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Cast of Characters

JACK, thirties, drug dealer

MAE, thirties, his girl, loose

RALPH, friend of Jack's, thirties, reefer smoker

BLANCHE, his former girl, thirties, accomplice

BILL, teenager, wholesome

MARY, teen, his girlfriend, more wholesome

JIMMY, teen, Mary's younger brother

AGNES, teen, Jimmy's girl, a good time girl in the making

GWEN, teen, wants to be an actress

JAY, teen, has ties to the mob, budding drug dealer

WALT, teen, Jay's friend

AL, thirties, basically a pimp and a dealer, ties to the mob

DR. CARROLL, your host and school principal

MARY'S MOTHER

BILL'S MOM

BILL'S DAD

GEOFFREY, Bill's younger brother

JOE, the owner of Joe's Place

HOT FINGERS MCCRAWLSKY, piano player, addicted to reefer

BOSS, main dealer, the boss

PETE, low life drug dealer, has no spine

OFFICER, a cop

CUSTOMER, a "John"

LAWYER, a lawyer

PAPERBOY, a paperboy

HENCHMAN, thug who helps Al

MAN

WOMAN

ATTENDANT ONE, from asylum

ATTENDANT TWO, ditto

Character Note

The original cast numbered 14, but could be less with more doubling of roles.

Time

1936.

Place

Your Town, U.S.A.

Author Notes

The original production of *Reefer Madness* was played in a fairly strict “film noir” style—i.e. very straight with heightened emotions—which accented the absurdities of the original film and thus the humor. While we found the audiences very receptive to this approach, an all out farcical approach, loaded with bits and pot in-jokes, would probably go over equally as well.

Stage Left Theatre (where *Reefer Madness* was originally staged) was an intimate space that seated about 70, had plaster falling off the walls, and a license allowing patrons to bring in their own alcohol. Curtain was at midnight on Friday and Saturday nights. Although we didn’t plan it, all of these factors added greatly to the “party” atmosphere surrounding the show.

We had no set to speak of, and very few props. The set consisted of five chairs that were moved about the stage by the actors to suggest (with the help of the lights) any of the many locations in the show. The entire stage was used for both Joe’s Place and Mae’s apartment. Props were limited to small items, with the most important being Jack’s gun and the many joints we consumed nightly. Oregano and menthol tobacco, with the help of an old cigarette roller, worked well enough to put a question mark in the audience’s minds. “Is that...?” Larger set pieces—the piano, the car, etc.—were all mimed.

Sound is of great importance to the show. Car crashes, piano playing, Gwen’s dance number, party scenes, pre-show music—all of it added an immense amount of validity to our low budget intentions.

And finally, costumes. Our budget for the first production was nonexistent, but we managed to come up with convincing costumes from second hand shops. We found that even though we had a hard

time finding authentic period dresses for the girls, a very basic, classic, below the knee dress suggested enough of the period that, combined with everything else, no one questioned the authenticity. And as an added touch, make sure all the costumes (as well as the set and props) are black and white.

As far as casting, our original production used fourteen actors. This caused us to have to cut the role of the “Paperboy” altogether, replacing him with slides that read:

“Trial Verdict Overturned!”
“Police Nab Drug Ring!”
“Body Found in City Dump!”

All three slides were shown just prior to Dr. Carroll’s final speech. This worked quite well, but I’ve left the Paperboy’s role in the final script because I still like the idea. Our understudies doubled as the ensemble, and appeared in all the party scenes and Joe’s Place scenes. If you have more actors, more than just two unknown party-goers (or “Everyman” and “Everywoman” as we called them) looks great on stage.

Have fun!

Sean Abley

Before the Show

Have the box office person or usher pass out note cards and pencils to the audience. Ask them to write any questions they might have about marijuana on the cards, then gather them up and deliver them backstage to the actor playing Dr. Carroll. They will be used during the intermission.

Acknowledgments

Reefer Madness was first performed at the Stage Left Theater, Chicago, Illinois on February 14, 1992. The production was produced by Some Mo' Productions in association with Liz Cloud. The cast and staff was as follows:

DR. CARROLL / HOT FINGERS Sean Abley
JACK Geoff Isaac
MAE Cassy Harlo
GWEN Amy Seeley
WALT / AL/
GEOFFREY / JOE / PETE/
LAWYER / ATTENDANT Mike Meredith
JAY / BILL'S DAD/
BOSS / OFFICER Shon Little
RALPH Dave Gaudet
MARY Theresa Mulligan
BILL Jesse Dienstag
JIMMY Ray Wheeler
AGNES / MARY'S MOTHER/
BILL'S MOTHER/
HYSTERICAL WOMAN Renee Williams
BLANCHE Brooke Dillman
CUSTOMER/
HENCHMAN / ATTENDANT Mike Squire
ENSEMBLE / UNDERSTUDY Joanna Morrison
ENSEMBLE / UNDERSTUDY Mike Squire
Director Jeff Rogers
Stage Manager Oliver Oertel
Logo Design Mike Mulligan (Mulligan & Mulligan)
Photos Kyle Kizzier

Reefer Madness was subsequently moved to the Organic Theater Lab and then again to the Factory Theater where it completed its run June 5, 1993.

Reefer Madness would not have been possible without the immense talents of the director and original cast. They are wholly responsible for the great reviews and exposure our production received, reviews that propelled *Reefer* into a long run and ultimately to the published version you are holding now. Everyone involved in the original production added something wonderful and funny to the show, and whatever could be captured on paper has been included here. Geoff, Cassy, Amy, Mike, Squire, Shon, Dave, Theresa, Jesse, Ray, Renee, Brooke, Joanna, and Jeff—thank you!

I also must thank Jill Shely and Brooke Dillman (who was Brooke Alley back then) not only for their support, but for putting up with our rehearsals in the basement we shared at the time.

REEFER MADNESS

by Sean Abley

ADAPTED FROM THE FILM

ACT I

Prologue

(In the darkness Slide #1: Picture of marijuana, flashes on the wall. DR. CARROLL's voice can be heard in the darkness.)

CARROLL. Marijuana. This is a menace that must be stopped. You, and other school parent associations like yours, must stand united on this and stamp out this frightful assassin of our youth. You can do so by bringing about compulsory education on the subject of narcotics in general, but *(Pause)* marijuana in particular.

(Lights up, including house, as this should appear to be a lecture.)

That is the purpose of this meeting, ladies, and gentlemen. To lay the foundation for a nationwide campaign by you, to bring about, by law, such education. Because it is only through enlightenment that this scourge, this lawlessness that we can scarcely imagine that has grown, spread and is now flourishing in every city and hamlet in the nation, can be wiped out.

It might be important for you to know some of the methods of bringing this drug into the country, and of the efforts of the forces of law and order who are working daily in combatting the traffic, always at risk of life by their agents. This ceaseless fight against the dreaded narcotic...*marijuana*...is directed by the Department of Narcotics, Washington. I have received the following letter from said organization.

(Slide #2: Picture of the letter. DR. CARROLL should not look at the letter as he reads.)

“Dear Doctor Carroll. This letter is in reality to the parent teacher organizations throughout our fine country. You have a great responsibility on your hands. The responsibility to create an envi-

ronment where dreaded narcotics such as...*marijuana*...are as feared as the plague, or the spread of communism.”

This letter goes on to tell the methods of harvesting the drug marijuana, or Mary Jane as it is often referred to in the drug culture. How it is dried, stripped, and rolled into cigarettes (*Slide #3: Several joints*) and distributed to our youth through our high schools, and other teenaged hangouts.

I know. You may feel the facts have been exaggerated, that it can't happen to your children, that you don't have to worry. Well, let me tell you a story that made the papers recently. It is a true story. It begins in an apartment near one of our local high schools...

(DR.CARROLL exits, lights shift to stage only, Mae's apartment.)

Scene 1

(MAE is asleep when JACK enters. The apartment is a mess.)

JACK. Hey, come on Mae. Get up.

MAE. What time is it?

JACK. It's time to get up and give this place a goin' over. Looks like the Marines have landed.

MAE. That bunch last night was high enough to take over the Marines and the Navy.

JACK. You better get on the job. Some of the kids might be by this afternoon.

MAE. Oh, Jack. We can get along without dragging those kids up here.

JACK. Why don't you button your lip? You got more static than a radio.

(MAE gets dressed, which should be the equivalent of 1930s T&A, while JACK cleans up. GWEN, JAY, and WALT, three teens, enter the apartment.)

JAY. Hi, Jack!

JACK. Oh, hello, Jay, Walt, Gwen.

GWEN. Hello.

WALT. Hi, kid.

JACK. I didn't know you two knew Gwen.

GWEN. They didn't, Jack, until just a moment ago. We met outside.

JACK. Well, swell. Everybody make themselves comfortable. I'll get Mae.

(Action alternates between this front room and another room [bedroom?].)

GWEN. What kind of joint is this, Jay? I've never been here before. I just met Jack at Joe's Place the other day.

JAY. It's okay. They must've had some sort of party here last night.

GWEN. Oh.

JACK. *(To MAE:)* A couple of my customers, Mae.

MAE. At least my customers are old enough to know what they're doing. Not like those kids you bring up here.

JACK. All right, all right. Just get 'em connected. I'm gonna blow.

MAE. Where ya goin'?

JACK. I gotta make some deliveries, then I'll probably drop by Joe's Place and pick up some of the kids.

MAE. Oh, I wish you'd lay off those kids.

JACK. Why don't you get over that mother complex, huh?

(They go to the front room.)

MAE. Here you go, Jay, Walt. And you are?

GWEN. Gwen.

MAE. *(Grudgingly:)* Well, here's some for you too. You keep an eye out when you're with these two characters.

WALT. Ah, come on, Mae. We're not that bad.

MAE. Well...

GWEN. Jay and Walt offered to take me to drag main. Maybe we'll come back here later and see if there's another party?

JACK. That sounds dandy. You three have fun.

(JACK and MAE exit. GWEN, JAY, and WALT move to the street and intercept RALPH, a rather intense man in his early thirties.)

JAY. Hi, Ralph, old bean. We're gonna drag main with our new friend Gwen here. Wanna come?

RALPH. *(Leering:)* Gwen? It's very nice to meet you. I'd love to come.

GWEN. Swell!

WALT. Um, well...there's not that much room in the car right now. Uh...there's a lot of stuff in the back seat I gotta drop off later.

RALPH. Maybe some other time. Right, Gwen?

GWEN. Uh, sure, Ralph.

(RALPH exits.)

JAY. Why'd you do that?

WALT. I don't know why you want to make such a fuss over that Ralph.

GWEN. He gives me the heebie geebies.

JAY. He's a swell guy. He even made the swim team that year he went to college.

WALT. Yeah, and then they kicked him out. My father knows his family. None of 'em are any good. His father and mother just got a divorce. Ralph just goes around on his own. He's been in a couple 'a jams.

JAY. Well, I just say hello to him. I don't go around with him.

WALT. Well, you better not. He's a little too old for us. That's what my dad says.

GWEN. Enough talk of creepy old Ralph. Let's hit the wheel.

(They exit. JACK and RALPH walk down the street.)

JACK. Hey, kid. How are you?

RALPH. Okay. And you?

JACK. Great. Where are you headed?

RALPH. Oh...

(He spies three teens: MARY, her brother JIMMY, and her boyfriend BILL.)

Hey, how do you like that? That's the one I was telling you about.

JACK. Very nice.

RALPH. Hello, Mary! How are you, Bill?

BILL. Hello.

MARY. Oh, hello, Ralph. You know my brother Jimmy, don't you?

RALPH. How are you?

JIMMY. Swell!

RALPH. I'd like you to meet a friend of mine, Jack. Mary, Bill, Jimmy.

JACK. Nice to meet you. We're going over to Joe's Place. Why don't you come along?

BILL. We've got a date to play a set of doubles.

JACK. Oh, you can play any time. Come on. We'll have some laughs.

MARY. We can't today, Ralph. Maybe some other time.

JIMMY. Can I go along with you?

RALPH. Sure!

JIMMY. See you at dinner, sis!

MARY. Don't be late, Jimmy.

(BILL and MARY exit.)

Scene 2

(JACK, RALPH, and JIMMY move to Joe's Place. A soda shop, with JOE behind the counter, people dancing, and HOT FINGERS MCCRAWLSKY playing the piano wildly. AGNES, Jimmy's girl, is in the crowd.)

AGNES. Jimmy, Jimmy!

JIMMY. Hey, Agnes! *(About FINGERS:)* Hey! He ain't no paperman!

AGNES. Don't you know him? He's Hot Fingers McCrawlsky!

JIMMY. Boy, he really swings out with a hot mess o' jive! Wanna dance?

AGNES. Sure!

(And they do, wildly. RALPH and JACK sit with BLANCHE, a woman in her thirties who's been around.)

RALPH. Mae's expecting us at her apartment later.

JACK. Any new prospects?

BLANCHE. Maybe...

(They laugh. FINGERS stops playing.)

FINGERS. Break time!

(All respond knowingly. FINGERS moves to a private part of the stage.)

AGNES. Jimmy, look!

JIMMY. Oh, okay!

(JIMMY sits down and begins to play. FINGERS looks around, pulls out a joint and begins to smoke. The lights isolate him in a spot. He laughs maniacally, for he is basically insane. Lights restore.)

AGNES. Oh, Jimmy. You're wonderful!

JIMMY. You're just figuring that out?

JACK. *(For everyone else's benefit:)* Why can't we go now?

BLANCHE. Why not? Hey, kids, we're having a little party in my girlfriend's apartment. Want to come?

AGNES. I'd love to! You wanna come, don't you Jimmy?

JIMMY. Well, sure!

BLANCHE. Well, come along. We can all go in my car!

(Big response from entire crowd. Everyone follows BLANCHE out except JOE, who exits by himself and FINGERS, who stays at the piano. Spotlight on FINGERS, then blackout.)

Scene 3

(Walt's car. JAY driving with mimed steering wheel. They are going very fast, as we can hear.)

GWEN. Ooh! I can barely catch my breath! It's great Walt let you borrow his car. How come he went home?

JAY. Aw, he's just a wet blanket. Besides, we can have more fun duo than trio.

GWEN. Hey, Jay, give me another stick, huh?

JAY. Well, sure, kid. You got any money?

GWEN. Money? No. I haven't gotten my allowance for this week yet. How come money, Jay?

JAY. This stuff doesn't grow on trees. But I'll float ya this time.

GWEN. I'll pay you back. Promise.

JAY. You're right. You will. Here ya go.

(Just as he hands her the joint, the car goes out of control.)

GWEN. Jay, look out!

(Slow motion car crash, blackout.)

Scene 4

(Mary's house. MARY and BILL study.)

MARY. It was sweet of you to help me, Bill.

BILL. I'll help with anything except Domestic Science.

MARY. Why, Bill, don't you want to know anything about running your own home?

BILL. The answer is no. You know, after that session yesterday I went home and told my mother the trouble with her pot roast gravy was she hadn't added two heaping teaspoons of olive oil.

MARY. What did she say?

BILL. She didn't say anything. She just threw me out of the kitchen.

MARY. *(Laughing:)* I don't wonder.

(Mary's MOTHER enters with tray.)

MOTHER. Hello, children.

MARY. Hello, Mother.

BILL. Hello.

MARY. That was sweet of you, Mother.

BILL. Gosh! Hot chocolate! Thanks!

MOTHER. I know you can't study on empty stomachs. Sit back and enjoy yourselves.

MARY. He will.

BILL. She will, too. *(Bad English accent:)* May I?

MARY. *(Same:)* Please, do, kind sir. You are very kind.

(BILL pours for both of them.)

BILL. Mary, before we do that math, how about reading some of this? It's swell.

MARY. Romeo and Juliet?

BILL. Don't you like it?

MARY. Yes.

BILL. You know, when I study this, I sort of think of you. It's like you're right here beside me. Listen— *(This Shakespeare should be painfully bad:)*

It is my soul that calls upon thy name.

How silver sweet sound lovers tongues by night

Softest music to attending ears.

MARY. *(Reading:)* Romeo?

BILL. My dear?

MARY. What o'clock tomorrow shall I come to thee?

BILL. The hour of nine.

MARY. I will not fail.

'Tis twenty years til then.

(They kiss. BILL jumps up, embarrassed.)

BILL. Uh, I'll see you tomorrow, Mary. Bye!

(They exit separate ways.)

Scene 5

(Lights shift to Bill's house. His DAD, MOM, and little brother GEOFFREY sit around the radio.)

GEOFFREY. Hey, Daddy! You got anything for me?

DAD. Certainly.

MOM. Don't bother your father every night, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY. Aw! Have ya?

DAD. There you are.

(BILL enters.)

BILL. Hello, everyone!

MOM. What made you so late, Bill? I was getting worried.

BILL. I had to study, Ma.

GEOFFREY. He was not! I saw him walkin' with his girl! Bill's got a girl, Bill's got a girl!

BILL. Mom, make him cut it out!

MOM. Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY. Well, Bill *has* got a girl!

MOM. Quiet! And put that candy away until after dinner. Henry, you shouldn't have given it to him.

(DAD grunts.)

GEOFFREY. Bill's gotta girl and her name is Mary!

BILL. Yeah, I'll shut you up!

(He chases GEOFFREY around the stage.)

MOM. Bill, Geoffrey! Stop that carrying on!

DAD. Let them alone. They're all right. They're just young.

(BILL catches GEOFFREY.)

GEOFFREY. I didn't mean it, Bill! Honest I didn't!

BILL. Well, I'm just burnt up you didn't say "Bill's got a *swell* girl."

GEOFFREY. Gee, it must be love. She'd have to be swell for you to like her.

BILL. Uh huh. Sounds like you want something. Come on. What is it?

GEOFFREY. It's my model airplane. It doesn't work. You can fix it. You can fix everything.

BILL. *(Laughs:)* Okay, I'll fix it. But after I meet Mary and Jimmy tomorrow afternoon.

GEOFFREY. Thanks, Bill!

(Family exits.)

Scene 6

(BILL crosses to outside Joe's Place. JIMMY is in a car.)

JIMMY. Mary told me to wait and tell you she had to go home. Mother wanted her to go to the dressmakers with her.

BILL. Thanks, Jimmy. Must be getting grown up. I see Mary let you borrow her car.

JIMMY. Yeah! Can I take you any place?

BILL. Well, I wasn't going any place in particular.

JIMMY. How 'bout going over to Joe's Place with me? I'll buy you a soda.

BILL. I never drink that stuff.

JIMMY. Well, gee, I'll buy you something else.

BILL. Okay, you're on the hook for one root beer!

JIMMY. Swell!

Scene 7

(JIMMY and BILL get out of the car and they enter Joe's Place. RALPH and BLANCHE sit together at a table, and BILL and JIMMY mingle with the ensemble, JOE behind the counter, and after a beat, GWEN enters, met by JAY.)

JAY. Gwen! I've been lookin' all over for ya.

GWEN. Hello, Jay. I wasn't in school today on account of my head and my hand. *(She shows him the bandage on her hand.)* The doctor said I should rest.

JAY. Did they buy the rap about the stairs?

GWEN. Sure they did. Mother found it hard to believe I would be so clumsy with all those dance lessons I've been to.

JAY. A dancer? You want to be a dancer?

GWEN. (*GWEN does a little twirl.*) It's all I've ever wanted in my whole life. But enough of this. What about you? Wasn't Walt mad about his car?

JAY. He was pretty steamed. But he knew better than to say anything.

GWEN. Why?

JAY. Let's just say he owes me one.

GWEN. Oh. Say, Jay, I gotta run. Do you think you could get me another cig? (*She makes a childish attempt at being sexy.*)

JAY. You got any scratch?

GWEN. Well, no. I still haven't gotten my allowance. But I'll pay you back. Promise.

JAY. How about this? I give you the score, and you meet me at a party tonight. You can pay me back then.

GWEN. I don't know. Mother doesn't even know I'm out of the house right now. I don't think she'll let me go to a party with my hand and all.

JAY. What if I told you there would be a producer there? What if I told you you might be able to get a dancin' job from some Joe at the party?

GWEN. A job? You mean it? I'll try to make it, Jay! I swear I will. Now, how about that cigarette?

(Again with the sexy stuff. He hands her a joint.)

JAY. Here you go. Eight o'clock. Mae's place.

GWEN. Thanks a mil, Jay!

(She kisses his cheek and exits. JAY blends in with the crowd. JOE, with a look at RALPH and BLANCHE calls out.)

JOE. Hey, Bill! Jimmy!

RALPH. Hey! Jimmy!

BLANCHE. Hello, Bill! Hello, Jimmy! Come on! Sit on down!

(They do.)

BILL. Hello, Blanche. Hello, Ralph.

JIMMY. Hey, Joe! Two sodas! No! I mean, one soda and one root beer!

(JOE exits for root beer.)

BLANCHE. We're going up to Mae's for a party later on.

JIMMY. Couldn't Bill come along?

BLANCHE. Uh huh!

BILL. Well...

JIMMY. Come on, Bill. You'll get a kick out of it.

BILL. Thanks just the same—

BLANCHE. Come on, Bill. Mary won't be jealous.

JIMMY. Why sure! All the kids will be there. It's keen!

BILL. Well, I don't—

(JIMMY stares at him.)

I really shouldn't—

(BLANCHE joins Jimmy's stare.)

I've got a tennis match—

(Everyone stares at BILL. Dead silence.)

Well, okay!

(Everyone bursts into laughter and follows BLANCHE out, except JAY and FINGERS. JAY walks up behind FINGERS as he plays.)

JAY. That's a nice tune—

(FINGERS jumps, startled.)

FINGERS. Oh. sorry...I'm just a little...tense.

JAY. That's a real swingin' tune you're tossin' out, Mr. Fingers.

FINGERS. What's all this "Mr. Fingers" stuff? Just call me...Hot!

JAY. Okay...Hot—

(AL enters. He is a typical greasy strip joint owner.)

AL. Hello, Jay. Hello...Hot.

JAY. *(Nervous:)* Al! How the heck are ya?

(FINGERS slinks out during this exchange.)

AL. Just great. I just closed the deal on another men's club. All I need to do is build the stage and get some more dames and we're in business.

JAY. Glad to hear it. By the way, you remember I owe you for a couple, right?

AL. Do you? I guess it just slipped my mind.

JAY. Well, I got the payback to end all paybacks. And she wants to be a dancer, no less.

AL. She? A dancer? When do I get to meet this future employee of the Pageant House?

JAY. Tonight. I got a line on a party at Mae's place tonight. You know her?

AL. *(All too well:)* Vaguely.

JAY. But the only thing is I need some more bait to reel her in.

AL. I gotcha. But this better be good. Not a crier like the last one.

JAY. Don't worry. She'll be too hot for that.

(AL hands JAY some dope.)

Thanks. Tonight at eight fifteen. Mae's place.

(They exit.)

Scene 8

(Lights shift to Mae's place. JACK opens the front door.)

JACK. Hey, everybody! Come on in!

(The whole crowd streams in boisterously. MAE enters from the kitchen with AGNES, who is helping set up for the party.)

AGNES. Jimmy!

JIMMY. Hey, Ag!

(She grabs him and they start making out. BILL stands by the door.)

BLANCHE. Come, on, Bill. Don't stand there.

(He moves in. MAE eyes him suspiciously.)

Oh, Mae. This is Bill. He's okay.

MAE. If you say so, he's all right with me.

(She offers him a firm handshake.)

BILL. Nice to meet you.

MAE. Likewise. *(She moves to JACK.)* There's a new one here today.

JACK. Yeah. Bill. He's all right. Blanche has got herself quite a yen for him.

MAE. Not bad. I didn't think Blanche had that much taste.

JACK. She knows what she's doin'. She's got Ralph not to bother her, and now she's got her hooks out for this new kid.

MAE. Say, we're almost outta smokes. You better run out and get some. And get me some scotch while you're at it.

JACK. Why couldn't you figure that out when I was here this morning? I got my car in the shop.

MAE. Well, what of it? That kid out there. Jimmy? He's got a car. He'll take ya. Come on. Get goin'. Hurry up.

(JACK crosses to JIMMY and AGNES.)

JACK. Hey, Jimmy. I've got to run over to Feeder Avenue for a minute. You got a car, haven't you?

JIMMY. Why, yes. My sister's.

JACK. You wouldn't mind giving me a lift?

JIMMY. Why sure! Come on.

(They exit. AGNES mingles. JAY enters.)

JAY. Hi, everyone!

(All respond enthusiastically. JAY mingles. BILL offers BLANCHE a real cigarette.)

BILL. Smoke?

BLANCHE. No, thank you.

(MAE enters with pot for everyone.)

MAE. Well, here we are!

(She begins passing it out.)

BLANCHE. Thanks!

RALPH. *(More crazed than usual:)* Oh, Mae, don't forget me!

MAE. *(Grouchily:)* I never forget you.

(All laugh.)

BLANCHE. Oh, here, Bill. If you want a good smoke, try one of these.

(He hesitates.)

I thought you were a good sport. Of course, if you're afraid...

(Dead silence. All stare at BILL. He hesitates, then takes the joint. The party resumes.)

That's better! I know you'll like it. I know you will. Now, just take a puff.

(Dead silence. Spotlight on BILL. BLANCHE has lit a match, and BILL hesitantly lights up. All eyes on BILL. He takes one puff, like a cigarette. He begins to laugh. RALPH laughs at Bill's laugh. BILL laughs at Ralph's laugh. Everyone laughs. Lights restore. Laugh, laugh, laugh. GWEN enters.)

JAY. Gwen! Over here!

(He takes her hand. She winces at the pain.)

GWEN. Oh, hi. I'm glad I found you right away. I hardly know these people.

JAY. Well, you know me and for now, that's enough.

GWEN. I really need another smoke, Jay. I know I said I'd pay you back, but I didn't get my allowance and I smoked the last one (*Babbling:*) but if you give me just one more—

JAY. Hey, don't flip your top over it. You can have all the smoke you want. More, even.

(He gives her a joint which she desperately smokes.)

GWEN. Thanks, Jay. I don't know how I'm ever gonna pay you back. And I'm so nervous about meeting this agent, or whatever he is.

JAY. He's more like a manager, and he should be here any minute.

(AL enters.)

AL, over here! I'd like you to meet Gwen. The dancer.

GWEN. How do you do?

AL. Very fine, Miss Gwen. I hear you want to make a career in show biz.

GWEN. Well, yes. More than anything, really.

AL. Well, if Jay will excuse us, why don't we sit down and chat about your career?

JAY. I'll catch you later.

GWEN. *(Whispering:)* Thanks, Jay.

JAY. Don't think about it. *(He mingles.)*

AL. I can tell just by lookin' at ya, that you would be very suitable for a job I happen to know just opened up.

GWEN. Really? You mean it? I could audition for you. I've been dancing for three years...well, in class, anyway.

AL. Nope. You're auditioning for me just by standing there. I've got a nose for these things. As far as I'm concerned, you're hired.

GWEN. You mean it?

AL. You bet.

GWEN. I got my first part! I can't believe it! Wait till I tell mother!

AL. Now, before you go spoutin' off about this new gig, I gotta fill you in on some of the aspects of show biz you might not know about. For instance, you're lucky. You've got a manager, me, who cares about ya and will shape your career. Some girls ain't got that. And without that, you ain't got nothin'.

GWEN. Oh.

AL. Managers ain't cheap. We take ten percent of everything you make.

GWEN. Ten percent?

AL. Even the Barrymores give ten percent to their manager. But, because I like ya, I'm willin' to make a deal with ya.

GWEN. Oh, okay.

AL. No ten percent in exchange for later payback.

GWEN. All these paybacks. I didn't know this business was so complicated. How do I pay you back?

AL. In gratitude.

GWEN. Oh, Al, I'm *very* grateful.

AL. That's a start.

MAE. Hey! Any of you kids want some...snacks?

(Everyone heartily responds "yes" and all exit into kitchen.)

Scene 9

(JACK and JIMMY are in a car, outside the Boss's office. The BOSS is a Mafioso type. JACK gets out of the car.)

JACK. Just be a minute, kid.

JIMMY. (*Desperately:*) Hey, Jack! Give me another cigarette before you go.

(*JACK hands him a joint, then crosses to the Boss' office. The Boss' face should always be blocked by a newspaper.*)

BOSS. Hello, Jack.

JACK. Hello, Boss.

BOSS. How's business?

JACK. Gettin' better every day. Those kids sure go for it.

BOSS. Swell.

JACK. Had to run over for a couple more cartons. Ran short today.

BOSS. All right. (*Into phone:*) Manny, ten cartons for Jack. ...Who?... Pete? All right, send him up.

(*PETE enters, just another dope dealer.*)

PETE. I wanna talk to you.

BOSS. All right, go ahead. Jack's okay. What's the beef?

PETE. Listen you never heard no beef when I had to sell that rotten gin.

BOSS. You're after the dough, aren't ya?

PETE. Yeah, but I don't need dough that bad, takin' two bit pieces from kids.

BOSS. There's millions of two bit pieces out there just beggin' to be taken. Don't be a dope.

PETE. I'm just dope enough to draw the line sellin' hop to kids.

BOSS. (*Pause.*) All right, Pete. You know what my policy has always been. If the boys aren't satisfied I'm always willing to have them retire...retire permanently. (*Pause.*) So long, Pete.

PETE. (*Moves to leave.*) I only wish you had a couple a kids—

BOSS. Get out!

(*PETE exits.*)

All right, Jack, pick up your stuff from Manny. It ought to be ready by now.

JACK. Okay, Boss.

(He moves from the office to the car, picking up a parcel on the way. He gets in the car.)

JIMMY. Let's go, Jack! I'm red hot!

JACK. Better be careful how you drive or the next thing you know you'll be ice cold.

(JIMMY starts the car and begins driving, very poorly and fast.)

Take it easy kid! You're goin' almost fifty! Slow down! You'll kill somebody!

(Someone walks out in front of the car and gets hit. JIMMY slams on the brakes, they look at the body, then speed away as the lights blackout.)

End of Act I

Intermission

(This next section took the place of an intermission in the original production. During the course of the show, the actor playing DR. CARROLL should look through the note cards with pot questions and pick out about ten that can be answered humorously within the style of the show. Jotting down the answers—be creative, remembering the hysteria of the time—is helpful. Lights up. DR. CARROLL stands center stage.)

CARROLL. Reefer smokers. Though we are examining the effects of marijuana on the fibre of America's youth, reefer smokers can be any age. They can be anyone. They can be anywhere. Why, look around. Perhaps there are some reefer smokers here this evening. *(House lights up as DR. CARROLL takes several menacing steps toward the audience.)* I am now prepared to answer some of the questions you wrote on the cards before this evening's lecture. *(He answers the questions, which usually range from "Where can I get some?" to "Does it cause birth defects?" to "Are you high right now?")* Now let us discuss the methods of spotting a reefer smoker in your proximity. The first effect of smoking marijuana is paranoia. *(DR. CARROLL stares at the audience, some of whom will inevitably laugh.)* The second effect is uncontrollable laughter. *(Stare.)* The third...well, let me put this in the form of a question. Is anyone here...hungry? *(DR. CARROLL pulls a huge candy bar from his coat pocket.)*

ACT II

Scene 1

(Dr. Carroll's office. DR. CARROLL continues directly from intermission.)

CARROLL. And so you see, it can happen to you. And once it starts, once the dealers sink their claws into your brain, nothing can stop them from controlling your every thought, your every action, your every emotion. Imagine being a marionette with no control over your own strings. There is nothing the puppeteer can't make you do—robbery, prostitution, even murder.

(BILL enters.)

CARROLL. I had a chance to speak to young Bill not too long before his life became impossibly twisted. Sit down, Bill. There seems to be something wrong. What is it? You were always a fine student. You always had excellent grades.

(BILL's eyes have been glued to the candy bar DR. CARROLL still holds.)

BILL. Well, I guess the work is getting a little harder, Dr. Carroll.

CARROLL. No, no, it isn't that. Bill, I'd like to help you, but of course I can't unless you let me. *(Pause.)* You're undermining your health.

BILL. There's nothing, Dr. Carroll. Honest there isn't. I'll study harder. Honest.

CARROLL. Honest? If you were being honest with me and honest with yourself, I'm afraid you'd be telling me a different story. Bill, I'm going to ask you a straightforward question, and I'd appreciate a straightforward answer.

BILL. Yes, sir.

CARROLL. Isn't it true that you have, perhaps unwillingly, acquired a certain harmful habit, through association with certain undesirable people? *(Pause.)* Well?

BILL. No, sir, I haven't, Dr. Carroll. Well...that is...you see, I'm worried about something at home.

CARROLL. Well, we'll just have to let it go at that. But remember, if you ever want to confide in me, no one will be the wiser.

BILL. Thank you, Dr. Carroll.

(They exit.)

Scene 2

(The Pageant House, with a pageant underway. GWEN, obviously uncomfortable, is doing a striptease. We hear hoots and hollers. After the act, AL enters, encouraging the audience to clap.)

AL. Beautiful, Gwen, beautiful. Any of you gentlemen who would like to share in Gwen's company, she'll be available for a visit after her break. Come on, kid.

(They move across the stage.)

GWEN. Hey, hold up. You promised.

AL. All right, all right. Here's your hot stick.

GWEN. What's the blow? This isn't big enough for a baby.

AL. Well, you still *are* a baby, and don't you forget it. Anyway, you'll get what's comin' to ya after your session tonight.

GWEN. Another session? You promised! After I worked off the stuff I borrowed, no more "visitations."

AL. What are you wearin'?

GWEN. What?

AL. *(Angry:)* What the hell are you wearin'?

GWEN. Uh, a top? With fringe...?

AL. And who gave 'em to ya?

GWEN. *(Resigned:)* You did, Al.

AL. And do you know how much those fringes and feathers cost?

GWEN. No.

AL. *(Pause.)* A lot. And according to my calculations, you still owe for the rags and the reefer.

GWEN. Oh.

AL. So, unless you got any more declarations of independence, I suggest you get back to your table and visit before your curfew is up and your mother finds out about your “study dates.”

(She hesitates, then exits, with AL following.)

Scene 3

(Mary's house. MOTHER is serving breakfast.)

MOTHER. Mary, you're not eating your breakfast again. Bill hasn't been around lately. Anything wrong between you two?

MARY. *(Angrily.)* Why should there be anything wrong?

MOTHER. There shouldn't, I'm sure. And whatever it is isn't serious, I know.

MARY. I'm sorry, Mother, for snapping at you like that.

MOTHER. Don't worry about it, dear. Why don't you speak frankly to Bill? I'm sure he'll be honest, whatever it is. I'm sure Bill has never lied about anything.

MARY. Yes, that's it. Bill's mother says he never lies.

MOTHER. There, you see?

MARY. Do you think it would be all right if I speak to him about it?

MOTHER. Why, of course.

(JIMMY enters, in a cranky mood.)

MOTHER. Oh, Jimmy, sit down, darling. I'll have your breakfast ready in a moment.

(MOTHER exits.)

MARY. You look worried.

JIMMY. What have I got to be worried about?

MARY. Why don't you tell me?

JIMMY. Oh, for Pete's sake! Don't try to cross examine me, will ya? I'm all right!

(He storms out. MARY follows.)

MARY. Jimmy! Don't let Mother see you like that!

(JIMMY knocks down an OFFICER on his way out. MARY stops to help him up.)

OFFICER. Where's he going in such a hurry?

MARY. Oh, um...the store.

OFFICER. Morning, miss. I'm from the Police Department.

MARY. Yes. Good morning.

OFFICER. We're tracing a hit and run driver. Someone caught the license number at the scene of the accident, but didn't get it quite right, so we're checking all numbers like it. And yours is one of them.

MARY. Well, I'll try to help you.

OFFICER. Do you remember what you were doing the 29th of last month?

MARY. That was the day before Mother's birthday. Oh, yes, I remember that day because I left school and went directly to the dressmaker's with Mother. I was there all afternoon.

OFFICER. Did you happen to loan your car to a couple of men?

MARY. *(Glancing after JIMMY:)* No, no. I had the car all afternoon myself.

OFFICER. Well, thanks, miss. Sorry to have troubled you.

MARY. Officer...did they...? Was the person killed?

OFFICER. Fortunately he wasn't. But that's still no excuse for hit and run driving. Good afternoon.

(He exits.)

MARY. Jimmy!

(She runs off in the direction of Jimmy's exit.)

Scene 4

(Mae's place. BLANCHE enters alone.)

BLANCHE. Hey, everybody! I feel like dancin'!

(MAE, JACK, RALPH, AGNES, BILL, ENSEMBLE all enter boisterously. JIMMY enters by the front door.)

BLANCHE. Come on, Jimmy! Play something hot!

(JIMMY sits down at the piano and plays wildly. BLANCHE dances wildly, taking off her clothes. She pulls BILL up to dance with her. Everyone shouts approval.)

JACK. Didn't take that kid long to catch on.

MAE. Don't take any of 'em long. Jack, we gotta lay off those kids.

JACK. Ah, shut your yap.

(BILL and BLANCHE dance their way to the bedroom which can be offstage if space dictates. If onstage, BLANCHE lays down on the bed and moves suggestively. BILL hesitates, stifling giggles.)

BLANCHE. Come on, Bill.

(BILL goes to her and they go at it. Outside at the party, there is smoking and making out and piano playing. MARY enters.)

Scene 5

(Joe's Place. Mae's party freezes, as this scene takes place downstage.)

MARY. Has Jimmy been here?

JOE. He was in. He went over to Mae's place. You know where that is?

MARY. Well, he was going to wait for me here, so he didn't give me Mae's address. Are you sure he didn't leave any message for me? Mary?

JOE. *(Looking her up and down:)* No, he didn't. But I guess you're okay. I'll write it down for you.

(He does, taking what seems an inordinate amount of time to do so. He finally hands it to her.)

MARY. Thanks!

(They exit their separate ways.)

Scene 6

(Party resumes. MARY enters. JIMMY sees her, grabs AGNES and exits.)

RALPH. Mary! Come right in!

MARY. Is Jimmy here?

RALPH. I think he's around here somewhere. Oh, wait, he left to take Agnes home, but he'll be right back. Come, sit down. Let me take your coat.

(The guests start filing out.)

MAE. *(To JACK:)* Who's the new kid?

JACK. It's that gal Ralph's gone over for. Funny, we've never been able to get her up here before.

RALPH. *(To last couple:)* Scram, will ya? *(Lights joint.)* Smoke, Mary?

MARY. Thanks. Are you sure Jimmy will be back soon?

RALPH. Sure. Any minute.

(MARY smokes and begins to giggle. JACK pours MAE a drink.)

MAE. What am I, an orphan?

JACK. Where do you put it? Ya got a hollow leg?

RALPH. How do you feel, Mary?

(He gradually begins touching her on the arm and the shoulder. She just giggles and half-heartedly shrugs him off. He becomes more and more aggressive until she realizes what he is doing and struggles to get away.)

MARY. No! Ralph, don't! Stop!

(Meanwhile, BILL has finished with BLANCHE and stumbles into the room. He sees RALPH and MARY, but light change indicates he isn't seeing what is really happening. In the spotlight, we see MARY, in slow motion, gaily removing her blouse for RALPH whose hands are all over her. Lights restore. RALPH is attacking MARY. BILL leaps on RALPH. JACK, MAE, and BLANCHE enter. JACK pulls out a gun to knock BILL out with, but in the struggle it fires, killing MARY. JACK knocks BILL out.)

BLANCHE. Bill! NO! Look!

RALPH. Jack, is she all right?

(JACK feels her pulse.)

JACK. She's dead.

BLANCHE. Oh, no! No! NO! NO! NO!

(MAE tries to quiet BLANCHE.)

JACK. Mae, get me some water.

(She exits for water.)

Now, listen you two. I want you to get out of here. Get out of here and forget you were ever here today. I'll handle this. Now get going.

(RALPH and BLANCHE head out, but stop to look at the bodies of BILL and MARY.)

Scram!

(They exit. MAE enters with water. JACK wipes off the fingerprints on the gun, then puts it in BILL's hand. He splashes water on BILL's face until he wakes up. BILL stands and sees MARY.)

BILL. Mary? *(He notices the gun in his hand.)* What happened?

JACK. You killed her.

(BILL throws himself on MARY's body and weeps.)

JACK. *(Aside to MAE:)* Look, after I scam, you call the cops. And this is your story. Remember it. These two kids came up for a couple of beers. You were in the kitchen, you heard a shot. When you got in here, this is what you found. Just stick to that story.

BILL. Mary! Speak to me!

(He weeps and weeps...and weeps, for too long. The lights finally blackout.)

Scene 7

(Bedroom. GWEN and a CUSTOMER, a disgusting middle-aged man, are finishing up business. He is zipping up his pants, she is in a state of undress.)

CUSTOMER. You're getting better. I gotta blow. Later.

GWEN. Wait! What about...?

CUSTOMER. Oh, yeah.

(He tosses a wad of bills on the bed. She just lets it fall.)

GWEN. *(Desperate:)* No, I mean...

CUSTOMER. Right. Here.

(He tosses a joint on the bed. She snatches it up greedily.)

Al told me you were nuts for the stuff, but you got it bad!

(He exits. AL enters.)

AL. You got another one. Put that stuff away! I told you no reefer until after your shift. Now get a leg up.

(He exits and she pulls herself together. JIMMY enters. She recognizes him, and tries to hide her face. He starts to undress.)

JIMMY. Uh, I've never...well, I haven't ever paid for...it was a bet with the fellas and... Wait! I know you. Gwen! Gwen, isn't it?

GWEN. Hello, Jimmy. Oh, please don't tell anyone.

JIMMY. What are you doing here?

GWEN. I don't know. It all happened so fast. First Jay, now Al—

JIMMY. So you don't know? About Jay.

GWEN. I haven't seen Jay for weeks. Just about the time I dropped out of school he disappeared.

JIMMY. He's dead. Stabbed twelve times. They say he owed somebody some money and couldn't pay it back. I guess he just kept getting in deeper and deeper until he was six feet deep. And now you. I gotta leave, Gwen. We'll just pretend—

GWEN. Wait! Please stay and talk. I've got to find out about my family. My mother.

JIMMY. Well, okay. I guess it would look better if I stayed in here awhile.

(He hands her money.)

GWEN. Keep your money. I'll just tell Al you walked. He'll be mad, but that's okay. But do you have any "j"?

JIMMY. What? Jay's dead. I just—

GWEN. No. "J." Pot. Mary Jane. *Reefer.*

JIMMY. Uh, no, I don't.

GWEN. Yes you do! That's part of the deal! Al said!

JIMMY. But I don't. I swear! Nobody told me.

GWEN. I see. I see what the game is. Well, come on then.

(She paws at him, trying to get him to sleep with her.)

JIMMY. Gwen, no!

GWEN. Come on, I know you got it. Come on. It won't be so bad. I've got lots of practice.

(She starts kissing him and pulling off their clothes.)

Come on, Jimmy! Get with it. You've only got twenty minutes.

(He pushes her off.)

JIMMY. STOP IT! You disgust me! I can't believe you've come to this. For a lousy joint. Well, here!

(He throws a joint at her. She grabs it.)

Yes, I did have one, but I didn't want to give it to you because you were such a mess. I thought maybe I could help you, but I guess not. Goodbye, Gwen. Oh, and about your mother, I'm not going to tell her anything. I don't think she could go on living knowing her daughter is a *(Disgusted:)* prostitute.

(He exits. GWEN cries, but still smokes the joint.)

AL. *(Offstage:)* Next!

(GWEN grabs her clothes and runs off.)

Scene 8

(Street. JACK and JIMMY enter opposite sides.)

JACK. Jimmy!

JIMMY. Hi, Jack.

JACK. I was just talking to a friend of mine. *(Pause.)* A cop. *(Pause.)* Sergeant on the homicide squad. That guy you hit that day...died.

JIMMY. Died?... You?... I mean, you didn't...?

JACK. No, I didn't crack. And I'm not going to. Nobody will ever know you were driving that car.

JIMMY. Gosh! Thanks, Jack.

JACK. Just as long as you keep your mouth shut you were ever in Mae's apartment.

JIMMY. Sure, Jack. Sure.

JACK. Okay, kid. *(With meaning:)* Okay.

(They exit.)

Scene 9

(Courtroom. Bill's trial. BILL sits with his MOTHER and FATHER.)

LAWYER. I'd like to recall Dr. Alfred Carroll to the stand.

(DR. CARROLL enters and sits on the witness stand.)

Dr. Carroll, as principal of Lakeview High School, did you, in recent months, notice a change in behavior and demeanor in your student, William?

CARROLL. Yes, in a number of ways. For instance, at times, disassociation— *(A beat. A beat.)* —of ideas. In another instance, I happened to attend a recent interscholastic tennis match. And while Bill was considered an exceedingly good player, I saw him miss the ball by at least three or four feet. *(Rumbling throughout the courtroom.)* This, I understand, can be attributed to the use of *marijuana*.

(Bill's MOTHER sobs loudly.)

LAWYER. So you noticed changes that would lead you to believe, as an educator, that he was undergoing some sort of severe mental strain, which might possibly have been induced by some drug?

CARROLL. Yes. I recall distinctly just three weeks ago, during a class of English literature there was a very serious discussion of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Suddenly, Bill burst into an uncontrollable fit of hysterical laughter.

(DAD sighs loudly.)

LAWYER. Six months ago, what would have been your opinion regarding the character of William?

CARROLL. He was a fine, upstanding, American boy. A good scholar, a good athlete, and a representative of the caliber of young men we are proud to graduate from our school.

LAWYER. Thank you, Dr. Carroll. You may step down.

(He steps down, looks at BILL, then directly at the audience and shakes his head, sadly. He exits.)

The prosecution rests.

Scene 10

(Mae's place. RALPH, BLANCHE, JACK, and MAE hiding out. RALPH is edging closer to insanity.)

BLANCHE. Oh, snap out of it, will ya!? It's not our fault. Why'd I ever bring him up here in the first place? He's just a kid. They can't hang him.

RALPH. Shut up! SHUT UP!

BLANCHE. Why don't you let yourself go? Talk! Go off your nut and have me that way, too. It was his own fault, wasn't it?

RALPH. Shut up! They've got the kid now, haven't they? The cops can't find us.

MAE. *(To JACK:)* Jack, I wanna get out of this place.

JACK. You're gonna stay here as long as we have to keep these two under cover. Till the trial is over, or the boss gets a better idea.

MAE. But they're getting on my nerves.

JACK. Can't last much longer. I'm not worried about her. We gotta keep him game.

MAE. He's ready to crack.

JACK. All you gotta do is keep him from getting too many reefers.

MAE. Any day now that punk'll get hot. He'll probably spill and tell all he knows if he gets the chance.

JACK. I don't think he'll get it. I'll see you later.

MAE. Where are you goin'?

JACK. See the boss.

(He exits. Mae's apartment freezes. Lights up on GWEN, who lurches up to JACK in the street.)

GWEN. Hey, Jack, you gotta help me. Please!

JACK. Beat it, kid. I got things to do.

GWEN. Don't you remember me? It's Gwen. You gotta help me. Al's after me. I can't go back there. Please!

JACK. Sorry. I don't mess in Al's affairs. You're on your own. Now move it before somebody sees us together.

(He exits. She lays down on the street in a doorway. She doesn't move for the rest of the play.)

Scene 11

(Boss' office. JACK enters.)

BOSS. *(Behind paper:)* Hello, Jack.

JACK. Hello, Boss. What are we gonna do about this Ralph guy?

BOSS. Still jittery, huh?

JACK. I don't know what that punk's gonna do.

BOSS. Keep feeding him those hot sticks.

JACK. That's what Mae's been doin'. That's no good. I got a hunch he's due to crack when that verdict comes in. If he's on the tea, he's liable to take a powder on us and blow his topper to the D.A.

BOSS. You mean you think we'd all be better off if he never heard the verdict? Well, what are you waiting for?

(They exit. A PAPERBOY crosses the stage.)

PAPERBOY. Extra! Extra! "Guilty Verdict in Reefer Murder!" Extra!

Scene 12

(Mae's place. BLANCHE plays the piano or hums while RALPH paces.)

RALPH. Stop that racket! STOP IT!

BLANCHE. What's the matter with you? Givin' me the creeps.

RALPH. Mae! Mae!

MAE. What do you want?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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