself.

(BUFF exits, leaving ROD still standing at the microphone. He closes his eyes and starts singing alone, with true passion.)

ROD

(“Singing”)

WELL SHE WAS MESSING WITH MAGNETS
TESTING HER POLARITY
SHE WAS MESSING WITH MAGNETS
TO ATTRACT HER TO ME
BUT IT DIDN'T WORK AND I FELT LIKE A JERK

A DISCARDED FLOWER PETAL
SEE I'M NOT MADE OF METAL..
SHE WAS MESSING WITH MAGNETS..

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 24

(GARY and GEG are on the living room, watching TV. On the other side of the stage, NED is in the “kitchen” making popcorn. NED is flooded in a blue spotlight, as he appears to be leaning over the counter.)

GEG

(Yelling)

Hurry up Ned! I’m hungry! *(Pause)* You’re missing the best part here!

(Suddenly the blue spotlight on NED flashes to white and he straightens up a little.)

NED

(Shakily)

Just a second! I have to melt the butter..

(The light changes back to blue as LINDAHL enters, dressed in a ball gown. Soft dreamy music begins. Like a magnet they snap together and begin to dance. They waltz around the kitchen together, elegantly keeping perfect time to the music, a spotlight following them. They even dance past GEG and GARY who don’t even notice them. GARY has moved from the couch to the drums and is bashing away, but we can’t hear it.)

GEG

(To GARY; wearily)

I’m gonna shove those drums up your ass.what the hell is taking Ned so long?

(NED and LINDAHL continue to waltz until the music slowly fades. They are back at the spot where NED began, coming to a dramatic climax in which NED dips LINDAHL and kisses her. Then he releases her and she fades back into the shadows along with the remaining strains of music. NED is again in the same attitude he was at the scene's beginning. He is slightly stooped over the counter, appearing breathless. He arranges his pants, takes the "popcorn" into the living room.)

GEG

It's about time. The goddamn show's about over.

NED

(Cheerily)

Got something to do it's worth doing right.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 25

(A silent scene. GARY is dismantling his drum kit. He looks totally defeated. He does it slowly and lovingly. In the background, maybe the TV's on or it's from next door, but we can faintly hear the sound of a baby crying.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 26

(ROD and GEG are in bed. Silently ROD gets up and dresses. He puts on a suit instead of his usual; biker stuff. He leaves without saying a word.)

GEG

(To the audience)

I know you think I let my life come to this by my own devices. Things seemed better when they were more trouble and less confusing. But I wanted to feel something again. Just once more. Anything.

(Pause)

I had a very hard time today. I had this awful dream that Tribbles, our cat was dying. I dreamed we couldn't find him and Gary thought he heard him crying and then I dreamed I was asleep and Tribbles came up from under my waterbed mattress. He was emaciated and his hair had fallen out and his eyes were very bright. He came up out of my waterbed and licked my face. Then I woke up for real and I just had this bad feeling and Gary found him dead under my waterbed mattress..

(Pause)

I guess God is in the details. If you look at the sky as a whole then all you see is stars. But if you could look at one star at a time, then you could see the whole universe. Does that make sense? No?

(Pause)

Okay. You think of a color.

(Pause)

Blue.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 27

(GARY is outside LINDAHL's house. We hear the crickets chirping. GARY takes out a plastic bucket and some drumsticks. He begins to play a song.)

GARY

(Singing in a fine whispery croon)

CAN WE TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER?

BLUE STORMS PASSING UNNOTICED BETWEEN US?

SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT THE SEASONS CHANGING?

A LONELY DAY FILLED WITH SUN AND DYING LEAVES ON FIRE

SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT THE AUTUMN IN YOUR EYES ?

A PRELUDE TO THE COLD TO COME.

SHOULD WE LET THE SUMMER SUN LIGHT OUR LIVES

WHEN THE GRASS IS GREEN AND THE HEAT MOVES

NOISILY ACROSS THE ROOM TOWARD US?

He finishes his song. A light goes on in LINDAHL's window, throwing a shaft of light on GARY from above. He looks up expectantly. He waits. Nothing happens. The crickets are chirping. Nothing happens. Very slowly GARY's expression changes. Very slowly..)

LIGHTS DOWN**SCENE 28**

(The living room. The drum kit is gone. GEG and NED are on the couch. NED is weeping and GEG is trying to comfort him.)

NED

I cant believe it..I can't believe he's gone..

GEG

I still can't believe somebody's do that.

NED

Poor little N-boy!

GEG

It was probably anti-freeze. They like to drink that.

(NED wails louder at this.)

NED

My poor little dog. *(Pause)* N-Boy and me went to the Grand Canyon together. Just the two of us. We went and visited all the graves of the 1919 Chicago Black Sox players too. N-Boy loved the Sox..

GEG

(Kindly)

Ned why don't you go to the kitchen and see what's in the fridge.

(NED obeys. ROD enters.)

ROD

What's the matter with him?

GEG

Someone poisoned his fucking dog.

(She stares sharply at ROD.)

GEG

You Motherfucker..

ROD

Close. *(Pause)* C'mon Geg. It was only one of those little snippy ratdogs and you fucking hated it.

GEG

(Ferociously)

I LOVED that dog you ASSHOLE! What are you trying to prove by killing Ned's little dog?

ROD

(Disconnected)

All day long I'm selling. I'm selling something to people who don't want it. You have to have some kind of fun somewhere.

GEG

You're sick.

ROD

(Angry)

Don't say that.

GEG

I don't even know what's I'm doing in the middle of this.

ROD

You put yourself there.

GEG

So this is what you want? To balance out your life in this manner? Work all day. Kill all night.

ROD

(Pause)

Why not? It works for me. *(Pause)* I want to marry you.

GEG

Oh Christ!

ROD

Why do you always act like it's out of the question?

GEG

I think I'm going to marry Ned.

ROD

(Calmly)

Then I'll kill myself.

GEG

Good.

ROD

I swear I'll do it. You know I'll do it.

(NED reenters, his shirttail hanging out.)

Ned

What's all the ruck about?

GEG

I just told him about N-Boy.

NED

(Touched)

Why Rod, you didn't even know my N-Boy did you. N-Boy, that stands for Ned's boy. I know that it's sill to get so attached to those dogs. But you know when a man gets to be my age; it's kind of reassuring to have a companion, someone who still thinks you're the bee's knees. I mean N-Boy, he sure loved me. He followed me everywhere. I was his whole life. For a man like me, past his prime and all, no I know I am. For a man like me having another living creature who makes you its whole life is..something.

(NED's eyes are shining. GEG looks stricken and remorseful. ROD gets up.)

ROD

Fuck the both of you.

(He stomps out.)

NED

(As if awakened from a reverie)

What'd he say?

GEG

Nothing.

NED

He sure was broken up about N-Boy. He must love dogs.

GEG

Ned don't get started on that again. You're just calming down now.

(GARY walks in. he's had his haircut and he no longer dresses like a teenager. He seems older in look and manner. It is not an improvement.)

GARY

Hey.

NED

Well I'll be. Look what the cat dragged in. You look like a regular man now! (Pause) I guess you heard of my sorrow.

GARY

Yeah..

GEG

(Grudgingly)

You look fine Gary.

GARY

(Excitedly)

That's not all. I got a job too. Where Rod's working. I'm starting in telemarketing though. Sales isn't for me.

NED

N-boy died.

GARY

I know. *(Pause)* I got three hundred for the drums. Here's a hundred and fifty.

(GEG cautiously takes the money.)

GEG

Is it American?

(GARY smiles sheepishly and bends down to kiss her on the cheek. GEG is very surprised indeed.)

GARY
Goodnight.

(We follow GARY with the lights into his "room." He begins taking clothes off and neatly folding them and hanging them up. He puts on some loud rock music and cranks it even louder. We can see, via a dim light on GEG and NED how annoyed this makes them. GARY is pulling things out of his pockets. He lingers over a pocketknife. Suddenly with sickening fury he takes the knife to himself, violently slashing away at his arms and chest and face. He staggers back, covered in blood. He takes the knife and plunges it into his stomach.)

GEG
GARY! TURN DOWN THAT GODDAMN MUSIC! GARY!..Gary!..

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 29

(ROD is sitting at a desk, on the phone. He is lit starkly, with cigarette smoke curling above him.)

ROD

(Into phone, with an oily tone we have not heard before)

Mr. DeSiata? Thos Rod Rodasta from Mayerling Mortuaries..Yes sir, I'm calling concerning the card you mailed in from the TV Guide that expressed an interest in more information concerning our pre-need plans. Do you have a moment to spare sir?..Yes I'm sure you sent it in. I'm looking at it right now...Well someone sent it in..No sir, I'm not trying to sell you anything. I want you to know that I am not paid on commission. My only concern is your complete and total peace of mind. .Can you hear me all right sir? Good. Now then. Everyone dies. It's just a plain fact. You can pay for it all now or you can let your family be at the mercy of wolves in their most vulnerable time. With pre-need you pay what you want, you know what you're going to get and you won't leave your family holding the bag...No sir, that wasn't a joke..I'm sorry sir. Not much of a sense of humor here since my mother recently passed away. What I would have given if she had just thought ahead..I would have had to make NO decisions in my pain and confusion..

(Pause)

Well can we get together? I feel we need to talk. You sound like a man with foresight. A man who does not believe in burdening others. I'd like to know you, even if we never

discuss the purpose for my call..Yes. Well sir as you know the average funeral costs over ten thousand dollars. With pre-need you can slash that figure in half.

(Pause)

Mr. DeSiata, I understand. I do. I want you knot something. Life is the bully of the soul.

(Long pause)

Yes..I look forward to it..

(ROD hangs up. He takes a drag on his cigarette and snorts a line of crank from a small mirror he has on his desk. He dials the phone.)

ROD

Mrs. Martinez? Hi, this is Rod Garcia from Mayerling Mortuaries. Yes ma'am I'm calling in connection with the card you mailed in from TV GUIDE expressing an interest in our pre need services..

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 30

(NED is standing in line at the supermarket. He's holding a few things, some toilet paper, some dog food etc. They hear the sound effects of the store behind him. LINDAHL comes into the light, carrying a basket full of groceries.)

LINDAHL
(Tapping NED)
Hi there.

NED
(Startled)
Well hello Linda. Getting some groceries eh? Yeah me too. Me too. Needed a few things, that's all.

LINDAHL
(With meaning)
How ARE you Ned?

NED
Well it's been a tough couple weeks since my little dog died.

LINDAHL
(Putting her hand on NED's shoulder)
Oh Ned, I'm sorry to hear that.

NED

Oh well. I got me a new one now. N-Boy number 11. N-Boy that's short for Ned's boy you know.

LINDAHL

I know. *(Pause)* How is...everyone?

NED

Oh great. Fine. Everyone's just fine. *(Pause)* I suppose you heard all about Gary.

LINDAHL

(Exasperated)

What now?

(There is an awkward silence.)

NED

Well it was an accident really. No need to blame yourself. He's just a confused boy. It was superficial really. Just stitches...He's still in the hospital you know. I never know what to say about things like that. Now linoleum, I know all about linoleum, Forty years in the business and you get to know it pretty well. And it's not true that linoleum is full of asbestos. Not any more.

(NED trails off. LINDAHL looks at him stone faced.)

LINDAHL

He tried to kill himself?

NED

Say, you ever sneak a peak at people's groceries? I mean what people buy at Safeway reveals more about them than anything.

(NED looks at his toilet paper and dog food and become self-conscious.)

LINDAHL

(Stonily)

How's the dancing Ned?

NED

Well I'm no Buddy Ebsen but I can cut a rug.

LINDAHL

Gary never danced with me. He said it made him feel embarrassed. We should have a dance sometime Ned.

NED

(Nervously)

Now.. I don't go in for..but sure..sure sometime we could give it a whirl. Who knows?
Who knows? No harm done..

LINDAHL

Ned, it's your turn.

(NED snaps out of it and hands his groceries in the direction of an invisible cashier.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 31

(LINDAHL is sitting next to GARY's hospital bed. She is sitting ramrod straight with a sheaf of papers in her hands. GARY groggily wakes up.)

LINDAHL

Self-murder is the highest form of narcissism there is Gary. You weren't trying to kill yourself as much as you were trying to make everyone else responsible for your pain.

GARY

That's right.

(He turns away.)

GARY

Except it didn't work.

LINDAHL

I want to understand.

GARY

It was because I cut my hair.

LINDAHL

What?

GARY

I CUT MY HAIR!

LINDAHL

Yes. You look very nice now.

GARY

I looked good before.

LINDAHL

Gary, why do you have so much trouble growing up?

GARY

Because I'm afraid of ending up like you.

(There is a long pause.)

LINDAHL

I better go.

GARY

Go ahead. I'm supposed to take this kind of shit from you but when the situation is reversed then suddenly it's over the line. You want honesty then I'm all about honesty. I don't have anything else to lose. You hide behind your whole trip with your poems and your metaphor just like I hide behind my drums. You just get away with it.

LINDAHL

I only brought you those poems because I thought they would enlighten your life to other people's feelings..to my feelings.

GARY

You don't get it, do you. Your feelings aren't my responsibility. I don't want to be an adult if being an adult means I have to swallow my own common sense and fall for every bullshit con that comes out on TV. I still want to find my life, not play it out and hope for the best.

LINDAHL

That's all very fine Gary, but in this world, in the REAL world you take what you can get. You take bits and pieces and you make something of it. I know you laugh at me and my ways but I built it Gary. I built it from nothing and it works. Maybe you're right about me. But you have to be accepting Gary..

GARY

I have to be accepting? I don't want to be accepting. I want to be..anarchy.

(GEG enters.)

GARY

Great. Just what I need.

GEG

(Wearily)

Don't start Gary.

LINDAHL

He's very depressed. He isn't making any sense.

GEG

Well when you pull a stunt like that you have to take the consequences.

GARY

It seemed like the thing to do at the time.

GEG

(Exploding)

Don't give me your flip answers! Do you have any idea the feeling inside of me when I thought you might die? When I saw that you were in so much pain that you tried to kill yourself? Fuck you! You selfish prick! You're my only child Gary..

GARY

Sorry!

(GEG calms down. GARY thinks better of it.)

GARY

No, I'm not sorry. I wanted to cause pain.

GEG

You wanted to cause pain?

LINDAHL

That's sick Gary.

GARY

So help me. Are YOU going to help me?

LINDAHL

If you ask me to.

GARY

I don't need your fucking help.

LINDAHL

But do you WANT it?

GEG

Well I can't handle this anymore Gary.

GARY

I said I was sorry.

GEG

(Screaming)

Where I come from when you cut yourself to pieces with a knife you need professional help!

GARY

I need a bigger knife!

LINDAHL

Gary why are you so bitter?

GARY

I don't know! *(Evenly)* I sold my drums. I quit my band. I cut my hair. What else do you want?

LINDAHL

You can work on your appearance.

GEG

You can get a job..

GARY

Okay. I'll join a gym. I'll get a job at the cat litter factory. It's honest work. I know that. *(Pause, in a dead, even tone)* But I'll still be me. No matter how much I change to please you I'll still be me. You'll never be satisfied.

GEG

Don't be ridiculous. We'd be thrilled if you changed..

LINDAHL

Even if you just meet us halfway Gary. We'll accept you for what we want you to be.

(GARY just gives up.)

GARY

Okay. Okay.

LINDAHL

We want you to get better.

GEG

We want you to be a man.

GARY

(Flatly)

Okay. All right.

LINDAHL

Work on your people skills. Be more sensitive to other people's needs..

GARY

(Flatly)

Yeah..okay.

GEG

Start you life. Build your future on brick at a time..

GARY

(Flatly)

Yeah..okay.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 32

(ROD is crouching outside GEG's bedroom window, clutching a sheaf of papers. We hear the sounds of the night; crickets, coyotes, etc. You get the picture.)

ROD

Geg! Geg! I wrote you a letter!

(No response. ROD looks around, sees a "car." He takes a knife out of his suit pocket. He plunges it into the "tire." We hear the violent hissing of air. He does it again. And again. Suddenly he is enveloped in blue and red light, flashing on his face one color after another. He stands up straight with a strange and Wrong smile on his face. He tears up the letter, tears it into little pieces, all the while smiling. When he is finished, he throws the pieces of paper up into the air, like confetti.)

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 33

(GEG is in bed. NED lies next to her, but he says nothing. Ostensibly she's talking to NED but instead she addresses the audience.)

GEG

Did you ever have a nightmare and wake up alone? Oh God what a feeling. Usually it's when I take the sleeping pills, I have such vivid dreams. Like the one where I'm walking to school and no one there will have anything to do with me anymore. I had done some unspeakable thing and I was so ashamed. I wished I could just turn back time. Then I wake up and it's such a relief..

(Pause)

Why is it when you're crying hard in your dream you can wake up and you haven't been crying at all? My husband used to say that if you put cedar chips under a dreaming dog's head you'd have the same dream as the dog. But who cares about what dog's dream?

(Pause)

One time there was this dream I had about a body in the basement. It was a naked man, but I only saw part of his back. I touched the fleshy part of his shoulder with my hand and my handprint stayed on his skin. It was cold..

(Pause)

Do you believe in dreams? I do. I have several dream encyclopedias but I don't use them anymore. They're good for the archetypes, but dreams are too personal. Don't you think?

(Pause)

I have this one dream about once a year about mound builders. People who dig in mounds for bones. I'm a hostess with a stun gun and a man with no identity comes to me for help. Instead I stun him and kill him and regenerate him back to life so I can mold him to my own specifications. But then we're killed together and we go into different lives. Different incarnations. God is there but he's a guy who drinks beer and lives under a bridge, like a troll. He's a Mexican guy I think.

(Pause)

That's not in the dream encyclopedias.

(Pause)

I wonder what that dream means. They say dreams are the way you control your mind, but I think it's vice versa. I think it has something to do with alternate dimensions. Whose to say we don't live our lives on two or more entirely different planes of existence? When we're asleep in one world we're alive and awake in another that's just as real..

NED

(Suddenly)

I never have any dreams.

GEG

(Sleepily)

None? Never?

NED

Well once when I was a youngster in Pueblo, Colorado I had a dream one time. It was all about me and Clark Gable. Except it wasn't the genuine Clark Gable, but sort of like a carton one, with big bushy sideburns. He kept saying "howza!" and winking at me. Then Clark Gable took this piece of paper and tore it to bits saying, "Howza!" While he was tearing it up this real bouncy music was going. Like in those old Little Rascal shows. When Clark Gable was finishes tearing the paper to little bits he threw it over his head and let it all fall down. He said, "howza!"

(GEG appears to be asleep.)

NED

Other than that I never had any dreams.

LIGHTS DOWN**SCENE 34**

(ROD is seated facing the audience, looking very dapper with a large three ring binder full of pictures of coffins. He addresses the audience as if it were a mourner.)

ROD

I'm not going to come on strong now. I know this is a time of great confusion and unrest for you. I know all about the clichés of funeral directors and how they supposedly take advantage of people. Maybe some do. But I don't. Please tell me..how can we best celebrate your father's life?

(Pause)

I hoped you would appreciate it if I spoke plainly. As you can see, I'm no slick salesman. I'm not paid on commission so it doesn't matter to me which casket you choose. I only want you to feel that you have done justice to the memory of the life of the person you are choosing for.

(He opens the book to show us some coffins.)

ROD

Let me tell you that six months ago I lost my own mother to the same horrible disease. I understand your loss. Making the necessary and proper arrangements was an ordeal I was ill prepared for. If you could have seen me on that day..well let's just say I had a lot of growing up to do.

(Pause)

Yes sir, caskets are required by law for cremations. It's unnecessary in my opinion. Such a waste..

(Holds up a picture.)

Now let me show you this one. It's gopher wood. This is the one I chose for my mother. You wouldn't know it to look at me now. But all my life I was a mama's boy...

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 35

(The living room. GEG and NED are watching TV while LINDAHL and GARY are sitting across the room. GARY is seated at a small snare drum and cymbal. He looks happy as he timidly bangs it.)

GEG

Goddamnit Gary, can't you wait until the commercial?

LINDAHL

And I thought we might be able to talk about it but I don't know if it's going to work out Gary. Okay, you got a job and I'll give you karma credit for that but Gary you haven't made a fundamental commitment to change.

GARY

Then let's get married.

LINDAHL

How would we live? On what you make at the animal shelter?

GARY

It would be change. Change is good.

LINDAHL

That's not funny. You make things so frivolous. besides, where would we live?

GARY

Your place.

LINDAHL

I'm not allowed to have any pets.

GARY

Is that all I am to you? A pet?

LINDAHL

No..I didn't mean..

GEG

You're sure as hell not going to live here.

GARY

I don't WANT to live here.

NED

(His hearing aid is turned off)

Huh? What's that?

LINDAHL

Is this your response to my honesty? To evade me with a proposal of marriage?

GARY

Well, I love you. The rest is just details.

LINDAHL

But God is in the details!

GARY

I don't care about God. I love you. You don't have to love me back. I know what I am. C'mon. Let's get married. Let's be irresponsible one more time before it's too late.

NED

Why don't you two get married and live here? There's plenty of room, even after I move in.

GEG

Ned! Are you crazy? It's going to be bad enough with you here. You gotta be out of your goddamn mind.

LINDAHL

I don't consider this proposal as sincere..

(GARY puts on his headphones and starts playing his drum. He seems connected again, to something, however tenuous, it is his. At this moment we see GARY as a whole person. A seriously flawed person maybe, but someone who is not quite ready to give up.)

LINDAHL

Gary! I want you to be serious a minute! I'm not going to couple with you as a life partner and companion as long as you continue to backslide into infantile behavior..

GEG

Couldn't you at least wait until the commercial to settle this?

NED

No, I just went a while ago. I'm still okay.

(GARY has been tapping his drum and cymbal. He suddenly finds a groove, not unlike that of a beating heart. It isn't anything fancy, but it is a little groove. To everyone's astonishment, he starts to sing. Not yell singing like he did before, but a soulful croon.)

GARY

(Almost whispering)

HALF HEARTBREAK, HALF GLUE
WISH YOU WERE HERE TO TELL ME WHAT TO DO
HALF GARDEN HALF ZOO
DROWNING IN BOTTOMLESS POOLS..

JUST STAYING HIGH NOT ACTING SHY MAYBE THAT'S A LIE
YOU CAN'T TELL..

HALF INFERNO HALF COOL
WISH YOU WERE HERE SO I COULD TOUCH YOU
HALF CIRCUS HALF JEWEL
ALL I SEE ARE FINGERPRINTS ON YOU

GO AHEAD AND TRY TO LOOK ME IN THE EYE MAYBE IT'S A LIE
I CAN'T TELL..

HALF STORY HALF TRUE
ISN'T THAT WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO
HALF ME AND HALF YOU
WATCH THE SKY TURN FROM GRAY TO BLUE..

(At first GEG gets mad. She doesn't say anything but we can see her annoyance. But as GARY's song progresses we see her change her mind. LINDAHL also pays close attention. NED watches the TV.)

GEG

That wasn't as bad as the others I guess.

GARY

(Embarrassed)

Okay. Okay.

GEG

Jesus I'm sorry I said anything now!

GARY

So am I!

(He slams his headphones down and sullenly taps the cymbal. NED is startled and looks over.)

NED

What happened to the rest of your drums Gary?

(GARY doesn't hear him. He's playing the song again. LINDAHL turns off the TV and everyone, including NED, listen.)

C U R T A I N