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Cast of Characters

DR. CARROLL and others, 50s

MAE COLEMAN, 20s

JACK PERRY, 20s

RALPH WILEY, 19

BLANCHE D'JOUR, 17

BILL HARPER, 17

MARY LANE, 17

JIMMY LANE, 16

Scene

Time: The 1950s.

Place: Suburbia. Action suggests several locations.

Production Notes

Scenes have been numbered for rehearsal purposes.

Reefer Madness is performed without an intermission.

Acknowledgments

Reefer Madness was originally developed at Playwrights Horizons in New York City.

Reefer Madness premiered at Second Guess Theatre Company in Westport, Connecticut in November, 1997. The production was directed by Joe Landry and assistant directed by Tom Landry. It was performed with the following cast:

DR. CARROLL	Tom Petrone
MARY	Stephanie Rogers
BILL	Victor Sayegh
JIMMY	Simon Tuozzoli
RALPH	Matthew Mihalcsik
BLANCHE	Jamie Lynn Rubin
MAE	Jennifer Mihalcsik
JACK	Robert Fortunato

(The Standby for Mary was Hope Landry.)

Reefer Madness was revived by Second Guess Theatre Company in Westport, Connecticut in November, 1999. The production was directed by Joe Landry, with lighting by David A. Ullman, stage management by Julia Carroll, and percussion by Avery Brooks. It was performed with the following cast:

DR. CARROLL	Gene D'Agostino
MARY	Stephanie Rogers
BILL	Bill Farrell
JIMMY	Michal Slaby
RALPH	Matthew Mihalcsik
BLANCHE	Meryl Rosten
MAE	Glory Gallo
JACK	Tom Petrone

(Also appearing in this production, in roles not included in the current script, were Noelle Hayden, Mindy Hrabstock, Molly Kimmerling and Kevin Smith.)

Introduction

When I was twelve years old, my first job was in the film department at Fairfield Public Library in my hometown of Fairfield, Connecticut. This was back in the days of 16mm, just before the dawn of home video. Their permanent collection included a handful of feature films, including "Reefer Madness." From my very first viewing, I couldn't believe what I was watching. Was this some of the worst acting ever committed to celluloid—and could they possibly be serious about their subject? The answer to both these questions, I learned, was yes. This film's original intention was, indeed, to stomp out the national epidemic of marijuana. What's more, my research showed that the film was financed by a church group before falling into the hands of the Cecil B. DeMille of exploitation films, Dwain Esper (who changed the original title from "Tell Your Children" to the more sensational "Reefer Madness").

During high school, when I realized I wanted to be a writer, one of my first ideas was to do a stage adaptation of "Reefer Madness." I decided to set my adaptation in the 1950s, as I could easily relate to the wholesome "Leave It to Beaver" suburbia and wanted to have fun exposing a seedy side to this idyllic American Dream. The script was workshopped during my days at Playwrights Horizons in New York City, and later became a staple of my Second Guess Theatre Company in Westport, Connecticut, where both runs of the play enjoyed critical acclaim and extensions by popular demand.

Special thanks to my friends and family, who helped in the development of this play throughout its journey thus far: Playwrights Horizons, Music Theatre of Connecticut, Westport Country Playhouse, Frances Kondziela, Maggie Williams, James B. McKenzie, Jane Desy, Barbara Meyer, Achilles Tsakiridis, The Dramatists Guild of America, Playscripts, Mom, Dad, Hope, Tom, Colin, and finally, Cathy Mulligan, to whom I dedicate this play, as her laughter and determination inspire me always.

—Joe Landry August, 2008

REEFER MADNESS

by Joe Landry

adapted from the Cult Classic Motion Picture

Scene 1

(Happy-go-lucky music, very innocent. Darkness. A gunshot. The music scratches to a stop. Lights up slow as we hear voices in the dark and start putting faces with them...)

MARY & JACK. (To us:) Murder!

BLANCHE. (To us:) Suicide!

JIMMY. (*To us:*) Hit-and-run driving!

RALPH. (*To us:*) Incurable insanity!

MARY. (To us:) Hearts torn apart!

BILL. (*To us:*) Families broken up!

JACK. (*To us:*) Kids who will suffer guilt and bad memories until the day they die!

MAE. (To us:) And all because kids couldn't resist a few kicks!

ALL. (*To us:*) The story you are about to see is true. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent.

MAE. (*To us:*) And now that we've got your attention, ladies and gentlemen, children of all ages, it is my privilege to introduce our host!

MARY. (To us:) To know him is to love him!

JIMMY. (To us:) Your pal and mine!

BLANCHE. (*To us:*) All the way from your local high school!

JACK. (*To us:*) Put your hands together and let's give a rip-roaring reception!

RALPH. (To us:) For Dr. Alfred Carroll!

(They step aside as DR. CARROLL enters. All remain in the background for the present.)

Scene 2

DR. CARROLL. (To us:) Good evening. I'm most appreciative to see such a supportive and enthusiastic group of parents here tonight. Most of you already know me, but for the few of you who don't, my name is Dr. Carroll. I'm the principal to your kids down at the high school. The P.T.A. has called this meeting tonight in the efforts to share with you our concern with a national epidemic of overwhelming proportions. I've invited you here this evening to introduce you to the real Public Enemy number one... (He reaches into his jacket pocket, looking like he's going to pull a gun, but instead produces a bag a marijuana:) Yes, ladies and gents, I am speaking of "Reefer Madness"—the drug menace, marijuana! You, and all the school parent groups around the country must stand united on stamping out this frightful assassin of our youth. You can do it by bringing about compulsory education on the subject of narcotics in general. The dreaded marijuana in particular. That is the purpose of this meeting, ladies and gentlemen. To lay the foundation for a nationwide campaign by you to demand by law such compulsory education. Because it is only through enlightenment that this scourge can be wiped out. Out of the trafficking of these drugs, a lawlessness that we can scarcely estimate has grown and is now flourishing. It exists in almost every city and hamlet in the country. It might be interesting and important for you to know some of the methods used in bringing these drugs into the country. As the work of the forces of law and order, which are daily combating the traffic always at the risk of life by their agents, this ceaseless fight against the drug traffic is directed by the department of narcotics, Washington. (Producing a letter:) I have received a letter of vital importance from a member of the narcotics bureau. I am going to read this letter to you. (Unfolding the letter and reading from it:)

"My dear Dr. Carroll,

The suppression of the use of marijuana and of the forces lurking behind it are the most important jobs this department is now engaged in. At the outset of this letter, there is one vital fact I would like to submit: There is a powerful agency, I speak of the School-Parent associations of this country, which can be invaluable in stamping out this scourge. Their help, their eternal vigilance, could be the deciding factor in our fight against it. The weed marijuana is grown in every state in the union. Recently, in the city of Brooklyn, New York, a field of marijuana was found behind a tenement court. The weed was here being cultivated, regularly stripped, and dried and sold in schools and government army posts in and around New York. The dried leaves and berries are ground up and made into cigarettes by a simple hand machine. The deadly narcotic is wrapped quickly and easily prepared for its market. The sale of marijuana is even more difficult to detect than the trafficking of drugs such as opium, morphine and heroin. They are hidden in fake jewelry cases, in the heels of shoes—women's shoes, especially, because the drugs can be secreted in false heels. Hollowed shaving brushes are another medium, books with false centers are often used, watch cases are convenient hiding places. The value of drugs thus seized is enormous. Recently, a huge supply of heroin was taken; it was concealed in an apparently harmless shipment of 35 barrels of olive oil. The deadly drug was burned in the incinerator of the bureau of engraving and printing. And more vicious, more deadly even than these soul destroying drugs, is the menace of marijuana."

No doubt many of you do not believe that these things do happen, that they cannot happen to you. You may also believe that the facts have been exaggerated. Let me tell you of something that happened right here in our own city. This story is set in a world your own kids would never tell you about—so that's why I'm here. You probably read about it in the papers. However, I'll give you the real facts behind the case.

Scene 3

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) Let me take a moment to introduce you to our cast of characters. First off, starting on a positive note, let me introduce you to our very own Romeo and Juliet. Ladies and gentlemen, Bill Harper and Mary Lane.

(BILL and MARY are there, hand in hand.)

BILL. (*To us:*) Hiya, folks! Glad you could all make it tonight. This here's Mary, she's my girl.

MARY. (*To us:*) And Bill's all mine, girls—so don't go getting any ideas. (*To a woman in the audience:*) Hi, mom! Where's dad? Couldn't come?

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) Moving on...

MARY. Please do.

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) I'm sure you'll all love meeting Mary's kid brother, Jimmy Lane.

(JIMMY is there, chewing bubble gum.)

JIMMY. (To us, giving us a little salute:) Nice to meet ya.

DR. CARROLL. What's that in your mouth, Jimmy?

JIMMY. Nuttin'.

DR. CARROLL. "Nuttin'", huh? Did you bring enough for all of us?

(He didn't, and knows he's caught. DR. CARROLL holds out his palm. JIMMY knows the drill: he takes the gum from his mouth and places it in DR. CARROLL's hand.)

JIMMY. Sorry, Dr. Carroll. It won't happen again.

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) Next, let me introduce Ralph Wiley and Blanche D'Jour. Ralph's big man on campus...

(RALPH and BLANCHE are there.)

RALPH. (*To us:*) How do you do?

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) And Blanche is the exchange student next door.

BLANCHE. (To us:) No. Speak. The. English.

RALPH. Blanche, quit that clowning!

BLANCHE. (Distracted by a young man in the audience. To him:) After the show, why don't you come back to my dressing room. (To another audience member:) You too, tiger. (Growling at him.)

RALPH. (Taking her back:) That'll be about enough of that.

BLANCHE. (*To* RALPH:) I'm just gettin' started, kiddo.

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) Okay, now. Last, but not least, our adults in-the-know, Mae Coleman and Jack Perry: The villains of the piece. Feel free to boo and hiss to your heart's content.

(MAE and JACK are there as the others boo and hiss them. MAE stomps her foot, shooting them a look and the noise stops.)

MAE. (*To us:*) Mae Coleman, party girl. (*Re* JACK:) This here's my goon. (*To* JACK:) Make nice with the people, Jack.

JACK. (*To us:*) Her place is my place. Come up any old time, kids. (Winking at a young thing in the audience.)

DR. CARROLL. (*To the rest:*) Thank you all. Please set up for our first scene. (*They do as he continues:*) And while they do, let me tell you a little bit about our town—for those of you who might be visiting us tonight. Population: 4,641—most of them God-fearing and go to church every Sunday. Average household has 3.5 children. Most of the men who can work do so at the hula-hoop factory just the other side of the railroad tracks. Most all women are housewives, a few of the single women are secretaries and like that. The children attend school through the twelfth grade, then there's the college next town over. There's a gazebo on the town green, with free concerts in the evenings—weather permitting, of course. Nice town, know what I mean?

Scene 4

JACK. (Re the set:) Ready to start when you are, Dr. Carroll.

DR. CARROLL. Then let's do just that, shall we? (*To us:*) Our first scene takes place in the apartment belonging to Mae Coleman. (*Steps aside to let the scene play, maybe hanging in the background.*)

(Maybe some music underscoring.)

MAE. (*To us:*) Let me give you a quick tour: This here's the living room. That's the front door. Through there's the kitchen and bedroom. Over here's the fireplace. This chair and the bar used to belong to my parents. The piano came with the place—and I don't play, so don't even ask. In the view from that window there, you can see the park, Main Street and the high school just the other side. Guess that about does it. Oh, please do excuse the mess—I had a little party last night which ended this morning, after which I passed out…right here. (*Does so.*)

(JACK is there.)

JACK. (*To us:*) I have my own key, so I let myself in. (*Looks at the mess, shakes his head, finds* MAE *and wakes her:*) Hey. C'mon, Mae, get up.

MAE. What time is it?

JACK. Time to get up and give this place a going over, looks like the Marines have landed.

MAE. (*Rising, beginning to clean up:*) Oh, that bunch last night was high enough to take over the Marines and the Navy.

JACK. You better get on the job. *(Giving her a hand with the clean-up.)* Some of the kids may be up this afternoon.

MAE. Oh, Jack, we can get along without draggin' those young kids up here.

JACK. Oh, why don't you button up your lip. You're always squawkin' about somethin'—you got more static than the radio.

(RALPH and BLANCHE at the imagined doorway. He presses the doorbell.)

RALPH. (Providing his own sound effects:) Ding-dong!

MAE. Get the door.

JACK. You've got gams.

MAE. (Heading for the bedroom:) I'm going to put on some nylons and a new face.

JACK. You have a new face lying around here someplace?

MAE. Droll. Very droll. Get the door, ya big galoot. (Goes.)

JACK. (Opening the door:) Ah, greetings!

RALPH. Well, hello, fella. How are ya?

JACK. Fine. How are you? Come in, come in. Glad to see you.

RALPH. Is Mae in?

JACK. She'll be right in. Just sit down and make yourself comfortable.

RALPH. This here's Blanche.

JACK. Well, looks like big shot Ralph's gone and got himself a new pair of stems.

RALPH. Well, let me introduce you to her: Blanche D'Jour. She's an exchange student, stayin' next door with the Fishpaws, don't ya know?

JACK. Exchange student, huh? (Assuming she doesn't speak English, speaking slowing as shaking her hand:) Nice to meet you. Welcome to America! (Going for MAE:) Let me get the madam for ya, won't be but a minute. (Goes.)

BLANCHE. Hey, what kind of a joint is this, Ralph?

RALPH. Oh, it's alright, Blanche. See, they probably had a party last night.

BLANCHE. Oh.

(JACK is back with MAE.)

JACK. A couple of your customers, Mae.

MAE. Yeah? Well, they're old enough to know what they're doing. Not like those young kids you bring up here. (*To* RALPH:) Hiya, sexy.

RALPH. Hiya, Kitten. Well, well, Mae, old girl. How's every little thing?

MAE. Can't complain, can't complain.

JACK. Not much, you can't.

MAE. That's enough out of you.

RALPH. Not quite yet. This here's Blanche. (*To* BLANCHE, *then all:*) Excuse me for a moment while I visit the gents, will ya? (*Goes.*)

MAE. (To BLANCHE:) Blanche, is it?

JACK. Doesn't speak a word of English.

MAE. (Smiles to BLANCHE:) Is that so? (Aside to JACK:) Seems like the kind of doll that old dog'd go for—one who can't even defend herself with words he'd understand.

JACK. Not a bad looker, is she?

MAE. Except for the ratty threads. I wouldn't wear that get-up to a dog fight!

BLANCHE. Then perhaps you can take me shopping and show me what's in fashion this season.

MAE. (Not getting it at first:) Take a number, sister. Don't go mistaking me for Mother Cabrini just 'cause I host a soiree or two every other night. What?! (Aside to JACK:) Thought you said she didn't speak a word!

JACK. I assumed.

BLANCHE. Assume nothing, cowboy.

MAE. Sorry.

BLANCHE. Don't worry about it.

MAE. (To BLANCHE:) What can I get ya?

(RALPH's back.)

RALPH. (Re MAE's offer:) Anything over eighty proof'll do.

MAE. I wasn't talking to you.

RALPH. And why not? You're the hostess with the mostess, ain't ya?

JACK. C'mon, Ralph. Go on an errand with me.

RALPH. Where you goin'?

MAE. (*To* RALPH, *re* JACK:) To play in traffic, let's hope.

JACK. It'll give the dolls a chance to measure us up among themselves.

MAE. (To BLANCHE:) You got a ruler, kid?

BLANCHE. I'm afraid I don't understand.

RALPH. (*To* BLANCHE:) You should be afraid of her, honey. She's the dragon lady.

BLANCHE. What does this mean?

MAE. That's what I'd like to know.

RALPH. Stick around and you'll find out soon enough.

JACK. (*To* RALPH:) Ready to blow or what?

RALPH. (*To* BLANCHE:) Back in no time at all.

JACK. I gotta make some deliveries and I'll probably drop by Main Street and bring back a couple of the kids.

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

JACK. Oh, why don't you get over that mother complex?

(The fellas go.)

MAE. So, Miss America: You looking to graze on some grass?

BLANCHE. What?

MAE. Okay, chick, looks like I dialed the wrong number.

BLANCHE. You're a tough little broad, ain't ya?

MAE. I'm a businesswoman.

BLANCHE. What's your biz?

MAE. All in good time, sister. All in good time.

BLANCHE. Oh, so you're a crook.

MAE. Aren't we all.

(The scene shifts.)

Scene 5

(DR. CARROLL is there.)

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) We take you now to a suggestion of Main Street. Every town's got one, I suppose. Each pretty much like all the rest. Soda fountain's right down there. Up thataway's the church. Over yonder's the high school, which is just getting out for the day, according to my watch. Here come some of the kiddies now. Happy, gay, not a care in the world—*and* about to fall into a trap full of despair and incurable insanity. Let's watch, shall we?

(BILL and JIMMY are there. DR. CARROLL hangs in the background [or goes].)

JIMMY. That Ralph Wiley's the living end. Boy, oh boy is he keen.

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

JIMMY. Oh, he's a swell swimmer. He'd make the freshman team if he went to college.

BILL. Yeah, but my dad knows his family and none of them are any good. His father and mother just got a divorce in Paris.

JIMMY. You don't say?

BILL. You know, Ralph runs around pretty much on his own. He's been in a couple of jams.

JIMMY. Well, I only kinda say hello to him, I don't go around with him.

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

JIMMY. Hmm...

BILL. Oh, by the way, Jimmy, I'm sort of giving a little party Saturday afternoon over at my grandmother's. You know, the place with the swimming pool. Like to come?

JIMMY. Thanks, Bill, maybe I will.

BILL. I'd sure like to have you.

JIMMY. I'm sure you would. Okay, I'll probably drop over.

(MARY is there.)

MARY. Hello, Bill! Hiya, Jimmy.

BILL. (So in love:) Hello, Mary.

MARY. (So in love:) Bill...

JIMMY. How's tricks, sis?

MARY. Since I saw you at my locker ten minutes ago? I suppose they're 'bout the same.

(RALPH and JACK are there. RALPH sees MARY and stops JACK before they get too close.)

RALPH. (*Re* MARY:) Say, how do you like that? That's the one I was telling you about.

JACK. Very nice.

RALPH. I've got the goal to take her on a trip to cloud nine.

JACK. Keep your brains in your pants, Wiley. C'mon.

(RALPH and JACK approach the kids.)

RALPH. Hello, Mary. Hiya, Bill.

BILL. How are you, Ralph?

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 Perry. Mary, Bill.

JACK. How are ya?

BILL. Glad to know you.

MARY. How do you do?

JACK. Glad to know you. Say, kids, we're having a little party up at my girlfriend's apartment.

RALPH. That's right! Wouldn't you like to come along?

BILL. Mary and I have a date to play a set of doubles.

RALPH. Oh, you can play anytime. Come on, we'll have some laughs.

MARY. Oh, we can't today, Ralph. Some other time.

JIMMY. Can I go along with ya?

RALPH. Sure.

JIMMY. Hot dog! Say, I'll see you at dinner, sis.

MARY. Don't be late, Jimmy.

JIMMY. I won't.

RALPH. Ready?

JIMMY. Ready.

JACK. It's just up this way a few blocks.

JIMMY. I've got a car.

RALPH. Keen.

(MARY and BILL go off in one direction. RALPH, JIMMY, and JACK go to Mae's as the scene shifts.)

Scene 6

(Music plays into the scene as underscoring. BLANCHE and MAE at Mae's.)

MAE. So, how do you find America?

BLANCHE. I just got off the boat.

MAE. No, no. What I meant was—

BLANCHE. I know what you meant. I was just trying to make one of your unfunny American jokes. I love this country. Apple pie and Uncle Sam and all that jazz.

MAE. Where do you come from?

BLANCHE. Fredonia.

MAE. Never heard of it.

BLANCHE. In my country, children are making a living and putting bread on the family's table by the time they're my age. Not here. Not in America.

MAE. Great country, ain't it? Kids running like animals in the streets and whooping it up every chance they get.

BLANCHE. I like whooping it up. Very much so.

MAE. Well, then you come to the right place, sister. You come to the right place. Jack and Ralph'll be back any minute now—and with a coupla those dang kids I'll bet ya.

BLANCHE. You and Jack are, how do you say?

MAE. How you *don't* say. Sure, he's healthy and normal and fun—you know what I mean. Don't tell me you never road a hot rod or had a late date in the second balcony... Or maybe you haven't.

BLANCHE. I know of what you speak. But I thought you and this Jack were having relations.

MAE. Heavens no. Maybe back once in days of yore, but that was back when I was a stupid kid and didn't know any better— Like you and Ralph are now, I'd bet.

BLANCHE. Oh, I like that Ralph character. But the thing is, I like *all* of your American boys. Ralph's not enough for me.

MAE. I like your phraseology, sister.

BLANCHE. So, you and Jack are in more of a business relationship, that it?

MAE. That's it, all right. And it's a pretty swell setup, if I don't say so myself.

BLANCHE. Then why don't you say it?

MAE. Maybe I will. Say, I like you. You want a smoke?

BLANCHE. Ralph tells me that you have funny kind of cigarettes here. The kind without any writing on them.

MAE. I'm one step ahead of ya, sweetheart. (Offering her a reefer:) Go ahead.

BLANCHE. Why, thank you.

MAE. Anytime.

BLANCHE. How much?

MAE. You talkin' dough? I'm offering, so this one here's on me. (*Lighting her reefer:*) We'll talk about moolah later. I've got a little motto: Friends first, customers second.

(Whenever BLANCHE smokes, she dances uncontrollably.)

BLANCHE. I'd like to be your friend, Mae. I don't have any girl-friends in America.

MAE. Sure, I'll be your girlfriend. Can't promise you much but a place to kick your heels up when you need it.

BLANCHE. That's good enough for me.

MAE. Swell. (Hearing the fellas return:) Oh, Jeeze.

BLANCHE. What is it?

MAE. Sounds like the fellas are back.

BLANCHE. (Re putting out her reefer:) Should I...?

MAE. Course not. Mi casa, su casa.

BLANCHE. Is that American talk?

MAE. Something like that.

BLANCHE. (Trying it:) "Mi casa, su casa..."

(JACK, RALPH, and JIMMY are there.)

MAE. Hello, fellas. Jack, Ralph, (To JIMMY:) and you are?

JIMMY. Jimmy Lane.

MAE. I'm Mae. That there's Blanche.

BLANCHE. (Falling for JIMMY at first sight:) Hello, there!

MAE. (Re booze:) What'll it be, gents?

JACK. Whatdya think?

MAE. Whatdya know. (*To* JIMMY:) And how's 'bout you, Pee-Wee? Want me to jerk ya a soda?

JIMMY. Never touch the stuff.

MAE. Well, how's about something else then? If you'd rather have coffee, there's a pot of fresh.

JIMMY. Okay. You're on the hook for one root beer.

JACK. (*To* MAE, *re Jimmy's drink:*) Root on the side.

MAE. (To JACK as she passes:) Wise guy.

JIMMY. What's that?

JACK. Never you mind. (*To* MAE:) And why don't you put a little more coffee in your brandy and coffee.

MAE. (*Producing a switchblade:*) Don't get pretty or I'll let the air out of ya!

JACK. Just joshin', dollface.

MAE. Well, ya better be... (Fixes the drinks.)

JACK. You want to have some fun, don't ya?

JIMMY. That's why I'm here.

JACK. Then leave it all in the hands of big brother Jack.

RALPH. Thought this was supposed to be some kind of a party. Where's the cheese and crackers? Where's the music?

BLANCHE. I've been known to tickle the ivories.

RALPH. Then I think you had better.

BLANCHE. (To MAE, re the piano:) May I?

MAE. Please do.

(BLANCHE plays piano, MAE serves drinks.)

RALPH. (For the drink:) Thanks, sugar.

MAE. I am *not* your sugar. Not anymore. And if you're trying to create an impression, I'm unimpressed.

RALPH. Everything old is new again. (Smacks her behind as she passes.)

MAE. (*Grabbing* RALPH's *hand:*) You walked in this room with thirty-two teeth, buster. How'd ya like to walk out with zero?

RALPH. Don't flip your wig.

MAE. (Adjusts her wig:) Say you're sorry.

RALPH. Sorry.

MAE. You better be. *(To JIMMY, suddenly sweet:)* Here ya go, pumpkin. *(Shooting her eyes to JACK for a moment:)* Root on the side.

JIMMY. So, this is just...beer?

MAE. You'll love it.

JIMMY. (Drinking:) Mmmm... (Turning green, running to the piano and getting sick in it. After doing so:) Sorry 'bout that.

JACK. Isn't the first time somebody used that old piano for something other than playing—*and* won't be the last, I'd imagine.

MAE. I don't like a guy who can't hold his liquor. (*Trips over something or other, falling into a split of sorts.*)

RALPH. Say, how's about some smokes, Mae?

MAE. I'm comin', I'm comin'. (Getting her stash of pre-rolled marijuana cigarettes from their secret hiding place and distributing them as the scene goes on.)

JIMMY. Thanks, but I don't smoke.

JACK. Not ever?

JIMMY. Never.

MAE. This is the smoothest smoke in town.

JIMMY. I don't doubt it is. But that still doesn't change the fact that I don't smoke.

JACK. Don't you want to fit in?

MAE. Be cool?

JACK. Get the girl?

BLANCHE. (Waving to JIMMY:) Yoo-hoo!

JIMMY. What do you say, Ralph? You gonna smoke one?

RALPH. I'm going to smoke several.

JIMMY. You think it's okay?

RALPH. Sure, it's okay. Would I steer ya wrong, bub?

JIMMY. Well...Okay. (*To* RALPH:) If you say so.

(RALPH musses JIMMY's hair, all chummy-like. MAE gives JIMMY a reefer.)

RALPH. (With a lighter lit:) Allow me:

JIMMY. Thanks. (Smokes. Coughs, then:) Smooth.

RALPH. Of course you're gonna cough a little for starters. But just you wait, believe you me. (*Putting the reefer to his lips:*) Take another drag. (*He does.*) Ya see? You're a natch!

JIMMY. Not bad. (Another drag.) Not bad at all. (Puffing away.)

(JIMMY starts laughing, and his laughter becomes contagious. Within a few moments, the room is wild with laughter. When JIMMY smokes, he thinks he's a dog.)

Scene 7

(The scene shifts. DR. CARROLL is there.)

DR. CARROLL. (To us:) And, as Jimmy unknowingly began his addiction to the evil weed, another scene was being played out in

another part of town. Bill and Mary: our typical, red-blooded, Godfearing, American as apple-pie-with-cheese couple, have finished their game of tennis and return to Mary's to do their homework together...

(DR. CARROLL goes as BILL and MARY are there.)

MARY. It's sweet of you to help me with my homework, Bill.

BILL. Oh, I'll try anything except domestic science!

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

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

MARY. What did she say?

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

MARY. Well, I don't wonder.

(DR. CARROLL, dressed as MRS. LANE, is there. [S]he has a tray with a pot of hot chocolate and two mugs.)

MRS. LANE. Hello, children!

MARY. Hello, mother!

BILL. Hello, Mrs. Lane!

MARY. That was sweet of you, mother!

BILL. Gosh, hot chocolate! Thanks, Mrs. Lane!

MRS. LANE. I know you can't study on empty stomachs. Now, then, enjoy yourselves.

MARY. He will!

BILL. She will too, Mrs. Lane!

MRS. LANE. I'll be just inside the kitchen, I've got this biscuit dough and a pie in the oven.

(MRS. LANE hangs back, spying on the love-struck kids.)

BILL. (Offering to pour her hot chocolate, doing some highbrow voice he's heard in a movie:) May I?

MARY. (*Playing along:*) Oh, thank you, kind sir. You're so very, very kind.

BILL. (Producing a copy of "Romeo and Juliet":) Mary, before we do that math, how 'bout reading some of this? It's swell!

MARY. Romeo and Juliet.

BILL. Don't you like it?

MARY. Uh-huh.

BILL. You know, when I study this, I kind of think of you. I just sort of feel as though you're there beside me. Oh, listen: "It is my soul that calls upon thy name. How silver sweet sound lovers tongues by night. Like softest music to attending ears."

MARY. "Romeo."

BILL. "My dear."

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

BILL. "By the hour of nine."

MARY. "I will not fail. Tis twenty years till then."

MRS. LANE. (Can't resist making her presence known:) Oh, you kids!

MARY. Mother! I thought you had your biscuit dough!

MRS. LANE. *And* a pie in the oven.

MARY. Would you mind if Bill and I had a moment alone?

MRS. LANE. Yes.

MARY. What's that smell?

BILL. What smell?

(MARY elbows BILL into playing along.)

MRS. LANE. I don't smell anything.

MARY. Something's burning.

MRS. LANE. My pie!

(MRS. LANE flees.)

BILL. I *still* don't smell anything.

MARY. That's because there's nothing to smell, save for my perfume—do you like it?

BILL. Very much so. What's it called?

MARY. (*Dodging:*) Let's do some homework.

BILL. You don't know the name of your perfume?

MARY. Oh, I know it.

BILL. So what's it called?

MARY. It's embarrassing.

BILL. Then whisper it in my ear.

MARY. You're not going to stop, are you?

BILL. Not a chance.

MARY. Very well, then... (Whispering to him.)

BILL. "My Sin?!"

MARY. Not a word to mother.

BILL. My lips are sealed. But that was a nasty trick you played just to get her back in the house.

MARY. She shouldn't be spying—Senator McCarthy says that spying is most un-American.

BILL. Well, I don't know if Mr. McCarthy cares as much about you as your mother does.

MARY. If she cares so much, then what's she doing leaving me in the hands of a masher like you?

BILL. "Masher?!"

MARY. Oh, now, I know you're not, and you know you're not.

BILL. But your mother isn't quite sure.

MARY. Exactly. And I'm sure she thinks that as soon as her back is turned that you've got your hands all over me.

BILL. I don't, do I?

MARY. Not ever. That's something I've been wanting to talk to you about.

BILL. Why, what's the matter, Mary?

MARY. I see the way other fellas act when they're alone with girls. And you, well, you're different.

BILL. That's because I respect you, Mary.

MARY. I know ya do, Bill. And I appreciate that. Thing is, well, a little whoopee-making now and again is a quintessential part of *any* teenage relationship.

BILL. Perhaps I paint your picture all wrong, Mary Lane.

MARY. How do you paint it?

BILL. Gosh, Mary, are you gonna make me say it?

MARY. Perhaps you had better.

BILL. I love ya, kid.

MARY. How much?

BILL. Much as Romeo loved Juliet.

MARY. They're dead, Bill. We're alive.

BILL. You want me to be like the other guys? I can do that. I'm trying all the time. But, the thing is, I can only be me. If you want yourself a Valentino, then maybe you're barking up the wrong tree.

MARY. Oh, you're the right tree—I know that. Maybe I'm not barking loud enough.

BILL. (With his pin:) How's about this?

MARY. Your pin?

BILL. Be mine, Mary Lane.

MARY. Oh, Bill!

BILL. Do ya love me?

MARY. My Romeo!

(They embrace. MRS. LANE is back.)

MRS. LANE. What class is this homework for? Or are we doing more of *Romeo and Juliet?*

BILL. I was just going, actually. If I don't mow the lawn before father gets home from work, he'll beat the Dickens outta me!

(All laugh, then.)

MARY. Are you still taking me to the new James Dean picture tonight, Bill?

MRS. LANE. (*To* MARY:) No James Dean unless you get your homework done.

BILL. Well, I'll see you tonight, Mary. Goodbye, Mrs. Lane.

MRS. LANE. Goodbye, Bill.

MARY. Good-bye!

(BILL goes.)

MRS. LANE. I don't like that boy.

MARY. Mother!

MRS. LANE. Riding around on a motorcycle with Sal Mineo all night long.

MARY. Bill?

MRS. LANE. "Bill?!" *No!* James Dean, silly. I think his pictures foster delinquency.

MARY. You sound like Dr. Carroll down at school. That old bag of wind's always going on and on about something or another.

MRS. LANE. "Old bag of—?!" Poppycock! There's a lot of truth in what that man says.

MARY. Oh, I know. (Re the pin:) Look, mother! Bill pinned me!

MRS. LANE. Pinnings and *Romeo and Juliet* and James Dean pictures in CinemaScope: You and your fast youth will have me in the old ladies home yet!

MARY. Things haven't changed so much since your time, have they mother?

MRS. LANE. In my time, Romeo and Juliet were alive and well and living in Verona.

MARY. Go ahead and make jokes, mother. But, surely you remember what it was like when you first met father.

MRS. LANE. Oh, now, Mary, that was a hundred years ago.

MARY. But being in love is the most important part of growing up.

MRS. LANE. It is a *part* of growing up, I'll give you that. But there are things far more important, like homework and good grades and volunteer work.

MARY. Oh, mother, you don't understand.

MRS. LANE. I'm trying to understand.

MARY. Mother?

MRS. LANE. What is it, dear?

MARY. Nothing.

MRS. LANE. Something's troubling you—don't try to hide it, because I can tell.

MARY. I can talk to you about *any*thing—that's what you always say, isn't it?

MRS. LANE. That's right. Of course you can. I want to be the best mother I can be. What is it you want to talk about?

MARY. Sometimes, in the lav at school, some of the very, very cheap girls talk about something called...The Facts of Life.

MRS. LANE. Oh my.

MARY. What is it they're talking about, mother?

MRS. LANE. (Starting to clear the hot chocolate remains:) I really should tend to that poor biscuit dough.

MARY. Don't you *know* what they're talking about?

MRS. LANE. They're talking about things they shouldn't. Secret things—surprises!

MARY. What kind of surprises?

MRS. LANE. Don't you want to be surprised on your wedding night?

MARY. Well, I don't know... Do I?

MRS. LANE. Yes. So, just wait— *Then* you'll see. (Starts clearing the hot chocolate, etc.)

MARY. (Re the hot chocolate, etc.) Let me help you with that.

MRS. LANE. Thank you, dear.

MARY. I'm glad we had this little talk, mother.

MRS. LANE. I'm glad you're glad.

(MARY and MRS. LANE clear things as the scene shifts.)

Scene 8

(JIMMY and BLANCHE are there, necking, etc.)

BLANCHE. I love you, Jimmy.

JIMMY. I'll bet you say that to all the boys.

BLANCHE. What's wrong with that?

JIMMY. Nothing, I guess. But how do I know I mean anything to you? (She kisses him.) That's good enough for me.

BLANCHE. I've gotta scram, Jimmy. Gimme a ring, doll— Or I'll see you tomorrow at Mae's.

JIMMY. Good night, Blanche.

BLANCHE. Sweet dreams. (She blows him a kiss and goes.)

JIMMY. (*To us:*) She loves me!... I think. At least that's what she tells me whenever Ralph leaves the room. She's *his* girl, but she says she's "everybody's girl"—so I guess she's my girl, too... I think. You see, the thing is, I've been spending a whole lot of time up at that Mae's place. And I'm having plenty of kicks—don't get me wrong. But, well, the thing is that I've been skipping lunch at school—and not because I'm not hungry. I'm *starving*, as a matter of fact. But I need the money for, well, for something else.

(JACK is there.)

JACK. What do you mean, you don't have the do-re-mi?

JIMMY. Can't you float me?

JACK. How many times do you expect me to cover ya?

JIMMY. I always pay you back.

JACK. How do I know you won't skip town middle-of-the-night style?

JIMMY. Are ya kiddin', Jack? My *family's* here. I'm not goin' anywhere.

JACK. How do I know I can trust your word?

JIMMY. We're friends, ain't we?

JACK. Yeah, but besides that, I don't know you from Adam's off ox.

JIMMY. Ya hurt my feelin's, Jack.

JACK. Didn't mean to. It's, just, well: This is business.

JIMMY. I know it is. Shucks.

JACK. Of course, if you don't have the do-re-mi, there's an alternative.

JIMMY. An "alternative?"

JACK. Nah, ya wouldn't go for it.

JIMMY. Try me.

JACK. This is on the hush-hush, mind ya.

JIMMY. 'Course it is. Go ahead:

JACK. There are sad little ladies in this town of ours who'd pay nicely to spend an evening with a young stud like you.

JIMMY. What are ya talkin', Jack?

JACK. This is how it works: They pay you, you pay me, and I give ya the reefers. Git me?

JIMMY. I dig, I dig.

JACK. Now, here's the important part, so get the wax out of your ears.

JIMMY. (Shaking his ears, attempting, in some way, to do what JACK asked. Then:) Ready:

JACK. This is between You And Me. Am I making myself perfectly clear?

JIMMY. You And Me.

JACK. No Mae, no Blanche, Ralph or anybody else. Get it?

JIMMY. Got it.

JACK. Good. (Producing a scrap of paper and writing an address on it, continuing as he does:) Here's the drill. You show up in your best dressed at this address, seven o'clock this evening. You'll be meeting a Miss Edwina Hatch.

JIMMY. "Edwina?"

JACK. That's right, and you're going to show her a good time.

JIMMY. But what if she asks—

JACK. Don't interrupt. It's rude.

JIMMY. Sorry.

JACK. Okay. Do what*ever* she asks like a good little boy. Then, when she's content and sends you away, stop back at Mae's and I'll fix you up. *(Giving him the address.)*

JIMMY. (Re the name going through his head:) "Edwina Hatch..." Say, this dame was my third grade teacher!

JACK. What about it?

JIMMY. Just saying. That's all.

JACK. Prove yourself tonight and there's more where that's from.

JIMMY. I'll prove myself— You just wait and see!

JACK. You had better. (Giving him a little salute as a good-bye.) So long, kiddo. (Goes.)

JIMMY. So long. (*To us:*) So, I went on the date. We went to a concert at the gazebo, and held hands under her shawl. Then, at the end of the night, when I dropped her home, she asked me to kiss her. And I shut my eyes and did it. And it wasn't half as bad as I thought it'd be—even if she did only have three teeth in her head. But that's all she really wanted: A kiss. That's not too much work for ten reefers. But, well, the thing is that I smoked 'em up quicker than I thought and was back to Jack to fix up another date.

(DR. CARROLL has entered in the background by this point.)

DR. CARROLL. Tell them about the next date, Jimmy.

JIMMY. Don't you think we should move on to the next scene, Dr. Carroll?

DR. CARROLL. (*Re the audience:*) Telling these good people the whole story—telling them the *truth* is the only way to move on. Go ahead.

JIMMY. Okay... Well... *(To us:)* The next one was a college girl. So, she wasn't that old, but she wasn't too easy on the eyes either. Good thing I smoked up before meeting her. She took me to a taffy pull and forced me to dance with her for about six hours—but she didn't ask me to kiss her or anything, so that was okay.

DR. CARROLL. Tell them about the last date, Jimmy.

JIMMY. I have to go now, Dr. Carroll.

DR. CARROLL. No, you don't.

JIMMY. I have to get ready for the next scene.

DR. CARROLL. The next scene won't make any sense unless you finish the story.

JIMMY. I'd rather not tell it, thanks just the same.

DR. CARROLL. Tell them! I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell. Would you, please?

JIMMY. Can't you tell them?

DR. CARROLL. No.

JIMMY. (*To us:*) Okay... The last date I went on was the worst. And the thing is... I don't know how to say this... It, um, wasn't like the first too because it wasn't a date with a chick. Of course, Jack didn't tell me it was a fella 'cause he knows I wouldn't have gone. But I went, and when this old guy opened the door, there was nowhere to run. So, I stuck it out. He took me to a weenie roast some of his old friends were having, and showed me off like he'd just won the grand prize of all time.

DR. CARROLL. Very good. Thank you, Jimmy.

JIMMY. I'm not finished.

DR. CARROLL. I'm sorry.

JIMMY. I want to make something clear. *(To us:)* Now, before you get any funny ideas—I am *not* a fruit.

DR. CARROLL. Nobody's saying you are, Jimmy.

JIMMY. (*To us, pressing the point:*) What these old homosexualists want to do with each other is nobody's business, and I don't care about it. But what this old guy asked me to do...

DR. CARROLL. That's enough, Jimmy.

JIMMY. No! You asked me to tell them, so that's what I'm doing! (Beat, then to us:) I have never been so repulsed in all my life. I excused myself, ran to the john, and got sick. I told him I wasn't feeling well and he suggested we call it an early night— I couldn't have agreed more. When I went back to Jack, I wanted to kill him. But I didn't. I didn't say anything. He gave me my reefers and I went home. I haven't been on another one of Jack's dates since.

DR. CARROLL. Are you quite finished?

JIMMY. Yes. I'm finished.

DR. CARROLL. Then I suppose you had better go and get ready for the next scene.

JIMMY. Okay. (Starts off, then stops. To him:) I thought you wanted the truth?

DR. CARROLL. Yes. That's all we want. The whole shocking truth. Very good. You can go now. (*He's gone. Then, to us:*) I apologize if some of those details did not sit well with you, folks. But this is the sick reality that is tonight's sad, sad story. Let's move on, shall we? We take you to Mae's, where there always seems to be a party going on...

Scene 9

(Music plays into the scene as underscoring. A party is in progress. MAE, JACK, RALPH, and BLANCHE are in the middle of playing a party game at Mae's. After a few moments, JIMMY is there. And from the look on his face, something awful has happened. BLANCHE sees him first, and runs to him.)

BLANCHE. (All over him:) Jimmy! Jimmy!

JIMMY. (Pushing her away:) Not now.

MAE. (*To* BLANCHE:) Are we playing or what?

BLANCHE. (Attempting to drag him over to where they're playing:) C'mon, Jimmy. Join in on the fun!

JIMMY. (Resisting her tug:) Not right now, thanks.

MAE. C'mon, Blanche. It's your turn.

BLANCHE. I'm comin', I'm comin'... (Rejoining the game.)

JACK. (Leaving the game for JIMMY:) What's the matter?

JIMMY. Why should anything be the matter?

JACK. If you say nothing's the matter, then I say nothing's the matter.

JIMMY. Good.

JACK. Good.

JIMMY. There was an accident.

JACK. What are you talking about?

JIMMY. I mean, that's why they call them accidents, isn't it—because they're accidents. Things that shouldn't have happened and nobody's to blame.

JACK. Of course. Now what shouldn't have happened?

JIMMY. You're saying it's my fault!

JACK. I'm not saying anything. I don't even know what happened. Now, are you going to tell me?

JIMMY. I'm still shaking.

JACK. From what?

JIMMY. I didn't even see him, I swear.

JACK. Didn't see who?

JIMMY. The guy.

JACK. "The guy...?"

JIMMY. He came outta nowhere— You gotta believe me.

JACK. I believe you. Now, what happened?

JIMMY. I hit him.

JACK. You punched him?

JIMMY. I hit him... With the car.

JACK. Let me handle this.

JIMMY. What are you going to do?

JACK. Did you hear what I just said? This is my problem. I'll handle it. Now, let's hear no more about it. Come and join the stupid game and don't let on that anything's the matter. You think you can do that?

JIMMY. I dunno.

JACK. Well, you had better try...try hard. Let's play (a round)...

(They join the game as the scene shifts.)

Scene 10

(MARY and JIMMY at The Lane Home. He's out of it, she's chipper as ever.)

MARY. Good morning, Jimmy. Oh, what a beautiful morning! Oh, what a beautiful day! I have this beautiful feeling—

JIMMY. (Cutting her off:) What's so beautiful about it?

MARY. The sun is shining, the morning dew is on the flowers, and the birds are singing the sweetest of songs.

JIMMY. Dang birds!

MARY. Jimmy! What's the matter?

(A knock at the door.)

MARY. I'll go.

(MARY goes to the door. DR. CARROLL is there, dressed as a DE-TECTIVE. MARY has the conversation, but JIMMY's there for the whole thing, trying not to crack.)

DETECTIVE. Good morning, miss. I'm from the police department.

MARY. Good morning.

DETECTIVE. We're tracing a hit and run driver. Someone caught the license number at the place 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.

DETECTIVE. Do you remember what you did on the 29th of last month?

MARY. Oh, that was the day before mother's birthday... Oh, yes, I remember that because I left school and went directly to the dress-maker's with mother. I was there all afternoon.

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

MARY. No. No, I had the car all afternoon myself.

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

MARY. Tell me... Was the person killed?

DETECTIVE. Fortunately he wasn't, but that's still no excuse for hit and run driving. (With a card:) You'll be kind enough to call if you remember anything.

MARY. Of course, detective.

DETECTIVE. Good day.

MARY. Good day.

(The DETECTIVE starts off, JIMMY's sure he's in the clear and breathes a sigh of relief. Just then, the DETECTIVE stops in his tracks.)

DETECTIVE. Just one more thing. (*To* JIMMY:) How about you, sonny?

JIMMY. Me?

DETECTIVE. Yeah, you. What's your name?

JIMMY. It's my sister's car, officer.

DETECTIVE. I'm not an officer, I'm a detective. And I'd appreciate your name for the record, if you don't mind.

MARY. Oh, Jimmy, don't be so difficult. (*To* DETECTIVE:) This is my brother, Jimmy—J-I-double M-Y—Lane, same last name as mine, of course. And let me apologize for his behavior. He hasn't been himself these past few weeks. And, if you ask me, it's because he's—

JIMMY. That's enough!

MARY. Jimmy!

JIMMY. If you have any questions for me, dick, I'll be glad to answer them.

DETECTIVE. Very good. Nothing—at this time. But this case is not closed, I'll have you know. (*Putting his pen away.*) I will be in touch with the two of you if I need anything else. Good day. (*Goes.*)

MARY. What's the matter with you, Jimmy?

JIMMY. With *me?!* What are you trying to do? Send me up the river?

MARY. Oh, now, Jimmy, all he was asking was for a little cooperation.

JIMMY. Well, you can cooperate to your heart's content—but just leave me outta it, ya see?

MARY. You don't have to get cross. It's just, well, I'm worried about you.

JIMMY. Well, don't go wasting your time. I'm a big boy and I can take care of myself, thank you very much.

MARY. Jimmy?

JIMMY. What have I got to worry about?

MARY. Why don't you tell me.

JIMMY. Oh, for Pete's sake, don't start to cross-examine me, will ya? I'm alright!

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

MRS. LANE. (From off:) Mary! Jimmy! My lands, the time! You don't want to be late to school, do you?

MARY. (*To off:*) We're just going now, mother! (*Ready to go, notices* JIMMY *isn't.*) Well?

JIMMY. Go on ahead, I'll see ya later.

MARY. Jimmy, if you're thinking about skipping—

JIMMY. Just go, will ya?! Go!

MARY. (On the verge of tears:) Oh, Jimmy, I wish you'd just...

JIMMY. Go on! Get outta here!

(She goes, he remains for a moment, then goes.)

(JACK and MAE at her place. JIMMY arrives.)

JACK. Greetings!

JIMMY. (Sheepish:) Hello.

MAE. Hiya, kid. What can I get ya?

JIMMY. Um, nothing, thanks just the same.

(MAE looks away from the fellas for some reason. JIMMY makes a gesture of some sort to JACK to indicate he wants to talk without MAE in the room. JACK gets JIMMY.)

JACK. (To MAE, indicating the seams on the back of her stockings:) Honey, wanna check your seams?

MAE. They ain't straight? Damn! Back in a flash.

(She goes.)

JACK. What's the matter?

JIMMY. A detective paid a call to my place this morning.

JACK. Did you say anything?

JIMMY. Not a word.

JACK. Keep it that way.

JIMMY. (*Indicating* MAE:) You tell her?

JACK. Had to. You see the paper today?

JIMMY. No. Why?

JACK. That old fella ain't doin' so hot.

JIMMY. Oh, sweet Jesus H. Christmas!

JACK. Take it easy. (Giving him a reefer:) Here.

JIMMY. I don't think so.

JACK. (Lighting it for him:) It'll make you relax, take the edge off.

JIMMY. Good idea.

(MAE's back.)

MAE. (To JACK:) Nice trick, Houdini. I'm not wearing stockings.

JACK. (Re JIMMY:) He didn't know you knew.

MAE. And now he does, so we can hear no more of it.

(RALPH and BLANCHE at the door.)

RALPH. (As doorbell:) Ding-dong!

JACK. Who's that?

MAE. You're the magician.

JACK. Yeah, but my seeing through walls ain't up to snuff.

MAE. Then I suppose you should answer it.

(JACK opens the door. RALPH and BLANCHE are there.)

RALPH. Greetings!

BLANCHE. How's every little thing?

JACK. Swell.

BLANCHE. Mae, honey!

MAE. Top o' the morning, lammy pie.

RALPH. (*To* JIMMY:) How's tricks, killer?

JIMMY. "Killer?" (To JACK:) What'd he mean, "killer?"

JACK. Nothing.

JIMMY. (Unrelenting, to RALPH:) What'd ya mean, "killer?"

RALPH. Take it easy.

JIMMY. I didn't kill nobody!

JACK. Nobody said you did.

MAE. (To JACK:) Get him out of here—now!

JIMMY. (To anyone who'll listen:) He's still alive, ain't he?

JACK. (*To* JIMMY:) Let's get some air.

JIMMY. Where are we going?

JACK. For a walk. C'mon.

JIMMY. I don't wanna go for a walk.

JACK. (Ushering him out:) Well, you're going on one.

JIMMY. (On the way out:) What's the matter?

JACK. (Out the door.) Nothing.

(JIMMY and JACK are gone.)

RALPH. What was that?

BLANCHE. What's going on around here?

MAE. Nothing.

RALPH. I don't believe you.

MAE. So don't. Who wants what?

(She goes to make drinks, etc. as the scene shifts.)

Scene 12

(JACK and JIMMY on Main Street.)

JACK. You've got to play it cool, kid.

JIMMY. It isn't easy, Jack.

JACK. And this part isn't going to be easy, either.

JIMMY. What's that? You mean it gets worse?

JACK. I wish you'd leveled with me, Jimmy. It would have made things so much easier all the way around.

JIMMY. I did level with ya— I told ya what happened, didn't I?

JACK. You gave me the gist of it, but ya left out one very important detail. This old goat ya hit—he wasn't a total stranger, was he?

JIMMY. 'Course he was.

JACK. Jimmy: I know.

JIMMY. Whatdya know?

JACK. I went to visit the geezer in the hospital. And from the second I walked into his room, I knew who he was—and you know too.

JIMMY. I still don't follow.

JACK. And ya can cut the innocent act, 'cause I can see right through it. Let me ask you this: Been to any good weenie roasts lately?

JIMMY. I didn't mean it! I didn't know what I was doing! I swear!

JACK. Want to lower your voice? I've got things under control. A friend of mine's a nurse at that hospital, and he's gonna make sure the old fella gets more medicine than he needs, if you follow.

JIMMY. You mean he's gonna...?

JACK. Problem solved. Did I tell ya to trust me or did I?

(BILL is suddenly there, he joins them.)

BILL. Jimmy!

JIMMY. Oh, hello, Bill.

JACK. (To JIMMY:) Who's this?

JIMMY. Don't you remember? This is my old friend, Bill. Say, Jack. Do you think it'd be okay if Bill came back to Mae's with us?

JACK. You took the words right out of my mouth.

JIMMY. Whatdya say, Bill? You want to come to a party?

BILL. A party? In the middle of the day? Thanks, but no thanks. I'm waiting to meet Mary. We have a date to go bowling.

JACK. You can bowl any time!

JIMMY. Yeah! You can bowl any time!

BILL. Can Mary come?

JACK. The more the merrier!

JIMMY. (Simultaneously with "The more the merrier.") No, no, no. I don't think that's such a good idea.

BILL. Well, then maybe some other time.

JACK. Any time you like.

BILL. See you around, Jack.

JACK. (Ready to go:) You, too.

JIMMY. (*Getting a scheme:*) You know, Bill. I forgot: Mary told me to wait and tell you she had to go home. Mother wanted her to go to the dressmaker's with her.

BILL. Well, in that case, I suppose I should go home and crack some books.

JIMMY. Oh, come on along, Bill. You'll get a kick out of it!

BILL. Thanks just the same.

JACK. Are you sure? A lot of the kids will be there. It's keen!

JIMMY. Oh, come on, Bill. Mary won't be jealous.

BILL. Well, I don't know. I really shouldn't...

JIMMY. Oh, come on...

BILL. Okay.

(They go. A moment later, MARY arrives wearing a poodle skirt and carrying a bowling ball. She waits for BILL, who she assumes hasn't shown yet.)

Scene 13

(BLANCHE, RALPH, and MAE whoop it up at Mae's place. Music plays into the scene as underscoring. JACK and JIMMY arrive with BILL in toe.)

MAE. Hiya, kids!

JIMMY. Hiya, Blanche.

BLANCHE. Oh, hullo, Jimmy. (Aside to JIMMY, re BILL:) Who's the dreamboat?

JIMMY. Thought I was yours.

BLANCHE. Yesterday's fish. If you don't want to introduce me, then I'll introduce myself. (*To* BILL:) I'm Blanche. And you are...?

BILL. Bill Harper. Pleasure to meet you.

BLANCHE. You better believe it. Sit down over here next to me.

BILL. Okay... I guess.

(BILL and BLANCHE sit.)

JIMMY. (To himself, mostly:) Dang skirts! (Let down, he goes to the corner to smoke and brood for awhile.)

BILL. (Offering BLANCHE a cigarette:) Would you like one?

BLANCHE. No, thank you.

MAE. (Offering BLANCHE a reefer:) Well, here we are.

BLANCHE. Oh, thanks!

RALPH. Oh, Mae. Don't forget me.

MAE. (Going to RALPH, giving him a reefer:) I never forget you.

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

BILL. I've got my brand. Thanks just the same.

BLANCHE. (*Peer-pressure:*) I thought you were a sport. Of course, if you're afraid.

BILL. Why on earth should I be afraid of a cigarette?

BLANCHE. (Lighting a reefer for him and putting it in his mouth:) Oh, that's better! That's more like it! I know you'll like that, really you will. Now just take a puff of it.

(RALPH laughs at BILL, JACK approaches him. Whenever BILL smokes, he gets ants in his pants and is in a constant state of arousal.)

JACK. Doesn't it get your goat?

RALPH. What's that?

JACK. Your Blanche has got herself quite a yen for that Bill Harper character.

RALPH. I didn't think she had that much taste.

JACK. Well, he's attractive enough for all practical purposes.

RALPH. What's that supposed to mean?

JACK. Figure it out, egghead. Blanche knows what to do with him.

RALPH. And I know what to do with her.

JACK. You don't have to prove anything to me.

RALPH. No?

JACK. (Close to RALPH:) 'Course not, old friend, old buddy, old chum.

RALPH. (Pushing JACK away:) Quit it.

JACK. Sorry...

RALPH. (Going to BLANCHE:) Say, Blanche, let's cut a rug!

BLANCHE. Dancing? That's a swell idea!

RALPH. You got any dance music in this dump, Mae?

MAE. (*Indicating to him:*) There's the radio.

(RALPH turns the radio to some dance music. BLANCHE drags BILL to his feet and the two of them go crazy, reducing RALPH to deejay. JIMMY starts to go.)

JACK. Jimmy!

JIMMY. Leave me alone!

JACK. Where are you going?

JIMMY. I'll be right back. (Goes.)

(The dancing continues.)

(Main Street. MARY is still waiting for BILL. After a moment, JIMMY arrives. He sheepishly approaches her from behind, covering her eyes with his hands. Throughout this and the following scenes he is distracted by her poodle skirt [since, when under the influence, he fancies himself canine].)

JIMMY. Guess who?

MARY. Bill! (Turns, sees it's JIMMY:) Oh. It's only you.

JIMMY. That's a fine how-do-you-do.

MARY. I was expecting Bill.

JIMMY. I know you were, that's why I'm here.

MARY. Why *you're* here...?

JIMMY. He told me to tell you that he couldn't make it.

MARY. Oh, I see. What's the matter? Has something happened to him?

JIMMY. No. Of course not. Nothing at all. Whatever gave you that idea?

MARY. I just hope nothing's the matter, that's all.

JIMMY. You care about him plenty, huh?

MARY. You know how I feel about him, Jimmy.

JIMMY. Yeah, well...

MARY. What's the matter?

JIMMY. Why does something always have to be the matter?

MARY. Are you jealous?

JIMMY. Jealous?! What have I got to be jealous about.

MARY. I know you don't have that special someone in your life, Jimmy. But just you wait, I know you will.

JIMMY. Maybe I do right now. What do you think about that, sis? Maybe I've got somebody waiting right now for me to get back to them as we speak.

MARY. Then I'm happy for you.

JIMMY. As well you should be.

MARY. If it's true.

JIMMY. Now you're calling me a liar. What kind of a good-fornothing so-and-so do you take me for? And don't even start with your "I'm concerned about you, Jimmy," because it doesn't hold water! I don't know why I came here in the first place! Feeling sorry for you and whatnot. Where do you think Bill is right now, huh?

MARY. I don't know.

JIMMY. That's right. You *don't* know.

MARY. Are you going to tell me?

JIMMY. You aren't ready for it.

MARY. What's come over you, Jimmy?

JIMMY. Nothing! NOTHING!! NOTHING!!!

(He storms off.)

MARY. (Calling after him:) Jimmy?! JIMMY??!! Are you going to be home for dinner?!

(She gives up and sulks off.)

Scene 15

(Mae's. BLANCHE and BILL alone. Dance music plays as BLANCHE teaches BILL a few new steps.)

BLANCHE. Just like that... One-two-three and...

BILL. This is what they call dancing "No Tomorrow-style?"

BLANCHE. That's right... You got it, you got it!

BILL. Nobody ever taught me to dance like this, Blanche. You dance like this with Ralph?

BLANCHE. Let's not talk about him, okay?

BILL. Where is he now?

BLANCHE. Who knows? Who cares?

BILL. He's your fella, ain't he?

BLANCHE. (All over him:) Don't worry your pretty little head about that...

BILL. I suppose I ought to tell you that I have a girl of my own, name of Mary. And we're pretty together, if you know what I mean.

BLANCHE. Forget her. Pay a little attention to me. Look, she won't have to know a thing about you and I.

BILL. And neither would Ralph, huh?

BLANCHE. That's right, Billy boy.

BILL. What am I saying?! No sale! I love Mary.

BLANCHE. And I'm sure she loves you, too.

BILL. That's what she tells me.

BLANCHE. She loves you and you love her... *So* much love to go around.

BILL. Blanche, you're a swell girl, and don't think I wouldn't say no if things were different.

BLANCHE. You don't like me.

BILL. 'Course I do. Didn't you hear what I just said?

BLANCHE. Yeah, yeah, "if things were different"—story of my life.

BILL. You and Ralph aren't hitting it off?

BLANCHE. Let's not talk about Ralph anymore, okay? I mean, if that's okay with you.

BILL. Sure, sure. That's fine.

BLANCHE. Good. And let's not bring up Mary, either.

BILL. No Ralph, no Mary.

BLANCHE. That's right. There's only you, only me.

(JIMMY arrives.)

BILL. Where'd you go, Jimmy?

JIMMY. Just needed some air is all.

BILL. This place is the living end! Thanks ever so for turning me on to it.

JIMMY. Don't mention it.

(MAE, JACK, and RALPH enter from the bedroom. MAE's telling the punchline to some racy joke.)

MAE. ...and so he says to me "Why don't we cut out, go to your pad and live it up?!"

(JACK, RALPH, and MAE laugh at her joke.)

BILL. (Breaking away from BLANCHE, who gets miffed:) What's the joke?

RALPH. You wouldn't understand.

MAE. You shouldn't understand! (To the bar:) Who wants what?

(BLANCHE, smitten by Bill's denial of sorts, grabs JIMMY, drags him under the piano and starts to neck, etc.—making sure BILL sees them. Once he does:)

BILL. (Re a drink:) I'll take something.

RALPH. (With a drink for BILL, giving it to him:) One step ahead of ya, brother.

BILL. Thanks.

(BILL drinks his drink, RALPH shakes his head [about to laugh], JACK and MAE exchange knowing glances and the party continues...)

(Dr. Carroll's office. DR. CARROLL is there.)

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) On the afternoon of Thursday the 14th, I sent for Bill Harper to come to my office during his study hall period.

(BILL is there.)

BILL. You wanted to see me, Dr. Carroll?

DR. CARROLL. Sit down, Bill. There seems to be something wrong. What is it? You were always a fine student. You always had excellent grades.

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

DR. CARROLL. No. No, it isn't that. Bill, I'd like to help you. But of course I can't unless you let me. You're undermining your help.

BILL. Well there's nothing, Dr. Carroll, really there isn't. I'll study harder, honest.

DR. CARROLL. Honest? If you were being honest with me and honest with yourself, I'm afraid you'd tell me an entirely different story. Bill, I'm going to ask you a straightforward question, and I'd like to have a straightforward answer.

BILL. Yes, sir.

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

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

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

BILL. Thank you, Dr. Carroll.

(BILL goes.)

(Mary's backyard. Music plays into the scene as underscoring. MARY and BILL are there.)

BILL. What's the matter?

MARY. Shouldn't I be asking you that?

BILL. Nothing's the matter with me.

MARY. Oh? I think there is. Why'd you pin me, Bill?

BILL. I thought that was what you wanted.

MARY. You didn't want it?

BILL. If you want it, I want it.

MARY. I wish I could believe you.

BILL. Oh, Mary, I only want to do what's right. It's just, well, I've been busy.

MARY. Tell me about it: We've spent less than five minutes together in the past week and a half.

BILL. What do you want from me, Mary? You want to tie a leash around my neck and make me your dog?

MARY. Is that what it sounds like I want?

BILL. Well, I don't know, so maybe you had better tell me. Look, I love ya, Mary Lane—but no girl, not even you, is going to have me at your beck and call twenty-four hours a day.

MARY. Oh, be reasonable, Bill. You know I'm not asking that. I didn't think I was asking much at all.

BILL. I don't think you know what you're asking.

MARY. I don't want to have this conversation, Bill.

BILL. And I don't either.

MARY. So, what's say we talk about something pleasant. Did you watch *I Love Lucy* last Tuesday?

BILL. Missed it.

MARY. You see, Bill? That's *just* what I'm talking about. Our lives have become *I Love Lucy!*

BILL. I'm afraid I don't follow.

MARY. We used to watch it together every single week—religiously. And now? I'm watching alone and you're missing it completely! It's, well, what do they call it?— A metaphor! A metaphor for our excuse for a relationship. (On the verge of tears:) Oh, Bill—I don't want to have this conversation!!!

BILL. Maybe the conversations we don't want to have are the ones we *need* to.

MARY. What are you saying?

BILL. Maybe, well, you and I... Maybe we should—

MARY. (Cutting him off:) Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no no no no mo—We can't break up, Bill. We just can't. Mother and I are already planning the wedding, just in case you ask me to.

BILL. And we had that yearbook picture taken just last week.

MARY. That's right! We're Class Couple!— So, ya see, we just *can't* go splitsville right now. Under no conditions. Period.

BILL. There's...there's someone else.

MARY. I don't understand.

BILL. Another girl.

MARY. I can't hear you.

BILL. And, well, the thing is, I think I've fallen for her.

MARY. Look at the hydrangeas, Bill. Aren't they coming in beautifully?

BILL. I know you're hearing me.

MARY. Mother certainly does wonders with a shovel, tender loving care and a little manure.

BILL. I think she loves me, too.

MARY. I wish you could stay to dinner, Bill. But I've got oodles of studying to do. And what with my volunteer night at the orphanage. Well, what do you know about that— It would seem I'm a very busy girl myself.

BILL. Sounds like it.

MARY. So... (Unpinning his pin:) I guess you'll want this back.

BILL. Let's not be hasty.

MARY. No. Let's. Take it. Please.

BILL. (Taking the pin back:) Okay... Okay, then.

MARY. (Offering her hand:) Good-bye, Bill.

BILL. Good-bye, Mary. (Shaking her hand.)

MARY. Guess this is the end of the line.

BILL. It would certainly appear that way. You take care of yourself. You're a wonderful girl, and you deserve the world.

MARY. It would appear I deserve everything but you, huh?

BILL. I'm not the end of the world.

MARY. That's right. You're not.

BILL. That's right. So long. (Starts off.)

MARY. Bill?

BILL. (Stops.) Mary?

MARY. No. Nothing. Just go. Please. Go on. Don't turn back.

(He goes, she weeps. DR. CARROLL is there, she goes to him and cries on his shoulder.)

DR. CARROLL. There, there...

MARY. Where? Where?

DR. CARROLL. (He looks in her eyes, brushes her hair back off her face.) Buck up, sweetheart.

MARY. That's right... Tomorrow is another day.

DR. CARROLL. Chin up.

MARY. (Chin up:) Chin up! (She starts off bravely, then breaks down into sobs as she runs away.)

Scene 18

(Mae's. Music plays into the scene as underscoring. BLANCHE is there. [JIMMY may be passed out under the piano.] BILL knocks at the door. BLANCHE lets him in.)

BLANCHE. Well, hello there.

BILL. Are we alone?

BLANCHE. Mae and Jack went for some booze.

BILL. Mary and I had a terrible fight.

BLANCHE. I'm sorry. What happened?

BILL. She gave me her pin back.

BLANCHE. What does this mean?

BILL. Giving a girl your pin means the two of you are going steady.

BLANCHE. And giving it back means the opposite?

BILL. Pretty much?

BLANCHE. So, you and I... Light me a cigarette, big boy, would ya?

BILL. Sure... (Re one of his tobacco cigarettes:) One of...? (Re reefers:) Oh, I get ya.

BLANCHE. And one for yourself. A person should never smoke alone. That's what I think, anyway. It's downright sad. (*He lights her reefer.*) Thank you.

BILL. Don't mention it. *(Lighting his own:)* You smoke a lot of these things?

BLANCHE. What's it to ya?

BILL. They're very good, actually. I've got to get— I almost said her name.

BLANCHE. Good thing you stopped yourself. I don't think it would be such a fine idea anyway. She's not modern, and that's why you like her.

BILL. And you are one of these modern girls?

BLANCHE. I might not come from the city, but I know that fast life—and how it gets your small-town boys' motors runnin'. (Hiking up her skirt somewhat.)

BILL. (Trying not to notice her legs:) Aw, gee... Wow...

BLANCHE. You're looking at my gams, aren't you?

BILL. No.

BLANCHE. Don't be bashful. Let's cut the yakety-yak. Go ahead, touch 'em if you want... They're just legs. I know you want to...

BILL. I can't.

BLANCHE. Put your hand in mine. (She holds out her hand, he doesn't move. She takes his hand, puts it in hers, and guides their grasp up her leg.) There ya go...

BILL. ...Oh— What's your name again?

BLANCHE. Blanche.

BILL. Sorry.

BLANCHE. Don't worry about it. Say my name.

BILL. (Pulling his hand from her leg:) Just say it?

BLANCHE. Put your hand back first.

BILL. (Sheepishly putting his hand back:) Oh, Blanche...

BLANCHE. Yes, Bill?

BILL. Oh, Blanche!

(He can't fight it anymore, and dives for her. They make out wildly, clothes flying. BLANCHE drags BILL off into the bedroom.)

(Main Street. MARY is there.)

MARY. (*To us:*) I wanted to get that Bill out of my mind just as soon as possible—but I couldn't. Every place I went, everything I did just took me back to the good old days of Bill and Mary. It had to stop. I needed a way to weasel that guy right outta my heart— Did I say "heart?" I meant *head*. Gotta get him out of my thoughts, outta my dreams. I doubled my load of charity work, and was on the way from the orphanage to the home for the deaf and dumb when I was stopped right in the middle of Main Street.

(RALPH approaches.)

RALPH. Hello, Mary!

MARY. Oh, hello, Ralph. How's things?

RALPH. A lot better now that I've seen you.

MARY. Are you trying to be cute or are you trying to be fresh?

RALPH. What do you think?

MARY. I've really got to get going. I'm in a bit of a hurry.

RALPH. Where's the fire?

MARY. No fire. Just busy is all.

RALPH. I was hoping maybe you and I could...

MARY. Could what? You've got a dirty mind, Ralph Wiley! You're just sick—*sick!*

RALPH. I was hoping you and I could *get a soda sometime.*

MARY. Is that what you were really going to say?

RALPH. Where do you have to be right now?

MARY. Across town (Re wristwatch:) — and I'm late!

RALPH. You've got an important date, huh?

MARY. My charity work, Ralph. And it wouldn't hurt you to do a little something for sweet charity every now and again.

RALPH. And it wouldn't hurt you to cut loose and act your age every now and again, either.

MARY. I'm becoming an old maid before my time, Ralph. It's a frightening prospect, but I don't know just what to do about it.

RALPH. Let me show you the town.

MARY. I've seen the town, Ralph.

RALPH. But not with me, you haven't. We can go over to Joe's place and I'll buy you a malted—and then we can go to a party.

MARY. That sounds fun, actually.

RALPH. It is! So, whatdya say?

MARY. Okay.

RALPH. "Okay?"

MARY. Okay! Great!

RALPH. "Okay! Great!" C'mon!

MARY. (*To us:*) And we went for a malted. And I started to think that maybe there wasn't so much truth to all those awful things I heard about Ralph. He's a regular fella. I lowered my defenses and we were having quite the pleasant time.

RALPH. (*To us:*) Until I opened my big mouth and said something I shouldn't have.

MARY. (In the moment, having just heard what RALPH said, but not believing it:) What was that?

RALPH. I said, Bill's up at Mae's sometimes.

MARY. Mae? She's the one who's having this famous marathon party you speak of?

RALPH. That's right. She's a tough cookie, but once you get to know her—sweet as molasses.

MARY. Ralph? What leads you to believe that I'd give an everlovin' dang whether or not that *fool* Bill Harper would be there?

RALPH. Well, I was under the impression that you and he were—

MARY. (Interrupting him:) Not anymore!

RALPH. So, you're a bachelor girl?

MARY. More or less... And I'm having a good time with you this afternoon, Ralph.

RALPH. I'm having a swell time with you, too, Mary.

MARY. You're helping me forget about certain things.

RALPH. Like what?

MARY. Things that could stand some forgetting. Let's go to this party, shall we?

RALPH. (Hand out for her to lead the way:) After you:

(They go.)

Scene 20

(Mae's. Music plays into the scene as underscoring. RALPH leads MARY in.)

RALPH. Here we are.

MARY. Where is everybody?

RALPH. This isn't the only room in the place, you know.

MARY. Oh! Okay... Is the party going on in one of these other rooms?

RALPH. Just relax, Mary.

MARY. I'll try.

RALPH. Come in and sit down, Mary. (Offering her a reefer:) Smoke, Mary?

MARY. (He lights her reefer:) Thanks... Do you think Bill's here to-day?

RALPH. Do you want me to check?

MARY. No. I don't want to know. (Smokes, laughs.)

RALPH. How do you feel, Mary?

MARY. Kinda funny.

RALPH. You're a beautiful girl, Mary.

MARY. Oh, Ralph! (Bursts into laughter.)

RALPH. I'm serious. You got a mighty pretty face. (Caresses her face.)

MARY. Stop that! (Slaps his face.)

RALPH. (Recoils from the slap:) What'd you do that for? (Keeping his face covered.)

MARY. I'm sorry, Ralph. I didn't mean... Are you okay? (Goes to his face, taking his hands away.)

RALPH. (Diving for her:) Oh, Mary, give me...

MARY. (Fighting him off:) Stop! Ralph!

RALPH. (Atop her:) Oh, Mary!

MARY. (Struggling:) Leave me alone! Go away!

(RALPH has his way with MARY. BILL enters a moment later.)

BILL. (Dazed:) Mary?

MARY. Bill! Help! Help!

BILL. What is this?

RALPH. (Covering MARY's mouth with his hand:) Shut your mouth!

MARY. (Biting RALPH's hand so she can scream:) Bill!

RALPH. I'll teach you to bite my hand!

MARY. You don't have to— I know how! (Bites him again.)

(RALPH's about to backhand slap MARY when BILL goes into action. He grabs RALPH off of MARY and the two fight. MARY's screams call MAE, JACK, and BLANCHE to the room.)

BILL. What do you think you're doing?!

RALPH. This is none of your business!

MAE. Cut it, fellas!

MARY. Bill! Stop! Please!

RALPH. She doesn't love you! She loves me and it's galling you!

BILL. Why, you!

(The following action takes place in slow motion. BILL is about to slug RALPH when JACK gets behind him. JACK draws a pistol with the intention of conking BILL on the head and knocking him out. But, before JACK gets a chance to do so, BILL spins around and sees him coming. BILL goes for the gun and he and JACK struggle. MAE holds BLANCHE back from the scene, as RALPH returns for MARY with a mad look in his eyes. MARY recoils and tries to get away from him. The pistol fires, MARY falls dead. JACK gets hold of the pistol and conks BILL on the head. BILL faints away, and all take a second or two to assess the situation. MAE is the first to notice something very, very bad has happened:)

MAE. (Re MARY:) Look!

RALPH. Jack, is she alright?

JACK. She's dead.

MAE. Oh, sweet Jesus!

BLANCHE. This isn't happening.

JACK. Mae, get me some water.

MAE. Water? What for?

JACK. Just do it!

MAE. Well, alright...

(MAE goes. JACK, trying to get in control of things, calls RALPH and BLANCHE to him.)

JACK. Now, listen you two: I want you to get out of here.

RALPH. But, Jack, what about—

JACK. (Cutting him off:) Get out of here and forget you were ever in here today.

BLANCHE. But how can we? What can we do?!

JACK. I'll handle this. Now get going.

(RALPH and BLANCHE go. JACK wipes his fingerprints off the pistol and places it in BILL's hand. After a moment, MAE is back with some water.)

MAE. Here we are.

JACK. Give it to me.

MAE. (Giving the water to him:) Here.

JACK. (Splashing water in BILL's face:) Wake up! C'mon you!

BILL. (Coming through:) Where am I? Who am I?

JACK. You're Bill Harper.

BILL. Mary? What happened?

JACK. You killed her.

BILL. No!

JACK. The gun's in your hand, isn't it?

BILL. Mary...

(In a trance, BILL approaches MARY, coming to terms with what he's been told he's done as the scene continues. JACK goes to MAE.)

MAE. What now?

JACK. Look, after I scram, you call the cops. And this is your story, remember it: These two kids came up here for a couple of beers. You were out in the kitchen and heard the shot. When you got in here, that's what you found. Just stick to that story.

(JACK readies to go. MAE contemplates the whole ugly mess.)

BILL. (Weeping over her body:) Mary! Mary, speak to me! Mary! (The scene shifts.)

(DR. CARROLL is there.)

DR. CARROLL. A few months back, I went to our nation's capital, Washington, DC. There, an assistant to Mr. J. Edgar Hoover was kind enough to entertain me for a few minutes. I shared with him my concerns: "There is no doubt that there is an organized gang distributing the narcotic to students," I told him. "Not only in my school, but all over the city. You government men have got to find some way to put an end to it."

Of course, he agreed with me. "Marijuana is not like other forms of dope," he reminded me. "It grows wild in almost every state in the union. Therefore, there is practically no interstate commerce in the drug. As a result, the government's hands are tied. And frankly, the only sure cure is a wide spread campaign in education." Oh, it's alright for him to talk about education. But we educators can't do anything until the public is sufficiently aroused. "Then, I propose it is your job to arouse them," he told me. Then he was kind enough to share some cases with me. He told me that ten years ago, the records on marijuana in the Washington office of the narcotics division scarcely filled a small folder like this. (Produces a folder.) Today, they fill cabinets. All these devoted to marijuana records. (Opening a folder:) Here is an example: A sixteen-year-old lad, apprehended in the act of staging a hold-up. Sixteen years old and a marijuana addict. (Opening another folder:) Here is a most tragic case. A young boy. Under the influence of the drug, he killed his entire family with an ax. Then there is the most vicious type of case: (Yet another folder:) Here. In Michigan. A young girl, seventeen years old, a reefer smoker. Taken in a raid in the company with five young men. Here is a particularly flagrant case. The newspapers made quite a play of it. And there are hundreds of them coming up, new ones every day. Have I succeeded in arousing your interest, ladies and gentlemen? Perhaps I have piqued it, but there's more to our story tonight—much more.

(BILL is there.)

BILL. (*To us:*) I was just sitting down to dinner with my parents and kid sister when the doorbell rang.

(DR. CARROLL as DETECTIVE.)

DETECTIVE. William Harper? You are under arrest for the murder of Mary Lane.

BILL. (*To us:*) Mother passed out, head first, into the mashed potatoes.

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) And Bill was taken away, and held in a cell alongside hardened criminals...

BILL. (*To us:*) In the bunk above me was a man who was accused of beating his wife to death with a car aerial— I didn't ask why. And in the cot across the way was a pleasant old man known only as "Smilin' Jake"—he asked me to be his girlfriend, I told him I'd get back to him.

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) And as poor Bill wiled away the hours, Jack and Mae held up Ralph and Blanche in the apartment, waiting for the trial...

(DR. CARROLL takes BILL away as the scene shifts...)

Scene 23

(Mae's. Music plays into the scene as underscoring. RALPH stares into space, a wild look in his eyes, and sings along with the song as a frightened BLANCHE watches him.)

BLANCHE. Oh, snap out of it, will ya? It's not our fault. 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 go that way too. It was his own fault, wasn't it?

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

(JACK and MAE in another area.)

MAE. Jack...Jack, I wanna get out of this place.

JACK. You're gonna stay here as long as we have to keep those two out there under cover. Until the trial's over, or the boss gets a better idea.

MAE. But they're getting on my nerves!

JACK. I can't last much longer. I'm not worried about her, we've got to keep him gagged.

MAE. Oh, he's about ready to crack. Just look at him. If ever I saw a bad case of the screamin' Mimis, I'm looking at it now. I don't know what that punk's gonna do.

JACK. Keep feeding him those hot sticks.

MAE. That's no good. Any day now that Harper verdict's gonna come in, and I've got a hunch that he'll probably take a powder on us and blow his top off to the DA.

JACK. I don't think he'll get that chance. Here's how I figure it: Maybe we'd all be better off if he never heard the verdict?

MAE. That's what I'm saying.

JACK. You know I can't do anything like that without seeing the Boss—got to have his okay.

MAE. Then maybe you better get his okay. Okay?

JACK. Okay. I'll go right now. (Readies to go.)

RALPH. Jack! Where are you going?

JACK. Just on an errand or two.

RALPH. Where?

MAE. (Impromptu, with a scrap of paper:) Here's the shopping list.

JACK. (Taking the list:) Thanks.

RALPH. Shopping? Can I come?

MAE. I don't think that's the best idea.

RALPH. I'm goin' batty shut up in this lousy joint!

MAE. (Snaps:) How do you think I feel about it?! (Attempts composure:) I'm sorry. (Looking for BLANCHE to help:) Blanche...

BLANCHE. You know what always lifts me when I'm down in the dumps?

MAE. What?

BLANCHE. A good old-fashioned community sing!

MAE. Pasadena. How's 'bout a good Old-Fashioned? (Starts for the bar.)

BLANCHE. (Stopping MAE, giving her a look to solicit cooperation for Ralph's sake, then going to RALPH:) C'mon, Ralphy boy, how's about some fun?

RALPH. Don't sing.

BLANCHE. Well, maybe some dancing then. We can turn on the radio.

RALPH. Don't dance.

BLANCHE. Cards? Scrabble? Didn't I see a piñata around here someplace?

RALPH. Shut up! SHUT UP!!! Can't the two of you just sit down and shut up for five minutes?

BLANCHE. We can try.

(BLANCHE does, MAE goes to the bar.)

Scene 24

(The courtroom. DR. CARROLL recreates highlights of the Bill Harper trial, playing the BAILIFF, BILL'S LAWYER, D.A. and JUDGE. BILL sits in a chair.)

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: What follows are highlights from the trial of Bill Harper...

BAILIFF. Hear ye, hear ye! The Honorable Judge Isador Fish presiding. Let's begin with opening arguments.

BILL'S LAWYER. Marmaduke Wigglesworm representing William Harper. I will attempt to show that my client is a clean-cut American boy, who was unwillingly drawn into a decadent lifestyle which he could not refuse. I will show that the death of Mary Lane was accidental, and my client is free of all blame from said death.

D.A. Hector Flywheel, District Attorney. I intend to show that William Harper is a menace to our community, he is nothing less than a cold-blooded murderer, who went to that apartment with the intent to kill Mary Lane.

BILL. That's not true!

JUDGE. Order in the court!

BILL'S LAWYER. Bill, please!

D.A. May I continue?

JUDGE. Please:

D.A. Thank you. I would like to call my first witness, William Harper.

JUDGE. William Harper, take the stand.

D.A. Please state your name for the record:

BILL. William Harper.

D.A. Mr. Harper, did you or did you not fire the pistol that shot Mary Lane?

BILL. Yes, but—

D.A. (Producing the weapon, now adorned with an evidence tag:) And is this not the weapon you used to shoot the life out of this innocent young woman?

BILL. That's the gun, but—

D.A. No more questions!

JUDGE. Mr. Wigglesworm?

BILL'S LAWYER. Yes. Bill. Tell us all what happened to you on that fateful afternoon.

BILL. I was under the power of some drug I was forced to smoke. This cheap woman took me off into a bedroom and had her filthy way with me.

BILL'S LAWYER. Outrageous!

BILL. I didn't know what I was doing. You've got to believe me!

BILL'S LAWYER. Oh, I do, Bill. Rest assured, I do. That's all. You may step down. Thank you. Your honor, I'd like to call Dr. Alfred Carroll to the stand.

JUDGE. Call Dr. Alfred Carroll to the stand.

BILL'S LAWYER. Dr. Carroll, as principal of the Lakeside High School, did you, during the last three months, notice any changes in the demeanor and attitude of your student William Harper?

DR. CARROLL. Yes, in a number of things. For example, at times disassociation of ideas. In another instance, I happened to attend the recent interscholastic tennis matches. And while Bill Harper had been considered an exceedingly good player, I saw him miss the ball by as much as three or four feet.

D.A. Outrageous!

DR. CARROLL. This, I understand, could be attributed to the use of marijuana. It causes errors in time and space.

BILL'S LAWYER. Did you notice any changes that would lead you to believe as an educator that he was under some severe mental strain which might possibly have been induced by some drug?

DR. CARROLL. Yes. I recall distinctly a few weeks ago. It was during a class of English literature. There was a serious discussion of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" when he suddenly burst into an uncontrollable fit of hysterical laughter.

BILL'S LAWYER. Oh, by the way, Dr. Carroll. Six months ago, what would have been your opinion regarding the character of my client?

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

BILL'S LAWYER. Thank you, Dr. Carroll. The Defense rests.

JUDGE. Closing arguments.

D.A. (To us:) You ladies and gentlemen of the jury have a duty to perform. (To a man in the audience:) I know what you're thinking, sir: "He might have been insane when he did it." But he wasn't. He knew what he was doing. There's no doubt about the fact that he murdered her. He admitted it himself. That wasn't the first time he was there. (To a woman in the audience:) And, you, ma'am, I know what you're thinking, too: Sure, that could be your son up there on trial. And you don't want to believe he's done this horrible thing. But that could be your daughter rotting in the morgue as we speak! How do you feel now? (Back to all of us:) By his own admission, the defendant pulled the trigger of the weapon that sent lovely and innocent Mary Lane to a tragic and untimely death. If such deeds are permitted to go unpunished, this community would cease to be a decent and safe place for us or our children to live. You are upright citizens. That is why you were chosen to judge another. And as honest and upright citizens, there is only one verdict which you can find. And that is a verdict of guilty.

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) And that is the very verdict the jury decided on.

JUDGE. William Harper, please stand for sentencing. (BILL *does.*) You will be taken from this place, and on a date to be determined, sentenced to death by electrocution. May God have mercy on your pitiful soul.

BILL. (Rising:) No!!! No... (Fainting away.)

JUDGE. Court adjourned!

(DR. CARROLL administers some smelling salts and walks BILL off to jail as the scene shifts.)

(Mae's. Music plays into the scene as underscoring. RALPH and BLANCHE are there.)

RALPH. They're going to fry him... They're going to fry him!

BLANCHE. You don't know that.

RALPH. If I say they're going to fry him—they're *going* to fry him!

BLANCHE. What's the matter with you? You're giving me the creeps.

RALPH. Mae! MAE!

(MAE is there.)

MAE. What do you want?

RALPH. Bring me some reefers!

(MAE goes.)

BLANCHE. (Going to him:) Oh, c'mon, get ahold of yourself.

RALPH. Bah! (Pushing her face away from him, ala Cagney's grapefruit in the face.)

(MAE is back with reefers.)

MAE. Here you are.

(RALPH smokes wildly. MAE helps BLANCHE up. MAE gives her a reefer.)

BLANCHE. Thanks.

(RALPH laughs wildly.)

MAE. Now cut the crazy laughing!

RALPH. Where's Jack? I wanna get out of here!

MAE. They'll pick you up and electrocute you if you don't pipe down!

RALPH. I wanna see Jack. Jack... I wanna see Jack... Jack...

MAE. (*To* BLANCHE:) You'd better quiet him.

BLANCHE. I can't do anything with him.

RALPH. I've got to see Jack. We can't let that kid get the hot seat.

BLANCHE. He'll be here. Don't worry. He'll be here in a little while.

RALPH. I've got to see him... I've got to see him... Oh...

BLANCHE. C'mon, darling, everything will be over soon. Do you want me to play something for you?

RALPH. Yeah. Yeah, that's it. Play something.

BLANCHE. Alright. C'mon. Sit down.

(She shuts the music and starts playing the piano. He loses it.)

RALPH. Faster... Faster... Play faster... Faster!... Play faster!... Faster!...

(JACK is there. He and MAE in another area.)

MAE. (*To* JACK:) It's about time! What'd the Boss say?

(JACK makes the slitting throat hand action, MAE knows what he means. RALPH sees JACK, and tenses up before losing it again. BLANCHE stops playing piano.)

RALPH. (To JACK:) I know what you want. You want to kill me!

JACK. (Closing in on RALPH:) You're crazy. Take it easy, kid. I just want to talk to ya.

(RALPH grabs a fire poker and beats JACK to death with it. MAE and BLANCHE scream wildly. RALPH falls back into a chair, the bloody poker still in his hand. He stares blankly ahead. MAE goes to JACK.)

MAE. Jack! Jack!!! Speak to me!

BLANCHE. Is he dead?

MAE. (Checking JACK's vitals, he's gone.) He's dead! Dead! (Turning on RALPH:) You killed him! And now I'm going to kill you!

(MAE jumps on RALPH, clawing him, attempting to strangle, etc. A POLICEMAN is suddenly there. He has his gun drawn and goes

to cuff BLANCHE [for starts, but with intentions of taking the lot in.])

BLANCHE. Stop it! Stop it! Let go of me! Take your hands off of me!

Scene 26

(The police interrogation room. Music plays into the scene as underscoring. POLICE interrogate MAE.)

POLICE. Listen, Coleman, you're gonna talk.

MAE. You can't make me do a thing, copper!

POLICE. Oh, we have ways, little lady. I assure you of that.

MAE. Lousy, stinkin' flatfoot! Pushin' a pencil 'round the station-house desk your whole life—when you're not stuffin' your fat face with donuts!

POLICE. Go ahead, sister. You don't think I've heard it all before? Well, I have. What's your beef? I just want to play friends.

MAE. Give me a glass of water.

POLICE. (He pours a glass of water, acts like he's gonna give it to her, but drinks it himself, thoroughly enjoying every sip:) You'll get water when you talk, and not before.

MAE. What are you accusing me of?

POLICE. Delinquency of minors—

MAE. That's real cute, Jack Webb.

POLICE. For starters. Add to that, ringleader of a drug syndicate.

MAE. Jack was the ringleader!

POLICE. Jack's pushin' up daisies!

MAE. So, what's that supposed to mean?! You think I know somethin'—'cause I don't!

POLICE. You know plenty, and you're gonna sing to me all about it.

MAE. I ain't singin' for nobody!

POLICE. You're indirectly responsible for a pair of murders, so far— Once this Harper kid fries, you'll be up for three!

MAE. I didn't kill anybody!

POLICE. Did you ever do a good thing in your life?

MAE. No... (Considers it. No dice:) —And I ain't about to start now!

POLICE. You know what this means, don't ya, Coleman? It means you're going up the river for a long, long time!

MAE. I may be many things, officer. But I am *not* a snitch! (Wrists out for handcuffs:) Lock me up and throw away the key! I could use a vacation!

POLICE. This is a sad day for the fate of this town.

MAE. My whole life's one long, sad day. It's a highway to Hell: With endless tollbooths, and no exits.

DR. CARROLL. (To us:) Blanche D'Jour was more cooperative...

(BLANCHE and DR. CARROLL as POLICE.)

POLICE. You want to set things right, don't ya?

BLANCHE. Yes! So, what do I do?

POLICE. Are you ready to tell what you know?

BLANCHE. Yes! I'll talk! I was there! I saw it! I know who killed Mary! It wasn't Bill! It was Jack! Jack Perry! He shot Mary and then put the gun in Bill's hand! We were all up in the apartment one afternoon and when Mary and Ralph came in lookin' for a good time. Bill and I, we'd been in another room. And Bill came in, he caught Ralph with Mary and he started to fight. But it was Jack who had the gun, he was going to hit Bill over the head to make him stop. And then the gun went off. I saw it. I can see it now. It was horrible! Before we knew it, Mary was dead. But you see, officer, Bill didn't know he hadn't killed Mary. He was so doped up, they made him think he had. Ralph wanted to tell you, too. Oh, if they'd only let him. This is the truth! I'm telling you the truth! It was Jack's fault,

and it was my fault, too. I got all of them to come up to the apartment. I'm just as much to blame. I am!

POLICE. Do I understand that you wish to plead guilty to the charge of fostering moral delinquency in the case of William Harper?

BLANCHE. Yes, I'm guilty. I am!

Scene 27

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) Blanche was brought into court, where she took the stand at Bill's retrial.

(BILL is there. DR. CARROLL becomes the JUDGE...)

JUDGE. We have come in the hearings before this court today to what I hope will be the final actions revolving around an unhappy and unfortunate case, one whose horrible tragedy will forever remain with me. I am happy to have been enabled, before it was too late, to order the verdict of the jury in the case of the people vs. William Harper to be set aside. But, young man, as long as this court is convinced that to declare you guilty would have been a gross miscarriage of justice, we cannot condone your acts. And we can express only the hope that your experiences may not only keep you, but thousands of others from the vicious pitfalls of marijuana. Thus I am ordering you to remain in this court during the next case, so that you will be obliged to witness what you yourself so narrowly escaped. Call the case of the people vs. Ralph Wiley.

(RALPH, out of his mind, is there. DR. CARROLL becomes his LAWYER...)

RALPH'S LAWYER. Your honor, in this case the state waives trial of the defendant Ralph Wiley. It is convinced that he is hopelessly and incurably insane, a condition caused by the drug marijuana to which he was addicted. It is recommended, your honor, that the defendant be placed in an institution for the criminally insane for the rest of his natural life. The defendant's council joins the state in this request.

JUDGE. Since council for the defense as well as council for the state seem to agree on this, I see no reason why either request should not be granted.

(RALPH laughs and laughs as he's carried off.)

Scene 28

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) Epilogue. Part One: The Fate of Blanche D'Jour...

BLANCHE. (*To us:*) I did not come to America for this! I came to learn about the culture—not to see these horrible things and go to jail! I can't do it! And while my parents sit at home, praying as they await my return—all I can ask is that you forgive me... God bless America!

(Maybe a crash of glass, or something to suggest Blanche's suicide.)

DR. CARROLL. (*To us:*) At 11:15 A.M., subsequent to the trial of Ralph Wiley, Blanche D'Jour jumped out the eighth floor window of the courthouse, and sailed to her death on the pavement of Main Street, breaking every bone in her body upon impact. She was given a simple funeral in her home country, where she is buried next to her uncle and three cousins. (*To* BLANCHE:) Thank you. You may go now. (*She remains in the background. He goes on:*) Part Two: The Fate of Jimmy Lane.

(JIMMY is there. He contemplates a reefer. Suddenly, there's a chord of music of some sound effect.)

JIMMY. What's that? Hello! Is anybody there?! I'm ascared...

(MARY, dressed as an angel, makes a glorious entrance...)

MARY. Don't be afraid! It's me, Jimmy!

JIMMY. Mary?

MARY. What have you got there?

JIMMY. (Hiding the reefer:) Nothing!

(A crash of thunder or some horrible noise. JACK, dressed as a devil, is there.)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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