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## **Cast of Characters**

DAVID WILLIAMSON: Stock trader, late forties. Trim and fit.

REESE: Club waiter, very late forties or older.

HELEN WILLIAMSON: David's wife, mid-late forties. Stylish, well put together.

ANNIE WILLIAMSON: Helen and David's daughter. Twenty. College student.

## **Setting**

### **ACT I: The Lion Eats His Lunch**

The dining parlor of a private club, late afternoon. The present.

### **ACT II: The Lion in His Lair**

The living room of the Williamson house, the same evening.

### **ACT III: The Lion Leaves His Mark**

The living room of the Williamson house, late morning the next day.

## **Time**

The Reagan/Bush years; the era of greed.

# **PRIDE OF THE LION**

## **by Larry Loebell**

### **ACT I**

#### **The Lion Eats His Lunch**

*(At rise, DAVID WILLIAMSON sits in a deep leather chair. Next to him is a table on which sits the remains of his uneaten lunch, a sandwich platter and a fruit cup. REESE enters, carrying an empty tray.)*

**REESE.** Can I clear you, sir?

**WILLIAMSON.** Clear me? Thank you, Reese, no. I'm not quite finished. I might want to give this sandwich another shot. Or perhaps I'll take another nibble of—what is this here in the fruit cup, orange slice dyed with, what, cherry juice? Stewart is so clever.

**REESE.** That's blood orange, Mr. Williamson.

**WILLIAMSON.** Really? I don't know I've ever actually seen one. Mediterranean?

**REESE.** From the groves of Zeus. Legend has it.

**WILLIAMSON.** Is that on your card?

**REESE.** Of course. *(Shows WILLIAMSON. Reading:)* "Turned red by Zeus to frighten thieves, this sweet citrus was once left uneaten because of its bloody color."

**WILLIAMSON.** Protective coloration.

**REESE.** What?

**WILLIAMSON.** Protective coloration. Nature's way of deceiving predators.

**REESE.** I wouldn't know.

**WILLIAMSON.** I'll keep it.

**REESE.** I'll come back.

*(REESE starts to exit.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Reese.

**REESE.** Sir?

**WILLIAMSON.** Reese, how long have we known each other?

**REESE.** Known each other?

**WILLIAMSON.** I mean how long has it been that you've been waiting on me.

**REESE.** I've had this station since you joined, sir. How long ago is that? Eight years?

**WILLIAMSON.** That long.

**REESE.** I'm sure it is.

**WILLIAMSON.** Sometimes it seems like it hasn't been very long and sometimes it seems like forever.

**REESE.** Maybe it feels short because nothing ever changes here.

**WILLIAMSON.** Wouldn't that make it seem longer?

**REESE.** I don't know. I'm just talking.

**WILLIAMSON.** Do you like working here, Reese?

**REESE.** I've got things I need to be doing.

**WILLIAMSON.** I'm sorry. That was impolite of me. You are absolutely right. I just thought, strike a casual note, this being my last day before...

**REESE.** They expel you.

**WILLIAMSON.** Expel me?

**REESE.** Pretty likely.

**WILLIAMSON.** Forever?

**REESE.** I've seen it before. The governor's board'll take a vote. Then Stewart puts a note on each waiter's card that so and so's privileges have been revoked.

**WILLIAMSON.** With the food facts, the specials *du jour*, and the soup.

**REESE.** Right. Last year after Mr. Raski went up the river, they voted him out.

**WILLIAMSON.** Raski? You think this is the same as Raski? That was a violent crime. There was a permanent injury. It was lurid. I can understand in that case.

**REESE.** Well, you'd know better.

**WILLIAMSON.** No, no. I'm sure you're right. It might be forever.

**REESE.** Is there anything I can get you? I'm heading back to the kitchen...

**WILLIAMSON.** It's not like I won't have money.

**REESE.** Maybe they'll let you stay, then. I'm just talking.

**WILLIAMSON.** It's the damn governor's board. One day you're lunching with someone and the next day he's blackballing you. Of course, the board could all be different by the time I'm out.

**REESE.** Mr. Gravas's been president for sixteen years. I heard him tell someone yesterday.

**WILLIAMSON.** I didn't vote for him. He's a good man, but that's too long. Every organization needs new blood once in a while.

*(REESE has begun to drift away.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Reese, there is something you could do for me. Bring me a telephone?

**REESE.** Sure.

**WILLIAMSON.** I want to tell my wife where I am.

**REESE.** Of course.

*(REESE brings him a phone, plugs it in for him, and exits. WILLIAMSON dials.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Oh, Helen. Pick it up, for Christ sake. I know you're there. Please. Pick. It. Up.

*(But no one answers so he hangs up. Then he picks up the sandwich, inspects it, then puts it down. REESE enters with a tray, sets it up at his station and starts to clear up plates left near the other chairs.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** I was glad there were people here. I wasn't sure they would stay once I arrived.

**REESE.** Who do you mean?

**WILLIAMSON.** Everyone. I thought people might not stay. Out of, I don't know, embarrassment. Embarrassment for me, I guess. I might not have, if the shoe was on someone else's foot. A lot of my friends, well Helen's and mine, have...

**REESE.** Things seemed pretty normal here to me.

**WILLIAMSON.** No one said anything at all. You were the first. I did think someone might say something, discreetly, before leaving. "If there is anything I might do..."

**REESE.** I was the first one?

**WILLIAMSON.** You were the first to refer to it, when you said "up the river" before.

**REESE.** I think that's what my father called it. Up the river. Or maybe that's from a movie. I didn't mean anything...

**WILLIAMSON.** No, no. I admire your candor. Up the river. I wonder where that came from?

**REESE.** He might have said "Big House." Or "Calaboose." People were scared of it in his day, that's for sure.

**WILLIAMSON.** I think it might be worse now. Scarier. Was he in?

**REESE.** Never. Never even got a parking ticket. It's probably about the same, though, then or now. Always being watched.

**WILLIAMSON.** Is that the worst of it?

**REESE.** For me, one of the things, probably. But I don't know. I'm just talking.

**WILLIAMSON.** Because if that's the worst, I can handle it.

**REESE.** Really?

**WILLIAMSON.** I worry someone could exploit the situation. To gain an advantage.

**REESE.** Gain an advantage? I'm not sure I understand, Mr. Williamson.

**WILLIAMSON.** Bully me in some way, have some power over me.

**REESE.** Up the river.

**WILLIAMSON.** Yes.

*(REESE goes back to clearing.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Reese, you know my first name, don't you?

**REESE.** Sure. David. Actually I know your whole name is David R. Williamson because of how you sign your account.

**WILLIAMSON.** Do you know anything more about me?

**REESE.** I followed the trial. You're our most famous member right now.

**WILLIAMSON.** Infamous, maybe.

**REESE.** Well the trial impressed a lot of these guys. I don't think they were sure you were really in their neighborhood.

**WILLIAMSON.** Economically, you mean?

**REESE.** Most of their fortunes have been in their families forever.

**WILLIAMSON.** Well, I'm only in the neighborhood on paper, depending on the vagaries of the markets. And the Feds have most of that tied up.

**REESE.** Even so.

**WILLIAMSON.** What else do you know?

**REESE.** I knew what business you were in before the trial.

**WILLIAMSON.** How did you know that?

**REESE.** From hearing you talk to your guests while I was serving.

**WILLIAMSON.** Really?

**REESE.** Oh, and I know you like musicals. I've heard you singing some of my own favorites. Well, not singing, really. Just humming.

*Camelot. My Fair Lady. Carousel. (Hums:)* “When you walk through a storm...”

**WILLIAMSON.** You’ve heard me? Like from the next stall in the men’s room?

**REESE.** Right here.

**WILLIAMSON.** I don’t sit here humming.

**REESE.** Sure you do. In the afternoon. When it’s empty like this. While you’re reading the paper. Before you go home.

**WILLIAMSON.** Do you have a family, Reese?

**REESE.** I’m divorced. My kids are all on their own.

**WILLIAMSON.** I have a daughter. Annie. She’s nineteen. No, twenty. Twenty. I missed her birthday during the trial and I really caught hell for it. From my wife, not from Annie. She’s not speaking to me.

**REESE.** No.

**WILLIAMSON.** She’s living on campus. She won’t even come home to visit.

**REESE.** I’m sorry.

**WILLIAMSON.** She’ll come around.

**REESE.** Can I take that sandwich now?

**WILLIAMSON.** Do you know, Reese, that I have been coming here for all these years, and every day you are here, and not once in all that time have I ever asked you a personal question?

**REESE.** You don’t come here to talk to the help.

**WILLIAMSON.** But after all this time, it really is awkward...

**REESE.** Don’t sweat it. That’s how it’s supposed to be.

**WILLIAMSON.** Reese, I don’t even know your last name.

**REESE.** It’s Reese.

**WILLIAMSON.** You’re kidding.

**REESE.** Nope.

**WILLIAMSON.** All this time I've been calling you Reese thinking it was your first name?

**REESE.** That's what everyone calls me. My kids call me Reese.

**WILLIAMSON.** What is your first name, Mr. Reese?

**REESE.** Albert. Al.

**WILLIAMSON.** Albert. Tell me, Albert, what do your children do?

**REESE.** Sara's a teacher. She's married and has two kids of her own. John's in the Navy. Charlie's...still finding himself.

**WILLIAMSON.** You're too young to be a grandfather?

**REESE.** Three years. You want to see their pictures?

*(REESE gives WILLIAMSON the photos from his wallet and then backs off.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Nice-looking kids.

*(WILLIAMSON hands them back. He picks up the phone, dials. REESE tries to take his sandwich plate, but WILLIAMSON holds it away from him. REESE picks up the tray he has been filling and exits. The phone rings and rings. WILLIAMSON hangs up, and then quickly picks it up and re-dials. No one answers. REESE returns, carrying an empty tray, which he resets at his station.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** *(Hanging up:)* Damn it.

**REESE.** Let me bring you something else from the kitchen, Mr. Williamson. I can see you don't want to eat that.

**WILLIAMSON.** I'm trying to get used to the idea of having to eat whatever someone gives me. I'm trying to imagine what it will be like.

**REESE.** You aren't there yet. Why don't you just wait and see what it'll be like and spend your last day here like it was regular. Let me just get you another...

*(REESE tries to take the sandwich plate but WILLIAMSON grabs the plate back.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Please!

*(Pulling it away, he loses hold and drops it. REESE backs off. WILLIAMSON is mortified. He stands, moves toward the plate as if to clean up. REESE stops him.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Reese, Albert, I'm so sorry. Let me help...

**REESE.** It's all right. I'll take care of it. It's no problem.

*(WILLIAMSON walks back to the phone, picks it up and dials again. REESE cleans up the mess.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Why won't she answer?

*(REESE finishes picking up the broken plate. WILLIAMSON hangs up the phone.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Albert, what else do you think will be hard?

**REESE.** Up the river?

**WILLIAMSON.** Up the river, yes.

**REESE.** I don't know. Sounds. Sounds would be hard for me.

**WILLIAMSON.** Sounds?

**REESE.** Like the gates closing. Metal clanking. People snoring. Or just listening to strangers talking all the time. That would bother me.

**WILLIAMSON.** More than being there? More than not being able to leave?

**REESE.** I'd miss things, sure. But three years? Come on. I was in the Army that long. How much worse can jail be? I think I could take it.

**WILLIAMSON.** You do?

**REESE.** Sure. It's not a bad trade. For what you got.

**WILLIAMSON.** What does that mean?

**REESE.** Well, you have to see it from my perspective. I work a 35 hour week, I clear about 500 a week. In three years, I take home 75 grand. You had to give back, what? Half of... I hear you say it's all on paper, but I read it's like half of two hundred million, right? You spend three years out of circulation...

**WILLIAMSON.** It's five years.

**REESE.** If you have to serve it all, which you won't.

**WILLIAMSON.** My lawyers don't agree with you. The Feds want an example.

**REESE.** Well, okay, let's say even if it's five. So you read and you exercise, and you write a lot of letters, and you spend a lot of time doing nothing. And you're bored, bored, bored. You think you're going to lose your marbles there's so little to do, except you've got an ace in the hole. You've got all that money. And you've got all that free time to dream about how to spend it. And then you're out. You're what, forty-seven, forty-eight?

**WILLIAMSON.** In five years I'll be fifty-three.

**REESE.** Okay. Fifty-three. And you're retired. You're not allowed to go back to work. So all you have to do with the rest of your life is spend that money. I figure you make five grand more a day in interest than I make a year. It doesn't seem like such a bad deal. Hell, I'd do it.

**WILLIAMSON.** You would?

**REESE.** Trade five years in my forties for a hundred million dollars and the rest of my life to spend it? In a flash.

**WILLIAMSON.** But what about what you're giving up?

**REESE.** What would that be? My career?

**WILLIAMSON.** Your family.

**REESE.** For a chance to inherit money like that? They'd drive me straight up to the gate.

**REESE.** Okay, then. Love. Sex.

**REESE.** You mean would I be willing to give up sleeping alone like I do now for a hundred million in five years? Mr. Williamson, for that kind of money I'd trade five years of guaranteed no sex in a New York minute. Believe me, if I had that money to come home to, I'd make up for lost time.

**WILLIAMSON.** Money sounds pretty important to you.

**REESE.** I'm just telling you how I see your situation.

**WILLIAMSON.** What do you really think of me, Albert?

**REESE.** You're okay.

**WILLIAMSON.** Really?

**REESE.** Yeah. Really. I'm sorry you'll be gone.

**WILLIAMSON.** Despite my "tainted" money?

**REESE.** Sure. That's another thing altogether. I can't see how anyone got hurt by what you did. All these guys who belong here, they're all scheming how to increase their stake, same as anyone. And I can't say anything about it. I always got good tips.

**WILLIAMSON.** Tips? We don't give tips. The governor's board doesn't allow it. It's in the by-laws. Christmas presents, but no gratuities. I've given you substantial Christmas gifts every year, is that what you mean?

**REESE.** No. I mean, the presents have been more than generous. They really help at the holidays. But I mean tips. Stock tips.

**WILLIAMSON.** I never gave you any stock tips.

**REESE.** I'm not deaf, Mr. Williamson.

**WILLIAMSON.** What do you mean?

**REESE.** I already told you. I listen to your conversations while I'm serving you. I keep a notebook and a Wall Street Journal in the kitchen. If I hear you talking about something, I watch it. If it starts to move, I get in.

**WILLIAMSON.** You get in? What do you mean you get in?

**REESE.** What do you think I mean? I buy stock.

**WILLIAMSON.** You buy stock? I could have you fired.

**REESE.** Fired? For what? Overhearing?

**WILLIAMSON.** For theft. You know what my advice is worth? Do you know what those people I was talking to were paying?

**REESE.** They were buying illegal information.

**WILLIAMSON.** They were buying my advice.

**REESE.** I never asked for your advice. I never took any longer with you than I do with any of my other tables. I have my rules about it. I just pick up whatever crumbs I can while I'm there serving.

**WILLIAMSON.** Crumbs? Those were privileged conversations.

**REESE.** Well, I did my best with what I got. I didn't know it was insider stuff.

**WILLIAMSON.** How much money are we talking about, Albert?

**REESE.** I'm not sure that's any of your business.

**WILLIAMSON.** Albert, come on. Impress me. You've made your mark. What's your take? You owe me that, at least.

**REESE.** I don't want to be rude here, Mr. Williamson, but I don't think I owe you...

*(WILLIAMSON puts his arm around REESE and brings him close.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** Just between us. How much?

**REESE.** All together?

**WILLIAMSON.** Sure, all together. How long have you been doing this?

**REESE.** Since I first knew what you did, after you joined.

**WILLIAMSON.** That long? Pretty sly, Albert. How much.

**REESE.** Net? After trading fees and commissions?

**WILLIAMSON.** Sure. Your take. Your net.

**REESE.** My portfolio is worth over seventy thousand. I started with about fifteen.

*(WILLIAMSON releases him.)*

**WILLIAMSON.** You made 55 grand on what you overheard me say in here?

**REESE.** I always double-checked. I did my own research, too.

**WILLIAMSON.** You listened to me tell my clients things no one else in the world knew and you tagged along, and you're telling me you did your own research?

**REESE.** I wish I hadn't told you.

**WILLIAMSON.** What will you do without me, Albert?

**REESE.** Same as I've been doing since you got busted. Playing it safe.

**WILLIAMSON.** Wasn't it pretty risky to make buys purely on what you overheard?

**REESE.** Life's a risk.

**WILLIAMSON.** Oh, spare me.

**REESE.** I did it for my grandchildren. So they would have an inheritance.

**WILLIAMSON.** For your grandchildren? I don't think so. I mean it's great to have the asset, but that's not why you did it. I think you did it to prove something to all these guys you wait on. Am I right Al, really?

**REESE.** I admit it did give me some satisfaction when it started to grow.

**WILLIAMSON.** I should bill you.

**REESE.** So bill me.

**WILLIAMSON.** You'd pay me?

**REESE.** I'd think about it.

**WILLIAMSON.** Rule number one is don't pay for what you get for free.

**REESE.** I don't want you on my conscience.

**WILLIAMSON.** Oh please.

**REESE.** What would you charge me?

**WILLIAMSON.** It's my Christmas present. My going away present.

**REESE.** I want to know. I don't want charity.

**WILLIAMSON.** Too late.

**REESE.** I'm not sure I would have paid you anyway. Given the circumstances.

**WILLIAMSON.** I'm hardly surprised. You know what they say about honor and thieves?

**REESE.** Why do they call you the Lion?

**WILLIAMSON.** What?

**REESE.** The Lion. I've heard them. The people you bring here. Your guests. They say it with real reverence. The Lion.

**WILLIAMSON.** I'm the lord of the jungle, the king of the beasts.

**REESE.** Were.

**WILLIAMSON.** Yes, right.

**REESE.** So how'd you get the name?

**WILLIAMSON.** You really want to know?

**REESE.** I asked.

**WILLIAMSON.** It's hype. I made it up myself, years ago, after I did my first deal. I told my client how I had run the bankers to the ground in this negotiation. I told him the bankers told me they felt like antelope chased by a lion. It wasn't a total fabrication, but let's just say I told it well. From then on, he called me the Lion. Some other people picked it up. The funny thing was, even though we made money on that deal, we got taken. The bankers weren't running scared. It was an act. They knew things I didn't.

**REESE.** Protective coloration.

**WILLIAMSON.** That's how the Feds got me caught, too. Very elaborate entrapment. They were more brazen than I ever thought they'd be.

**REESE.** I'm sorry you're going.

**WILLIAMSON.** Bullshit.

**REESE.** I said you're okay. I meant it. You're okay.

**WILLIAMSON.** I'm okay, you're okay.

**REESE.** Seriously.

**WILLIAMSON.** Seriously, I make what you did seem okay to you. That's how I'm okay.

**REESE.** I have to set for dinner.

**WILLIAMSON.** I have to go home. Tell your grandchildren not to squander their inheritance.

**REESE.** Maybe when you're out, you'll come over and meet them.

**WILLIAMSON.** You're not serious.

**REESE.** Hey, can I ask you a favor?

**WILLIAMSON.** A favor.

**REESE.** Can I write to you?

**WILLIAMSON.** You want to write to me? You think I'm going to be sitting in prison giving stock tips?

**REESE.** You could tell me what to do now.

**WILLIAMSON.** You think I have responsibility for you? You stole from me. Why should I help you?

**REESE.** No reason. Just to do it. To beat the bastards.

**WILLIAMSON.** Albert, I am the bastards.

**REESE.** For fun then.

**WILLIAMSON.** I can't. I'm forbidden.

**REESE.** You're not going to let them grind you down, are you?

**WILLIAMSON.** Are you trying to...inspire me?

**REESE.** If it'll work.

**WILLIAMSON.** They'll be watching me, monitoring my mail.

**REESE.** Suppose you just give me strategies.

**WILLIAMSON.** No.

**REESE.** Nothing specific. Hints.

**THIS SCENE IS NOT OVER!  
PLAY CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE.**

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**ACT II**  
**The Lion in His Lair**

*(At rise, HELEN WILLIAMSON stands in her living room. She is casually dressed, pants and blouse. DAVID WILLIAMSON enters, glancing back.)*

**DAVID.** Vultures. Tonight a half a dozen of them circled the car pointing microphones at me like they were guns. That's supposed to make me want to talk to them?

**HELEN.** They love you. You're their *raison d'être*.

**DAVID.** Right. I've said no comment for 18 months.

**HELEN.** Tonight's their last chance to get you. Facing what you're facing, some people probably relent.

**DAVID.** You think I *should* talk to them?

**HELEN.** What difference does it make what I think?

*(The phone begins to ring.)*

Please don't answer that.

**DAVID.** Why not?

**HELEN.** Just don't. It's probably one of them calling from a car phone.

**DAVID.** How would they get an unlisted number?

**HELEN.** They get them, believe me.

**DAVID.** Have you been here all day? I called.

**HELEN.** I thought that might have been you.

*(The ringing stops.)*

**DAVID.** Why won't you just screen. I've showed you a hundred times...

**HELEN.** I didn't want to screen. I wasn't in the mood to hear anyone say how sorry they felt for me. And if one more of those news bimbos calls to ask me about "your feelings on this, the eve of your husband's imprisonment," it might be *me* going to jail tomorrow, not you. And I really didn't want to talk to you.

**DAVID.** I'm sorry, Helen. I really am. How many times do you want me to say it? If I could do it all again...

**HELEN.** It would be exactly the same. You've been saying you're sorry ever since this started and I still don't really know what you're sorry for.

*(They look at each other. DAVID begins to answer, but then thinks better of it. The phone starts to ring again.)*

**DAVID.** *(Forcing himself to ignore the phone:)* Is there any mail?

**HELEN.** *(Picking up where she left off:)* It's not for what you did. You maintain this perverse self-righteousness about that, as if you've been sadly misunderstood.

**DAVID.** I feel that way. Where's the mail?

**HELEN.** *(Still on track:)* I know you do. So you're not really sorry. You're remorseful, because it's a personal failure, and you're sorry for all of the embarrassment you've caused your friends and family, but you don't see the essential problem. *(Referring to the mail:)* On the table.

*(The phone stops ringing. DAVID goes and gets the mail and thumbs the stack.)*

**DAVID.** What's the difference? I'm going to jail for it. Why is everything already opened?

**HELEN.** Right. You're going to jail for it, but you don't accept what a big deal it is. A legal big deal. Why the SEC and the federal prosecutors and all those reporters out there think it's a big deal. You're still just angry you got caught. You don't think you've done anything worth all of the attention.

**DAVID.** Have those bastards out there started opening my mail?

**HELEN.** Your mail?

**DAVID.** My mail.

**HELEN.** Our mail.

**DAVID.** Excuse me. Our mail.

**HELEN.** I opened it.

**DAVID.** You opened it? Why?

**HELEN.** Because starting tomorrow, it's in my job description. Convict's wife, keeper of the home fires. So I thought I'd try a batch and see what was there. For years, the only things I've opened are personal letters. I always leave the rest for you.

**DAVID.** It's always just bills and business crap anyway. What's the big deal?

*(HELEN stares him down.)*

**DAVID.** So what's here?

**HELEN.** Nothing very interesting. Charity solicitations. Sale announcements. Bills. Business crap.

**DAVID.** Okay.

*(He puts it down without looking at it.)*

**HELEN.** No, David, it's not okay. After all these years of waiting for you to come home and open the mail, I decided not to wait, just to tick you off. Is it working?

**DAVID.** It's not important.

**HELEN.** Yes, it is. For me it is. It was important for me to open your mail before you came home.

**DAVID.** I know you're angry at me, Helen. What do you want me to do about it now?

**HELEN.** I don't know. Let me be angry.

**DAVID.** Let you? How could I stop you?

**HELEN.** I'm serious, David. This is serious.

**DAVID.** Helen, it's my last night home.

**HELEN.** So I should just bite it down. Because it's your last night home. And before it was the last night of the appeal. And before that it was the last night of the trial. And before that...

**DAVID.** All right. All right.

**HELEN.** And then tomorrow you'll be gone. After tomorrow, who am I supposed to be angry *with*?

**DAVID.** I guess you'll still be angry at me.

**HELEN.** I've been feeling like this for eighteen months. I never said a word during the trial. I never opened your goddamned sacred mail. Now I have one night left. One night left to tell you that it's not just your life, David. It's my life you've messed up, too. And Annie's.

**DAVID.** Why are you doing this? You don't want to do this.

**HELEN.** Not want to. Have to. Have to. Have to. Have to.

*(DAVID crosses to her and puts his arms around her. She does not resist, but does not hug him back.)*

**HELEN.** Don't.

**DAVID.** I have to. Have to, have to, have to.

*(DAVID steps away, holds her by the arms for a minute and then lets her go. HELEN steps away as if she is finishing a motion, as if the hug had not happened.)*

**DAVID.** Have you eaten?

**HELEN.** No.

**DAVID.** No? Me either. I ordered a sandwich at the club, but I couldn't eat it.

**HELEN.** There's a potential side benefit. Improved diet. You've lost so much weight since this started, all your clothes hang on you.

**DAVID.** Believe me, I'll be buying new clothes.

**HELEN.** Oh, Jesus.

**DAVID.** What?

**HELEN.** It's all marked off for you, isn't it? Like a business trip. Tomorrow at nine, get driven to prison. Tomorrow at ten, surrender to federal marshals. Ten-thirty, surrender my civilian clothes. Eleven, adjust to prison life. Begin six months of good behavior. Earn the right to an hour a month in the conjugal trailer. Next 54 months, 54 hours of conjugal bliss...

**DAVID.** That's not how I think of it, Helen.

**HELEN.** It's unimaginably sordid.

**DAVID.** Sordid is all I get for a while...

**HELEN.** Don't. Don't joke with me anymore tonight, David.

**DAVID.** *(Pulling back again:)* You used to like me to joke.

*(HELEN holds up her hands to get him to keep his distance.)*

**DAVID.** I just think we ought to try to be kind to each other. I'm asking you for that.

**HELEN.** You mean I should be kind to you.

**DAVID.** *(Ignoring her:)* We could go out for dinner.

**HELEN.** Oh, that would be fun. With that circus out there in tow.

**DAVID.** We'll ignore them. We'll snub them.

**HELEN.** Right. While we're being kind to each other.

**DAVID.** Okay, we'll invite them. We'll go someplace shamefully expensive. We'll rub their noses in it.

**HELEN.** That's despicable.

**DAVID.** You want to sit around here all night like a prisoner?

**HELEN.** To coin an unfortunate phrase.

**DAVID.** My sentence doesn't start until tomorrow.

**HELEN.** You don't know how much I long for an evening with nothing to do.

**DAVID.** You'll have plenty of them.

**HELEN.** Is that what you imagine? That I'm just going to, what, be here? Waiting for you?

**DAVID.** I just meant that we won't be going out together...

**HELEN.** Let me tell you something, David. I don't know where I'll be, but it won't be here. I'm going to leave here.

**DAVID.** That's ridiculous.

**HELEN.** Don't tell me it's ridiculous. Don't you dare tell me. Ridiculous is your thinking I will be waiting for you. Ridiculous was my thinking things would ever get back to the way they were before.

**DAVID.** Sure we could.

**HELEN.** I was so happy to be the one you came home to, David, the one you brought your clients home to entertain. And raising Annie. So happy.

**DAVID.** *(A beat while he absorbs this, then:)* I predicted this.

**HELEN.** You predicted it?

**DAVID.** At the club. I was trying to call you. I was the only one left in the dining room. Reese had brought me the phone. I told him how strong you'd been during the trial—I might have used the word stoical, but I meant supportive, you know what I mean—there for me—but it occurred to me at the same time I was telling him, that you might be...making plans to go. It occurred to me, so I said it out loud.

**HELEN.** Reese. Club waiter and confidant. Isn't that officially the bartender job? I've never gotten all of that stuff straight.

**DAVID.** Jesus, Helen, really.

**HELEN.** Well, it was a pretty good prediction.

**DAVID.** So why wait until now to tell me? Why all the bullshit about opening the mail from now on? Why give me crap about the conjugal trailers. We've gotten this far. Can't we let it go for tonight.

**HELEN.** So we can go out and put on a show? I could be like the long-suffering wife in that Michael Douglas movie. What was her name? The one Anne Archer played.

**DAVID.** About the stock guy?

**HELEN.** No. The one where Glenn Close nearly knifes him in the bathtub. I was rooting for her.

**DAVID.** I'm going to shower and change. Let's go to Centro. We can have steak.

**HELEN.** No.

**DAVID.** Top of the Square?

**HELEN.** No.

**DAVID.** Harry's?

**HELEN.** No!

**DAVID.** Where then?

**HELEN.** I'm not going out. I made something here. I went shopping.

**DAVID.** You might have said. Didn't Hilda shop this week?

**HELEN.** I let her go. Friday was her last day, not that you'd have ever noticed.

**DAVID.** Why? Even if you...go...you will still need "help."

**HELEN.** I don't want "help." I don't need "help." I've decided. No "help" anymore. Ever.

**DAVID.** That's it. You've decided.

**HELEN.** Right.

**DAVID.** Did it ever occur to you that Hilda has a family?

**HELEN.** Don't pretend this is about Hilda.

**DAVID.** Okay. So I'm supposed to ask what you got for dinner.

**HELEN.** Right.

**DAVID.** What, then?

**HELEN.** Canned food. Chef Boyardee. LeSueur peas. Niblets corn. Sugar wafers.

**DAVID.** Chef Boyardee?

**HELEN.** The days when we had Chef Boyardee and did our love-making on the couch were the best times of our marriage.

**DAVID.** You're kidding.

**HELEN.** No.

**DAVID.** You've blocked out a lot of bad stuff. Like how poor we were.

**HELEN.** We were crazy about each other.

**DAVID.** You, me, and the Chef.

**HELEN.** Right. *A ménage à trois.*

**DAVID.** I'm still crazy about you.

**HELEN.** Sweet of you to say it with so little prompting.

**DAVID.** I've been saying it. I've been saying it all these years. I say it all the time.

**HELEN.** You probably do.

**DAVID.** You know I do.

*(HELEN does not answer, but stares him down.)*

**DAVID.** Canned spaghetti is not exactly what I had in mind for my last...

**HELEN.** It's exactly the same.

**DAVID.** It is?

**HELEN.** I had it for lunch.

**DAVID.** This isn't some sort of austerity thing, is it? Because there's plenty of money. You do understand that, don't you? They only took back what I earned on specific deals. And the penalty. It wasn't everything by a long shot.

**HELEN.** I know. It doesn't matter.

**DAVID.** What does that mean?

**HELEN.** It means I don't want any of your money.

**DAVID.** It's our money.

**HELEN.** It's not our money. It's your money. I didn't work for it, and I didn't help you earn it.

**DAVID.** Of course you did.

**HELEN.** Then I was laboring under false pretenses. The man I was working for wasn't the man I thought he was.

**DAVID.** Helen, were you listening at the trial? Even the prosecution agreed everyone does what I did. Everyone looks for an edge, everyone exploits information...that's not an excuse for it, it's just the way it is.

**HELEN.** You could have fixed it. You could have admitted...

**DAVID.** There's a strategy in a trial. It's war. You don't give your enemy ammunition. You go out on the field with the best you've got and at the end of the day see who's standing. All things considered the outcome wasn't so bad.

**HELEN.** How can you say that? Don't you dare say that.

**DAVID.** You don't need to do penance for my mistakes.

**HELEN.** It's not penance. I'm just not going to live like this anymore.

**DAVID.** No divorce lawyer is going to let you walk away from this money.

**HELEN.** I don't care. I don't want it.

**DAVID.** Helen, when are you gonna get this. No one got hurt because of what I did. No one. A few people got rich, and I made some extra money. There are no victims here. Even that pension fund the papers are so exercised about... You think a single worker is really going to go without a retirement check? Those guys hung me out to dry because if they hadn't they would have been up for lack of due diligence themselves. But when things were flying high they weren't pointing fingers. They were buying BMWs. Why do you think I still have an army of lawyers hanging around? You think they think I'm a charity case? Most of my former clients still think I'm a genius.

**HELEN.** You probably are a genius, David. Which is part of why I'm so angry.

**DAVID.** What do you want, Helen? What can I do that will make you forgive me?

**HELEN.** You have such hubris about this, like those husbands who try to tell their wives that the affair they're having has nothing to do with their marriage. You have spent eighteen months telling me that this is not about us. And I went out there on your arm like I believed

you. I used to believe you. I used to live through you, my hunter, my lion. I remember when I first heard someone call you that. I was so proud of you. I loved you so much. And I felt so safe, so protected. But things changed. I've seen pictures of myself on TV from years ago—I don't know where they came from—and these snapshots of our happiness have somehow become evidence against us. Our own driveway has become the staging area for the assault against us. We're not safe here. And it's the money, David. It's the money, it's the money, it's the money.

**DAVID.** (*Spoken:*) "If ever I would leave you..."

**HELEN.** What?

**DAVID.** It's a song. (*Singing:*) "It wouldn't be in spring time." (*Spoken:*) From *Camelot*. (*Singing:*) "Knowing how in spring I'm bewitched by you so."

**HELEN.** Stop it. I mean it.

**DAVID.** (*Singing:*) "Oh no, not in springtime, summer, winter, or fall..."

**HELEN.** When would have been a good time to tell you, David? Tomorrow? The next day? Next week? You think I should have written you a letter, maybe? Or told you at the end of one of those conjugal visits you're going to walk the straight and narrow for? When would have been the right time?

**DAVID.** I'm sorry.

**HELEN.** Stop saying that.

**DAVID.** I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I just don't know what else to say.

**HELEN.** You want it to go away.

**DAVID.** I don't want to think about it. Not tonight.

**HELEN.** This is the problem. You do things, and then there are consequences, and you do everything you can to delay dealing with them in some vain hope that everything will somehow get better. Or you'll be able to pull off something that will make everyone forget about the last thing. And, God knows, it's worked for you. I've seen

you take something that seems to have turned to shit one day and grow roses in it the next. But not this time.

*(HELEN exits. DAVID takes off his jacket and tosses it on the back of the couch. He looks through the mail, verifying it's what she said. HELEN comes back carrying a tray of steaming pots.)*

**DAVID.** That actually smells good.

**HELEN.** I told you.

*(DAVID and HELEN eat.)*

**HELEN.** Is it hot enough?

**DAVID.** Maybe we've been missing something by having Hilda cook all these years.

**HELEN.** I want you to remember how we used to be.

**DAVID.** I'd be very happy if you'd make love with me on the couch, like we used to.

*(They stare each other down, but HELEN flinches. She puts the tray down on one of the tables, then opens one of the pots.)*

**DAVID.** *(Tenderly:)* Did you hear what I said, Helen?

**HELEN.** I heard, David, I heard. And I supposed I invited it. But don't, please don't think we'd be making love. We wouldn't.

**DAVID.** We'll see.

**HELEN.** Damn it, David. Don't turn this into a contest. It would just be a *bon voyage*. Don't try to prove anything.

**DAVID.** I know we're not starting from the same place. But that's the reason for doing it, isn't it? To end up somewhere together.

**HELEN.** That's your view. I'm just being kind.

**DAVID.** Jesus, Helen. You're just trying to hurt me.

**HELEN.** I can't help myself. You screwed everything up.

**DAVID.** I screwed up one part. It doesn't change what I feel. I love you. We have a home, a life, and more than that, we've survived the worst of this.

**HELEN.** But you won't be here.

**DAVID.** Short term.

**HELEN.** Five years.

**DAVID.** With good behavior, it'll be less than three.

**HELEN.** They say you'll be an example.

**DAVID.** They'll forget about me as soon as I'm yesterday's news.

**HELEN.** Right.

**DAVID.** Right? You agree? Right, you've stopped arguing? What's right?

**HELEN.** Come on David. Make love to me, if that's what you think it will be. Make me feel it, David, whatever it is you feel.

**DAVID.** Helen.

**HELEN.** *(She starts to undress:)* I want to show you that this means different things to me and to you. Listen to what I'm telling you. I'm leaving you, David. I'm going out as soon as you're gone to begin looking for someone who won't tell me he's one thing in one part of his life and someone else in the other part. Maybe I'll start with the reporters. Give some lucky guy an exclusive. You can be stoic while I do that, right? Supportive. There for me. For three years, or five years, or however long it is.

*(She continues undressing.)*

Is your love stronger than that? Strong enough to make me forgive you, David.

**DAVID.** Helen, I don't want to do this this way...

*(She continues undressing.)*

**HELEN.** Alright, David. Change my mind. Convert me. Make me love you back.

*(He looks at her. Then begins to pull off his clothes. The clothes come off quickly, as far as they need to, and then he goes to her. They lay down on the couch. There is a moment of apparent tenderness between them and then the front door opens and they are interrupted. ANNIE*

*enters. It takes her a moment to fumble her key out of the lock, but then she realizes.)*

**ANNIE.** Oh my god. I can't believe this.

*(HELEN and DAVID roll apart, covering up.)*

**HELEN.** Annie.

**ANNIE.** Oh god.

**DAVID.** You could have knocked. Rung the bell.

**ANNIE.** To come into my own house? Into my own living room?

**HELEN.** If we had any idea you were coming...

**ANNIE.** That's what they made bedrooms for.

**DAVID.** Annie, Annie, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

**ANNIE.** Don't!

**DAVID.** I know you're angry at me. You have every right...

**ANNIE.** I don't need your permission.

**DAVID.** No.

**HELEN.** I'm so sorry, Annie. It wasn't supposed to... We didn't count on you...

**ANNIE.** Why did I come here? This is all so distorted. I'm supposed to be writing a paper for my economics class... Do you know I can petition the dean for extensions on account of family stress? I'm pretty sure this qualifies.

**HELEN.** You see it David. It's not just happening to you.

**DAVID.** I see it. I've always seen it. It just doesn't have anything to do with what I did. It doesn't have anything to do with what any of us feel. *(To HELEN:)* If you didn't love me you wouldn't be so angry at me.

**ANNIE.** No. That's just what you tell yourself to make it all right. But you know what? I get angry at all sorts of people I don't love. There's a junkie who sings and cries under my window, and believe me, he makes me angry. And there's this bitch who hassles me to

show her my ID card at the cafeteria, even though she sees me every day and knows exactly who I am.

**HELEN.** Annie...

**ANNIE.** Have you told him you're leaving?

**DAVID.** She told me.

**ANNIE.** Have you told him you're thinking about a new life with a new name in a new place where no one knows you and...

**HELEN.** Annie...

**DAVID.** Is that what you're thinking?

**ANNIE.** That's what she told me. Me and Mom talk about everything, right Mom? We're buds. I told her when you're gone, she should have herself a little party, pick up some boy toy and get it on, didn't I Mom? Hey if she'd thought of it, I'm sure she would have invited me over to hang out with you tonight.

**HELEN.** I never imagined you'd come. You've been so adamant.

**DAVID.** Helen, it's really not fair...

**ANNIE.** You're a great one to talk about fair. Like fairness ever crossed your mind before you started all of this. Annie, would you mind if I do some bogus deals I might get arrested for? Annie would you mind if our name is in the paper every day and everyone stops talking to us and you'll come home one night and find me and Mom in the living room like stupid kids in a sitcom... Coming here was a mistake.

**DAVID.** I'm glad you wanted to.

**HELEN.** Annie, please. Stay. Have some dinner with us. Just dinner. After that, what I do, or what you do will be another thing altogether.

**ANNIE.** I can't. I have other plans.

**DAVID.** Please don't leave like this. *(A beat.)* I love you.

*(ANNIE doesn't respond. She walks out the door.)*

**DAVID.** You've been thinking about it for a long time haven't you?

**HELEN.** Leaving? I guess.

**DAVID.** What will I do? What should I look forward to?

**HELEN.** I can't tell you. Maybe you'll change.

**DAVID.** You said you didn't think I would.

**HELEN.** Maybe when you lose something you care about enough...

**DAVID.** That sounds like the movies.

**HELEN.** Yeah. Next one of us will say we could start over.

**DAVID.** We could start over...

**HELEN.** No, David, we can't.

**DAVID.** Or we can just go on. We have things in common. I'll make amends with Annie.

**HELEN.** I think you've really lost her.

**DAVID.** I love you, Helen.

**HELEN.** I'm sorry, David. I really am.

**DAVID.** Please don't say that. Please.

*(HELEN begins to get dressed. She pulls on her blouse, then seems tired of the effort.)*

**DAVID.** If you leave here, what will you do?

**HELEN.** Go to my mother's for a while. Then I don't know.

**DAVID.** You can put the house on the market, if you like.

**HELEN.** It's probably a good idea.

*(DAVID scoots over closer to her. He picks up the pot of Chef Boyardee.)*

**DAVID.** You can have whatever money you want. I'd never fight you about it. You know that, don't you?

**HELEN.** I can warm that up if you want.

**DAVID.** No, it's okay.

*(DAVID begins to eat from the pot with the serving spoon. He holds the pot close to his body.)*

**HELEN.** I can't make love to you anymore, David.

**DAVID.** *(A beat.)* Will you come and see me?

**HELEN.** It's over, David. We're over.

**DAVID.** Will you hold me? Just right now?

*(HELEN holds him, but she does not look at him. He closes his eyes and leans into her. She stares straight ahead. Lights go to black.)*

**ACT III**  
**The Lion Leaves His Mark**

*(HELEN enters through the living room door. She is struck almost immediately by things out of place, most notably a pile of records loosed from a record cabinet which has been closed in the previous acts. An offstage sound puts her on her guard. She moves to the fireplace, picks up a poker, and edges toward the door leading to the kitchen.)*

**HELEN.** All right. I know you're in there. This is too much. He's gone, what, three hours and you think I'm a target? I'm not afraid of you. You won't get anything important without a fight. I know you're in there. Do you hear me?

*(As she reaches the door to the kitchen, and has the poker raised to the top of its arc to strike, ANNIE enters, wearing a Walkman, singing to herself, and carrying a plate with a sandwich. Just as her mother is about to club her, there is a moment of recognition during which HELEN barely deflects the blow and ANNIE barely gets out of the way, dropping the plate.)*

**ANNIE.** *(Ducking, tearing off her headphones:)* Jesus, Mother! What are you doing...

**HELEN.** Annie! Oh, god...

*(HELEN throws her arms around ANNIE in a desperate embrace.)*

**HELEN.** Oh, baby, baby. What are you doing here? Didn't you hear me? I was calling! When no one answered I thought...

**ANNIE.** *(Pulling away sharply, angry:)* No I didn't hear you. I had my headphones cranked...

**HELEN.** This is what I've come to.

**ANNIE.** You wouldn't have done it, would you?

**HELEN.** I think I could have.

**ANNIE.** That's what's scaring me.

**HELEN.** I was calling out.

**ANNIE.** Who did you think I was?

**HELEN.** An intruder. A burglar. A reporter.

**ANNIE.** A reporter? You were going to bash a reporter with a fireplace thingy?

**HELEN.** You don't know. These last few months, they've made our lives so miserable. I thought someone was going through our things. Maybe they thought, "while she is taking him to jail, that's a perfect time to go in and have a look around." They really do think like that. They sift our trash. I should have just gone out again, called the police. Oh, Annie. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. What was I thinking?

**ANNIE.** *(Still angry, but less:)* You could really have hurt me.

**HELEN.** I know I could, believe me. I was going to. It's just that after last night, you're the last person I would have guessed...

**ANNIE.** *(Almost simultaneously:)* I thought, "ok I'm mad at her, but it'll be hard for her to be alone this morning." So I wanted to be sure you were okay.

*(A beat.)*

**HELEN.** I'm okay, sweetheart. I am. I will be. In a minute. I will. Forgive me. Please.

**ANNIE.** You don't look half as bad as I thought you would.

**HELEN.** Thanks a lot.

**ANNIE.** I don't mean it like that.

**HELEN.** It's okay. It hasn't completely hit.

**ANNIE.** It hasn't?

**HELEN.** No, believe it or not. Not really. Up to now there's been some focus. The trial. The appeal. Getting him ready to go. Now...

*(There is an awkward moment, then they both move to clean up the spilled sandwich, both stop, and both move again.)*

**HELEN.** I'll just get this...

**ANNIE.** *(Simultaneously:)* Let me pick up...

**HELEN.** It's okay.

**ANNIE.** There's coffee. I made some coffee. I thought we could just hang out together a little. You want some?

**HELEN.** Sure. Fine.

*(ANNIE picks up the sandwich and the plate and exits to get the coffee. HELEN puts the poker back in its place. Then she goes to the pile of records Annie has left strewn about, and begins picking them up and reading the covers as if they were totally unfamiliar. All of the covers we see are from Broadway shows. ANNIE reenters with the coffee.)*

**ANNIE.** Were they outside this morning?

**HELEN.** *(Slightly distracted by the records and also a little wary still from their fight:)* Who?

**ANNIE.** The reporters.

**HELEN.** Oh yes. Circling their prey as usual. Your father gave his customary salute.

*(She demonstrates, extending her hand way up, middle finger out. Then she crosses and takes the coffee from ANNIE.)*

**ANNIE.** What a guy.

**HELEN.** I admit, I've grown to enjoy their scurrying out of the way.

**ANNIE.** He goes after them?

**HELEN.** Drives right at them.

**ANNIE.** He still drives?

**HELEN.** Who else?

**ANNIE.** You don't drive him?

**HELEN.** Never.

**ANNIE.** Or his lawyer, what's his name?

**HELEN.** No.

**ANNIE.** He's not suspended?

**HELEN.** They took his license when he surrendered. Which is an absurdity. Where do they think he'll be driving at Allenwood?

**ANNIE.** Do they use it?

**HELEN.** Does who use what?

**ANNIE.** The reporters. That he flips them the bird and aims the car at them.

**HELEN.** I've never seen it. But it surely added to their general antipathy. Which I told him.

**ANNIE.** Your phone's been ringing.

**HELEN.** Really?

**ANNIE.** A few times. I let it go.

**HELEN.** Fine.

**ANNIE.** Were they at the Federal Building?

**HELEN.** It was a gauntlet. When we pulled up, someone was giving a statement. "Triumph of Justice," all that crap. From the prosecutor's office I guess. They must have had a call we were on our way. He finished just as your father got out of the car. They chased after us all the way into the building.

**ANNIE.** Like in a movie.

**HELEN.** Wall Street, the sequel. Only now he's the Birdman of Alcatraz.

**ANNIE.** Birdman of Allenwood.

**HELEN.** Cute.

**ANNIE.** How was he?

**HELEN.** Low key. Sorry you weren't there.

**ANNIE.** I'll bet.

**HELEN.** He was. Other than that, except for the fact that he didn't have his briefcase and he isn't coming home, I could have been dropping him at the office.

**ANNIE.** No tears, of course.

**HELEN.** That's not his style.

**ANNIE.** What an asshole.

**HELEN.** That's not altogether fair.

**ANNIE.** Why?

**HELEN.** Because it's not. He's who he is. He's not going to suddenly change.

**ANNIE.** What if he was just some jerk on Action News?

**HELEN.** You mean would I think he was an asshole?

**ANNIE.** Yeah.

**HELEN.** I don't know. He's different in different situations. He likes to be in control. It's not like this is news to you.

**ANNIE.** I think anyone who's too fucked up to cry before he's sent to the slammer for five years because it's not his style is an asshole.

**HELEN.** It's probably only going to be three years. He thinks three, with time off for good behavior.

**ANNIE.** Three years, five years. What's the difference?

**HELEN.** He cried last night, if it means anything to you.

**ANNIE.** It means he's not totally dried up inside. I guess that's something.

*(ANNIE opens a crystal candy dish, takes one, examines it, puts it back. Takes another.)*

Are you really going to be able to give all of this up? I don't think you will. You don't seem worked up enough.

**HELEN.** You haven't seen me at my worst.

**ANNIE.** If you're worked up enough you might have a chance at making a clean getaway.

**HELEN.** I don't need to make a getaway.

**ANNIE.** Sure you do. You need to break free of him. I'm working on it, believe me. And being pissed at him helps. When he first got arrested, I didn't know what to feel. I felt so conflicted, like what

were they trying to do to my father. But then that started to change, the more things came out. Now...

**HELEN.** It's the preponderance of the evidence problem. It got very hard to feel sympathy.

**ANNIE.** That's a good way to put it.

**HELEN.** Accusation is so corrosive. Here's someone you love and you think you know deeply, think you understand and can predict. Someone says, "You know that person, he's not at all what you think." And you rebel. You fight with all your heart not to believe it. Because it's just their opinion, after all. It's just an accusation. And it's about his business. Which has nothing to do with your life together. That's the daily hunt, from which he comes home to you. And he assures you it's just the nature of things, that he's just a target for every sanctimonious enforcement bastard out there who wants a trophy. But then, as things come out, your own doubts creep in. There's no way to keep perspective. It's like someone is pouring acid on you, very slowly. Eventually everything solid is burned away.

*(And then a sob, so deep and wracking that it startles ANNIE, escapes from HELEN. ANNIE moves to comfort HELEN; HELEN waves her away.)*

**HELEN.** *(Trying to bite it down:)* I'm sorry. I got through the whole morning without doing that.

*(HELEN composes herself.)*

**ANNIE.** You know one thing I have come to really despise about him? His unbelievable optimism.

*(ANNIE fishes through the records for the one she's looking for, and puts it on. It is a recording of the Broadway show Carousel. She plays "When You Walk Through a Storm.")*

**ANNIE.** Do you remember this?

**RECORDED VOICE.** "When you walk through a storm, keep your head held high, And don't be afraid of the dark. At the end of the storm, There's a golden sky, and the sweet silver song of a lark."

**HELEN.** I guess.

**ANNIE.** (*Vastly lowering the volume:*) He'd sit me up on the couch and sing to me with the record. I wasn't supposed to sing with him. I was supposed to listen very hard.

**HELEN.** Your father always loved that stuff. I thought it was embarrassingly lowbrow.

**ANNIE.** I think it was as close as I ever got to any moral education.

**HELEN.** Moral education? Didn't we give you that?

**ANNIE.** That depends. How much of him do you think rubbed off?

**HELEN.** I think he was just a sucker for the sentimental number.

**ANNIE.** How about this?

**RECORDED VOICE.** (*Ethel Merman singing:*) "Curtain up. Light the Lights. You've got nothing to hit but the heights. Starting here. Starting now. Honey, everything's coming up roses."

**HELEN.** She never did anything for me.

**ANNIE.** (*Lowering the volume:*) He believed in this stuff. He still believes in it.

**HELEN.** He didn't want you to be frightened.

**ANNIE.** Frightened of what?

**HELEN.** I don't know. Whatever frightened him.

**ANNIE.** I was frightened *of* him.

**HELEN.** That's not true. You had him wrapped around your little finger.

**ANNIE.** I was frightened he would leave. I was frightened he'd get hurt. I was frightened he'd die.

**HELEN.** Oh, now really, Annie.

**ANNIE.** It's the truth.

**HELEN.** He just wanted you to know things work out.

**ANNIE.** But they don't.

**HELEN.** He thought mostly they did.

**ANNIE.** He was telling me that when shit happens, if you smile and pretend everything will be okay, it will be okay.

**HELEN.** I don't think he meant that at all. If he intended any moral education it had to do in some fuzzy way with learning to depend on your own resources. He just wanted you to be strong.

**ANNIE.** Why do you always end up defending him?

**HELEN.** I'm not defending him. I'm just trying to explain...

**ANNIE.** And forgiving him?

**HELEN.** I don't know if I forgive him. But I do understand him. And I probably still love him. It just doesn't make any difference right now.

**ANNIE.** It does to me.

**HELEN.** Why?

**ANNIE.** Because I don't think you should, that's all.

**HELEN.** You talk like it's something I can turn on or off. It's more immutable than that.

**ANNIE.** Immutable?

**HELEN.** Permanent.

*(HELEN picks up the coffee cups and exits to the kitchen. ANNIE moves to where HELEN has left the fireplace poker. She picks it up and hefts it. She swings it as if she were going to strike a blow.)*

**ANNIE.** You think it would have been immutable if you had hit me with the poker?

**HELEN.** *(Off:)* What?

*(ANNIE puts down the poker and moves to a bookshelf where she takes down a photo album. She begins to leaf through it.)*

**ANNIE.** What was the best time you guys ever had?

**HELEN.** *(Off:)* What?

**ANNIE.** What was the best time you guys ever had?

*(HELEN enters.)*

## **THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!**

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