

**AUTHOR'S AGENT**

Susan Schulman  
A Literary Agency  
454 W.44th Street  
New York, New York 10036  
Tel 212 713-1633  
Fax 212 581-8830  
Schulman@aol.com

**INTERLUDES**

**By**

**Allan Havis**

Allan Havis  
6035 Hillpointe Row  
La Jolla, CA 92037  
allanhavis@aya.yale.edu

### **Characters**

Josh . . . . . thin, mid 20s, handsome, introverted  
Beverly . . . . . Josh's sister, late 20s, sexual, goth, domineering  
Arlene . . . . . mid 20s, a little heavy, attractive, from Vermont  
Rupert . . . . . stockier than Josh, late 20s, aggressive neighbor

### **Setting**

Most likely a New York City one bedroom tawdry apartment in Alphaville – or any grungy urban America locale

**SCENE ONE**

**(Perhaps in full blackout or dim lights, we hear Patti Smith's *Horses* song and fades down as dialogue begins)**

What is it, Beverly?

JOSH

I had a miscarriage.

BEVERLY

When?

JOSH

The other day.

BEVERLY

You should have told me.

JOSH

Why?

BEVERLY

For fuck's sake . . .

JOSH

Like you would care.

BEVERLY

Shit.

JOSH

I wasn't sure. It wasn't meant to be. You can kill it. Or God can kill it. Or a little of both.

BEVERLY

JOSH

I'm part of this.

BEVERLY

Don't you understand? I can't have the baby.

JOSH

We can have anything we desire.

BEVERLY

Like a house in the Hamptons?

JOSH

Bust my balls.

(Pause)

Let's go to a movie.

BEVERLY

Not tonight.

JOSH

Want a massage? A little shiatsu?

BEVERLY

Sure.

(He begins)

I'm sick of work, Josh. It's killing me. I want to stay home for a while.

JOSH

I could use the company.

BEVERLY

That's the spot. Harder. It's a nerve. Oh, shit . . .

(Pause)

We could live off our trust fund. I'm of age. You have two years to go.

JOSH

I don't know.

BEVERLY

You don't know what?

JOSH

We've been doing a lot of coke.

BEVERLY

We?

JOSH

Me.

BEVERLY

Let's move, Josh. This is bullshit. I'm tired of the village.

JOSH

And lose this place? Better than rent control.

BEVERLY

Hell, it's like living in an old Warhol film. This apartment is like the fucking dives you see in the *Saw* and *Hostel* films. I never liked basement apartments.

JOSH

Better than a fifth floor walk-up with bathtub in the kitchen. Besides, we got the greatest neighbors in the city. Three junkies, two rappers, one fag hag, and the Bavarian Monk.

BEVERLY

Don't forget Rupert. A failed gangsta from the Bronx.

JOSH

Ah, Rupert Delgado Miller! Like a brother to me. Can cheer up the dead at any Assisted Living hole. I'm sorry, Bev. My friends are here. We're not moving.

BEVERLY

My gums are bleeding.

JOSH

What?

BEVERLY

Smoking too much. I think my teeth are loosening.

JOSH

Switch to vaping.

BEVERLY

It's the same crap.

JOSH

Better floss.

BEVERLY

It's sexual anxiety. For real.

(She makes a bizarre face. He laughs crudely)

JOSH

No, it's probably hereditary.

BEVERLY

You too?

JOSH

Not as bad as you.

(They kiss)

BEVERLY

You must have a charmed life.

JOSH

*Mais oui bien sûr*, blessed by Lucifer in a lurid black Mass after midnight – blessed with an incurable preeminence.

BEVERLY

You're such a shithead.

JOSH

You love your shithead. You would die with your little shithead.

BEVERLY

I do love my little shithead.

(She pulls his hair back playfully, painfully)

JOSH

Can you read his mind?

BEVERLY

Any time.

JOSH

What is he thinking?

BEVERLY

(Pause)

Sex.

JOSH

What kind of sex?

BEVERLY

Extreme.

JOSH

Still don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

BEVERLY

Go shove up a beer bottle while listening to Adele's new album.

JOSH

See? You victimize him. A naked boy. A grown man. You violate his corporal space. You see the boy in him and you just think about sodomy. You monopolize his air waves like satellite radio.

BEVERLY

You're too high, don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

JOSH

Haven't smoked a thing.

BEVERLY

Truth or dare.

JOSH

Haven't popped shit.

BEVERLY

It's become second nature.

JOSH

Beverly, it's an effort. I wish you would let up. My birthday's coming. Send long stem roses in a box.

(Pause)

Let's fuck.

BEVERLY

What?

JOSH

Fuck. Let's fuck.

BEVERLY

Another time.

JOSH

Don't be selfish.

BEVERLY

Then let me sleep through it. No galloping.

JOSH

No galloping?

BEVERLY

Not even a slow trot.

JOSH

How about a fox trot? A waltz, perhaps?

BEVERLY

Perhaps a waltz.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE TWO**

**(Arlene enter the apartment while Josh is finishing shaving in the kitchen sink)**

ARLENE

I like you home.

JOSH

Do you?

ARLENE

I do. It's not pretentious.

JOSH

It's a super's apartment. I'm the super. The bathroom's in the hall with a padlock.

ARLENE

You're kidding?

JOSH

No. Without a lock, anyone from the street can find their way into the toilet.

ARLENE

Do you pay rent?

JOSH

Of course not. It's free and they pay me a little on the side. I'm the plumber, the electrician, the fix-it guy, and I warn the landlord when the inspector is coming.

ARLENE

This subsidizes your art.

JOSH

What do you think?

*(Closes his eyes)**Cerberus – a dog of hell**Three headed beast**Putrid foam from his jowls*

*Keeps the fucking dead  
From ever leaving  
The vile ticks in his fur  
Explode when Hell's gates  
Opened for little children*

ARLENE

Wow. That packs a punch.

JOSH

I was drinking a cheap California merlot when I wrote that.

ARLENE

You must come over and see my place.

JOSH

Sure.

(Pause)

I like to be on the premises six days a week. Just in case hell breaks loose.

ARLENE

Come at night. I don't work weekends.

JOSH

Sure.

ARLENE

I'll cook us dinner. I'm a great cook.

JOSH

Are you?

ARLENE

Yes, a great cook. Last year I got into exotic herbs.

JOSH

Nothing like exotic herbs.

ARLENE

And organic zucchini. I can do miracles with zucchini.

JOSH

I like broccoli. Broccoli crowns. They look like bonsai trees.

ARLENE

I'm also great with broccoli.

(Pause)

Besides writing poetry, how do you pass the time?

JOSH

A little of this, a little of that.

ARLENE

I bet you're good with your hands.

JOSH

Got to be. Lots of maintenance work. Pipes, radiators, locks, you know, lots of shit work.

ARLENE

Can I read your poetry?

JOSH

Not now, Arlene. It's too personal.

ARLENE

Okay. I understand.

(Pause)

Any hobbies?

JOSH

Can't tell you. You'd laugh.

ARLENE

I won't.

JOSH

I know you'll laugh. They all laugh.

ARLENE

Tell me.

JOSH

All right.

(Pause)

I build bird cages.

ARLENE

What's funny about that?

JOSH

Nothing.

ARLENE

Why do you build bird cages.

JOSH

I don't really know. My sister tells me as I used to build them when I was a little kid. I didn't have many friends. We weren't allowed pets but I had imaginary birds. The cages kept them safe. I guess I like the intricacy of design, the imaginary space inside the cage. The way time stops still when you build. Who knows, everyone has to have a physical talent.

ARLENE

My aunt in Brattleboro makes the loveliest doilies out of shopping bags.

JOSH

Is that right?

(Pause)

Arlene . . .

ARLENE

Yes?

JOSH

(Awkward)

I find you attractive.

ARLENE

Do you?

JOSH

Yes.

ARLENE

I don't wear make-up.

JOSH

I've noticed. Not even eye liner.

ARLENE

It's an allergy kind of thing.

JOSH

I could guess.

ARLENE

The poems you read at the coffee house were so raw.

JOSH

Raw?

ARLENE

Like Bukowski.

JOSH

Like Patti Smith?

ARLENE

Yeah, I think so.

JOSH

Is that good?

ARLENE

Yes. I think so.

(Pause. Awkward)

I like your house plants.

JOSH

We don't get enough light unfortunately. I talk to the plants which seems to help. And I like to keep the curtains closed most of the day.

ARLENE

Do people look in.

JOSH

Winos piss on our windows.

ARLENE

Really?

JOSH

You'd be surprised. It's a very popular building.

ARLENE

I love New York. Don't you?

JOSH

Immensely. Love the mayor too.

ARLENE  
I'm from Vermont, originally.

JOSH  
Is that right?

ARLENE  
Montpelier. I often visit. Very small town.

JOSH  
Ski town?

ARLENE  
Like *South Park* with a lot of flannel underwear.

JOSH  
Were you a naughty girl up there . . . in flannel?

ARLENE  
(Laughing)  
Very.

JOSH  
I like naughtiness.

ARLENE  
It can get you in trouble.

JOSH  
So?

ARLENE  
Not in a small town.

JOSH  
Not in a small town.

ARLENE  
Small towns have small newspapers.

JOSH  
I get it, Arlene.

ARLENE  
I guess it's time I go.

JOSH

Your smile is very engaging. Do I see dimple?

ARLENE

In dim light, you can see . . .

(Pause)

What time is it?

JOSH

Around four.

ARLENE

Oh hell, I like to set up my tables before five.

JOSH

Arlene . . .

ARLENE

Yes, Josh?

JOSH

Can I have your scarf?

ARLENE

(Pause)

Sure.

(She removes it and gives it to Josh)

Are you cold?

JOSH

I'm always cold.

(Pause)

It was nice having you over.

ARLENE

Did I give you my phone number?

JOSH

No.

ARLENE

(She takes out a little notebook from her purse)

I'll write it down. Call me when you have your next day off, Josh.

JOSH

(He takes the slip of paper from her notebook and reads the numbers)  
I like that you slash your number 7 with a cross hatch. They do that in France.

ARLENE

Do they?

JOSH

(With charm)  
They do, Miss Arlene Travis. They do.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE THREE**

**(The next day – morning. A loud knock at the door. Josh answers it to find neighbor Rupert – his shirt nearly unbuttoned to his waist and a gold chain around his neck)**

Rupert!

JOSH

RUPERT

You piece of shit!  
(Rupert slaps Josh playfully across the face and a second jab hits Josh in the belly)

JOSH

You shaved off your beard? You look a possum's pussy.

RUPERT

Yeah.

JOSH

Why?

RUPERT

'cause of the cunt.

JOSH

I thought you kicked her out.

RUPERT

Gladys came back. She's tenacious. Is tenacious a word? I got lonely. Stupid cunt. I missed her. Loneliness sucks. I can't do the fucking laundry. Mixed the colored with the white. Every fucking thing is pink.

JOSH

I like Gladys.

RUPERT

Then you sleep with her. I can't stand her name. Jesus Christ! She keeps advising me what

to do. She tries to teach me a new vocabulary word each day. What am I? A fucking exchange student from Tokyo? She buys these books. She doesn't talk about them. Just leaves them around, with the fucking page opened. I'm supposed to get the hint. I ask her when is the fucking test? And she said the test is every fucking day.

JOSH

Beats me, Rupert. You're the guy who wrote the book?

RUPERT

You're telling me? Street smarts trumps a PhD. Say, what gives with Polaski? This is the shittiest building along Second Avenue. We got more Pakistanis moving in than I count cockroaches. And where does he come off asking for a rent hike? I'll kill him, the next time I see the fucker. I'm walking around with my Louisville slugger baseball bat. Every bald head I see, I want to blast it out of the frickin' park.

JOSH

Got to catch him early. Polaski sneaks in before rush hour and sometimes before the garbage trucks. He's wearing one of those furry Russian hats.

RUPERT

The little motherfucker.

JOSH

On your way to work?

RUPERT

Two funeral today. First one's this big Mafiosa family from Brooklyn - a cousin related to Eddie the Chink - you know, from the Gambino line. Bet you we make the Daily News.

JOSH

Is it true they double up bodies in some coffins?

RUPERT

Depends on the stature of the deceased. And how many hits that week. Stupid way to dump a whack job. Say, Josh. You got any loose joints?

JOSH

I can sell you a bag.

RUPERT

Nah, just give me a lose one. We'll smoke it now. I told the bitch I would quit.

JOSH

(Throwing a joint over to Rupert)  
Another time. Keep it. Company's coming.

Pussy? RUPERT

Keep it to ourselves, Rupert. JOSH

Sure, Josh. Sure. RUPERT  
(Pause. Looking at himself in the hall mirror)  
Thanks for the J.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE FOUR**  
**(That night, Josh and Beverly are on the sofa)**

BEVERLY

So then what happened?

JOSH

I told Wineburger, if he doesn't like it, he can get this fat ass out of here.

BEVERLY

You think word will get back to Polaski?

JOSH

I don't care, Bev. I used to respect Polish people, but not this prick. I'm not a goddamn errand boy.

BEVERLY

But you are.

JOSH

Don't give me shit.

BEVERLY

Let's move.

JOSH

I'll wash the floors and change the fuses. I'll put locks on doors when the rent is behind. But I don't like management fucking with me.

BEVERLY

We have options.

JOSH

Yeah. A great menu of options.  
(She kisses his neck and gives him a hickey)

BEVERLY

What's for dinner?

JOSH

Broccoli. Crown broccoli. I'll melt some cheddar over it and garnish with pine nuts. Maybe some brown rice with garlic butter.

BEVERLY

Why didn't you go shopping today?

JOSH

I was working the building. What were you doing?

BEVERLY

(Baldly insincere)

Job interviews. All day. Piercing and tattoo studios.

JOSH

Give me a break . . .

BEVERLY

Take out the chest.

JOSH

No.

BEVERLY

Take out the chest, Josh.

JOSH

I'm not in the mood.

BEVERLY

Take out the chest, or else . . .

JOSH

(Getting up, finding the chest, opening up the chest)

I'm really not in the mood.

(They dress up quickly as their parents)

Hello, Natalie.

BEVERLY

Don't hello me, Sam.

JOSH

What?

BEVERLY

I should shout it out the goddamn window for all the world to hear.

JOSH

Not to the neighbors, for Christsake.

BEVERLY

I'm so furious at you.

JOSH

At me? Good God, what did I do?

BEVERLY

Guess.

JOSH

You want me to guess?

BEVERLY

You get three guesses.

JOSH

Three damn guesses. Let me see.

(Pause)

I drink too much.

(Pause)

I don't spend enough time with the kids?

(Pause)

We don't make love anymore?

BEVERLY

It's your mother, Sam.

JOSH

My mother? My mother's a fucking saint.

BEVERLY

Your mother's a sneak, a thief, and a psychopath.

JOSH

Natalie! Hold your tongue!

BEVERLY

In the middle of the night she comes in our bedroom.

JOSH

But she's my goddamn mother.

BEVERLY

She has the nerve to throw another blanket over you. Never me, mind you! Only you. She takes my pillow and gives it to you too.

JOSH

Natalie, she's an old woman. She has dementia.

BEVERLY

I want all of you, Sam. Not part of you. All of you. Your body. Your money. Your car. Your attention. I want you tied to me. Shackled to me.

JOSH

I'm not cheating on you.

BEVERLY

We took sacred vows.

JOSH

You want to rule my life.

BEVERLY

You bet.

JOSH

I'm not a dog.

BEVERLY

I want you in my heart.

JOSH

I need a drink. Where did you hide the bottle?

BEVERLY

You look at other women on the street. Hunger after me, Sam. Give it to me. Or I'll die.

JOSH

My son frightens me.

BEVERLY

Look at me.

JOSH

My daughter needs me.

BEVERLY

Sam . . .

JOSH

I don't know my own wife.

(He rips off some of his clothes, and falls to his knees in gentle supplication)

BLACKOUT

**SCENE FIVE****(The next day. Arlene has just entered the apartment)**

ARLENE

On the way over I ran into that obnoxious guy again. You know, the asshole with the unbutton shirt and chain.

JOSH

That's Rupert. He has an eye for you.

ARLENE

Great.

JOSH

He has no self-control but he thinks he's a connoisseur of beauty.

ARLENE

Better keep his hands off me.

JOSH

Did he touch you?

ARLENE

Almost. I was quick.

JOSH

I'll talk to him.

ARLENE

Please. Next time I'll pepper spray the S.O.B.

JOSH

Arlene, I really appreciate your visits. It's easier that you come here, you know, with work and fixing shit.

ARLENE

Josh, you mean a lot to me.

JOSH

I lead a lonely life.

ARLENE

I can tell. It's in your poems.

JOSH

I try to hide it.

ARLENE

We should still try to shake this up a bit, Josh. You need to get out of this space some days.

JOSH

Next Sunday.

ARLENE

Josh . . .

JOSH

(He approaches her quietly, softly)  
I'm wondering whether I'm psychotic. My sister hates my poetry. People ignore me. I'm wallpaper. You don't haze me, Arlene. You're responsive. Something timeless, something very ineluctable. Then I get a feeling for blackness. I don't want to be pleasant, don't want to be empathic. I just want to get out my cooking knives.

ARLENE

Are you on medication?

JOSH

No. Never took a prescription in my life.

ARLENE

I'm up late at night with bad thoughts about you. You have literary talent. But you seem lost in depression. I worry about you.

JOSH

Do you?

ARLENE

Come closer.

(They sit at the sofa. He rests his head on her breasts)

JOSH

Peace is everything.

ARLENE

Peace is everything.

JOSH

Let me show you my collection of knives.

ARLENE

Not now, darling.

JOSH

How about my bird cages?

ARLENE

Later. I only want to see your poetry.

JOSH

You know, I hate birds.

ARLENE

I understand, darling.

JOSH

I'm very close to my work.

ARLENE

Yes, darling.

JOSH

Like how you are with your customers at the restaurant.

ARLENE

Shh, rest a while.

JOSH

I find your body odor provocative. I mean I love the way you smell, Arlene.

(Pause)

I'm trapped. I'm happy. You're getting under my skin.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE SIX****(Next day, Rupert is on the sofa. Smoking pot together)**

Gladys moved back in.

RUPERT

Good for you.

JOSH

She made a strange request.

RUPERT

Yeah?

JOSH

Up the ass, Josh. I'm not used to that.

RUPERT

She asked for it, Rupert?

JOSH

On my grandmother's grave. I swear.

RUPERT

Give it to her. Don't let her down.

JOSH

Is that what you and Bev do?

RUPERT

On birthdays and Christmas.

JOSH

You like it?

RUPERT

JOSH

What's not to like?

RUPERT

And that other woman? A little chunky in the hips?

JOSH

You like her?

RUPERT

She's got a nice face.

JOSH

Yeah. She does.

RUPERT

Sweet.

JOSH

Buttercup.

RUPERT

Not bad.

JOSH

Just met her the other week.

RUPERT

Bev knows?

JOSH

Fuck no.

RUPERT

Be careful, man.

JOSH

I'm always careful.

RUPERT

Bev has a temper.

JOSH

Don't I know it.

RUPERT

How long she good for?

JOSH

Arlene?

(Pause)

Hey, watch the ashes, man.

(pause)

How long she good for?

RUPERT

Yeah.

JOSH

Don't know yet. Just testing my wings. She likes my writing. Beverly hates my poetry.

RUPERT

You write poems?

JOSH

Just testing my wings, man.

RUPERT

Does she give head?

(Pause)

Does she swallow?

JOSH

These are difficult questions, Rupert.

RUPERT

You haven't found out yet? You're not banging the crap out of her?

JOSH

Why don't you ever button your shirts?

RUPERT

'Cause I'm a tough guy. That's why.

JOSH

What makes you so tough?

RUPERT

(Extinguishes the rest of the marijuana joint into a wine glass)

I don't give a shit about the next guy.

JOSH  
Yeah, Rupert.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE SEVEN**

**(Later that night. The sofa bed is open to accommodate two people. Josh and Beverly are in a reclined position)**

JOSH  
I bought new fitted sheets. 100% cotton. On clearance. If you look closely at the print, you'll see baby penguins. You have to squint your eyes to see them.

BEVERLY  
Did you buy them at the zoo?

JOSH  
No. Bed Bath and Beyond.

BEVERLY  
Feels like polyester.

JOSH  
Stop busting my chops.

BEVERLY  
We don't have bed bugs.

JOSH  
I know.

BEVERLY  
So why do you keep changing the sheets?

JOSH  
*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

BEVERLY  
What the fuck did you just say?

JOSH  
The more things change, the more they stay the same.  
(She assumes a different erotic position parallel to his body)

I like the way you wrap your legs around me.

BEVERLY

Are you complaining?

JOSH

Why don't you cut off my balls?

BEVERLY

Where are your knives?

JOSH

Use your fake nails. All your cash is going into Korean pedicures. Scratch me, Bev.

BEVERLY

First your eyes.

JOSH

Spare me from seeing your next tattoo.

BEVERLY

Fuck you.

JOSH

I'm waiting.

BEVERLY

When we were kids, I could put you down anytime.

JOSH

When we were kids, you had three years on me.

BEVERLY

When we were kids, loud noises freaked you out.

JOSH

When we were kids, I cleaned up the blood in the bathroom trash.

BEVERLY

Hold me, Josh. I'm cold.

(Pause)

Please. I'm very cold.

(he holds her carefully)

Thank you.

JOSH

You feel good.

(She sighs a note of deep comfort)

I'm not enjoying our sex.

BEVERLY

You're lying.

JOSH

No.

BEVERLY

Best sex you'll ever get.

JOSH

No.

BEVERLY

You're flaccid, my boy.

JOSH

And you're dry.

BEVERLY

I want to kill you.

JOSH

Words have no meaning.

BEVERLY

Rage.

JOSH

It's real.

BEVERLY

Love me harder.

JOSH

No.

BEVERLY

One day I will.

(Pause)

Kill you.

Let me commit you to an asylum.

JOSH

Commit . . .

BEVERLY

Have to someday . . .

JOSH

When hell freezes over . . .

BEVERLY

Better an asylum than hell.

JOSH

You're just like your rich father.

BEVERLY

Please.

JOSH

Like your father. Filthy and mediocre.

BEVERLY

BLACKOUT

**SCENE EIGHT****(Next day. Arlene and Josh are on the sofa)**

ARLENE

I've shown your photo to a few of my friends.

JOSH

When did you take a photo of me?

ARLENE

In profile they think you look like a young Johnny Depp.

JOSH

When I was asleep?

ARLENE

Or like Jake Gyllenhaal.

JOSH

Don't post it, damnit.

ARLENE

Josh. Trust is everything.

JOSH

That's right.

ARLENE

So you have to start trusting me more.

JOSH

I do. But don't do weird things, Arlene.

ARLENE

I don't do weird things, darling.

(Pause)

I brought my diaphragm.

JOSH

That's presumptuous, Arlene.

ARLENE

My mother said I should think ahead.

JOSH

Anything else?

ARLENE

My mother said I shouldn't headhunt.

JOSH

She said that?

ARLENE

More than once.

JOSH

She has tremendous insight.

ARLENE

I've lost weight in the last 18 months. Midriff's gone. You see a new me.

JOSH

Really?

ARLENE

All my sisters are married. Montpelier is waiting to hear from me. Can I use the bathroom now?

(Pause)

Do I need the padlock key?

JOSH

Puerto Ricans do it sideways and say it's almost 100% safe.

ARLENE

I need protection.

JOSH

(Gives her the hall bathroom key)

You don't need to go into the hall to fix yourself.

ARLENE

(She sits next to him suddenly)

Did I tell you about my belly?

JOSH

No.

ARLENE

Rub my belly.

JOSH

Why?

ARLENE

Please.

JOSH

Over the sweater or under?

ARLENE

If your hands are warm, under.

JOSH

Such fresh skin.

ARLENE

(She throws a blanket over the two of them)

Lower.

JOSH

(An octave lower, slacker humor)

Such fresh skin.

ARLENE

I've had daydreams over the weekend about children.

JOSH

Nice.

ARLENE

Having children.

JOSH

Yes.

ARLENE

I'm almost thirty.

No way.

JOSH

ARLENE

I know I'm a little older than you.

JOSH

I could be fifty. You know. An old soul.

ARLENE

They say it's dangerous after thirty.

JOSH

Nothing's dangerous.

ARLENE

Birth defects. It runs in my family.

JOSH

That's superstition.

ARLENE

No. It's a fact.

JOSH

Did you insert your diaphragm?

ARLENE

My mother sends me medical articles.

JOSH

I'm not feeling good, Arlene.

ARLENE

A glass of wine?

JOSH

I'm worried.

ARLENE

Don't be.

JOSH

Sex is destroying my will. I'm not thinking. I'm acting like an animal.

(She gives him a long, intimate kiss)

You have too much power over me.

ARLENE

(Unbuttoning his shirt)

Nonsense.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE TEN**  
**(The next day. Beverly and Josh are at the**  
**kitchen table)**

BEVERLY

The musicians were silent at our wedding.

JOSH

Our aunts and uncles wore black.

BEVERLY

Children were not allowed to be present.

JOSH

We were warned. We warned others.

BEVERLY

The gifts were but tokens.

JOSH

We don't open our wedding album.

BEVERLY

My friends didn't show for the bridal shower.

JOSH

That hurt you a lot.

BEVERLY

Shit.

JOSH

I told you it was a mistake.

BEVERLY

We were only thinking of the children.

JOSH

What children?

(Pause)  
What children?

BEVERLY

I was always good to you.

JOSH

You used to shock me.

BEVERLY

Terror makes us live forever. Like vampires.

JOSH

No.

BEVERLY

It's true.

JOSH

Vampires aren't real.

BEVERLY

It was a game we used to play.

JOSH

I didn't know it was a game.

BEVERLY

You knew.

JOSH

You kept me from my friends.

BEVERLY

You had no friends.

JOSH

There was Eddie.

BEVERLY

Eddie was no friend.

JOSH

Eddie tried hard.

I was your only friend. BEVERLY

That can't be true. JOSH

Think, Josh. BEVERLY

Who were your friends? JOSH

Truck drivers. BEVERLY

I thought you had my best interest in mind. JOSH

Always. BEVERLY

You brought out my vulnerability. JOSH

It enhanced you. BEVERLY

Shit. JOSH

It kept you pure. BEVERLY

I found my soul. JOSH

Yes. BEVERLY

We swim weekly at the Y. JOSH

Who protects you? Who feeds you? Who dresses you? BEVERLY

That was the past.

JOSH

The past is the present.

BEVERLY

Not true. I'm getting stronger.

JOSH

Think so?

BEVERLY

All the time. Other women notice me.

JOSH

You are nothing without me.

BEVERLY

Stop.

JOSH

Disposable. Recyclable. Trash.

BEVERLY

Stop.

JOSH

You got high without me.

BEVERLY

You bring me such pain, Beverly. You occupy hell.

JOSH

BLACKOUT

**SCENE TEN**

**(The next day. Josh is working on a new bird cage construction as Rupert watches with a beer can in his hand.)**

RUPERT

I used to see Phillip Seymour Hoffman all the time on St. Marks Place. Sometimes at a pizza joint. Sometimes at the corner store buying cigarettes. He'd say hi to me.

JOSH

No shit?

RUPERT

Really.

JOSH

What a waste.

RUPERT

Good actor.

JOSH

One of the best.

RUPERT

He left a son.

JOSH

Smack is totally shit.

RUPERT

Ain't it the truth.

JOSH

Never did it.

RUPERT

You smoked it once. At a party.

JOSH

Never. Not crack. Not smack.

RUPERT

Lie to me. Lie to yourself. Lie to your bitch sister. Bullshit is bullshit, douche bag.

JOSH

Don't mess with my head when I'm working.

RUPERT

You're not working. That's a fucking birdcage.

JOSH

I sell them at the flea market.

RUPERT

Yeah. Right. I thought your old man left you a bank account.

JOSH

Not really.

RUPERT

When did he die?

JOSH

Five years ago. Car accident.

RUPERT

With your mother?

JOSH

No. With me. I was driving. He was in the death seat.

RUPERT

No seat belt?

(Josh nods his head yes)

That's fucked.

JOSH

We hit a DUI driver who crossed the yellow line.

RUPERT

Where?

JOSH

Morristown, New Jersey.

RUPERT

You over it?

JOSH

Yeah, I'm over New Jersey.

RUPERT

Was he a good father?

JOSH

I thought so. Yeah. Until I realized the damage.

RUPERT

Yeah. Damage comes with love, man.

JOSH

Love comes with damage.

(Pause)

You ever want kids?

RUPERT

Gladys and I are talking it over.

JOSH

You've knocked her up before. I loaned you some bucks.

RUPERT

Two abortions in three years. Thing she's trying to tell me something? She claims she's using some protection. What the fuck? A rabbit's foot?

JOSH

Give her a baby, Rupert. She's a good woman. She'll be a great mother.

RUPERT

She deserves a better guy.

(Laughing as he finishes his beer)

I'm waiting for the stork to deliver a baby ready to go. Can't stand three trimesters of grief.

JOSH

Don't be a selfish prick.

RUPERT

I'm a little paranoid, Josh. What if it's a son? She'll give him all the attention. I'd

abandoned the kid first.

JOSH

You're a big boy, Rupert.

RUPERT

Not really. I need lots of coddling. And in my birth hospital, I was taken to the wrong mother for breast feeding. True story, man.

JOSH

I'll buy you a large teddy bear.

RUPERT

You do that. One with a cunt.

JOSH

So what was your father like?

RUPERT

Decent enough. Fireman. He kept his whores away from the house.

JOSH

Did your mother know?

RUPERT

To tell the truth, she didn't give a shit.

JOSH

Where's she now?

RUPERT

Mom? In a home in Long Island.

JOSH

What kind of place?

RUPERT

You know, assisted living. Bars on the door.

JOSH

You put her there?

RUPERT

Yeah. She began to wet her bed.

## BLACKOUT

## SCENE ELEVEN

**(Weeks later. With flowers and gift box in hand, Arlene wears flashier clothes. Josh is in his basic grunge.)**

Happy anniversary!

ARLENE

So soon?

JOSH

Eight weeks!

ARLENE

Time flies.

JOSH

Only when you're in love.

ARLENE

What did you buy?

JOSH

More cologne.

ARLENE

Why?

JOSH

It makes you manly.

ARLENE

You want to bathe me in Aramis.

JOSH

I want to eat you whole.

ARLENE

JOSH

Give it time, Arlene. You're going way too fast.

ARLENE

Nonsense.

JOSH

And stop leaving little surprises around the apartment.

ARLENE

You're spoiling our anniversary.

JOSH

Anniversaries mean a year. That's the fucking definition.

ARLENE

I don't need to come every day, you know. A lot of guys are asking me out at work.

JOSH

So what do you tell these clowns?

ARLENE

(Coming in for the kiss on Josh's neck)  
I tell them I'm engaged.

JOSH

What?

ARLENE

It works. Like shoeing flies away.

JOSH

You need to know me more.

ARLENE

We're very special, Josh.

JOSH

Is incest something special?

ARLENE

Incest?

JOSH

Rice is nice, but incest is best.

ARLENE

What have you been smoking?

JOSH

Just an old Cuban cigar.

ARLENE

You're spoiling our anniversary. I wish you wouldn't spend time with that bastard next door.

JOSH

Rupert doesn't bother you anymore.

ARLENE

He's a bad influence.

JOSH

But he lives in the building.

ARLENE

Look, Josh. If you want our life together to get bigger, idiots like Rupert have to be tossed aside.

(Arranging flowers in a vase)

JOSH

He's not an idiot.

ARLENE

No?

JOSH

He's just not a rocket scientist. I'll tell him take some space.

ARLENE

You do that.

JOSH

Don't get bossy, Arlene.

ARLENE

You like it when I'm bossy.

(Putting the flowers down. Approaching Josh)

JOSH

Who the hell do you think you are?

ARLENE

(Sits next to him on sofa and pulls his head to her lap)  
Your better half. Josh, admit it. You're a cripple.

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWELVE

(The next day. Rupert is visiting)

JOSH

Ever feel romantic?

RUPERT

Yeah.

JOSH

Often?

RUPERT

Twice a week.

JOSH

Twice a week?

RUPERT

When I stroke Tom?

JOSH

Yeah.

RUPERT

When I jack off.

JOSH

So now you call him Tom?

RUPERT

I always called him that.

JOSH

You hate Tom Cruise.

RUPERT

Fuck you. My Tom wins all my esteem.

(Hand is out. There is a drug sale here)

JOSH

I got to go now.

RUPERT

Don't go. Recite a fucking poem, you asshole.

JOSH

I got to clean up before Bev comes home.

RUPERT

How do you do it? You time things like a fucking Swiss watch. Bev goes to work at her Goth Piercing Studio and then you schedule these little trysts with Miss Vermont who loves Ben and Jerry Ice Cream.

JOSH

It's just something temporary.

RUPERT

Why not make it a three way?

JOSH

You're out of your mind.

RUPERT

Why not make it four way? I'll make the motherfucker introductions.

JOSH

You're shitting on a friend.

RUPERT

I'm having fun.

JOSH

I'm sorry I opened my mouth to you.

RUPERT

If this was a TV movie, I could blackmail you. Josh, I could make you sweat.

JOSH

Why the hell would you want to do that?

RUPERT

Beats me.

I trust you, Rupert.

JOSH

You do?

RUPERT

I let you confide in me about Gladys. I try to help you. I tell you shit about Bev. You try to help me.

JOSH

Yeah, man. Quid pro quo shit.

RUPERT

So try to leave Arlene alone.

JOSH

Sure.

RUPERT

Okay?

JOSH

I'm cool.

RUPERT

Not that she can't defend herself. She might like ice cream, but I swear she's a killer.

JOSH

All bitches are after the flower blooms.

RUPERT

Yeah, after the flower blooms.

JOSH

Why else do you want to fuck them?

RUPERT

BLACKOUT

**SCENE THIRTEEN**

**(That night, Beverly is taking off make-up in a mirror. Josh is cleaning up the table which holds his bird cage construction. Arlene is waiting by the open apartment door)**

I think the rain has stopped.

JOSH

Just a drizzle.

BEVERLY

I miss our cat.

JOSH

Yeah.

BEVERLY

She's out there somewhere in the courtyard. You can hear her when it rains.

JOSH

I can't.

BEVERLY

Take away my loneliness.

JOSH

You're getting on my nerves.

BEVERLY

Home in your arms.

JOSH

Go away. I got a fucking migraine.

BEVERLY

Don't do this to me.

JOSH

Don't do what? BEVERLY

Punish me. JOSH

I'm not punishing you. BEVERLY

I lost my umbrella. You know what that means. JOSH

Quit the bullshit. BEVERLY

Can I? JOSH

Easily. BEVERLY

How the hell do I begin? JOSH

Be direct. Nobody gives a flying fuck. BEVERLY

And you? JOSH

Truth or dare? BEVERLY

Truth or dare. JOSH

I've blotted you out a long time ago. Before the trust kicked in. BEVERLY

Three years ago? JOSH

Can you blame me? BEVERLY

JOSH

All right. It seems true. I can't blame you.

(Pause)

I want you to meet Arlene.

BEVERLY

Not now, Josh.

JOSH

Arlene, I want you to meet my sister Beverly.

(He motions to Arlene to come in)

It's okay.

(She takes a step inside)

ARLENE

My pleasure.

JOSH

Beverly, this is Arlene. From Vermont. She's a waitress.

(Standing closer to her, arm over her)

I read her my poems. She's my new lover.

BEVERLY

Is she?

JOSH

Bev, why don't you get us a drink.

(Pause)

Please. Arlene?

ARLENE

I'd love white wine.

BEVERLY

Fuck off.

ARLENE

Are you out of chardonnay? I'll take scotch.

BEVERLY

Where did you find her? Starbucks?

JOSH

We have Dewers, Arlene.

ARLENE

(Walking to the kitchen)  
I'll fix us a drink.

BEVERLY

She has no breasts. She struts like a hen.

JOSH

What a warm womb.

BEVERLY

That means nothing.

JOSH

Each kiss, she kisses back.

BEVERLY

She know how to count. God bless her.

ARLENE

Beverly, I could fix you a drink?

BEVERLY

You're not moving in, motherfucker.

ARLENE

Who are you? Really?

BEVERLY

Who the fuck are you?

ARLENE

(Delivering Josh's drink )  
Here, darling.

BEVERLY

For Christsake, what do you see in my brother?

ARLENE

A shy, warm, loving man. With literary talent.

BEVERLY

Literary talent? Does he recite his verses while you suck his cock? How fucking gullible are you?

ARLENE

How charming you are.

BEVERLY

So I am. What do you hell do you want with us? I live here too.

ARLENE

You do? Is this really true, Josh?

JOSH

Sometimes she sleeps here. Sometimes she's in a gated institution an hour away.

ARLENE

Oh, I see.

BEVERLY

You have two minutes to get your ass out of here.

ARLENE

Josh?

JOSH

What?

ARLENE

Do something.

BEVERLY

(Steps towards Arlene)

He can't. Sometimes he's just like a slug. Let me tell you a few things about my kid brother. He wears six masks. The everyday mask looks sad. Such a long face

ARLENE

I don't want to know.

BEVERLY

The evening mask looks devilish. The eyebrows point, the grin widens. It can tease you.

(A sexual sneer at Arlene, then she moves towards Josh)

ARLENE

Yes, I know.

BEVERLY

Then there's the tender mask. Josh baby is feeling rather guilty. That's the time to take advantage of him.

(Beverly has her hands around Josh's face)

ARLENE

Never.

BEVERLY

I like the mad mask, the times he can't see out.

(Pause)

And then there's the selfish mask. It hides under the other masks.

(Pause)

The sixth mask is my favorite mask. It hasn't any face. Under everything, my dumb fuck brother is just a lump of clay.

(She pulls his head by tugging hard on his hair)

BLACKOUT

**SCENE FOURTEEN****(The next day. Arlene is on the sofa. Josh is finishing his bird cage construction)**

ARLENE

Why did you marry your sister?

JOSH

I don't know.

ARLENE

Why did you marry your sister?

JOSH

I thought it was the coming trend.

ARLENE

Why did you marry your sister?

JOSH

I took her on the rebound.

ARLENE

Why did you marry your sister?

JOSH

We lived together so long that I . . . I finally gave in.

ARLENE

Why the fuck did you marry your sister?

JOSH

We became infected many years ago. So help me God.

ARLENE

Do your parents know?

JOSH

We wanted to break it to them slowly. It killed them.

I hate you. ARLENE

I understand. JOSH

I should have seen this coming. ARLENE

Yes. JOSH

You hid stuff. ARLENE

I had to. JOSH

I'm going back to Vermont. ARLENE

JOSH  
*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

How can I go back to Vermont? ARLENE

BLACKOUT

**SCENE FIFTEEN**

**(The next week. Rupert has brought bags of groceries to Josh as a favor.)**

RUPERT

You knew I had a hard on for her.

JOSH

It doesn't matter.

RUPERT

I'm being straight with you.

JOSH

She's got standards.

RUPERT

I took her to dinner to calm her down. Whatever the shit you threw at her, must have scared her to death.

JOSH

Arlene got me. She knows my issues. I need her still. I failed her. Beverly always wins.

RUPERT

So it's okay?

JOSH

What's okay?

RUPERT

I have your blessings?

JOSH

What the hell are you talking about?

RUPERT

Arlene's into me. I drove her to her apartment. We were making out in my car. Maybe it's a passing thing.

JOSH

Why the fuck do you need my blessings?

RUPERT

I don't know. It feels right to say it.

JOSH

Don't you have any decency?

(Pause)

Does Gladys know?

RUPERT

Does Gladys know? Sure she knows. She always knows. So does Beverly. Everyone fucking knows. Even Polanski. The whole block knows for Christsake.

JOSH

It's like I'm cursed.

RUPERT

You're not cursed. It's just that women's liberation let everyone grab more pussy. It's the greatest thing to happen to women since ribbed condoms and the iPhone. You still love Arlene?

JOSH

She like my poetry, Rupert. No one likes my poetry.

RUPERT

Look, pal. It's just a passing thing. You can have back soon. You'll want her again. You've lost Beverly.

JOSH

What do you mean, I lost Beverly?

RUPERT

I don't know how to tell you.

(Suppresses a laugh)

She's making it with Polanski.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE SIXTEEN**  
**(The next day. Rupert is back visiting)**

I saw her face in the window.

JOSH

Yeah.

RUPERT

Hollow cheeks. Glass reflection. Shards of light.

JOSH

Last night?

RUPERT

She didn't suspect a thing.

JOSH

Like?

RUPERT

I felt superior to her. I let her know that. You can hear it in my voice.

JOSH

Go on.

RUPERT

Taller than her. Stronger. Smarter. Luckier than her. I stood over her. I could see the top of her head. The part in her uncombed hair. I could see stains of time.

JOSH

All right.

RUPERT

For the first time in my life I wanted to frighten her.

JOSH

RUPERT

I'm sure you did.

JOSH

I took my time walking down the cellar stairs. I was sleepwalking. My eyes were like slits. I heard sounds like a flying bat. An incredible floating sensation. My mind was outside my body.

RUPERT

Were you coked up?

JOSH

No. I was on nothing. I swear.

RUPERT

Go on.

JOSH

Bev opened the door. She saw something in my eye. She didn't say anything. I had a smirk on my face. She could it the thing that would soon be fear. She leaned against me. For safety sake. Her housecoat was undone to the waist. I touched her. Her breasts were cold. As cold as a northern witch. I kissed her. Twice. Very hard. She turned away and then I pulled her fucking hair.

RUPERT

Go on.

JOSH

Still she didn't suspect a thing. Even if my voice was strange. I told her to take out the chest. She did. We scattered the clothes around the room. Bev did as I said. I didn't have to shout. I was quite calm. I told her Mom and Dad were dead. We are broken links now. We should not disturb their memory. We are not them. We could never be. We are inferior. We are another generation. A lost generation. We were wrong to marry. She laughed and though it was a joke. She said I was a joke. She said I was an asshole for calling it quits. She said it all began when she gave me baths when I was four. She said it didn't matter now because she was walking out on me. She said I wouldn't live out the year.

(Pause)

But she was lying. I know.

(Laughs)

She wanted me, Rupert. More than ever. Her lipstick was smeared. The mascara was like war paint. She had her red housecoat on. Her fucking tits were hanging out.

RUPERT

Go on.

JOSH

We went into the kitchen. She began to eat cheese cake with her fingers. She smeared the shit all over her. I was aroused. I lost control. I wanted to taste her once more.

(Pause)

I waited until she was done. I asked Bev to sit. I gave her a massage. She let her head roll in my hands. I was in complete control. It was as though she didn't care anymore. I could kill her at any moment. I watched her face intently. She was beautiful for the devil and for any angel too. She was gorgeous for me. I could count every pore and blemish on her face. Every fucking zit. I could count each eyelash. I kissed her eyes. She was absolutely stunning that night. So with my left hand I reached for one of my knives and came down twice.

RUPERT

Just like that?

JOSH

Just like that.

RUPERT

I don't know, Josh.

JOSH

I'm sure she finished the cheese cake.

RUPERT

Sounds like you just had a bad dream.

JOSH

It was fucking real.

(Long silence. This sinks in for Rupert)

RUPERT

You better keep away from Gladys, all right?

JOSH

I like Gladys.

RUPERT

Gladys and me are back together. You might want to give Arlene a buzz.

JOSH

Why?

RUPERT

'Cause I think you need some good company.

I want to be alone to mourn.

JOSH

Yeah. You know best.

RUPERT

Then I'll move out. Fly to L.A..

JOSH

Sure, Josh.

RUPERT

Join the Peace Corps. Live outdoors. Lead an active, healthy life.

JOSH

Good idea, Josh, good idea.

RUPERT

Rupert, you've been a good friend.  
(Pause)  
I mean that sincerely,

JOSH

BLACKOUT

**SCENE SEVENTEEN**

**(A few days later. Arlene, with box in hand, is getting her final things left in Josh's apartment.)**

JOSH

The worst thing in life is getting stage four cancer or being betrayed.

ARLENE

I can't stay and talk, Josh.

JOSH

But this is mere speculation. Bev left me too. I'm not surprised. Sometimes the entire universe conspires to hurt one person.

ARLENE

Get a grip.

JOSH

Get a grip?

(Laughs)

Bukowski once wrote:

*I loved you  
like a man loves a woman he never touches, only  
writes to, keeps little photographs of. I would have  
loved you more if I had sat in a small room rolling a  
cigarette and listened to you piss in the bathroom,  
but that didn't happen. your letters got sadder.  
your lovers betrayed you. kid, I wrote back, all  
lovers betray. it didn't help. you said  
you had a crying bench and it was by a bridge and  
the bridge was over a river and you sat on the crying  
bench every night and wept for the lovers who had  
hurt and forgotten you.*

ARLENE

Rupert's talked to me about your deteriorating condition.

JOSH

Oh, he's such a noble motherfucker. And you like him now?

ARLENE

No. I don't like him. I don't like anyone right now.

JOSH

I don't believe you.

ARLENE

Believe what you want.

JOSH

Don't leave me, Arlene. There's no more Beverly in my life. I've learned from my mistakes. I still have your scarf.

ARLENE

Josh, I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. You're not the guy for me. I wanted to mother you. I felt valuable to you. I saw a husband in you. In my fantasy it would have worked. But that's not what you need.

JOSH

What do I need?

ARLENE

I don't know. Start by cleaning up your world. One day at a time.

JOSH

Okay. I can. For you. Come and let me hold you.  
(He crowds her)

ARLENE

No, Josh.

JOSH

I'm not hurting you.

ARLENE

Stop it, Josh.

JOSH

I always had your best interest at heart.

ARLENE

Let go.

JOSH

I never meant you any pain.

ARLENE

Let go, Josh. You're hurting me. Let go.

(He does. Long sustained eye contact)

I'm smarter than that.

JOSH

You've always been smarter than that. Just be nice to me. Like you used to be. Look at the bird's broken wing.

ARLENE

I've changed my cell phone. I've blocked you on Facebook. Maybe we can connect again in a year.

(Josh watches her passively as she steps away)

BLACKOUT

**SCENE EIGHTEEN**

**(The next day. Rupert has entered and the apartment door is still left open)**

JOSH

I burn incense but it doesn't seem to help.

RUPERT

I don't smell anything.

JOSH

Polaski does.

RUPERT

Fry bacon. That'll mask anything.

JOSH

Got to get some bacon.

RUPERT

Where the hell is Beverly?

JOSH

What the fuck's wrong with you? Got no memory?

RUPERT

Can't believe half the things you tell me anymore, Josh.

JOSH

A corpse stinks after seven days. Lots of debris left in a basement apartment just outside the trash cans. Arlene doesn't call. I can't reach her. I can't sleep alone. I break out in cold sweats at all hours. I can't open the mail. I'm falling behind on building repairs.

RUPERT

Wellbutrin works wonders, buddy.

(Pause)

Or fuck that, just get high.

JOSH

We're vermin. Walt Disney knew.

RUPERT

I got to go, Josh. See you.

JOSH

I don't feel guilty. I have a bleak poem that is emphatic. It is a dark jewel of God's morbidity..

RUPERT

Get high. Put your mind on a cloud.

JOSH

I bought a butcher's block. And I built a contraption in the work room outside.

RUPERT

It's like a fucking dungeon down here. Open the curtains.

JOSH

Soon, Rupert.. All I need wrapping paper.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE NINETEEN****(Josh is sitting cross legged on the floor)****JOSH**

When I was young, I built a tree house. No one helped me make it. It took five weeks. Working on it made me proud. After school I would hide up in my tree house and keep away from my sister. She was afraid to climb trees. I would hide for hours and hours and read dirty magazines. This was a happy time in my life.

**BLACKOUT**

**SCENE TWENTY**

**(Rupert's at the door holding a long flower box with a ribbon and bow. Josh, missing an arm, is sitting on a kitchen chair)**

RUPERT

That wasn't a very smart thing to do.

JOSH

As simple as shaving.

RUPERT

Had to hurt.

JOSH

No. Nothing hurts.

RUPERT

You're a fucking sick puppy, Josh. I've had it with our friendship.

JOSH

Don't say that, Rupert.

RUPERT

You lost it upstairs, my friend.

JOSH

Decisions are our consequences. Our consequences are our decisions.

RUPERT

You have to admit yourself into a hospital.

JOSH

Soon. Not now, man.

(Pause)

When did you get my package?

RUPERT

Twenty minutes ago.

Did you tip FedEx?

JOSH

No.

RUPERT

What ran through your mind?

JOSH

Gladys and me are moving. Next weekend. We gave Polaski notice.

RUPERT

Okay. Yeah. Cool. Come over and shake my hand.

JOSH

Goodbye, Josh. May God look down on you.

RUPERT

Be a sport, Rupert. Shake my hand.  
(Laughs)

JOSH

BLACKOUT

**SCENE TWENTY ONE**

**(Arlene, holding a long flower box, is at the open door. Josh is seated, now missing both arms)**

ARLENE

Why, Josh? I can't even look at you.

JOSH

Love makes us insane. Insanity makes us love.

ARLENE

I didn't open this. Rupert phoned.

JOSH

Check my tourniquet. It's much too tight.

(Pause)

Arlene. Check . . . my . . . tourniquet. I'm very scared.

ARLENE

I'm not a nurse. Where's your sister?

JOSH

Dead.

ARLENE

I don't want to know any more. Get medical help.

(Silence)

Aren't you going to say something?

JOSH

It was easier cutting the first arm.

ARLENE

(Sets the box down on the table)

I want you to keep out of my life. I'm calling the police. This is serious, Josh.

JOSH

Come and let me hug you. Let me caress you. Rock me in your arms. I'm so tired, Arlene.

Don't be afraid. Come closer. Part the curtains. Crack the windows. Put on some music. Let's dance. Life's just beginning. I am laughing inside. Where did I make my first mistake? Did you ever ask yourself that? God, let me dangle my hands like Glenn Gould at the Steinway piano. I want to clap and applaud. I want to touch myself. Feel my amazing biceps. Arlene, I am not looking for pity. There is no sympathy in this world. Ask yourself. Look at yourself. I'm at a loss, clearly. Come closer. Don't be afraid. Josh can't harm you now.

(She approaches him slowly, painfully from behind. Her hands caress his hair)  
That's it. Massage my scalp. Harder.

(Silence)

We were doing so wonderfully.

END OF PLAY

