

My goodness, here is a large bit of *Rose Jewel and Harmony* recovered I can't say from where or how. It's a mess. Incomplete. Would take a lot of work to clean up, but since it's all I can find at the moment. I better save it to reconstitute the play in electronic format so I can put it, one day, onto the web. 3/25/15

3/26/15 Well, with my temple crashing down around me and no janitor to pick up the stony debris (and Samson? well, he's the one responsible for it all) I think I had better launch into the long-postponed search for my old docs on my old 3X5 floppies, some working, some not. This appears to be the best doc of RJH and so I am going to clean it up to put it on the web, my goal for all the rest of my works that received only a few glorious productions. I'm not going to attend to all the proper formatting details; apologies to the readers, if any.  
Bob Locke

3/27/15 Well, what fun I am having getting reintroduced to these extremely likeable yet annoying characters and all their conflicts. I am up to ACT III now and I will mostly be having to retype all of that act from a 1986 script. I don't think much was changed between the Sacramento and the Bay Area production. I did find some differences between the remnant that I found on the 3X5 floppy and this paper copy. Worked out a happy compromise. Enjoying this.

Later that night... Had a couple of nice lines with myself when I went to pee:

"It's a good thing that you enjoy yourself so much, because nobody else does."

"And nobody to hear that line, but me. Nice."

# *Rose Jewel and Harmony*

***a comedy in three acts***  
***by Robert Locke***

© Robert Locke 1986 rev. March 25-28, 2015

I used to write on my title pages: “All Rights Reserved: Nobody can use this unless they contact me or my agent in writing.” But screw that. This is a good play. If you want to do some scenes from it, go ahead and be my guest. But I hope that you will at least tell me about it, and give me the writing credit for it. If I am still alive —and that’s growing more and more doubtful—contact me at [boblocke@csus.edu](mailto:boblocke@csus.edu)

THE SCENE: 1986, Los Angeles CA. The living room and front walkway of a small apartment, #18 facing across a patio to another door marked #17. It is a cul de sac of a complex of bungalow apartments. An imaginary wall divides a small patio area (downstage) from the living room (upstage) with the front door vertical to the audience centerstage. At stage left are two doorways: UL to the kitchen and DL to a hallway leading offstage to the rest of the apartment. The left wall has a built-in hutch.

There is a comfortable sofa, a small table with three chairs and an old console TV which is almost always turned on. A wall telephone with an extra-long cord is prominent. New to the world in 1986, with memory buttons for FIRE and POLICE and a dozen or so other contacts, this telephone is so prominent as to become almost a character of its own.

ROSE JEWEL JAMISON enters her living room from the kitchen, carrying a plate of brownies covered with plastic wrap. She is 65 but looks younger, with nicely dyed hair, and still something of a figure, if a plump one. Around her shoulders she wears an old, lacy, mantilla.

She puts the brownies onto the table and admires them a moment. Unsatisfied, she digs in a drawer of the hutch and comes out with a pink ribbon to adorn the dish.

She locates a number in her telephone book and, with resolution goes to the telephone and inexpertly punches buttons, but hangs up immediately.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, no no no no no...

She makes a new decision, comes DS to the invisible front wall and looks out an imaginary window over to the door of #17. She slips out of her slippers and into her dress shoes which she keeps near the front door, takes off her mantilla, takes up the brownies and goes out of her apartment, headed for #17. She hesitates to ring the bell.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, no no no...

She goes back into her apartment, consults her phone book again, and finally punches in the entire number.

ROSE JEWEL

(in a soft, pleasing Oklahoma accent)

Hello. Brother Eulie, uh, John? Hello, it's Rose Jewel. (beat) Rose Jewel Jamison? From the Pentecostal Holiness church, we met, uh, several times? (beat) Right. Uh no, that's Pearl. Pearl Williams. I'm Rose Jewel? You remember one time Brother

Hanford and you and me, we were all standing out by the big weeping willow tree just north of the church there, and Brother Hanford turned to me and said, "Why Rose Jewel, if you aren't getting prettier as the days go by, and you said..." Right! Right! That's me, Rose Jewel. Right. (beat) Well, how are you? (beat) Oh, well, no, I haven't attended lately, I, I, I've been, I haven't been well, though I've missed it, of course, and do intend to come back, but what I was calling for, Brother Eulie, uh, John, is that I've just baked up what looks to be, if you don't mind my bragging, uh, just a lovely batch of brownies, and I thought of you and wondered if you wouldn't care to stop over and, uh, share them with me? (beat) Well, yes, I will be seeing you in church, but the brownies are sitting here still warm right now. (beat) Oh no, of course, no you wouldn't, not if you're going over to Sister Merriman's for dinner. I have myself tasted Sister Merriman's fried chicken, and no, you surely won't be wanting ... anything afterwards. Well, you say hello to Sister Merriman for me, you hear? And I guess I'll be seeing you in church. You take care now. Bye.

(hangs up)

You poop!

(takes the plastic wrap off the brownies and pops one in her mouth, gazing a moment at the TV. She takes up the phone again and pushes a memory button, slipping back into her slippers meanwhile.)

I've had a miserable morning, how about you? (beat) Did she? I told you you were feeding her too much of that stuff, is the carpet going to come clean? (beat) When are you going to come over here, I'm just dying to show you how I fixed up this ratty old... (beat) Well, it's the same distance for me, Marge, as it is for you, and you got that new, zippy little car chasing up and down those canyons, and mine'll never make it up even the first hill, and you never call, I have to— Well, I wouldn't have to call you first if you called me first sometime, I could be laying over here dead for a month and you— What are you doing, I hear a noise like a typewriter. (beat) How can you talk to me and type both at the same time? (beat) Well, I'd say one of us is getting short shrift, and I don't think it's the typewriter. (beat) Well, yes I do have the TV on, but it's on very low and it's just an old soap that I don't have to pay a bit of mind to. (beat) That is as may be, Marge, but I'll just call you back later when you have a moment or two to spare me, I can understand that your novel is just consuming you, bye now.

(hangs up, pops a brownie, changes channel on TV; the phone rings)

That was fast, you done? (beat) Oh no honey, I don't want you to feel guilty; it's your novel, it's very important to you, and I'm just your sister, you can talk to me anytime, but inspiration must be bowed down before, or at least, so I imagine, but I called, the reason I called, I wasn't...

(opens the door and checks on #17)

...intending to keep you, I just wanted to tell you that guess who I met yesterday? No, go ahead, guess. (beat) Huh uh, my n-e-x-t-double-o-r-n-e-i-g-h-b-o-r. My next door neighbor, honey, if you're going to be a novelist, you're going to have to learn to spell. (beat) Well, yes, I had seen him before but not to talk to, not actually. (beat) No, of course he didn't ask right out did I get a face lift! We hardly did more than exchange names because, uh, I was in a hurry, but he looked at me right in my eyes, right in my fresh, soft, unwrinkled eyes, in a way that I remember men used to look at me. (giggles) No, not that one, the one in the wheelchair just across the way, and I just

know he's got an unhappy past, he's got just the biggest, tenderest eyes like a puppy squashed on the road. (beat) Yes, Marge, he's younger! (beat) Early fifties, I guess. (beat) Well, Marge, he's in a wheelchair, I don't suppose he's beating away every woman in town. (beat) Don't be stupid, just because he's lost the use of his legs doesn't mean he's lost the use of everything down there. And I have my tricks, you know. There were a few times with Roy, but I guess you could say that I pulled him through with my master's touch. (beat) Marge, I don't know what you're talking about and I'm not going to listen to it, 65 is not bordering the grave, we have a good many good years left. And besides I don't look 65 and there's no reason for him ever to know. (beat) Well, you haven't seen me but right after I got it done, with all the stitches still in, and black and blue and scabby, looking like something that fell off the meathook, but I'm pretty now. I look like I did at 35, I believe I do, I really do. There's just this one little place that— Marge, you couldn't possibly understand! You've never cared about your looks, you've always been plain, but I've always been pretty, I was born pretty, and I'm used to it, I'm used to men looking at me. And I don't want to be 65, I don't even know how we got to be 65. (laughs) You remember our fifteenth birthday and Daddy gave us those sweet little yellow twin dresses with the daisy print and Daddy said we could go down to Milady's Milliners and pick out whatever ribbon we wanted to dress it up individual, and you picked out that little thin drab gray nothing of a strip, I'll never forget that, and you said—

Rose Jewel checks out #17 again just as GEORGE BELLAMY opens the door and starts out in his wheelchair. As he wheels off down the walkway, Rose Jewel closes her door, lowering her voice, though squealing.

ROSE JEWEL

(squealing)

Ooh, he's coming out! Ooh! Ooh! For his mail, he always goes for his mail at this time, but but but I've got, oh I made some of them whatyouma'call'ems, uh, uh, brownies, and ooh...! (squeals) You think I should? But it's been so long, what if... Okay, okay, talk to you later, wish me luck.

(hangs up. She looks in the mirror, fixes her hair, smooths under her eyes, then takes off her glasses, changes into her dress shoes, picks up the plate of brownies and goes to the door as George wheels back on.)

ROSE JEWEL

(behind him)

Hello, hello!

GEORGE

Jesus Christ, you scared the shit out of me!

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, I'm so sorry. I, I, I heard you go out, and here, I thought you might like some, uh, uh, fudge things.

GEORGE

Oh, isn't that nice of you, but I can't. Gotta watch it, you know, in this chair, I could get a gut on me like a whale.

ROSE JEWEL

But just a few? I thought you might like to come in, and I've got some java brewin'.

GEORGE

Huh uh, Donahue's coming on. You ever watch that guy?

ROSE JEWEL

No, I've got my soaps.

GEORGE

Oh, you watch that shit, yeah? But Donahue, that guy Donahue, well he's nothing really, just a pissant, but some of the people he brings on! Couple of days ago he had on this married couple, and get this, the husband was getting his sex changed to a woman and the wife was getting her sex changed to a man. I mean, Jesus Christ, what are the chances of that?

ROSE JEWEL

Uh, the chances that uh ... ?

GEORGE

That two people go all their lives in the wrong body and end up together. Donahue, he didn't know which to call him and which to call her, it was hysterical. And these two had four kids. Now imagine this for a second— what'd you say your name was again?

ROSE JEWEL

Rose Jewel.

GEORGE

Oh yeah? I had a dog named Rosie, funny I didn't remember. But imagine these two up there, Rosie, and I mean they are to-stare-at ugly, and you know the kind of audience the guy gets, and so what are they doing, they're telling these two don't do it, you gotta think of the kids. And Donahue's right with them. You know, how selfish of this man and this woman, whichever they are, to want to have their own bodies when we know what's best for the kids is for everyone to be locked up and miserable. I mean it's fascinating, you could write a book.

ROSE JEWEL

No, I didn't see it. I've got my soaps.

GEORGE

Yeah, you said that, I heard you when you said that. You got a husband in there, Rosie?

ROSE JEWEL

Uh, no, and it's—

GEORGE

But you had one, you got the married woman look. What'd he do, die?

ROSE JEWEL

Yes.

GEORGE

Sorry.

ROSE JEWEL

Thank you.

GEORGE

Heart attack, right? I know the type.

ROSE JEWEL

Yes, he was... he was an awfully nice man, it was before his time.

GEORGE

Heart attacks often are, but then maybe not so much sometimes. That why you moved here? Couldn't stand being around where he was, his smell all over everything.

ROSE JEWEL

He didn't smell. He was very clean.

GEORGE

Yeah, but still. When I lost my legs I had to move.

ROSE JEWEL

Too many memories.

GEORGE

Too many stairs. It was over in Silver Lake, had a great view of downtown, but that was when downtown was downtown, now they got all those goddam buildings down there. I've been here twenty years, I bet I pay a quarter the rent you do.

ROSE JEWEL

Are they— ? Do they hurt, your legs?

GEORGE

Naw, not any more, it was a son-of-a-bitch at first though. Polio. Don't get it, Jesus!

(pounds his legs)

Damn useless things, I should just get rid of them.

ROSE JEWEL

Um, yes.

GEORGE

(looks at his watch)

Well listen, that guy Donahue doesn't wait for cripples. Thanks anyway for the brownies, Rosie. Well, maybe I will just partake a little.

(digs into the plate, drops several into his lap, and wheels into his apartment)  
I'll make you a couple of cream cheese and horse radish somethings that I got a recipe for. You'll weep over 'em.

Rose Jewel goes back into her apartment, slipping back into her slippers and pushing a memory button the the telephone.

ROSE JEWEL

I don't think it's going to work. (beat) Well, no, I could hardly understand what he was talking about, and he used the Lord's name in vain three times, it was the first two words out of his face. Do you think a man can be changed from that? Why would he want to, there are so many words in the...

(popping a brownie and starting for the kitchen)  
...vocabulary without resorting to blasphemy. And I swan! He dropped those brownies right in his lap without even a napkin or anything.

ANN CUTBERTH (early to mid-thirties) and her 13-year-old daughter Jennifer come down the walkway, suitcases in hand. They are more like sisters than mother and daughter, giggling, teasing each other.

Ann has been a severe stutterer since early childhood. Except for a few places where I think she must block, I have made no specific stuttering notations, leaving that to the actress. With Jennifer, Ann is completely fluent. With George, she blocks occasionally, but is clever and careful in the way she slides through or around the blocks. With Rose Jewel she is helpless.

JENNIFER

(laughing as Ann grabs at her suitcase)

I said stop it now! Come on! Number Seventeen ... and ... Jeez, it's like a rabbit warren!

ANN

Bungalow living, honey, get used to it.

JENNIFER

Number Eighteen.

(Ann takes faltering steps toward Rose Jewel's door.)

Number Eighteen? (beat) Eighteen?

(Ann can't ring the bell; sits on a bench outside the door)

You okay, Mom?



ANN

Umhmm. I just... It's been so long.

JENNIFER

Bungalo living, baby, get used to it. (beat) You want a drink?

ANN

You got a bottle?

JENNIFER

You wanna get stoned?

ANN

What do you know about getting stoned? You let me catch you anywhere near that stuff, and I'll kick your ass right back to Rocky Comfort.

JENNIFER

You kidding? What's the good of coming to California then? You know what Anita Hatchet said, she said—

ANN

Anita Hatchet, I told you about her.

JENNIFER

Anita Hatchet said all you had to do was dawdle on down to Hollywood and Vine and put out your hand with a twenty dollar bill in it and draw it back full of coke.

ANN

A twenty? Coca cola maybe.

JENNIFER

Anyway, I figure as long as you forced me to come here, I'm gonna—

ANN

I forced you, huh? Ha, ha.

JENNIFER

Yeah, and I figure I'm gonna have me some fun then, do what the natives do.

Ann looks furtively into the living room through the imaginary window in the center of the fourth wall.

ANN

You just heard what I said, that's all. Smart ass, these kids out here'll eat you alive. I don't think she's home.

JENNIFER

Anita Hatchet said—

ANN

Anita Hatchet is the biggest—

JENNIFER

Listen to me, now. When Anita Hatchet got picked up for drinking—

ANN

Anita Hatchet never got picked up for drinking, she—

JENNIFER

She got picked up—

ANN

She never did. She had a Doctor Pepper wrapped up in a brown paper bag, pretending to swig on it, chasing all over Rocky Comfort trying to get a cop to look twice at her. Anita Hatchet, some big shot.

JENNIFER

She said—

ANN

She said what?

JENNIFER

She said, “You never try, you never know.” So you gonna ring that doorbell, or what? You never try—

(threatens to ring the bell herself; Ann rushes to head her off. Meanwhile Rose Jewel is coming back out of the kitchen.)

ROSE JEWEL

...but I just can't get used to the loneliness. How do you deal with the loneliness, Marge?

(Ann pushes the door bell. Rose Jewel squeals.)

It's him! Oooh! Hold on, Marge, you can listen if you want, but don't type.

(puts down phone, intoning musically as she changes into dress shoes)

Who is it?

On her side of door, Ann tries for all she is worth, but can't utter a sound. She goes into a stuttering spasm that wracks her body. Jennifer watches but does not try to interfere. Rose Jewel continues musically.

Who is it? Who's there? Who can it be?

Ann turns finally and flees back up the walkway, stopping just out of sight of Rose Jewel's door. Rose Jewel puts on her chain lock and checks out the door in time to see only Jennifer stalking after Ann.)

ROSE JEWEL

Oh! Little Monsters!

(takes up phone again)

These kids around here, Marge, honestly! They're nothing but monsters, or at least that's what this old gal down the way tells me... (giggling) ...oh, and listen to this, there's this one little guy who runs around all the time with his fly open and sometimes it comes wagging out and he just...

(exits into kitchen)

JENNIFER

That was pretty sad, Mom. Or maybe you don't think so?

ANN

Sorry.

JENNIFER

Yeah. Sad and sorry.

ANN

I thought I could ... now ... maybe. Sorry.

JENNIFER

You want me to do it?

(Ann nods; Jennifer skips back to Rose Jewel's door, pushes bell.)

Duh duh duh duh duh, ding dong!

ROSE JEWEL

(returning fast from kitchen)

Those kids are back, Marge, hang up, I'm calling the police.

(disconnects, pushes a memory button)

Who? Fire? i want the police. Oh, I pushed fire and I wanted to push police. Hang up.

(beat) No, just hang up.

(tries to disconnect)

Hang up, doggone you, you're tyin' up my line and I want the police

(succeeds finally in pushing a different memory button)

JENNIFER

(to Ann) We could just go on home, you know. You'd never have to talk to her.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, come on, come on... Hello, Police? I am the victim of harrassment and potential burglary, my address is —

JENNIFER

Grandma? Grandma, are you going to open this door or aren't you?

ROSE JEWEL

(through door)

Who? Who?

(into the telephone)

Shh, shhh, shh, you, wait. Who?

JENNIFER

Grandma?

ROSE JEWEL

Who is that? Quiet, you on the telephone, I can't hear who's at the door.

JENNIFER

It's Jennifer, Grandma.

ROSE JEWEL

Jennifer who?

JENNIFER

Tsk! Jennifer Cutberth! I'm here with Mom.

ROSE JEWEL

What's her name?

JENNIFER

Oh, come on! You know her name, it's Ann! Tsk!

ROSE JEWEL

(squealing as she opens the door)

Oooh! Oooh! Oooh!

There couldn't be a more awkward reunion. With telephone receiver still in hand and the cord wrapping around the persons as Rose Jewel tries to embrace first one and then the other. Jennifer manages to step out of it all and bring their bags into the apartment.)

Look at you! Oh, Ann, how I have missed you! And you're Jennie! Look at you all grown up and in the twinkling of an eye, and you are the image! The image of your grandfather.

JENNIFER

Gee, thanks.

ROSE JEWEL

(to Ann) And you! You! Well— Oh, I'm going to call your brother right now.

(tries to dial on the receiver but the police are still on the line)

Oh, you! Hang up. No, hang up. No, just hang up. It's my daughter and my granddaughter, it's all a mistake, hang up.

(finally manages the disconnect and push another memory button, smiles to her guests)

The police.

(Jennifer makes a gesture to say, "Naturally," but Ann is frozen)

Your Aunt Marge gave me this shiny new phone as a housewarming present, but I'll never be able to— Oh, hello, hello, may I speak to Roy Jamison, Junior please? (beat) His mother, Rose Jewel Jamison. (beat) Oh, I see. Well, could you tell him please that his baby sister is in town and is just dying to see him, and will he call? Thank you. Bye now.

(hangs up, squeals)

Oooh! I can't get over it! Where's Verlin? And how did you get here, you didn't go Greyhound, did you, oh my soul what a ride, and the people! Oh, I've just got to call your Aunt Marge...

(pushes a memory button; Jennifer finds herself a place to sit on the sofa and gently pulls Ann down beside her.)

...she's always saying how come that daughter of yours never— Guess who it is, Marge! No, go ahead, guess. (beat) Well, no of course not, not now, not so soon, it's Ann! (beat) Ann! (beat) Jamison, I mean Cutbert, my daughter Ann! And Jennifer, too!

(beat, relays Marge's questions to Ann and Jennifer)

How long will you be stayin'?

JENNIFER

(looks to Ann, who is still frozen)

We don't know.

ROSE JEWEL

They don't know. (beat, relaying again) And how are you?

JENNIFER

(looks to Ann, then:)

Fine.

ROSE JEWEL

They're fine. (beat, relaying) And why are you here? I mean, I mean, what brings you here— what do— Marge, I haven't even talked to them myself yet, and I don't have a thing in the house! Call you back.

(hangs up, drops her mantilla on the sofa and goes for coat and purse)

I won't be a sec. I don't have a thing in the house, make yourselves to home and I'll be right back, there's, there's sandwich stuff in the kitchen, and I'm gettin' mayonnaise, so don't worry.

And she's out the front door, closing it behind her and pausing to take a deep breath and regain control before she sags and goes off up the walkway.

JENNIFER

Jeez!

ANN

I told you we should call.

JENNIFER

We?

(Ann looks away.)

Does she always act so weird?

ANN

I don't remember. I don't know how she acts.

JENNIFER

Jeez! So this is it? You and Uncle Roy both fit in here?

ANN

No, we had a house. It was a nice house, a big house. Daddy built it.

JENNIFER

(picking up a driftwood sculpture)

What the hell is this?

ANN

(taking it from her, close to weeping)

Oh, Daddy! Get out of here a minute, will you?

Embarrassed, Jennifer takes the suitcases off down the hallway. Ann puts down the sculpture, takes up the mantilla, smells it, lays it around her neck, notices the TV is still on, snaps it off.

JENNIFER

There's only one bedroom, but she's got one whole room full of sewing shit. We can get a mattress in there.

ANN

You're going to have to watch your talk, you know. She'll kick us right out.

JENNIFER

Yeah, okay.

ANN

We've got no place else to go.

JENNIFER

I said okay.

ANN

And whatever you do, never say Goddam or Jesus Christ, or even Gee Whiz.

JENNIFER

Jeez!

ANN

Jen.

JENNIFER

Jeez, it's hard!

ANN

Work on it.

JENNIFER

I don't know about this! I'll try, but boy!

ANN

Boy, that's good. Stick to boy.

JENNIFER

I miss Dwayne.

ANN

Yeah, well ...

JENNIFER

Don't you miss Dad?

ANN

Yeah, like I miss ... (little laugh) Huh! I can't even think of anything worse to miss, stepping on dog poo barefoot maybe.

JENNIFER

What's all that sewing shit for anyway?

ANN

Jen.

JENNIFER

Stuff. Sewing stuff.

ANN

For the church, the needy, you know?

JENNIFER

She used to sew for you?

ANN

Yeah.

JENNIFER

Little girl outfits? Pink shi— uh, stuff, pink stuff?

ANN

Yeah.

JENNIFER

You never made me any little girl outfits.

ANN

You bet I didn't.

JENNIFER

(taking the mantilla from Ann)

And what's this? I mean did you ever see such junk?

ANN

Daddy brought it back from Tijuana for her.

JENNIFER

I mean look at how old it is, look at how's she's patched it, I mean, Jeez! I mean, boy.

ANN

This is what I used to do...

(drapes the matilla as a veil, humming "Here Comes the Bride.")

Dum dum duh dum, dum dum duh dum. Huh?

JENNIFER

Yeah, dumb.

ANN

(fondling the sculpture again)

I can't believe she kept this. She hated it.



JENNIFER

Yeah, it's a piece of shi— uh, junk.

ANN

(laying the mantilla back on the sofa exactly as it had been)

Poor old Dad. He was so proud of it, and it's so ugly. He made it for me but couldn't even tell me what it was when he finished it. But you know the Mexican flag, the eagle with the serpent in its claws? Isn't that what it looks like?

JENNIFER

Tsk!

ANN

I always thought the serpent was a rattlesnake and the next second it reaches up and sinks its teeth right into the eagle's breast. Aaaaaaaarh!

(attacks Jennifer)

JENNIFER

Get off! What do you mean the next second, there is no next second, it's wood, it's like that forever.

ANN

What a grump.

JENNIFER

Well, I mean what then! Am I gonna have to be your mouth to her the whole time, or are you gonna shape up!

(waits for an answer; gets none)

I never saw you that bad. You never stuttered like that even with Dad. Is that how it was here?

ANN

I don't remember. Pretty much, I guess.

JENNIFER

No wonder she wanted to get rid of you, you were a piece of shit, too.

ANN

I tried to do everything different with you. (laughs) And you're the reward I get.

JENNIFER

(rubs her belly)

Me ... AND !

ANN

Oh, yeah, don't let me forget that. You ... AND ! Well, I've got a surprise for you, that baby's your reward, not mine.

JENNIFER

Not if I get rid of it.

ANN

Even if you get rid of it. You think by getting rid of it, you get rid of it? You've always got it.

JENNIFER

That's you talking, not me. Anita Hatchet says—

ANN

Jen, this is not Anita Hatchet. This is you. Now you won't—

JENNIFER

Me ... AND !

ANN

No joking now, you won't do anything without talking to me, will you? You know me, it's your life, whatever you do, but promise me you won't do anything without talking to me first.

JENNIFER

Don't I always?

ANN

You didn't when you got yourself pregnant.

JENNIFER

Well, you weren't around, thank God! Can I say "thank God"?

ANN

(roughing up Jennifer's hair)  
Love you, you little pill.

JENNIFER

Get off.

ANN

Come on, let's see this sewing room. Aren't you sleepy? I could lay down and die.

JENNIFER

(turning onTV) Huh uh, I want to see what's on in HOLLYWOOD!

ANN

Same thing that's on in MISSOUR! Shit.

JENNIFER

Mom! Tsk! Crap.

ANN

No, honey, poo.

Ann goes off down the hallway while Jennifer works the TV.

Meanwhile Rose Jewel comes slowly down the walkway, pulls out her keys, but cannot bring herself to unlock the door. She looks through the window at Jennifer just as George wheels out of his apartment. Rose Jewel brightens, covering.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, Mr. Bellamy, hello again so soon.

GEORGE

What's this Mr. stuff? We're friends now, right? I call you Rosie, you call me George.

ROSE JEWEL

All right. Georgie.

GEORGE

Last person to call me that was my mother. Maybe I should call you Mama.

ROSE JEWEL

You do and it's the last thing you call me. You, uh, you changed. And I believe that's fresh cologne?

GEORGE

Oh yeah, hell, I showered and douched.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, I'm just sure! And what about your Mr. Donahue? You're not watching after all?

GEORGE

Aw, that guy is so full of shit. He's in there, he's got a professional Santa Claus for Christ's sake. Now is there anyone in this world who needs a professional Santa Claus?

ROSE JEWEL

Well, the children.

GEORGE

Bull! Mommies and Daddies make up Santa Claus for Mommies and Daddies. So when the kid gets into kindygarden and that next Christmas comes along and all the big kids say, nay-nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah, you believe in Santa Claus, and the little kid comes home crying, the Mommies and Daddies get to jump and say, yeah, surprise, we fooled you, you little turd. If there's anything worse than a Goddam professional Santa Claus, they dropped it on Hiroshima.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, I guess everyone's entitled to his opinion.

GEORGE

What's yours?

ROSE JEWEL

My what?

GEORGE

Your opinion. (pats his lap) Here, park those bags here and invite me in.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, it's ... a little inconvenient just now, I'm so sorry. I have company.

GEORGE

Someone who don't want me to meet? You ashamed of me?

ROSE JEWEL

(laughs) No, I—

GEORGE

You ashamed of them?

ROSE JEWEL

Well ...

GEORGE

Well, come on then, open the door.

(waves a paper)

See here what I got for you, that cream cheese horse radish thing I promised you.

(reaches for her bag of groceries)

Got any cream cheese in there?

ROSE JEWEL

Just ... I wonder if I could ask you ... Your language, there's a little girl.

GEORGE

Oh, sure, no lo problemo.

ROSE JEWEL

It's not just her. Those other words, that's your choice, but when you use the Lord's name in vain like that, it hurts me. Can you understand? He died for our sins.

GEORGE

Thank you for telling me, Rosie. I'll watch myself.

ROSE JEWEL

Thank you.

She puts the key in the lock. Inside, Ann has returned and joined Jennifer on the floor when she hears the lock turn and now she escapes down the hallway again.

JENNIFER

Mom! Tsk!

ROSE JEWEL

Hello again, Jennie.

(squeals again, but not so excited now as coy, for George's benefit)

Ooh, it's so good to have you here! This is George, but I call him Georgie. And this is Jennie.

JENNIFER

Jennifer.

ROSE JEWEL

(opening the door wider to let the wheelchair pass)

Can you make it?

GEORGE

Hello, Jennifer!

JENNIFER

Hi.

GEORGE

This is the LITTLE girl?

JENNIFER

Did she call me a little girl? Jeez ... I mean, boy! Man! Man alive!

ROSE JEWEL

Well, I call her little because she'll always be little to me. I changed your diapers, I'll have you know, young lady! She was born, if you can believe this, in a little town called Rocky Comfort, Missouri. On a pig farm! And to this day I don't know how she survived. I myself went back there ...

(Jennifer laughs out loud at something on the TV; Rose Jewel crosses to the TV and turns it off, still talking.)

... to take care of her while her mother got on her feet. And ticks! And chiggers! She was just a banquet for every bug in that wretched country.

(takes the bag from George and puts it on the table; Jennifer rummages in the bag, brings out an apple which she bites into.)

But you are so right, she is growing right up. And pretty. Don't you think she's pretty?

GEORGE

Very pretty. She resembles you.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, don't tell her that. Look at her, now you've made her blush. But she does favor me, doesn't she? She's got my height, her mother was such a runty little thing, and you are pretty, honey, very pretty, just like your grandmother, I just ... it's just that hairstyle, though it's very ... modern, I suppose, I don't think it does her justice, do you, Georgie?

JENNIFER

Well, I'm not going to change it just on your say-so.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, no, I wouldn't expect so, you've got to learn on your own, honey, and I'm sure you will. Where's your mama?

JENNIFER

In the bathroom.

ROSE JEWEL

That girl has spent half her life in the bathroom.

(calling down hallway)

Ann, I'm back. And I brought company, so hurry on out now. Oh, all these people! I've been so— I haven't had so much company since I don't know when. What can I get you, Georgie?

(looking into the grocery bag)

I've got juice, and soda, and Coke, and let's see, Coke. And I got some crackers and I did get cream cheese, and I see Jennie's already got into the apples. Jennie, you want to come help and carry these things into the kitchen?

JENNIFER

Tsk! (takes bag into kitchen)

ROSE JEWEL

And Georgie, you just wheel on in and—

GEORGE

Can I help?

ROSE JEWEL

As if you could!

(realizes the insult)

I mean, you men! As if you could do anything right in the kitchen. You just make yourself to home, and we'll be right back. Now Jennifer, one apple is enough, please!

Rose Jewel goes into kitchen, and George wheels himself into the apartment, picks up the driftwood sculpture as Ann enters from hallway.

GEORGE

Christ! (turns and sees Ann) Oh, hello. My goodness, you must be ... ?

Ann manages her stuttering pretty well with George, using glides into words.

ANN

Hhhhi.

GEORGE

I'm George. I live next door.

ANN

Hi.

GEORGE

You got a name, too?

ANN

Guess.

GEORGE

Rumpelstiltskin?

(Ann laughs.)

No? Rumpelforeskin?

(Ann frowns, but laughs, too.)

I guess you're going to have to give me a clue. What does it start with?

ANN

A.

GEORGE  
Anastasia?

ANN  
Close.

GEORGE  
Ann.

ANN  
Yeah, you guessed it.

GEORGE  
Not really. I heard Rosie call it down the hall.

ANN  
You call her Rosie? And she lets you?

GEORGE  
Why not?

ANN  
It's not like her.

GEORGE  
You're her daughter?

ANN  
How could you tell?

GEORGE  
You look like her.

ANN  
Oh, dear Lord, don't say that in front of her.

Jennifer comes from the kitchen with a Coke for George.

JENNIFER  
She says to bring you a Coke. If you want something better, don't look in there. Jesus,  
all she's got is shit.  
(throws herself on the sofa)

ANN  
Honey.



JENNIFER

Well, I'm sorry, but Jeez! And she keeps calling me Jennie. I hate that.

ANN

Well, ask her not to.

JENNIFER

You can't ask her anything, she keeps talking! Just like a harmonica, on breath going in and breath going out, just noise.

ANN

Hon.

JENNIFER

And she's pumping me about you. And Dad.

ANN

Well, tell her, I don't care. And get your feet off her furniture. How's the coke, GgGeorge.

GEORGE

It's shit, the latest new Coke shit. Coke used to be great till they made it "better". I know a guy who lived for three solid years on nothing but Coke. Can't do that on this shit.

JENNIFER

Three years, you gotta be kidding.

GEORGE

Yeah, I am.

JENNIFER

Anyone ever tell you you're weird?

ANN

Honey.

GEORGE

Yeah, there was this one guy I used to work with, Swedish guy. He always got my name wrong. He thought I was Howard, so when he'd call me, he'd say, "How weird!"

ANN

(laughs)

It's L.A., honey, land of the weird.

ROSE JEWEL

(from kitchen)

Jennie!

JENNIFER

You keep saying how great it is here, but it all looks weird to me. "How weird," that's actually kind of a little bit funny. (exits into kitchen)

GEORGE

So, you're just in from Rocky Comfort.

ANN

She told you everything about me, huh?

GEORGE

She told me everything about Jennifer. I don't know anything about you.

ANN

And you don't know half about Jennifer.

GEORGE

Oh, she's got a secret past?

ANN

Well, if it's a secret, I'm not gonna tell you, am I?

GEORGE

I like you.

ANN

You don't even know me. How rude.

GEORGE

No, How Weird. How Rude was the Swedish guy. But anyway, no, I do like you. I know what I like, and I like you. What are you doing later?

ANN

Hey, aren't you my mother's boyfriend or something.

GEORGE

I hardly know her. How rude.

ANN

(laughs) You really are weird.

GEORGE

"How weird?"

ANN

Well, I'm... I'm new in town. And when you're new in town, you've got to watch who you take up with.

GEORGE

Where are you staying?

ANN

We don't ... have ... a permanent address yet.

GEORGE

If it weren't for the kid, you could stay at my place.

ANN

Now that ... that ... that is rude.

GEORGE

Okay, then, you can bring the kid, too.

ANN

I don't want to hear any more of that.

GEORGE

Don't let this chair foll you. Polio's a great disease, leaves everything right there, everything still ready. Well, you know about Roosevelt, the greatest fornicator this country ever produced. Of course he had to fornicate, with nothing but Eleanor at home, but he was very ... exuberant.

Ann tries to formulate a response. Can't. Stands. Would perhaps leave the room, but certainly not into the kitchen. Back to the bathroom? She stands trembling and irresolute.

ANN

You have ... you have ... a lot of nerve.

GEORGE

I have a lot of everything. Maybe I can show it to you later.

ANN

I go for younger men ... who take me out dancing.

Now it is George who is irresolute. He takes a moment then begins wheeling himself to the front door.

GEORGE

Well ... and George runs home. Say goodnight for me to your mom.

ANN

(moving quickly between him and the door)

I'm sorry ... I ... I ...

She tries to say more but begins a severe stuttering block. Her face contorts and her body jerks. George watches in astonishment, then reaches out to her.

GEORGE

Hey, hey, hey. It's okay. hold on.

(she retreats into a corner)

Listen, I'm the one who's sorry. I shouldn't have talked to you like that. I came over here because I was lonely, and your mother was lonely. And then I saw you, and you looked ... you look ... I don't know ... you look so good. I mean such a good person. And you have that lovely daughter. I mean her mouth is, her mouth is godawful, but you know you're both nice, you're good people. And don't tie yourself up like this. I'm so sorry. Your eyes, they're all weepy. Does that hurt you? When you do that? What is that? Is that some kind of stutter or something?

Meanwhile Ann has quieted. And now Rose Jewel comes in with a tray of snacks and overhears this last. Jennifer is right behind her, eating another apple.

ROSE JEWEL

Ann can't ... talk plain ... sometimes.

She sets the tray on the table.

But that's okay, isn't it honey. Come on over her and sit by me.

Rose Jewel sits of the sofa; Ann moves quietly to sit beside her. Rose Jewel tries to touch her but really gets no further than touching her clothes, adjusting her collar, removing a piece of lint, anything to touch her yet not touch her.

Isn't she pretty, Georgie? You got a pretty mama, Jennie. It must be nice to have young, pretty mama like this, you can go out shopping together. Does she take your boyfriends away from you? I bet she does, doesn't she?

(Jennifer resorts to picking up the sculpture to examine it.)

Your grandpa made that, honey, it's not a play pretty, leave it be.

(Jennifer sits on arm of sofa, begins to play with Ann's hair, as with a doll.)

Isn't it lovely, Georgie? It's a bird, a little wren, or so I've always thought, and the wren, you see, is building her nest, for the little ones, see this twig she's carrying in her little, uh, uh, paw.

GEORGE

Extraordinary.

ROSE JEWEL

You remember this, Ann? Remember when your daddy made this for me? (to George)  
Roy had such a talent with wood.

GEORGE

Looks to me like nature did most of the work.

ROSE JEWEL

Nature can always be improved upon. Roy always used to say, "There ain't nothing better you can do for a dry old stick of wood but slap on a coat of gloss."

(to Ann)

Speaking of which, honey, I like the way you're doing your makeup now, only have you ever tried more of a violet, you got such pretty eyes, and this that you're using makes them more hard, if you know what I'm saying, you try violet. And honey, now I know you've been working real hard at keeping your weight down, but...

(to George)

...and I'm hardly the one to be talking, but don't you think she's too thin? Don't you think she looks better with just a little more? Don't you?

GEORGE

It's hard to see how she could look any better.

ROSE JEWEL

I don't think it's healthy, and it's in the news all the time about that exe... exe.. exerexia stuff, or whatever it is. I swan, what won't they think of next! I worry about you, honey. Now I know, Jennie told me about what you've been going through...

(to George)

...she's had a little, uh, set-to lately at home...

(to Ann)

...but you just don't worry now, your Mama's going to take care of you. And Jennie, you know what I was thinking for tomorrow? We got Disneyland right down here. I used to dress your mama up and send her down there the whole day, come back looking like she'd been drug through a trough...

(telephone rings)

Ooh, it must be your brother!

(runs to the phone)

Junior? (beat) Who is this? (beat) Oh, hello, Verlin.

JENNIFER

Daddy! I told you he'd call.

(runs to Rose Jewel, grabbing at the phone)

Let me talk to him.

ROSE JEWEL

(into phone)

What makes you think I'd let you talk to her? You know, Verlin, if you lived in this state...

JENNIFER

Grandma!

ROSE JEWEL

Honey, hush now.

(into phone)

...the only person you'd be talking to is your lawyer!

JENNIFER

(getting the phone)

Daddy! Hi! I missed you! (beat) Yeah, she's right here. (beat) That all you got to say to me?

(beat, holds phone out to Ann:)

Wants to talk to you.

(Ann shakes her head.)

Mom, he called to talk to you, you can at least listen to him!

All watch Ann as she takes the phone into the kitchen.

ROSE JEWEL

How'd he get this number, I paid extra to get it unlisted.

JENNIFER

I gave it to him.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, I swan! You didn't give him this address too!

JENNIFER

No.

ROSE JEWEL

I don't want him coming around here.

(to George)

The man is a brute!

(to Jennifer)

I'm sorry, honey, I know he's your father and I shouldn't be talking about him in front of you...

(to George)

...but you should have heard him just now, and when I was back there! I've never seen a man so coarse and unfeeling, a pig farmer!

JENNIFER

Nothing wrong with a pig farmer, Grandma.

ROSE JEWEL

He hit her. Can you imagine a man hitting a woman, what kind of man would do that?

GEORGE

Who, Ann? He hit Ann?

JENNIFER

He didn't mean to hit her. She got in the way.

ROSE JEWEL

In the way of what?

JENNIFER

He was trying to hit me.

ROSE JEWEL

To hit...! To spank you, you mean?

JENNIFER

No, he wanted to hit me.

ROSE JEWEL

You mean on the face? With his fist?

JENNIFER

He didn't care where, he just wanted to hit me.

ROSE JEWEL

You're standing there telling me... are you taking up for him?

JENNIFER

I'm not taking up for him, I'm just saying that he didn't hit my mom, not on purpose anyway, and that's what you're trying to make him out is like a wife-batterer or something, and he's not. He just got mad.

ROSE JEWEL

And that makes it okay? That he was mad.

JENNIFER

We all do things we're sorry for, and I'm just saying that my mom shouldn't think my dad doesn't love her any more just because he hit her.

GEORGE

Does he love her?

JENNIFER

He married her, didn't he?

GEORGE

Does she love him?

ROSE JEWEL

Just a minute, uh, uh, George.

(to Jennifer)

Jennie, I don't see any big difference between a man who hits his child and a man who...

JENNIFER

It's between me and my dad; it's none of her business, and it's none of your business either!

ROSE JEWEL

It certainly is my business, you are my granddaughter!

JENNIFER

You haven't cared about me before, what makes you care now?

ROSE JEWEL

Honey, you have been halfway across the continent living on a pig farm. Now this was your mama's choice, what did you want me to do, I wrote to you, I sent you money...

JENNIFER

How much? How many letters?

ROSE JEWEL

How much? Isn't that just typical of you and your mama, your little hands out, how much? I have written you, I don't now how many times, and how many times did you write me? When your grandfather died, did you even send me a card, not even a puny Hallmark verse of sympathy!

JENNIFER

You don't think my mom needed sympathy too? Grandpa died and she wanted to come out for the funeral, and did you help her?

ROSE JEWEL

She could have come, I wanted her to come.

(as Ann returns, hangs up the phone, and takes Jen's hand to quiet her)

You should have come. If you loved him, you would have come.

JENNIFER

Where was she gonna get the money?



ROSE JEWEL

She got the money now, didn't she? She got you here! Jennifer, we have company now and—

JENNIFER

And you made sure she wasn't about to get any money. Uncle Roy called us and told us how you got Grandpa to change his will and put it all—

(shakes off Ann)

Let go, Mom!

(to George)

The man was on his sick bed and she made him cut his own kids out of his will.

ROSE JEWEL

I need to live too, you know! My life is as precious as yours! If I get sick, who's going to pay the bills, you? Who's going to take care of me? I took care of your grandfather, the things I did for him, I cleaned up after him, his accidents, I washed his...

(begins to cry; Ann comes to her, puts her hand on her shoulder; Rose Jewel shakes her off.)

Oh, take your hands off, you know I can't stand it.

(to Jennifer)

...and what's this got to do with anything, we're talking about your father hitting you!

JENNIFER

He didn't hit ...

ROSE JEWEL

He tried to! Now why would he want to hit you?

JENNIFER

Because I got pregnant!

ROSE JEWEL

I ... swan!

GEORGE

(to Jennifer)

How old are you?

ROSE JEWEL

She's thirteen, can you believe this?

JENNIFER

I'm almost fourteen.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, who cares how old you are, you're too young to be having a baby.

(to Ann)

Did you know about this? Swan to goodness, didn't you tell her anything?

(to Jennifer)

When your mama was your age, her very first period, I didn't waste any time, I took her aside and I told her everything, and I took her hand and I put in it a rubber-johnny, and I told her just what it was for and to keep it in her purse. Didn't she tell you anything?

JENNIFER

She told me. I knew.

ROSE JEWEL

And what are you going to do with a baby? Do you have any money, either of you, no. It's no wonder your father wanted to hit you. I feel like hitting you myself.

JENNIFER

You just try it, you old sow!

There is a moment of shock all around. Ann goes to Jennifer's side but can't face her mother.

ROSE JEWEL

(recovering)

Well, George, Georgie, I don't know what you must think of us.

GEORGE

I think you should all go on Donahue.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, my. Well, would you please forgive us, and could you please leave us alone now? We'll get together again, okay?

GEORGE

(wheeling out)

Sure. Jennifer, if you want to come over and talk to me...

ROSE JEWEL

(over him)

That's okay, Georgie, we can handle it.

GEORGE

...I'm just across the way. goodbye, Ann. Hope to see you again. 'Night, Rosie.

ROSE JEWEL

Goodnight.

George wheels out and toward his apartment. He chuckles, then laughs outright.

GEORGE

Jeee-Zuss Christ! God-Damn!

He looks at his watch and decides to wheel up the walkway instead.

Rose Jewel meanwhile has closed her door and turned back into the room, irresolute for a moment. She picks up the mantilla and drapes it over her shoulders, snaps on the TV and sits to watch, her back to Ann and Jennifer, who hold together, watching her as Lights Dim.

END of ACT I

ACT II

THE SCENE: The same, the next afternoon. Rose Jewel's table is half-set. Jennifer changes channels on the TV then sits on the sofa, dangling an unlit cigarette from her lips and playing with a cigarette lighter.

Rose Jewel enters from the kitchen carrying three plates and napkins, the phone hunched between her shoulder and ear.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, I hadn't made up my mind, but I was thinking either pork chops or liver and onions.

JENNIFER

Yeccccccch!

ROSE JEWEL

I think, after all, liver and onions. (beat) No, they don't like it much, but it's good for the baby. (beat) Well, no, Marge it's not born yet but it's alive, it gets nourishment from the mother. How you can write a novel, not knowing anything, is beyond me. Just a sec, Marge—

(to Jennifer)

You're not going to light that cigarette in here, are you?

JENNIFER

Did I say I was?

ROSE JEWEL

It makes me sick, honey, it gives me a sinus headache and I'll be sick for days, and that doesn't even say a word about that baby inside your body breathing in all that smoke.

JENNIFER

It doesn't breathe yet.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, it absorbs. It gets it through the blood or through the floppin' ... tubings ... or somehow.

JENNIFER

Grandma, I'm not lighting it, okay?

ROSE JEWEL

Do you have any idea what it makes you look like, honey, sitting there with that cigarette dangling off your lips?

JENNIFER

A slut?

ROSE JEWEL

You said it, I didn't.

(into phone)

Okay, Marge. (beat) Oh, she's just sitting there trying to provoke me. (beat) No, I don't, it's the only way to keep peace.

(Jennifer stands and heads for the hall.)

You're not planning on smoking that in the bathroom, there is nothing more revolting.

JENNIFER

Grandma, I know your rules. I'm not going to break them. Jeez!

ROSE JEWEL

Jennif—

JENNIFER

I mean boy! Boy Howdy! Man Alive! Lower the lifeboats. (exits into hall)

ROSE JEWEL

She is so perverse.

(changes channel on TV)

No, Ann went out early this morning to look for a job, if you can believe that. What kind of job can she do? Who's going to hire her? To do what? She can't put two words together. Can you imagine that girl appearing on your doorstep for an interview? Just breaks my heart. (beat) No, I haven't found out yet, that Jennifer is such a cagey little smarty pants. I asked her, "Do you even know who the father is?" and she said, "Yes, I met him intimately."

(laughs in spite of herself)

Doesn't she remind you of me? (beat) Oh, I was not, I was 15 the first time, or almost 15. It was that Monroe. Oooohwee, Monroe Monroe Monroe, I just couldn't keep my legs together. But I didn't get pregnant, I'll tell you tht right now. Wouldn't Daddy have just slain me? (beat) Well, it's a darn sight better than you, Marge. Good heavens, who ever heard of a 65 year old virgin? (beat) Juanita? Well, that is as may be, Marge, but you can't count Juanita. She doesn't have the right equipment. Technically you're a virgin

(to Jennifer who has returned up the hallway)

I didn't hear the water running, did you wash your hands?

JENNIFER

Tsk!

Jennifer storms back down the hallway.

Meanwhile George wheels on from up the walkway and proceeds to find himself a place on the patio in the sun. He takes a notebook from his knapsack and begins to write.

ROSE JEWEL

I swan! Listen, Marge, I'm going to get off. I want to talk to that girl. I mean I don't want to but I guess someone's got to. Yeah, bye, you get right back to work on that novel now, you hear? Oh, you stinker, I THOUGHT I heard scribbling.

(hangs up, laughing; Jennifer re-enters.)

Honey, it's just that you've got to be careful now because you've got the baby to think of. You go to the bathroom, you get germs on you, you've got to wash them off.

JENNIFER

(changes TV channel back)

I guess they're my germs and my baby, and I guess my baby's got all my germs already.

ROSE JEWEL

(turns TV off)

Well, yes, but then you'll go right in to that frigidatordaire and there's that plate of fried chicken in there, and you'll pick over every single piece —yes you will, I've seen you do it— and then the whole plate's ruined.

JENNIFER

So, it's not the baby after all, it's you.

ROSE JEWEL

And your mother.

JENNIFER

Mom doesn't care. My germs are her germs.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, they are now!

JENNIFER

I'm going outside for a weed.

ROSE JEWEL

And now you're going to smoke that poor baby's lungs out.

JENNIFER

It's not even tobacco, Grandma. It's herbs.

ROSE JEWEL

You're not talking about that marijuans stuff!

JENNIFER

No, it's mint, peppermint or cinnamon or something, and anyway I'm thinking about just getting rid of this baby now.

Jennifer goes out and just outside the door lights her herbal cigarette. She chokes on the first drag but will not put it out

Rose Jewel meanwhile has remained rooted, deep in thought. Now she ventures to the doorway.

ROSE JEWEL

How, uh ... how far along are you?

JENNIFER

I can still do it.

ROSE JEWEL

I swan, Jennie, you may as well be inside as out with that stuff.

She closes the door and returns to setting the table. But she is distracted and eventually sits down to think. Jennifer moves onto the patio area downstage of the living room, taking drags and coughing.

GEORGE

Ah, the aroma of finas herbas in la manana.

JENNIFER

Sorry! Jeez, okay, I'll put it out!

GEORGE

No, no, I like it. I gave up tobacco myself, but sometimes there's something about those first puffs off a fresh cigarette, even one as ghastly as that, that makes a guy want to gag. And of course you must remember that you're killing yourself, your baby, and everyone around you.

JENNIFER

Who cares? I figure I got five years at the outside.

GEORGE

Oh, yeah?

JENNIFER

Yeah, that goddam bomb you guys made.

GEORGE

Us guys?

JENNIFER

So if you don't mind, I'll finish this cigarette. Well, maybe later. (extinguishes it)

GEORGE

(putting away his notebook)  
Mind if I sit here with you?

JENNIFER

It's a free country, or so they tell me.

GEORGE

How come you don't like me?

JENNIFER

I don't like anyone.

GEORGE

Except your dad.

JENNIFER

He's okay sometimes.

GEORGE

And your mom.

JENNIFER

Oh, yeah, my mom's the best.

GEORGE

And your grandma.

JENNIFER

You gotta be kidding.

GEORGE

Yeah, I am. (they laugh) She's not so bad though, you know?

JENNIFER

What? She told you that?

Meanwhile Rose Jewel pushes a memory button on the phone.

ROSE JEWEL

Hello, may I please speak to Roy Jamison, Junior? (beat, sigh) His mother. (beat) Could you tell him please that it's really very very important that he call his sister? Thank you. Bye now.

GEORGE

So tell me, what's it like to be pregnant at thirteen?



JENNIFER

Oh, you know, I get sick sometimes in the morning.

(looking at the stub of the cigarette)

Jeez, these things stink even when they're not burning.

GEORGE

Does the father know?

JENNIFER

What's it to you?

GEORGE

Why didn't you tell him? Don't you think he's got some right to know? Who is he?

JENNIFER

According to Grandma, it's the whole football team. I'll tell you what it's like, being pregnant, it's like this big bellyache. I'm not talking about what it feels, you know physical, I'm talking about worrying all the time. You know? Like, I found out a couple of years ago —it was sixth grade, my sixth grade teacher Miss Spattifore was the best— she taught us all about where gas, you know, oil comes from. Well, from the ground, we all know that, but how it gets there. You know this, how oil gets in the ground?

GEORGE

No, tell me.

JENNIFER

Well, see, about a million years ago all these trees fell down and the ground covered them up and they rotted and turned into oil. But Jeez, it took a million years, you know? And how many trees? And you guys are using it all up and now my kid's not gonna have any gas, and no car. So I'll tell you, being pregnant's a bitch.

GEORGE

Yeah, but still. Have you ever held a baby? In your arms?

JENNIFER

I've held baby pigs. See, when the sow starts throwing a litter, she pops 'em out one right after the other, and she's wallowing around and screaming, I mean you know it hurts! And you gotta get the babies out of the way or she wallows right over 'em and mashes 'em.

GEORGE

To death?

JENNIFER

Yeah, to death, what do you think? They're little tiny and she's a big fat sow.

GEORGE

Then if she mashes 'em, does she eat 'em?

JENNIFER

She WOULD eat 'em, but we get 'em first, and they make the best breakfast, too! (whistles) But we save most of 'em, you know, their lives. That's when I've held 'em. They're kind of sweet, you know, little eyes, little ears. But then they grow up into the same old hogs.

GEORGE

Yeah, but listen, think of the worst kid in your school, the most, most horrible sloppy mess of them all.

JENNIFER

Yeah, I got him, Cecil Odom. Gross.

GEORGE

Cecil Odom was a sweet, cuddly little baby once.

JENNIFER

Yeah, and look what he turned into.

GEORGE

No, the point is if Cecil Odom was your baby...

JENNIFER

Oh, gross!

GEORGE

No, you'd have raised him to be nice! Cecil Odom could have been a good, clean kid!

JENNIFER

Don't tell me what Cecil Odom could have been, you don't even know him. Grownups are so stupid and you think kids are just as stupid as—

Rose Jewel, meanwhile, has come out her door.

ROSE JEWEL

Jennie, when you said— Oh, hello, Georgie.  
(takes off her apron, hides it behind her)

GEORGE

Hello, Rosie. Beautiful day out here, and we're having a lovely, congenial talk, why don't you join us?

ROSE JEWEL

Seems a little sunny.

GEORGE

Just right.

JENNIFER

I was just telling him about my baby, Grandma.

ROSE JEWEL

Were you? And I wonder just what you were saying?

JENNIFER

My baby's gonna save the world, Grandma. My baby's gonna be a savior.

ROSE JEWEL

Jennie, if you are referring to the Second Coming of our Lord, don't you think— ?

JENNIFER

I'm gonna name it Harmony.

ROSE JEWEL

What?

JENNIFER

My child, the savior. I'm gonna name my child Harmony.

ROSE JEWEL

Jennie—

GEORGE

Harmony, huh? So you're something of a feminist then? You believe the savior's going to be a girl. What if it's a boy?

JENNIFER

If it's a boy, I'm gonna name it Harmony.

GEORGE

And if it's a girl?

JENNIFER

If it's a girl, I'm gonna name it Harmony.

ROSE JEWEL

Honey, you are assigning that child to a life of misery.

JENNIFER

Well, it's never easy being a savior, is it, Grandma?

ROSE JEWEL

Little boys like names like Bobby or Butchy. It makes them feel like little boys, doesn't it, Georgie? A little girl, now, you may name a little girl Harmony, but she will always resent you for it. Melody, you could name her Melody. I have known several Melodies and they were all lovely. Oh, feel that balmy breeze, maybe I will come out for a bit. I'll just get my hat. Can I bring you a little something, Georgie?

GEORGE

No, thanks.

ROSE JEWEL

I'll just be a sec.

She turns back into the apartment and exits down the hall.

JENNIFER

"Can I bring you a little something, Georgie?"

(laughs)

Wonder whatever does she have in mind. You better watch yourself, I think she's got an eye on you. She keeps saying she's gonna get herself a younger man.

GEORGE

Oh, I think I can—

JENNIFER

(laughs)

Hey, you know what happened last night? The phone rang —Grandma had been telling us all night, Mom and me, all about how whenever she goes to the doctors, the doctors are always saying, "Oh Gee, how young and fresh it is,"— and then the phone rings and ...

GEORGE

Wait. How young and fresh what is?

JENNIFER

Oh, her... thing. And then the phone rings, and she was in the bathroom so I answer it, and it's this pervert and he's breathing, you know, I mean he's panting into the phone, and so I go, "Grandma, it's for you." And Grandma comes in and I give her the phone, and she goes, "Junior?" She thinks if the phone rings it's gotta be Uncle Roy. She goes, "Junior?" Then she goes, "Jennie, I don't get anything but static on this line." 'cause the guy's panting, see, and that's all she hears. But then he starts talking real low and dirty and Grandma goes, "What? What? I can't hear you, could you speak up, please?" And what he says —she tells us this later— he says, "I hear you got the

tightest pus... the tightest thing ... in town." And Grandma goes, "Who's been telling you this!"

(laughs)

So she hangs up on him, right, and turns to us and goes, "You don't suppose those doctors talk about their patients outside the office, do you?"

(laughs, George can't help laughing too)

So, Georgie, you may think she's too old for you, but Grandma thinks she's pretty young and fresh.

GEORGE

Why are you so tough on her?

JENNIFER

Look what she's done to my mom. She can't even talk.

GEORGE

What makes you think it's your grandmother's fault?

Rose Jewel re-enters from the hallway with a fancy scarf and sun hat. She stops at the mirror to smooth the skin under her eyes, and she changes from her slippers to her dress shoes.

JENNIFER

It was her, all right. You know, at my mom's graduation, see, my mom didn't think she was gonna graduate 'cause she never talked, but see, I think the teachers all liked her 'cause of that, they're always telling me to shut up— anyway, it was a real big deal to my mom, graduating, and she was so proud! She went up and got her diploma and brought it to Grandma, and Grandma goes, "Put down your collar! Your collar was up in front of all these people!"

GEORGE

Well, Jennifer, I'm sure your grandmother didn't really mean—

JENNIFER

She did too. And Grandpa didn't even come. Grandma made sure of that. She always had him out building another house or putting up a fence or something. She's the one killed him

Meanwhile, Rose Jewel has put a record onto the old phonograph console and it begins to play. It is Doris Day singing "Sentimental Journey". The scene will probably require a repeat of the first eight bars.

JENNIFER

Oh, listen! Watch out, Georgie, hot mama's coming!

GEORGE

I guess I can handle myself, thanks.

JENNIFER

(yells) Turn it up, Grandma, turn it up!  
(lowers her voice to George)  
You better strap it to your leg, big boy.

GEORGE

Say, who taught you to talk like that?

ROSE JEWEL

(arriving on the patio)  
Talk like what?

JENNIFER

I'll tell you, George, when you've lived on a pig farm, you've seen and heard everything.

ROSE JEWEL

I've told you about her ... ather-fay. There's no telling what this girl has seen.

JENNIFER

Oh, yeah, and you're so pure, huh?  
(to George)  
Her ather-fay was a preacher. I mean an eacher-pray. Eacher-pray is right. Eat Your Prey!

ROSE JEWEL

Jennie, I think you'd best get out of this sun, hon. It'll fry your brains. You're not used to it.

JENNIFER

No, we don't have sun in Rocky Comfort.

ROSE JEWEL

The desert sun is not like the Midwest. It is brutal even this late in the afternoon. But you do just as you wish.

(The phone rings.)

Oh, I believe that's the phone.  
(starts inside)

JENNIFER

If that's for me, tell him I don't want to talk to anyone, ever again, and especially not him!

ROSE JEWEL

Junior? (beat, turns down phonograph) Yes, she is, who is this please?

JENNIFER

I'm not talking to him!

ROSE JEWEL

Dwayne who?

JENNIFER

(at Rose Jewel's side in a flash)

Here! Give it to me!

ROSE JEWEL

A Mr. Dwayne ... Harmony.

(hands her the phone)

JENNIFER

(into phone as though she will melt)

Hi, Dwayne. Oh, wait a sec, Dwayne...

(Rose Jewel hangs around until Jennifer fixes her with the evil eye, then she returns to the patio and Jennifer goes into the kitchen.)

Hi, Dwayne, I missed you.

ROSE JEWEL

Dwayne ... Harmony!

GEORGE

Ah, the young.

ROSE JEWEL

The young idiots.

GEORGE

Take it easy, Rosie. It all works out, doesn't it, give it enough time. Speaking of which, how old are you anyway?

ROSE JEWEL

Why... ! Georgie!

GEORGE

Old enough to be a great grandmother.

ROSE JEWEL

That girl is a very very young mother! And besides, she's not a mother yet. I wonder what they're talking about in there.

GEORGE

Oh, nothing but love.

ROSE JEWEL

Love, aren't you the one. Oh, isn't it nice out here, just isn't it? I've always been a sun lover, though I always wear a hat, to keep my skin young and fresh.

(as Doris enters the song)

Oh, listen. Isn't she sweet? I love Doris.

GEORGE

Sweet little Miss Doris Humpeldinkeldoff. She could have been somebody. If she'd just done some drugs, she could have been another Judy Garland. But no, she settled for James Garner.

ROSE JEWEL

Roy — my husband — we used to go dancing. Did you ever go dancing? I mean, before ... ?

GEORGE

Fact is I used to be a dancer.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, no!

GEORGE

Pretty good, too. And an actor. I miss the stage. Dance for me, Rosie.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, it's been so long, but ... Give me your hand

(takes his hand and dances around the wheelchair)

Dip. And dip. Oh, I used to love to dance. My daddy was scandalized. Like Jennie said, he was a preacher, a Holiness preacher and couldn't he just preach up a storm when he got going! But he couldn't stop me dancing, oh no, it was my nature, and he couldn't deny it. Daddy brought us out from Oklahoma during the Great Depression, oh yes, I'm one of those ... Okies, and I'm proud of it, though they do write such tripe about us. I always thought—

Jennifer, meanwhile has come back from the kitchen, slamming the phone down on the hook, and exiting down the hallway to return in a moment with a record album of her own. She rejects "Sentimental Journey".

Oh, we have been cut off! I imagine we are frightening the establishment. Ooh, I'm just a bit breathless. Perhaps it was the electric touch of your hand?

Jennifer's hard rock comes on. She throws her denim jacket on the floor and stomps on it in time to the music.

Swan to goodness you wonder if this generation will survive its own music!



GEORGE

Yeah, it's great, isn't it? These kids are going to be something when they grow up.

ROSE JEWEL

(through the door)

Jennie, could you turn that down please?

JENNIFER

This record player is a piece of junk. You're ruining all my records.

ROSE JEWEL

(going inside and rejecting the record)

Well, don't run 'em then.

JENNIFER

This whole place is junk.

ROSE JEWEL

That is for serious music.

(returns outside)

JENNIFER

That music of yours is so serious, it's dead.

(cradles the denim jacket, near tears)

Oh, Dwayne!

ROSE JEWEL

Now, Georgie...

(but Georgie has started up the walkway, having checked his watch)

Oh, Georgie, don't go. Tell me something about yourself. You were a dancer and an actor, oooh, how exciting. What are you now?

GEORGE

Welfare bum. (returns)

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, I don't believe that for one second. What are you?

GEORGE

Writer.

ROSE JEWEL

A writer! George Bellamy, no, I don't think—

GEORGE

I don't write under George Bellamy.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, well then...

GEORGE

Natalie Pierce.

ROSE JEWEL

Natalie Pierce ... ?

GEORGE

TRIANGLE OF PASSION?

(Rose Jewel shakes her head.)

PASSION IN THE POPPIES?

ROSE JEWEL

PASSION...

GEORGE

PASSION IN THE POPPIES.

ROSE JEWEL

PASSION IN THE POPPIES! Yes, I believe I've seen that! I swan, Natalie Pierce, right next door. My, uh... my... my twin sister's a writer, a novelist. Maybe I could talk to Marge, maybe you'd like to see a chapter or two.

GEORGE

Oh, I'm sure I wouldn't.

Jennifer, sighing, takes the denim jacket and goes into the kitchen.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh. Well, it's just as well. Marge is very close-mouthed about it. I don't know what she's writing in that book, and I don't want to know.

GEORGE

You were named Rose Jewel, and your twin was named ... Marge?

ROSE JEWEL

Well, she wasn't always Marge. Daddy —his name was Cavendish, Cavendish Moon, isn't that a pretty name on a man?— he named all three of his girls after flowers and gemstones, and that's why there was Violet Ruby Moon, my older sister, and then came Rose Jewel Moon —oh yes, I am older than Marge by fifteen minutes and she will never let me forget it— and then came Marguerite Pearl Moon. Daddy couldn't have known when he named her so pretty that Marge would turn out so horsy —we are not identical, we are definitely not!

GEORGE

Interesting.

ROSE JEWEL

But soon enough the handwriting on the wall grew plainer and plainer, and people started calling her just plain Marge. But they kept calling me Rose Jewel.

GEORGE

Only I call you Rosie.

ROSE JEWEL

Yes, you do.

GEORGE

After my dog.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, you are incorrigible!

(George checks his watch again, looks up walkway; Rose Jewel stands, speaking quickly)

Uh, Uh, I tuned in today to your Mr. Donahue.

GEORGE

Oh, yeah, your preacher, that fundamentalist guy was on, wasn't he?

ROSE JEWEL

He is not my preacher. I tuned right out again. That man! He gives Christ a bad name.

GEORGE

I would have thought you liked his preaching, all that about prostitution and curing the poor homosexuals...

ROSE JEWEL

See? You sit there with your superior heathen attitude thinking that just because I'm saved, I'm going to follow that Bible thumper even if he leads me to Hell. Just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you're stupid.

GEORGE

I never said you were —

ROSE JEWEL

My daddy was a preacher, and the Lord knows he wasn't the best man on this earth — I swan he wadn't!— but he knew how to treat his fellow man...

GEORGE

Well, Rosie, I never—

ROSE JEWEL

... and he followed the principles of Christ, and Christ never said a doggone word about the homosexuals, and you know what He said about Mary Magdalene...

Jennifer crosses from the kitchen to the hallway, sucking on a pickle, the denim jacket slung over her shoulder.

GEORGE

Rosie, really, I'm not—

ROSE JEWEL

...good heavens, as if this planet didn't have enough trouble without spying into your neighbor's bedroom window, and this preacher —I won't even call him that— this lowdown man calling himself a preacher, he should be shut right up. I tuned him out.

GEORGE

(checks his watch again)

What are you getting so mad about?

ROSE JEWEL

And why do you keep looking at your watch? The time doesn't change that quick, you know. What've you got, another television program?

GEORGE

No, I was just... wondering where Ann was, when she'd be back.

ROSE JEWEL

She's around and about, she'll be back when she's back, she's a grown girl. And I'm not mad. I just don't like that superior heathen attitude.

GEORGE

What makes you think it's either superior or heathen?

ROSE JEWEL

I know you. I watch you from my kitchen window sitting out there at that bus stop. You never catch the bus, you just sit out there talking to whoever passes, whoever'll talk back at you. Categorizing. You putting them in your book?

GEORGE

I'm not writing a book just now.

ROSE JEWEL

You putting me in your book?

GEORGE

I just said that I wasn't—

ROSE JEWEL

Or maybe you're just ... lonely.

They gaze at each other a moment.

GEORGE

You're one hell of a woman, Rosie.

ROSE JEWEL

Should I take that as a compliment?

GEORGE

Any way you want. Ann's a lovely girl.

ROSE JEWEL

(after a brief pause)

Yes. Isn't she?

GEORGE

And you have a boy, too?

ROSE JEWEL

Yes, I've had two children, although the doctors can never believe that. His name's Roy, Junior, and he's a lawyer!

GEORGE

Is he?

ROSE JEWEL

Um hmm, lives just over here, which is why I moved to this neighborhood.

GEORGE

Oh, but he never comes around?

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, no, he's very ... independent. Roy ... Roy Senior ... always said, "Junior never asks for nor gives nothing." (laughs)

GEORGE

Least of all love, huh? Is Ann lefthanded?

ROSE JEWEL

Why are you so interested in Ann?

GEORGE

I just find her interesting.

ROSE JEWEL

But you're not going to put her in your book. You're not writing a book.

GEORGE

Is she lefthanded? Or righthanded?

Jennifer returns with a magazine, throwing herself onto the sofa and finishing her pickle.

ROSE JEWEL

I know what you're getting at. They told us, that's what the doctors told us in those days, that's what they all told us to do, because a lefthanded person is awkward and having to live in a righthanded world, so yes, I did help Ann to correct her lefthandedness. But I don't believe that anyway, all that what they're saying now about right brain left brain, it's just the latest thing they're saying, because my twin sister Marge didn't talk a word until we were five, not a word of English, she had her own language. She tried to get me to talk it with her, and I said, "Uh uh!" But when we were five, she came up to me and I was eating a cookie, and she reached out her hand and said, "Give me the damn cookie." She could talk all right, she just waited until she wanted something bad enough to use the language. And that woman became a city councilman, and now she's a novelist.

Ann has entered down the walkway and heard this last. She is dressed neatly in a skirt and blouse and her hair is up, but she looks tired.

Oh, hello, Ann! George was just asking about you.

GEORGE

Hello.

ROSE JEWEL

You look worn out. You hungry?

(starts into the apartment)

I'll just go see about getting dinner together. Georgie, you want to join us for dinner?

GEORGE

What are you having?

ROSE JEWEL

Liver and onio— Uh, pork chops.

GEORGE

I'd love to.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, good. Excuse me, then. You sit, honey. I'll bring you out a Coke.

GEORGE

(when Rose Jewel is out of earshot)

She's terrified of you.

ANN

(laughs) She's terrified of ME?

ROSE JEWEL

(passing through the living room to the hallway)

Jennie, go and get your mom a Coke.

JENNIFER

(yelling on her way to the kitchen)

Hi, Mom!

ANN

Hi, babe.

Ann sits on the bench and takes off her shoes to massage her feet.

GEORGE

She is, you know. Absolutely terrified.

ANN

She's terrified of a pause. Terrified I'll try to t-talk.

GEORGE

How long have you been a stutterer?

ANN

How long have you been a cripple?

GEORGE

Twenty-eight years Just twenty-eight. How long have you been a stutterer?

Ann laughs. Jennifer comes out with a coke, the denim jacket tied about her waist.

ANN

Thanks, babe.

JENNIFER

How'd it go?

ANN

Don't ask. How'd it go here?

JENNIFER

Don't ask.

ANN

You were nice to her, weren't you? (to George) This is my actress; did she tell you?

GEORGE

No.

JENNIFER

At my school we did TOM SAWYER. I played Injun Joe.

GEORGE

Injun Joe, huh?

JENNIFER

Yeah, they wanted me to play Becky Thatcher but I said you gotta be kidding. "Oh, Tom! Bats!" And you know what? If Rocky Comfort gave an Oscar, I'd have won it. Mom said I froze her blood, didn't you?

ANN

She froze my blood.

JENNIFER

So I figure I'm going to go out for the movies here in Hollywood. Anita Hatchet—

GEORGE

You need a what?

JENNIFER

Hatchet? Anita Hatchet? That's her name? Tsk! Anita Hatchet says you can make a lot of money in the movies.

ANN

And Anita Hatchet knows.

JENNIFER

And we're gonna become lesbians, aren't we, Mom?



ANN

We're going to what?

JENNIFER

Well, I'm sick of men. They're no good.

ANN

Have you been talking to your Aunt Marge?

JENNIFER

And I'm gonna buy us a big house with all that money I make, all our own, and no pigs!  
And I'm gonna make it all up to you. You'll never have to go job-hunting again.

ANN

Umhmm.

JENNIFER

And Daddy'll come out and live with us.

ROSE JEWEL

(calling through the door)

Jennifer, I could use a little help in here.

JENNIFER

But in the meantime I sure wish you'd get a job quick and get us out of here.  
(starts into the apartment, but holds to hear Ann's response to:)

GEORGE

Do you want him to come out?

ANN

I n-n-n-n-

(begins a block, though not a severe one)

JENNIFER

(imitating her exactly)

I n-n-n-n-

ANN

(bursts into laughter)

Look at her!

JENNIFER

(starting to tickle her)

Look at her!

They fall in a heap on the bench, tickling each other until Ann becomes self-conscious in front of George.

ANN

Okay, that's enough now.

GEORGE

You two make quite the pair.

JENNIFER

You got a bug up your ass or something?

GEORGE

I just asked a question, that's all. You want Verlin to come out here, Ann?

ANN

I believe your grandmother wants you.

GEORGE

What'd he say last night, when he called?

JENNIFER

He wants her to come home.

GEORGE

(to Jennifer) What about you? He invite you back, too?

JENNIFER

(hums as though to say, "I don't know": m-m-m)

I may get married.

GEORGE

I thought you were sick of men, after Dwayne called.

ANN

Dwayne called? How did he get the number.

JENNIFER

I gave it to him

ANN

You're asking for trouble.

JENNIFER

I guess I can talk to my baby's father.

ANN

It's up to you. What'd he say?

JENNIFER

He wants to marry me.

ANN

Oh yeah? How'd he come up with that idea?

JENNIFER

His daddy told him to. Daddy called Dwayne's daddy and told him it was Dwayne's duty to give the baby a name, and besides Dwayne's horny already.

ANN

What'd you say?

JENNIFER

I said if that's all the reason he wants to marry me, he can just go jerk it. And I said I can give my baby a name without him.

ANN

Damn right.

JENNIFER

He'd just be another kid to take care of.

The phone rings. Jennifer jumps for it.

Hello? (beat) Oh, wait, keep doing that. Grandma, it's for you!

(runs back out)

It's that pervert! Come on!

ANN

Did Jen tell you?

George laughs and wheels after Jennifer up to a listening position outside the door. Ann joins them somewhat reluctantly. Rose Jewel come out of the kitchen, wiping her hands with a dishtowel.

ROSE JEWEL

Junior? (beat) Hello? Oh! I don't know how you got my number but I don't want you calling here any more. (beat) That is not true! That is just not true! I have never done that in my life! You listen to me. I'm going to report you to the telephone company. What's your name and number? (beat) Well then, I'm not going to talk to you anymore. I'm going to hang up now, and if you know what's good for you, you won't call here again. I'd be ashamed. Goodbye now. (hangs up)

ANN

That was mean, Jen.

JENNIFER

Oh, she had fun.

ROSE JEWEL

(calling out the door on her way back to the kitchen)

Jennifer, I said now.

JENNIFER

Oh, Jeez!

ROSE JEWEL

Jennifer, watch that language. He died for our sins.

(goes into kitchen)

JENNIFER

For yours maybe, I wasn't even born yet.

ANN

Go on, help her, and if he calls again, just hang up on him.

Jennifer goes into the kitchen.

GEORGE

That girl is so ...

ANN

Watch it!

GEORGE

... precocious.

ANN

You mean obnoxious.

GEORGE

She's right though. Rosie did have fun. But she hung up too fast. That's the trouble with a woman. A man, now, he'll stay on the line, yelling how he's gonna bash your brains in and—

ANN

What are you talking about? You make calls like that?

GEORGE

Sure, sometimes.

ANN

You do not.

GEORGE

Sure I do. It's great. I have fun, the other guy has fun, letting off steam—  
(gesturing to Ann's feet which she is massaging)  
Here, park 'em here.

ANN

Yeah? What do you want with them?

GEORGE

Give 'em here.

ANN

They're all sweaty. They've hit all the streets of L.A. today.  
(but puts them in his lap anyway)

Oh!

GEORGE

Great hands, huh?

ANN

They're so ... strong.

GEORGE

Comes from wheeling this chair all over hell. Loosen up, Jesus! How many places did you hit today?

ANN

I lost count.

GEORGE

Nothing? Not even a nibble?

ANN

Oh, I s-s-st-stammered like hell. (laughs) Made a fool of myself, of course. I thought now maybe I could— Oh, hell! (laughs)

GEORGE

There was a fascinating special on dogs the other night. Do you know they have to kill six hundred dogs a day in the United States?

ANN

Dogs?

GEORGE

And there is not one case on record of a stutterer stuttering to his d-d-dog.

ANN

You've got a real knack for working a fact into a conversation. Why don't you stop talking and keep— Oh, yes, that, keep doing that.

The telephone rings and both Rose Jewel and Jennifer try to beat other to it. Jennifer wins, but Rose Jewel wrests it from her.

ROSE JEWEL

I'll take that, and you get back in there!

(into phone)

Now see here! Get back in there I said!

JENNIFER

Tsk! (but goes back into kitchen)

ROSE JEWEL

Now, you see here! (lowers voice) Oh, Verlin. What do you want? If you think you're going to talk to Ann, you can just whistle Dixie. You're where? Where did you say?

JENNIFER

(ducking in and out)

Grandma, don't you go flirting with that pervert!

ROSE JEWEL

You get!

(into phone again, voice lowered)

Well, you just hop right on the next plane back because you're not coming here. I'm not telling you where I live. (beat) Don't you threaten me, Verlin! You show your face around her and I'll sick the police on you like fleas on a hound. (beat) Well, why don't you just tell her that yourself!

She goes to patio.

Ann.

Ann jerks her feet off George's lap, but not before Rose Jewel sees.

I'm uh, closing up now, it's getting a little chilly.

She goes slowly back in to the telephone.

GEORGE

What are you scared of?

ROSE JEWEL

Verlin, you still— Verlin? No, and I'm not talking to you either!

She hangs up, goes to the window to look out onto the patio. Then she returns to the phone and takes it off the hook and goes back into the kitchen.

ANN

Why do you keep looking at me like that? I don't like it.

GEORGE

I just think you're pretty.

ANN

Oh, a brand new line. You just make that up yourself?

GEORGE

What kind of a job are you looking for?

ANN

Whatever kind of job I can get. My skills are ... they're not much.

GEORGE

What'd you go out for today?

ANN

R-r-r-eceptionist.

GEORGE

Receptionist!

ANN

I can do it!

GEORGE

Some on, Jesus, be realistic. You don't go out—

ANN

She says I can't, Verlin says I can't, you too, huh?

GEORGE

Okay, okay, but I mean why don't you try something a little less conversational, like a waitress or stand up comic?

ANN

I'll tell you what, you be the comic, I'll do the standing up part for you!

They gauge each other a moment.

GEORGE

Fair enough.

ANN

But I've already got the waitress jobs circled for tomorrow.

(She laughs. So does George.)

GEORGE

You can be my secretary, if you want. Or my maid, my live-in maid.

ANN

Yeah, but knowing you you'll try to take my wages out in trade.

GEORGE

So how come you don't stutter that much with me? That's a sign, you think?

ANN

A sign of what? A sign-off, maybe.

Rose Jewel comes to the table with a fourth place setting.

ROSE JEWEL

Jennie, go fetch that extra chair from the sewing room for Georgie.

JENNIFER

He doesn't need a chair. He carries his own with him.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, that's so.

JENNIFER

Hey, what's the phone off the hook for? I may be getting an important call.

(puts phone back on the hook)

ROSE JEWEL

That Harmony boy?

JENNIFER

Or maybe your gentleman caller?



ANN

Hey, keep it on the feet, you're getting a little high up there, aren't you?

GEORGE

Oh, oops.

ROSE JEWEL

Jennie, if you could, would you like to go back home to your daddy?

JENNIFER

I don't know. He called my baby a bastard. What are you wiping those for, they're clean.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, you said, didn't you, that you were thinking of getting rid of the baby.

JENNIFER

I say a lot of things. They're clean, Grandma. I wiped 'em twice already.

Jen returns to the kitchen, Rose Jewel following.

ANN

Before Jen was born, I don't remember ... much. I remember trying. It looked so easy.  
M-m-ma —

(slaps her leg)

She wanted me to be so just right, and I tried for her.

GEORGE

What about your father? Did you try for him?

ANN

I didn't have to. Daddy liked me just how I was.

GEORGE

Why didn't he come to your graduation?

ANN

Jen told you that, too? You had quite a talk.

GEORGE

So why didn't he?

ANN

Oh, he had ... he was working on ... You ask too many questions. What are you doing, writing a book?

GEORGE

Maybe. But don't tell your mother.

ANN

What's that supposed to mean?

GEORGE

So what was he working on that was so important?

ANN

I didn't say it was important. In fact, he came. Daddy did come to my graduation. I'm sure he did.

GEORGE

How'd you two get along?

ANN

Look, I don't like this. You want me to stay out here with you, okay, but don't lay that crap on me.

GEORGE

Okay.

ANN

Really, it's crap, you know? Okay, I have trouble talking, but it doesn't mean my parents strangled me. I just wasn't... couldn't... you know, I wasn't strong enough. So you got polio, so what?

(pushes his chair away)

Here, give me some room; I'm tight as a wire.

(stretches and bends, loosening her blouse tail)

See, I couldn't talk to anyone. I never said a word.

GEORGE

That must have been tough.

ANN

Oh God yeah.

GEORGE

Not to anyone? Not even Verlin?

ANN

Verlin? Ha!

GEORGE

How did you meet him if you couldn't talk.

ANN

In a laundromat. I pretended I was a deaf mute. (laughs) Really, I did. I was spending the summer with my grandfather —he had built this church back in Missouri and got up a congregation, oh, what a place!— and it was a real hot night, and I was in the laundromat, and so hot, and Verlin Cutberth walked in. Oh, boy, was he goodlooking! The way he stood there, folding his underwear, looking me over. I guess I was about as lonely as you get. There was no one around and I had all those clean towels so I thought, oh hell, why not?

GEORGE

Oh, wait now, give me just a second here, to picture this!

Jennifer storms out of the kitchen and turns on the TV. Rose Jewel follows.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, but honey, you go to be practical. You've got school. What are you planning to do, drop out? Waste your young life? And after the baby's here, how are you going to take care of it?

JENNIFER

Mom'll help.

ROSE JEWEL

She can't even get a job, honey!

JENNIFER

(turning off the TV and returning to the kitchen)

I'm not listening, you can go ahead and talk, but I'm not listening.

ROSE JEWEL

(right behind her)

And that Harmony boy's not going to help, you said that yourself, why he's only a child himself.

GEORGE

Okay, so where, in a laundromat, not on the floor, surely not. On a bench, say?

ANN

On top of a row of 35 cent washers. My first time out and I got pregnant. Isn't that just like life?

GEORGE

What happened to that rubber-johnny your mother gave you?

ANN

I don't remember her doing that! I don't think she did. But anyway, Verlin made an honest woman of me. It didn't matter to him that I couldn't talk; he got what he wanted.

GEORGE

What about you?

ANN

(laughs)

I got Jennifer! I guess... Huh! You know, you were right.

(takes a brush from her purse, brushes out her hair)

GEORGE

About what?

ANN

What you said about the dogs, about people who st-stammer not doing it with their dogs. Jennifer was my dog. You know, those sweet little eyes, when I was nursing her, those little eyes rolling up to look at me. All she wanted was love. I sang to her, lullabies, I could sing. And you know, it's not so different, singing and talking. She learned her first words from me.

GEORGE

Yeah, I've heard some of those words.

ANN

Oh, she doesn't know half what she pretends.

GEORGE

So the two of you started talking at the same time.

ANN

Yeah, guess so. And after Jen, I got pretty good with people, too. Not with Verlin, but I didn't have anything to say to Verlin anyway. I took it off him all those years, whatever, but when he tried to hit Jen... knowing she was pregnant.. I swore I'd never let anyone get down on me or my kid, ever again. I went for the hatchet.

GEORGE

You mean ... figuratively.

ANN

No. I went out to the shed and got the hatchet I kill turkeys with.

GEORGE

You went after Verlin with the hatchet you kill turkeys with? But my God, Ann! What'd Verlin do?

ANN

He ran. Oh, he's fast, Verlin was all state champ in the 440. I packed us up, took all the money in the jar, and got us out of there.

GEORGE

But you wouldn't have ... killed him, not really.

ANN

Gee, it seems like that shouldn't be such a tough question, doesn't it? But there he was, hitting Jen.

GEORGE

But he says he wants you back.

ANN

Well sure. I make his life... good.

GEORGE

This, uh, this puts you in a new light.

ANN

Oh, I grab a hatchet and now you take me serious, huh? Yeah, Verlin too. You probably don't understand, you probably don't have any kids, do you.

GEORGE

No, but I think I understand, all right.

Jennifer storms out of the kitchen and off down the hallway.

ROSE JEWEL

(on her heels)

Jennifer, now listen to me, listen to me... It's not like it was when I was a girl. They've got new laws ...

GEORGE

We talked about having kids.

ANN

You were married?

GEORGE

No, but I had a woman that I ... really ... liked. We talked about the kids we were gonna have. We even gave 'em names.

ANN

What happened?

GEORGE

Polio.

ANN

And she left you?

GEORGE

I left her. Those early years, all that pain, Jesus! She couldn't have stood it.

ANN

You didn't even give her a choice, you just left her?

GEORGE

She didn't want to have to choose. And anyway she'd have made the wrong choice, she'd have stayed with me.

ANN

Where is she now?

GEORGE

I don't know. I wonder if she had those kids.

JENNIFER

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

(running out of the hallway, she turns and throws the denim jacket at Rose

Jewel then runs out to the patio into her mother's arms)

Tell her to shut up! She wants to kill the baby! Tell her to shut up!

ROSE JEWEL

Jennifer, come to your senses!

Jennifer pulls out of Ann's arms and flees off up the walkway. Ann faces Rose Jewel, furious, tries to yell at her, but can't. She quivers and contorts with the effort. Finally she simply screams a hoarse scream into Rose Jewel's face, then another, then runs off after Jennifer.

GEORGE

My God woman! Can't you stop!

He wheels off after Ann and Jennifer. Rose Jewel might follow them, but the phone rings. She hesitates then goes to answer it.

ROSE JEWEL

Junior? (beat) Oh! I'll tell you right now, I'm in no mood for this. Why do you keep breathing like that, have you got asthma? (beat) I told you I don't like that kind of talk. My granddaughter says you just want to shock me, well I'm not shocked, I'm just sickened, and I don't see how that can be any fun for you. (beat) Yes, I have a granddaughter, I suppose now you don't want me anymore. (beat) Oh, you do, do you. I'll just bet. Listen, have you tried epinephrine? My husband had asthma, and he used epinephrine, and it cleared right up. (beat) No, he ... died. But he didn't die of asthma, I can tell you that. (beat) Thank you. (beat) Rose Jewel, what's yours. (beat) You're kidding, Roy was my husband's name.

Meanwhile George has wheeled back down the walkway. He starts inside his apartment, hesitates, then wheels to Rose Jewel's door and knocks. Just a sec, Roy, there's someone at the door.

(goes to door)

Oh, it's you. I'm on the phone.

GEORGE

Oh, Junior?

George wheels in as Rose Jewel returns to her phone conversation.

ROSE JEWEL

Hi, Roy, I'm back. (beat) No, it was just nobody. (beat) Well, I don't know, I hardly know you. And it's a bad time, family you know. (beat) Oh, no, no, no, no sir, you tell me where you are! (beat) The Crystal Fishbowl? Yeah, I know the place. Do people really go in there? (beat) About five-seven, curly hair, kind of auburn in color. I'll be wearing a rose-colored dress. (beat) Okay, Roy, see you there.

(hangs up, gets her purse and coat)

I'm sorry, George, you'll have to go home now. I'm going out.

GEORGE

You're going to the Crystal Fishbowl? Who with?

ROSE JEWEL

That is between me and the somebody who cares. Ann's got a key in case she wants back in.

She locks the door and starts off up the walkway, passing Ann who is on her way back. They see each other but do not speak.

GEORGE

Rosie, don't you think —?

(but she's gone; to Ann)

Did you catch her?

ANN

God, that girl can run. I should put her in the 440.

GEORGE

Where's she going?

ANN

Oh, she's just running. I know the feeling.

GEORGE

You saw your mother? You know where she's running to?

ANN

Same place, I guess.

GEORGE

You know, she doesn't seem like such a monster.

ANN

She's not a monster. What makes you say she is.

GEORGE

I said she's not a monster.

ANN

She's not.

GEORGE

That's what I said, Jesus Christ! What are you going to do now?

ANN

Pack again, I guess. I'm not taking Jen back in there.

GEORGE

Where'll you go?

ANN

I ... don't ...

GEORGE

Stay with me.

ANN

You never give up, do you?



GEORGE

You know, Ann, I've been alone a long time. I know I probably don't seem like much to you, but...

ANN

George, don't—

GEORGE

...I'm not so bad, Ann. I'm not. I've always thought that I'd have another chance, that somewhere sometime someone would come into my life. This chair is... I've been sitting here in this chair all these years. I had to let go of a lot of hopes, but this one hope I've held onto. And now here you are, standing there looking at me.

(opens his door for her)

Come on.

After a long moment, she moves into his doorway. She turns.

ANN

George...

GEORGE

No, don't. Don't stop.

She goes into George's apartment. He follows.

Rose Jewel's phone rings.

After a moment, Jennifer comes down the walkway. She tries Rose Jewel's door, finds it locked. She rings the doorbell, looks through the patio window, then wanders off back up the walkway. The phone keeps ringing. The lights dim.

END OF ACT II

### ACT III

THE SCENE: The same, 2:00 the next morning. The stage is illuminated only by the moon and porch lights.

Ann, wrapped in a blanket, comes out of George's apartment. She checks out the patio, checks out Rose Jewel's doorway, then checks up the walkway. She returns and, with a sigh, goes back into George's apartment.

Rose Jewel's phone begins ringing.

Jennifer wanders desolately down the walkway to Rose Jewel's door, tries it for what is clearly the umpteenth time, rings the doorbell.

JENNIFER

Answer the phone. Answer the door.

Starts off, but decides to ring George's doorbell. In a moment Ann opens the door.

What are you doing in there?

ANN

Where have you been?

JENNIFER

Where are your clothes? What are you doing in there? What have you been doing with him?

ANN

Jen, don't start—

JENNIFER

You... ! You ... ! I'm gonna tell Daddy!

ANN

You're going to tell Daddy what?

JENNIFER

How could you do this to him?

ANN

What have I done? You tell me.

JENNIFER

I don't know what you've done. I don't want to know. How could you do this to Daddy?

ANN

Who are you to talk?

JENNIFER

You're married! You're still married! You're married to Daddy! The first goddam man you meet, not even a man, a cripple...

ANN

Shut up! Sh — Sh—

JENNIFER

...and you jump in bed with him! You're nothing but a ... a bitch in heat! Bitch!

Ann lurches into a violent stuttering spasm.

Don't you stutter at me! Don't you dare stutter at me!

Jennifer shakes Ann by the shoulders.

Don't you dare!

Jennifer mimics Ann's contortions. Ann breaks out of her fit and slaps Jennifer across the face. Jennifer falls, looks at her mother in shock, then scrambles to her feet, crying, and starts to run up the walkway.

JENNIFER

(to George as he wheels into his doorway; he is in a robe.)

You keep away from her!

GEORGE

Jesus, you hit her.

JENNIFER

Oh, George, I h-hit her.

GEORGE

You were sleeping on the couch. Why didn't you tell her?

ANN

I didn't have a chance.

GEORGE

Sure you did.

ANN

She wouldn't let me talk. She made up her mind like that.

GEORGE

You slept on the goddam couch, you didn't do anything.

ANN

What if I did? I could have ... could have ... done ... done it all with you, and so what if I did. It's still me. She knows who I am. She turned against me.

GEORGE

Ann, she's just a kid. She thought you were turning against her dad.

ANN

Oh, she doesn't care about her dad. I told you what kind of man he is, what kind of father. Oh, Jen! I couldn't talk to her. I couldn't talk.

GEORGE

Shhhh, it's okay.

ANN

No, she came home looking for me, and I h-hit her, like Verlin!

GEORGE

Did you put that note on the door?

(a moment, then Ann shakes her head)

Ann! Why didn't you do that simple thing? Then she would have known where you were and it wouldn't have been this big—

ANN

I was afr...aid M...mmm...mm

GEORGE

Take your time, say it slow.

ANN

Shut up. I was afraid Mama'd come home first and find the note.

GEORGE

So what if she did?

ANN

Can't you see how she is about you?

GEORGE

She's a grown up woman!

ANN

Doesn't mean she doesn't have f-feelings.

GEORGE

When are you going to stand up for yourself?

ANN

Against which one of you?

GEORGE

Well ... uh... oh, well ... yeah, I guess ... so.

ANN

I'm going after Jen.

GEORGE

Like that? You go put some clothes on. I'll go after her.

ANN

You're not dressed either.

GEORGE

Yeah, but if I meet someone on the street, I'm not so likely to get raped. In fact, it's damn unlikely. Hey, on second thought, keep that on. You look pretty good in my blankets.

ANN

You have the worst timing.

GEORGE

I got you onto my couch, next step's the bed.

ANN

You think so, huh? You think I'm that easy.

GEORGE

What's that even mean, for Christ's sake! You think we're playing some kind of game and you're supposed to play hard-to-get, and I'm supposed to play the man and come sweep you—

ANN

It's not a game.

GEORGE

I've been telling you that all night! Look I want you. I can't put it any straighter. I'm not playing games.

ANN

And because you want me I'm supposed to just be yours? You're just like Verlin. I'm not something you just take.

GEORGE

I don't want to take you. I want you to come to me.

ANN

You think because I don't have anywhere to go, I'm just anybody's.

GEORGE

I'm not just anybody! It's because of this chair, isn't it?

ANN

It has nothing to do with the chair, you know that.

GEORGE

Then why?

ANN

I don't like you, that's why! I don't like how you grab at me! I don't even know who you are. You're the man who lives next door to my mother. And you don't— Oh, why am I saying these terrible things? I can't even talk.

GEORGE

Hey, hey, don't, shhh, don't, don't

ANN

(crying)

And you don't know me. You don't know what I want. And need. For Jen, for me and Jen... you don't. Oh, hell I don't even know what I want.

GEORGE

Hey, look at me. You know me.

ANN

Yeah. You're okay. I'm sorry, George. I know you're a good man.

GEORGE

I keep telling you! Go on in, I'll find Jen.  
(starts to wheel off)

ANN

George. I wish ... I wish you had been her father.

GEORGE

You want to make me weep here and now? What do you think I am, easy?

ANN

Oh, go! Get out of here.

George wheels off. Ann starts back into George's apartment. Rose Jewel's phone begins to ring. Ann hesitates, then as the phone keeps ringing, she runs into George's apartment to return in a moment with the key. She is about to unlock Rose Jewel's door when the phone stops ringing. She goes back into George's apartment.

Rose Jewel enters from the walkway, tipsy, weaving somewhat. She unlocks her door and goes in, turns on the light.

ROSE JEWEL

Shhh, shhh, shhh.

She sees the denim jacket on the floor, picks it up and hangs it on her coat tree. Then she picks up the phone, and pushes a memory button, taking off her coat and shoes and putting on her slippers as she talks.)

What are you doing up? (beat) Well of course I know the phone just rang, I'm the one who rang it! But you were up already, I can hear it in your voice. Don't you know what time it... what time is it? (beat) Two o'clock in the morning! Marge, what in the world are you doing up at this hour, you're going to make yourself sick! (beat) No I won't, I'm protected, I'm loaded. But you're sitting there with no protection at all. What are you doing, working on that fool book, it must be a lulu. (beat) Oh, I just went out. Guess. No, go ahead, guess. (beat) Huh uh, the Crystal Fishbowl. (giggles) A man, his name's Roy. (beat) No, of course not, he's a different Roy, you goose. Boy, is he different! (beat) Well, a kind of ... date, he called up here. (beat) I know, Marge, I'm not stupid! But he was a perfect gentleman. (beat) Well, he wanted me to, but I told him I'm not that kind of girl, not the first time out. (beat) That is as may be, Marge, but that was 50 years ago, I have changed, I am not that kind of girl anymore. (beat) Oh, about 45 I'd say. (beat) Well maybe he was a little older, but I told you I look 35! And I certainly felt 35 tonight. He told me, he said... Marge, now wait, he said didn't he recognize me from the movies, and when I said no I never made any movies, he said that I should have because I sure did look like a movie star. He said... No, Marge, he did, he said... (beat) Oh, you poop! You always know, why can't I ever learn. Yes, I was stood up. I never even met the man, and he stood me up. I just sat there all by myself all night... thinking! About Jennifer and that darn baby, and Ann, and ... Roy...

(begins to cry a bit)

...and there was a jukebox there, and I kept dropping in quarters playing that old...

(searching through the records)

...that song Roy used to like so, that poor sweet little colored girl sang it who was so unhappy, that Holiday girl...

She finds the 78 rpm record and puts it on, having to put down the phone to free her hands. The needle scratches across the record and comes to rest toward the end of "I'll Be Seeing You" by Billie Holiday.

BILLIE

...I'll be seeing you  
In every lovely summer's day,

In everything that's light and gay,  
I'll always think of you that way.  
I'll find you in the morning sun,  
And when the night is new,  
I'll be looking at the moon  
But I'll be seeing you.

Rose Jewel meanwhile forgets Marge, drapes the mantilla around her shoulders, and goes out her door to look up at the moon. As the record ends and automatically begins to replay, Rose Jewel goes back inside, leaving the door open. She finds the phone still off the hook.

ROSE JEWEL

(into phone)

You there? (beat) No, I just forgot about you. Roy loved that song. I was pregnant with Junior and I kept thinking I was going to die in childbirth and never see Roy again, and I played that record over and over, and I saw Roy everywhere. I miss him so much!

She breaks down. Meanwhile Ann comes out of George's apartment, hears the music, and comes to stand outside Rose Jewel's door, overhearing all.

Oh, Marge, I've been so bad. Roy's in heaven, and I don't think I'm going to get there too. I... I killed. I killed, Roy didn't know, but he didn't want any more kids, he never said so but he'd have left me, I know it. And Junior was so cold and awful... No, no, I got to tell, you got to listen... Junior was so awful, and there were, I don't know, through the years I don't know how many, I killed them. (beat) With... a hat pin. (beat) Oh, dear Lord, I know! It was awful! But then, but then, when Ann came I was afraid, Doctor Davis said I was just perforated, and so I thought she would miscarry on her own, but when she didn't, Violet Ruby told me this other way she used where you bake bricks and get them real hot and put them in a bucket and pour turpentine on them and then you sit on the bucket.

(beat, laughs)

Yeah, but all I did was scald my monkey and I couldn't sit down for two weeks. But Marge, I think that's why Ann turned out the way she did. I think I must have caused brain damage, you know she's never been right. And I just hated her! From the moment... no, I did, I got to finish, Marge... from the moment she came out of the womb and she looked up at me... and she was so ugly! I couldn't even come up with a name for her. Ann! Ann! Just as ugly as she was, but it was all I could think of, looking at her. And after all that, Roy loved her so, and I was so jealous! Like a pet rat he loved her, just to play with, never to take care of! I tried so hard! I wanted to be a good mother, but I'm horrible! And Marge... oh, God forgive me... I still hate her! Can God ever forgive a mother who hates her own child? He's not ever going to let that kind of woman into heaven, and Roy's up there waiting, and now here I am trying to get Jennifer to kill too, and she's just a child herself...

Meanwhile, Jennifer has entered down the walkway, George wheeling on behind her. She finds Ann outside Rose Jewel's door.



JENNIFER

I'm sorry, Mom!

Jennifer throws her arms around Ann. Ann tries pulls her quickly away from the door, but Rose Jewel has heard.

George told me, and I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

ROSE JEWEL

(whispering into the phone)

Marge, hush honey. They're outside. Call you back.

(hangs up)

GEORGE

Now you two look great like that. You stay that way. Hey, your mom's home.

(wheeling into Rose Jewel's apartment)

Rosie, welcome home, you old night owl, where you been? Hey, you got Billie Holliday in here?

ROSE JEWEL

I was just listening. I was just going to turn her off.

GEORGE

No, don't, she's a terrific tragic singer, she can make you miserable. Don't turn her off.

ROSE JEWEL

No, I don't want it.

She takes off the record.

GEORGE

Where you been?

ROSE JEWEL

I was ... out.

GEORGE

You have a good time? You go dancing?

ROSE JEWEL

Uh huh. I mean no.

Jennifer enters the apartment, Ann lagging behind.

JENNIFER

Grandma, I'm sorry.

ROSE JEWEL

No, honey. I'm ... I'm sorry.

JENNIFER

No, I been out there all night thinking about everything you said, and you're right. I got no business having a baby.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, no, honey I was wrong. I was wrong about everything. You have that baby, hon. If you want it, you have it.

JENNIFER

No, I don't want it. Is that okay, Mom? I been thinking about those pigs, and I don't want it.

GEORGE

Jennifer, this is not a pig!

JENNIFER

Yeah, but this world is no good. I don't want to bring a kid into this world. He'd just turn into Cecil Odom.

ROSE JEWEL

Jennifer, it's so late now, don't think about it now, honey. In the morning, it'll be brighter.

JENNIFER

I'm hungry. All I had all day was a dill pickle. Is that chicken still in there?

ROSE JEWEL

It sure is.

GEORGE

Hey, great, I'll join you! And you got any more of them brownies, Rosie?

ROSE JEWEL

In there, too.

(as Jennifer and George start into the kitchen)

Uh, Jennie.

JENNIFER

Yes, Grandma, I'll wash my hands.

ROSE JEWEL

No, I mean—

But Jennifer and George have gone into the kitchen, leaving Rose Jewel and Ann alone. There is a long moment. Rose Jewel can't quite look at Ann.

ANN

(finally)  
Oh, Mama. Fuck you.

ROSE JEWEL

You were outside the door. You heard.

ANN

Why didn't you just kill me, too? Do you know what my life's been like?

ROSE JEWEL

I did everything I could. I gave you all there was.

ANN

All I wanted was your love.

ROSE JEWEL

Honey, I didn't have it to give. Oh, Lord, forgive me. And honey ... oh, I wish you could see your eyes. All these years you've been looking at me with those eyes. You think I don't see what's in them? You think I don't feel my own pain... at being ... so ... empty for you? Honey, you might just as well ask me for the moon, I could get it for you easier. All I had I gave your Daddy.

ANN

(picks up driftwood sculpture)  
Why did you keep this? You always hated it.

ROSE JEWEL

I don't know. I kept it for you, I believe. I believe I did.

ANN

He made it for me. You know that, don't you?

ROSE JEWEL

Did he?

ANN

You know he did! You told Jen he made it for you, but you always knew he made it for me.

ROSE JEWEL

He told me it was for me.

ANN

It doesn't matter, but it was for me. He told me it was for me.

ROSE JEWEL

Do you want it now?

ANN

No. Yes! I'll take it. I'll pack it up tomorrow with the rest of our things. We're staying with George tonight.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, but where will you go?

ANN

I don't know. Maybe ... maybe ... m-m-m-

She gasps and looks at Rose Jewel who gasps, too.

ROSE JEWEL

You're talking to me! You haven't ... You're ... you're... Jennifer! Jennifer!

Jennifer runs in, alarmed, George wheeling in behind her.

JENNIFER

What!?! What'd you do to her?

ROSE JEWEL

She's talking to me. Listen! (to Ann) Say something.

ANN

I guess I just had to have something I wanted to say as bad as "Fuck you, Mama."

JENNIFER

You said "Fuck you" to Grandma?

ANN

(starts to laugh)

Yeah, I guess I did.

JENNIFER

(throws her arm around Ann)

Mom!

They fall on the couch, laughing. Rose Jewel starts to laugh, too.

GEORGE

Really, we should give Donahue a call. He would go crazy over you three.

Rose Jewel picks up the phone and pushes a button.

ROSE JEWEL

Junior? Oh, so you're home, huh? (beat) Yes, I do know what time it is; it's the only time I can reach you. But it won't take but a second more, Junior, because I have only a brief message, from me and from you sister, I believe.

(takes a deep breath)

Fuck you, Junior.

(hangs up)

Swan to goodness. Isn't it better?

JENNIFER

Well, Grandma, welcome to liberation.

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, my, I hope not Swan to goodness! Honey, Ann... I wouldn't blame you if you didn't want to, but I'd like... I kind of hope you'll stay on here, I mean just until you get settled and get a job, because you'll want a place of your own, of course, I mean I imagine you will, and Jennifer's going to be wanting to find a school, and when she has the baby—

JENNIFER

Grandma—

ROSE JEWEL

...If she has the baby... she's going to be wanting a babysitter, and if you'd like me to, I'd like to ... help.

ANN

I don't know, Mama. I just don't know what to think now. All these years.

ROSE JEWEL

Honey, I want to— I know I can't... but I want to try to make up for those years.

ANN

I don't know if I can even try.

ROSE JEWEL

The morning sun, honey, let's wait for the morning sun, everything will look so much brighter.

JENNIFER

Yeah, and when you get that job.

ANN

What job?

JENNIFER

Any damn job you want. Ain't that right?

ANN

Damn right.

GEORGE

Ann, you know what I told you, you've always got a place with me. I mean, when you get your divorce, and—

JENNIFER

Hey!

GEORGE

Hey what?

JENNIFER

Don't push her around. Divorce is a very serious decision, you know? Give her some air.

GEORGE

Just letting her know her options.

JENNIFER

This is my dad you're talking about. I want to hear from him, too.

ANN

Jen, I guess I can make my own decisions.

JENNIFER

Maybe so, maybe not.

ROSE JEWEL

George, uh, Georgie, uh, uh...

GEORGE

Rosie, I love your daughter.

ROSE JEWEL

But... but how could you love her? You only just met her.

GEORGE

I've been waiting a long time for her.

ROSE JEWEL

Well, but I was kind of thinking ...

GEORGE

Yeah, I know. But can you picture it?

ROSE JEWEL

Well, but... well, no, I guess I really can't, can you?

GEORGE

(turning to Ann)

Well, with the right ...

ANN

George, don't start right now, okay? But uh, just for the night, would it be okay if—

GEORGE

ANY time!

JENNIFER

You're gonna sleep over there? Not without me, you're not.

ANN

You're going to be there, too. The couch makes into a bed that can sleep two, doesn't it, George?

GEORGE

(wheeling out the door to his apartment)

Yeah, and I've got some satin sheets I been saving for the right occasion. This wasn't the occasion I had in mind, but oh well, let's call it a preview of coming attractions.

JENNIFER

(pushing the chair)

Do you have a lock on your bedroom door? I mean one that locks you in?

GEORGE

What was that song you were playing today?

JENNIFER

"World Destruction; Your Life Ain't Nothing."

GEORGE

Huh uh. "World CONstruction; Your Life is Everything."

Jennifer pushes George in his wheel chair into his apartment. Ann and Rose Jewel are left alone together. They look at each other a long moment.

ANN

Well, Mama ... ?

ROSE JEWEL

Well, baby ... ?

The phone rings. Ann looks at it with anxiety

ANN

Aren't you going to answer it?

ROSE JEWEL

I don't know who it is.

ANN

You can find out easy enough. You think it's that man? You want me to do the talking for you?

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, no, I don't think he's going to call any more.

ANN

I think Junior might ... be thinking—

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, I don't think so, honey. That wouldn't be Junior, oh, no, no.

ANN

Maybe Aunt Marge?

ROSE JEWEL

Oh, she just bought me that old thing to show off how much smarter than me she is, how she can work all the buttons, but she never calls me, I always have to call her. I think she threw away my number. She's sitting over there right now in that canyon of hers, writing all this up, I just bet you. No, I think it's ... Verlin.

ANN

Verlin?

(checks her watch)

Oh, yeah, Missouri time, he just got up to slop the pigs.



ROSE JEWEL

No, honey, he's in Los Angeles. He called today from the airport. I would have told you, but... you were out on the patio there with Georgie.

(Ann goes to the phone, hesitates.)

He said he's going to drag you back whether you want it or not, and if you ever run from him again, he'll— well, he ... he didn't—

ANN

He is such a pig.

Ann flips a switch on the side of the telephone, and it stops ringing.

ROSE JEWEL

How did you do that?

ANN

Mama, you mean you've had this phone all this time and didn't know you could turn it off?

(unplugs the receiver cord from the phone)

Look the whole thing comes apart; you don't have to listen or talk either.

ROSE JEWEL

(takes the disconnected receiver, puts it to her ear)

Well I swain! What won't they think of next?

Ann laughs, moves toward the door, hesitates. Then she goes to Rose Jewel and tentatively embraces her.

ANN

Goodnight, Mama.

ROSE JEWEL

(embracing her, too)

Goodnight, baby. Thank you ... for so much.

Ann goes into George's apartment, leaving Rose Jewel alone in her apartment. Rose Jewel looks again at the receiver in her hand, then wraps the cord around it and starts for the hallway as the lights dim.

ROSE JEWEL

Swan to goodness, isn't that better?

THE END