

THE NAKED HOUSE PAINTING SOCIETY

By Robert Bowie Jr.

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Cast of Characters

- Carol Is married to Michael and is in her early thirties. She is a nurse at the island hospital.
- Michael Is married to Carol and is in his late-thirties. He teaches school at the island public school.
- Andrea Is married to Brendan and is younger than the rest.
- Brendan Is married to Andrea and is in his late-thirties.

The Set

The set is primarily a wooden deck, which has been painted white and spreads out in front of a huge gray-shingled clapboard summerhouse which is only partly revealed on the stage. The house is faded from the blustering of winter storms. The paint of the white trim of the windows and the door is cracked and slightly chipped. There is an extension ladder against the edge of the house. The kitchen windows look out over the deck. There are window boxes in front of the windows that hold blooming geraniums. A screen door provides entry to and from the kitchen. There is a trash can next to the door. On the deck there are beach chairs stacked against the house and a stylish glass top table and black wrought iron chairs. On the deck is a mover's box containing a potter's wheel. At the farthest point of downstage right there is an enclosed outdoor shower.

The offstage area to the downstage right of the deck is graced with a rolling field filled with tall grass and wild flowers. At the edge of the field, down by a beach and shallow cove, there is an old Indian burial ground which is separately lit. The shallow water cove behind the house is filled with mussel shoals and oyster beds and the nests, along the shore, of seabirds. The offstage area downstage left holds a dirt road with a ridge in it that provides difficult transit to the house from the main road. The summer nights are cool, but the sun during the day comes down heavy with its light onto the deck and field and surrounding trees and inlet.

The set must have the feel of beautiful, peaceful, summer isolation. The tourists are far down island. They only come the twenty miles in buses to see Aquinnah and the Gay Head Cliffs and the small reservation of the Wampanoag tribe of Gay Head.

The Time and Place of the Play

The entire play takes place on the deck and briefly at the Indian burial ground. Act I takes place on a weekend after Labor Day. Act II, Scene 8 takes place in late November or early December of the same year and Act II, Scene 9 through 12 take place the following spring on Memorial Day weekend.

ACT I, SCENE 1

SETTING: It is slightly before sunset. MICHAEL and CAROL have just come up the long driveway to the house and parked their jeep. They are in the process of discovering that no one is at home yet. MICHAEL has checked the windows on the other side of the house and returns to CAROL as she stands alone on the deck. CAROL holds a gift wrapped bottle of wine.

CAROL

So, we drove all the way up here and you still won't tell me where you were last night... Oh God I've dropped the keys. Do you have the keys?

(Checking her pockets feverishly and then finding them.)

No, here they are...

MICHAEL

(Laughing and looking at the house.)

I don't believe he bought this house. Christ, we painted this house back then. Man, it didn't get any smaller.

CAROL

They said four o'clock.

MICHAEL

(He is still looking at the huge house.)

Well, the ferry must be late.

CAROL

It doesn't even look like they've moved in yet.

MICHAEL

No. There are tons of boxes in there. I haven't seen this house in ten years.

CAROL

We've got a hell of a reunion in the making but the only thing that is missing is Andrea and Brendan.

MICHAEL

What do you think this place went for?

CAROL

This far up the Island and with this ground - I don't know...

MICHAEL

We're talkin' big bucks here.

CAROL

Michael, it's no big deal.

MICHAEL

I know Carol, but he's probably changed... Remember we used to paint these houses naked.

CAROL

(Sarcastic humor.)

Yeah, he probably isn't a naked venture capitalist.

MICHAEL

Bad visual.

CAROL

You know what he does? I looked him up.

MICHAEL

No.

CAROL

"Manage his legacy." That's what it said. "One of the richest men on Wall Street... in ten years."

MICHAEL

You watch, he'll show up in suspenders with some kinda asshole designer luggage.

CAROL

Honey, why are you so scared?

MICHAEL

Carol I'm not scared - I mean it's been ten years. We just painted houses together for one summer. He bought a summer house - he's moving back, you know - tourists aren't happy unless they know "the locals." Why does he care about us?

CAROL

It was good times. Relax.

MICHAEL

It's weird.

CAROL

Get over it Michael. It'll be good to see them again.

MICHAEL

Let's practice how we're going to say hello.

CAROL

We've got nothing to be ashamed of...

MICHAEL

(To himself, practicing
various greetings.)

Hi...Hey there... Hello.

(He grabs his crotch and gives a
Bronx cheer and then bursts out
laughing.)

I'm only kidding.

CAROL

Sure you are...

MICHAEL

(Indicating the bottle that
CAROL holds.)

He probably won't like the wine.

CAROL

Give him your book of poems.

MICHAEL

No.

CAROL

Why not, you've got it with you, haven't you?

MICHAEL

Yeah - so what?

CAROL

So just give it to him. That's what you've been doin' while he's been making all his money.

MICHAEL

Maybe I'll give it to Andrea. She'd probably read it.

CAROL

(Catching the slight.)

Oooh.

MICHAEL

What and tell him that I teach school in Vineyard Haven all winter and still paint houses all summer to make ends meet for us.

CAROL

Well, what are you going to tell him that you won the Nobel Prize?

MICHAEL

No, I'll tell him I'm an archeologist - when we were painting this house, that morning he found this little Indian graveyard down at the end of the field. He was down there all the time.

CAROL

Just give him the book- that's all I'm saying... And then he'll say" ...Oooh, how boring!"

MICHAEL

Now that's funny.

CAROL

I'm just kidding.

MICHAEL

Brendan had already broken up with you when we painted this house.

CAROL

So? I heard about it...

MICHAEL

The owner was this big fat guy we met drinkin' down Island at the "Leaside." He struck up a conversation. He was drunk. He kept say'n, "Friend, you got to paint my house tomorrow." He was desperate. So we went the next day and it rained. He wanted us to put on latex paint on a rainy day.

CAROL

Well maybe he went to "house painter's hell" or something?

MICHAEL

I just hate jobs that weren't finished right.

CAROL

Ten years later?

MICHAEL

Andrea painted this house with us back then.

CAROL

Why does this bring up old shit for you?

MICHAEL

Because I had her first. I was sleeping with her before I married you? I just don't know why he'd call us out of the blue...

CAROL

Jesus, Michael! Come on - you two were best friends that summer. You used to call him "The Boss." You worshipped him Michael...

MICHAEL

I'll give you even odds that he wants something.

CAROL

You mean for old times sake or something?

MICHAEL

Yeah. He'd do something like that. Like he wants us to paint his house.

CAROL

You think that's why he called us?

MICHAEL

I'd make him do it with us.

CAROL

So, no problem.

MICHAEL

What do you mean?

CAROL

Just tell him if it's for old time's sake you all have to do it naked.

MICHAEL

You're crazy.

CAROL

No, you're crazy. He wouldn't ask us to do that.

MICHAEL

He might. He'd have to pay me a lot to do it.

CAROL

No, he wouldn't.

MICHAEL

Ten years of no contact and then this?

(Beat)

Andrea and I were together when we started painting this house... It was this time of year...

(Beat)

Something is go'n on...

(CAROL goes over to MICHAEL
and kisses him.)

CAROL

Don't be jealous.

MICHAEL

I'm not jealous.

CAROL

(She kisses him again.)

We having "a little hurricane." An "incident?"

(Beat)

Here we go again?

MICHAEL

(Laughing at himself.)

..Building off of Africa?

CAROL

It feels like it's already over the Canary Islands?

MICHAEL

(Gives her a big
affectionate hug.)

..Come'n across the Atlantic?

CAROL

It started come'n up here. I could feel it. You couldn't?

MICHAEL

..Up the Atlantic Coast?

CAROL

(Holding him tight.)

Smashing the beach houses and sending the refuse out to sea?

MICHAEL

(Hugging and kissing her.)

We've got each other baby. Is it hurricane season?

(Hugs her genuinely and
affectionately again.)

Sorry. Maybe that is what it is?

(Kisses her again.)

We've got each other. We've got each other.

CAROL

Yes, we do.

MICHAEL

(Laughing)

...The first, the first day down here that summer Brendan and I are at the Leaside sitting on bar stools and gett'n a feel of the summer.

And Andrea comes in by herself and goes and sits way down at the other end of the bar. And Brendan follows her with his eyes all the way down to when she sits down and then, and I'm not kidding you, and then he says: "I want to provide her with everything she ever wants and preserve her feral beauty." He never took his eyes off of her. He says "...Her feral beauty" and then "I love everything about her." There is a moment and then I elbowed him hard to wake him up and I said: "I'll bet you I can get her in bed tonight." He wouldn't bet me.

CAROL

(Sarcastically)

Michael, you are a real angel. I didn't know that.

MICHAEL

He's got her now. He's had friends since us. Why does he need us?

CAROL

..Well, you sure have.

MICHAEL

Leave it alone.

CAROL

...No male friends...

MICHAEL

Get out of your imagination, Carol. Why are you on me like this?

CAROL

...Just female friends. Where were you last night?

MICHAEL

I finished painting the Weisner's house at noon and I finished acting in the playhouse last night. I went out to the beach with a bottle. It would have been nice if you had seen the show.

CAROL

Is the summer over, finally?

MICHAEL

Yes.

CAROL

No more summer stock? No more summer waitresses?

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL goes over to a flower box and picks a few of the geraniums that are in bloom and makes a handful of them into a bouquet and returns to her.)

My love, you are an artist with your forgiveness.

(He hands them to her.)

I love you.

(He kisses her.)

The winter has begun. Come on let's go.

CAROL

No. I told him we would be here.

(CAROL sits down at the table and gets a magazine out of her handbag and starts to read as she waits.)

MICHAEL

(Beat - moment of realization)

I know why he's coming up here....

(CAROL starts leafing through the pages of the magazine.)

The first time we came up here to paint the place it was too hot and wet to paint...

(The light changes and the scene is a flashback. It is ten years before. ANDREA enters the stage in the misty blue light of the predawn. She carries two paint cans and brushes and is dressed in a yellow slicker that hides her face but exposes her legs. She hands MICHAEL a paint can and a brush. It has been raining, but it has stopped. They meet on the deck. She holds an umbrella over their heads.)

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL turns around and
they kiss.)

Where's Brendan?

ANDREA

Look, do you see something moving over on the dunes?

MICHAEL

(Laughing)

Don't fuck with me, Andrea - it's raining.

(He looks up at the house.)

Jesus. Look at the size of this Goddamn place.

ANDREA

The paint will never hold after this rain.

MICHAEL

Hey, the deal Brendan stuck last night in the bar was five
hundred dollars if we can do it in a day.

ANDREA

(Looking off stage right.)

Look, it is him out there.

MICHAEL

(Snuggling up to ANDREA.)

You know we could do this alone.

ANDREA

You think you're that good?

MICHAEL

With this rain he'll be touching up behind us all day.

ANDREA

What do you want, Michael?

MICHAEL

I just don't want him touching up behind us all day.

ANDREA

So, what do you want?

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN comes on stage from the dunes, also in a yellow slicker, holding some paper in one hand and some things hidden in his fist in the other.)

The paint is never going to hold.

MICHAEL

Do we still have a deal?

BRENDAN

Yeah, five hundred at the end of the day plus ten dollars an hour if it takes longer. He slammed the door in my face. He doesn't care about the money or the rain.

MICHAEL

Why?

ANDREA

What were you doing out on the dunes?

BRENDAN

These papers were nailed to the door when I got here. Some of the copies blew down the beach.

ANDREA

What's in your other hand?

BRENDAN

I leaned down to pick the papers out of the dune grass and there were chips of pottery and some arrowheads.

(To ANDREA.)

Here, Andrea. My gift for you.

(He hands the artifacts to ANDREA.)

MICHAEL

So the deal is on?

ANDREA

(Looks at MICHAEL to let him know that she is in control and then addresses BRENDAN.)

Thank you Brendan, but look how big this place is.

MICHAEL

(Catching the drift of ANDREA'S game.)

We can do it though.

ANDREA

But we'll need more paint.

MICHAEL

Brendan, trust me...

(Kidding him as the odd man out.)

You should go.

BRENDAN

You two spend all night together and you still want me gone? Okay, okay, just because I'm a nice guy I'll go...
(He turns to exit.)

MICHAEL

You're the boss, remember? You struck the deal...

BRENDAN

(Joking as he exits.)

Yeah, and don't you forget it.
(BRENDAN exits.)

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

Nice job. The guy can take a hint.

ANDREA

Just make up your mind, Michael.

MICHAEL

A couple of hours we can get it half done - the trim and some windows - then we take a long lunch on the roof and wait ...

(FLASHBACK--Lights Go Out)

CAROL

(The lights on the stage now holds the coming of the night. MICHAEL is laughing at the memory as the flashback ends. CAROL turns in her chair to look at him.)

Michael, why are you laughing?

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1 SCENE 2

SETTING It is a little later. A car horn beeps. A set of headlights level and then pass across MICHAEL and CAROL. The sound of a Land Rover engine turning off and the slam of car doors awaken CAROL as she doses on the porch in one of the folding chairs. MICHAEL has been leaning against the house. BRENDAN bolts onto the stage from the audience. He is dressed in suspenders, etc. and carries designer luggage as well as a bottle of champagne.

BRENDAN

(Embracing MICHAEL and CAROL excitedly.)

I knew you guys wouldn't abandon me. Sorry we're late...

ANDREA

(Carrying a grocery bag on stage.)

Oh, it's been so long. Hello. Hello.

BRENDAN

We missed the ferry and I had to talk my way onto the later boat.

(He tries to open the champagne.)

MICHAEL

(As soon as he can make eye contact with ANDREA.)

Hey, I waited for you.

(Recreating his earlier moves to amuse CAROL as he addresses BRENDAN.)

Hi... Hey there... Hello.

(Instead of grabbing his crotch he looks at BRENDAN.)

Nice suspenders! You so important now you can't come up on a Friday night?

BRENDAN

(Laughing with MICHAEL and referring to the suspenders.)

I wore them all the way up here just to piss you off.

(There are overlapping but awkward greetings all around. The awkwardness is always ever-present.)

ANDREA

(Kissing MICHAEL and CAROL.)

God, you all must be starved. I'm sorry we're so late.

(Hugging both of them.)

Oooh... I can't believe it's been 10 years...

BRENDAN

I've got champagne to start the weekend off.

(He continues to wrestle with the cork.)

Take one of the cups.

(MICHAEL and CAROL each take a cup and CAROL inconspicuously hides her bottle of wine in one of the chairs.)

CAROL

Oh this is going to be such fun.

MICHAEL

(Taunting CAROL.)

Hey kiss him, honey... You two were boyfriend and girlfriend once.

BRENDAN

(Pops the champagne cork.)

Okay - the weekend has begun.

(He pours champagne into their plastic cups.)

Put the glasses down for a minute -

(He gestures for them all to hold hands.)

Let's hold each other's hands...

CAROL

(Repulsed by the excessive intimacy of the suggestion.)

No, come on. I'll drink the champagne instead.

ANDREA

Oh, please Brendan.

(She turns away from him in rejection of the request.)

They all flounder for a moment.)

CAROL

(To ANDREA)

You look so good. You haven't changed a bit.

ANDREA

Neither have you.

CAROL

(To ANDREA)

You haven't seen the reading glasses. They are an inch thick. I can't see a thing.

ANDREA

(Teasing CAROL)

Hey, I'm the one over here with the crow's feet.

(She laughs.)

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN)

Did you really wear those suspenders?

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL, developing his
joke.)

...And designer luggage, too.

(He holds up his glass for a
toast.)

To our best friends. Friends from the beginning. Friends
and lovers from the beginning and friends forever.

(They all lift their glasses and
laugh awkwardly. BRENDAN offers
to fill empty glasses to break the
silence.)

CAROL

(The awkward pause continues
and increases.)

So is this the first time you've been here?

ANDREA

Oh, no, we went to closing up here last weekend and came up
here...

BRENDAN

(Beat)

You all must be starved.

ANDREA

...I bought fresh corn and we got some lobsters on the Ferry.

BRENDAN

(Searching through his
pockets.)

Oh God, I can't find the key.

ANDREA

(Tense - her nerves are on edge.)

Come on! Brendan, they're hungry...

BRENDAN

(Searching his pockets.)

Relax honey - I had them on the boat. I've got them somewhere.

ANDREA

(Apologizing to the others.)

We drove all the way up from New York and then we missed the boat. I just wanted to take a shower and we're late for you all.

BRENDAN

(Now searching his coat for the keys.)

You can take your shower. I'm going to make the dinner. Go on.

ANDREA

In the outdoor shower?

MICHAEL

(Taking the advantage.)

Yeah - like the old days ...

ANDREA

(Changing tone and looking at MICHAEL.)

That's why we're here...

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN.)

I can open it.

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL.)

Go on.

BRENDAN

No wait a minute. The key is somewhere.

MICHAEL

I can open it.

(He goes over to the door.)

ANDREA
(To MICHAEL.)

Go on.

MICHAEL

(Slams himself against the door
and then produces a pen knife,
jimmies the door and slams himself
against it.)

It's easy.

ANDREA
(She kicks off her shoes and
begins to disrobe.)

Get me a towel in there.

(BRENDAN is in a contained
panic.)

MICHAEL

Sure.

(MICHAEL prepares to slam himself
against the door again with his
knife in hand.)

BRENDAN
(Violently turns on MICHAEL)

No! Don't do that! Back off!

MICHAEL
(Enjoying BRENDAN'S
reaction)

Okay sorry. What are you protecting?

ANDREA

(As she continues to disrobe and
neatly fold and stack her clothes
on one of the chairs.)

There are towels in the boxes inside the door.

BRENDAN

(Finding his key in his
briefcase.)

I put it in here because I didn't want to lose it.

(Looking for laughter to
cover his embarrassment.)

He unlocks the door.)

Michael, you can go in now.

MICHAEL

(Testing Brandan)

So can I enter your house now?

(He goes in, not waiting for
a response.)

CAROL

(Trying to get in the spirit
of things to help Brendan
out.)

A briefcase. I've never seen you with a briefcase.

(Brendan is only thinking of
his wife disrobing.)

Stand up and hold it.

(Laughing.)

Let me see what you look like on Wall Street.

BRENDAN

(Carrying out the joke.)

I can't believe it either.

(He stands up straight and holds
the briefcase in a pose as his
wife undresses behind him.)

The man in the grey flannel suit..

CAROL

(To BRENDAN.)

Hey, after we broke up I went to grad school in Boston for
a while.

BRENDAN

That's great.

CAROL

Well, Michael was in this accident so I came back here -
you know to be with him. Did you know about that?

BRENDAN

(He glances at ANDREA'S
progress from the corner of
his eye.)

Forget about it - the world is rotten with grad students.

CAROL

(Touching his hand.)

No big deal.

(Beat.)

You all right?

BRENDAN

(Embarrassed)

Yea. I knew it wasn't.

CAROL

I'm a nurse at the hospital now. It's steady work down
here in the winter. I like it...

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN.)

Unless you want me to show these people what ten years has
done to my body you'd better get me a towel in there.

BRENDAN

(To ANDREA lovingly.)

Andrea -- they'd be envious.

(Exiting to the house quickly.)

Michael where's that towel?

CAROL

(To ANDREA as they stand
alone together with ANDREA
half naked in front of
CAROL.)

Looks like you want a shower in the worst kind of way...

ANDREA

(The tension in her has
reached its apex.)

It has been a dirty, miserable day...

CAROL

(Beat)

I wish I could still do that...

ANDREA

Do what?

CAROL

(Looking after BRENDAN who
is racing to satisfy
ANDREA'S needs.)

Just "that".

ANDREA

(Beat)

The city was so hot. I just want a shower.

(Beat. As she thinks about
the comment.)

Then we can all have a nice dinner. The lobsters are big.

(She heads for the outdoor
shower.)

BRENDAN

(Coming from the house with a
towel and a bathrobe.)

I found the soap and shampoo.

(ANDREA turns on the
shower.)

I'll get dinner ready.

(He hands the towel and bathrobe
over the edge of the shower
stall.)

CAROL

(To BRENDAN)

I'll set the table - okay?

BRENDAN

I want us to eat out here. The stars are out. I packed
some candles.

CAROL

(To BRENDAN.)

Why did you invite us here?

BRENDAN

Why?

CAROL

Nobody's going to get hurt, are they?

BRENDAN

(To CAROL.)

Hurt?

(MICHAEL exits from the screen door with a towel around his neck. He stops to inspect the box with the potter's wheel in it and opens it.)

I've got to shuck the corn and start the water for the lobsters.

(He looks at MICHAEL and then at his wife in the shower as he speaks to CAROL.)

I packed an old cutting knife in a box upstairs. Will you get it for me?

(BRENDAN and CAROL exit through the screen door.)

MICHAEL

(Yelling to ANDREA who is in the shower.)

What is this stuff in the box?

ANDREA

(From within the shower)

What?

MICHAEL

You heard me.

(Opening the box and starting to set up the potter's wheel.)

ANDREA

(From within the shower.)

What?

MICHAEL

(Drifting slowly toward the shower.)

Do you want me to set it up?

ANDREA

(From within the shower.)

I can't hear you.

(Looking over the shower stall.)

The wheel you mean?

MICHAEL

(He walks over to her and stops and then aggressively puts his hands on the top of the shower and looks her over as she turns off the water.)

I just was askin' if you wanted me to set it up?

(Referring to the potter's wheel.)

You heard me.

(BRENDAN pushes open the screen door and watches what follows. MICHAEL and ANDREA don't see him. BRENDAN puts his hands in his pockets and doesn't disturb them. He just watches.)

ANDREA

What are you lookin' at?

MICHAEL

(Turning away, self-satisfied.)

If you haven't seen it, you don't know what it is... And if you have, it don't make no difference.

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL playfully.)

Well come on in, the water's fine.

(MICHAEL laughs. BRENDAN has gone to the far end of the deck and continues to observe them unnoticed. She exits the shower with the robe around her.)

Can you make it work?

MICHAEL

Sure.

ANDREA

(Pointing to the potter's wheel.)

Then please do... I'm going inside to dry off.

(She exits past him as he watches. They smile at each other and both exit through the screen door. MICHAEL is respectfully following her at an appropriate distance. BRENDAN watches them exit and then he folds his arms.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1 SCENE 3

SETTING The lights rise on the porch. It is slightly later the same night. BRENDAN is downstage center shucking the corn. MICHAEL is putting together the potter's wheel. There is a long pause before either speaks.

BRENDAN

(As he speaks he tries to
get MICHAEL'S attention.)

It's a beautiful night. It's so clear. I remember nights
like this... Do you?

MICHAEL

(He has just finished
setting up the potter's
wheel.)

You know if nothing else, I'm a craftsman. Maybe that is
what I was always supposed to be.

BRENDAN

No, you were a poet. You are a poet is what I mean.
That's something you were born into...

MICHAEL

(Coming over to BRENDAN.)

It's still a craft. You need some help with the corn?

BRENDAN

Sure, pull up a chair.

(Beat)

The last corn is always beautiful. Look at the color of the
kernels. Andrea bought some fresh tomatoes at a roadside
stand coming up here. Did you see how beautiful they are?
She studied them in their baskets. She couldn't make up her
mind and the clock was ticking in my head. I knew we were
so close to missing the boat, but I admired the time she
spent. She really is an artist and I had to kill the
tension in me and let her decide. I kept saying to myself
"What is missing the boat?"

MICHAEL

(Softly to BRENDAN as he picks up
the first piece of corn and
prepares to strip it.)

She knew what she was doing.

BRENDAN

Yes, she did. If I just take time to watch her, every time
I do, she has this wonderful sense of things. She
understands all of life in a way that I do not.

MICHAEL

(Referring to missing the
boat.)

She takes what she needs. Doesn't she, Brendan? No, she
knew what she was doing.

BRENDAN

(Confused)

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

Like a fine-grained whetstone sharpens a knife. She's got
well honed survival skills.

BRENDAN

You've got such a great way with words. I wrote a poem for
her, a week ago, the day before we closed on the house.
It's about this place and the wildflowers in the meadow...
I've got it in our bedside table. I'm waiting for the
right moment to give it to her.

MICHAEL

Is this some game for you, Brendan? What do you want?

BRENDAN

I want your book of poems. I know you have a book of
poems, don't you? Are you going to give them to Andrea?
Are you still writing sonnets?

MICHAEL

So what did you pay for this place?

BRENDAN

It's got all of this acres and acres of private space
around it and right on the water. The house needs some
work but both of us know all about that from work'n on it
years ago. It failed the perk test and the sewer and drain
floods the meadow during the spring storms. It's an old
house. I think it was too much for the people who bought it
at the auction when we were here years and years ago.
Nobody has owned it since. I bought it from them.

MICHAEL
So how much?

BRENDAN
A lot of millions.

MICHAEL
(Changing the subject.)
Where did you go while I was setting up the potter's wheel?

BRENDAN
Oh, I just went for a walk.

MICHAEL
(Stripping the piece of corn.)
Where?

BRENDAN
...Just down the beach.

MICHAEL
(Stops stripping the corn.)
I looked across the field. You remember the old Indian
graveyard?

BRENDAN
(Beat)
You just walk off the beach and up the bank and you're
there...

(Beat)
MICHAEL
You went up there?
(Beat)
You told me ten years ago the place frightened you.
(MICHAEL waits for an answer
but doesn't get one.)
Remember?

BRENDAN
The last few years I have gone into the New York Public
Library and I have researched the Wampanoag people. I
found some of the artifacts I had given to Andrea. I think
I understand those graves.

MICHAEL

Before you bought this place?

BRENDAN

I think Andrea has great memories of the summer we painted houses up here.

MICHAEL

This was the last place we painted that summer...

BRENDAN

Yes it was...

MICHAEL

Is it like there is some unfinished business left up here?

BRENDAN

...Andrea and I left for New York the next day.

MICHAEL

(Continuing to strip the corn.)

I saw you have paint cans in there.

BRENDAN

Next spring I'm goin' to paint the house. I could get the paint cheaper in New York City. It didn't cost me anything extra to bring it up here last weekend when we came up for the closing...

MICHAEL

You want me to help you paint this place?

BRENDAN

No. You don't have to do that.

MICHAEL

We could all do it this weekend. Each take a quarter of the house. Hell, at least three of us know the house.

BRENDAN

No, I want you all to have a good time. We'll go down to the beach and drink wine at night. You know. Get acquainted again.

MICHAEL

That's the way to do it. We need a common project. It won't be work. It's what we all did together before - okay?

BRENDAN

No.

MICHAEL

(Pulls a paint brush out of his back pocket and hands it to BRENDAN.)

I pulled this from your box of supplies. Feel the gentle taper of the stem, the balance.

(He hands it to BRENDAN.)

What's it feel like?

BRENDAN

It feels good.

MICHAEL

You've got to be back in New York on Monday?

BRENDAN

Yes.

(He holds the paintbrush in his hand.)

MICHAEL

(Looking at BRENDAN as BRENDAN daydreams for a moment.)

A penny for your thoughts.

(The lights go down and a flashlight flickers from offstage and then centers on BRENDAN'S face. This is the second flashback of the play. ANDREA, dressed in the yellow slicker holds the light. She addresses BRENDAN as he descends from a ladder at the edge of the house with the paintbrush still in his hand.)

ANDREA

Are you still painting?

BRENDAN

Yes.

ANDREA

It's all over. I saw the fat man on the road as I came up here.

BRENDAN

I'm almost finished.

ANDREA

Did you get the five hundred bucks?

BRENDAN

(Beat)

It took longer than I thought.

ANDREA

You didn't get paid?

BRENDAN

Why are you way up here?

ANDREA

I didn't know where you were so I hitchhiked up here.

BRENDAN

Where's Michael?

ANDREA

Back down at the barn.

BRENDAN

Why?

ANDREA

I left him.

(Beat)

It's over. I knew you'd still be up here...

BRENDAN

(Beat)

Wait for me. I'm almost finished.

ANDREA

Michael says the house was sold at auction. Is that true?

BRENDAN

Yes. Right out on this deck.

ANDREA

Brendan... It's just an exercise in futility...

(She offers him her hand. He kisses her and laughs. The Lights Go Out on the FLASHBACK.)

MICHAEL

(The lights rise again after the flashback and BRENDAN is laughing to himself.)

Why are you laughing?

BRENDAN

(Points off stage toward the Indian graveyard.)

...When I was planning to buy this place I fell in love with that meadow of ever changing wildflowers. There is one out there that is what they call a "garden escape." It grows almost three feet tall, above the others, it has this feral beauty, if such a thing exists for a flower. It's elegant in it's isolation. It's different from the rest. It is from the Iris family. It is called "Iris Versicolor." It is named the "Blue Flag." It is a survivor.

MICHAEL

"Feral beauty?"

BRENDAN

Go into the kitchen. Open the first drawer on the left. Bring back what you find.

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL gets up and goes into the house and BRENDAN keeps stripping the corn.)

After a long pause MICHAEL comes
back with a handgun in his hand.)

What is this?

BRENDAN

When Andrea agreed she wanted the house. I said I wanted
the handgun. I wanted it to be here when you became our
first visitor.

MICHAEL

(Holding the gun in his
hand.)

There is no crime here.

BRENDAN

...Look over at the dunes past the wildflowers. Right
below the Indian graveyard. See the flower beds? I
planted those before I bought the place. That may be fifty
yards? That night after the closing I took one practice
shot ...To make sure the gun worked. I wanted to see if I
could deadhead a pansy.

MICHAEL

(Handling the gun.)

Deadhead a pansy?

BRENDAN

Go ahead... Deadhead a pansy... It's loaded.

MICHAEL

Right below the Indian Graveyard? You want me to just
shoot into the graveyard?

BRENDAN

Sure. They are the ones who brought food to the first
Thanksgiving. ...Less than a generation later they were at
war for their land.

MICHAEL

Yes. King Philip's War?

BRENDAN

The women owned this land. Apparently it got passed
through the daughters not the sons.

MICHAEL

So you want to see if I can deadhead a pansy?

(MICHAEL levels the gun and pulls the trigger and the sound brings the women storming out of the house.)

CAROL

(CAROL exploding through the kitchen door addressing MICHAEL.)

What is that?

MICHAEL

Brendan's gun.

ANDREA

(Flying out of the door behind CAROL.)

It's okay. It's okay. Brendan said if I got the house he wanted a gun.

CAROL

It came with the house?

ANDREA

He offered to buy the house. He asked for the gun. What's the problem?

CAROL

Brendan, why do you want a gun when you buy this house?

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL laughing.)

I wanted to see if Michael can deadhead a pansy.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1 SCENE 4

SETTING The lights rise on the porch. It is later that night and all four characters sit around a table which is nicely set with tablecloth, wine glasses, etc. They are finishing dinner and all are a little drunk. As the lights go up on them they are all laughing at the end of a story. There is a beat and CAROL covers the silence.

CAROL

(To BRENDAN.)

Michael told me that you three painted this house.

BRENDAN

(Opening the next bottle of wine.)

Did he tell you what happened?

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN as he anticipates the upcoming story about himself.)

I knew you'd get to this...

BRENDAN

(To CAROL.)

He never told you?

CAROL

(To BRENDAN.)

No. One of his many secrets...

(She laughs.)

ANDREA

(Affectionately as she looks at MICHAEL.)

You have lots of secrets, didn't you...?

BRENDAN

...The owner had made a lot of money, it turned out, owning and operating some swank inn up in Vermont during the winters...

MICHAEL

Yea, but tell her how...

BRENDAN

Yes, he'd made all this money it turns out, by not paying his creditors. He was cheap - in the tightest sense of the word -- so he got us up here and he wanted us to paint it "now!" With latex paint - the plastic coating over the woodwork - but it was raining when we came up here. But he said, "do the job!" The wood was wet - he wouldn't listen.

MICHAEL

... And the guy had no hair and he had like a thousand double chins and no shirt. Really! He looked like he was out of a diapers commercial...

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL.)

Wait - we'll get to that.

(Starts to pour the wine.)

Hand me your glasses... So Michael and Andrea start painting the house - It's goin' to peel off as soon as the sun comes out...

CAROL

What did he want?

BRENDAN

He had no friends - All he wanted was results. He wouldn't trust us. But he used to address us as "friend this" or "friend that." We told him...

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN)

Go on.

BRENDAN

...So Michael and Andrea get kind of bummed out - I mean workmanship...

ANDREA

(Holding her glass out to BRENDAN
for more wine.)

I'll take a little...

(BRENDAN pours her some more wine
and then continues.)

BRENDAN

... So at lunch they are sitting up on the roof - they'd finished the trim and windows and they'd smoked a joint and Michael sees the skylight up there.

ANDREA

(To CAROL)

This is the awful part...

BRENDAN

... So Michael's high, sitting on a roof, getting stoned and an idea comes to him... He'll play "Tic Tac Toe" on the skylight, big ones, with the paint, cause the rain'll wash them all away anyway... So he's working, on a real big "O" and then he looks down through the sky light and the guy is lookin' back at him - I mean horrified..

MICHAEL

(Interrupting and happy.)

He was real bald - no hair or anything you couldn't see him - till he looked up... And started cussin'...

BRENDAN

Well, Michael, being always on the attack, pulled his pants down and sat on the skylight... and went right through - the guy caught him -- what could he do? Michael said he grabbed for the cord that opens the thing as he went down - reaching for the sky and all, and this guy caught him...

MICHAEL

It must've looked like he was rock'n the baby Jesus!

(They are all laughing.)

CAROL

(Laughing)

Oh my God, how horrible...

BRENDAN

The next day I went back to him. It was sunny. I was going to offer to pay for the window - I didn't have any money but I was going to offer to pay and I walk up to the door and the plastic paint on that door had peeled right off the

(Pointing at the kitchen.)

door. And part of me got pissed off - cause that wasn't our fault - but I knocked on his door, measured the window, got the glass and came back and put it in that afternoon. I love that story. Michael was great. Man, that must have been the best moon that guy ever saw through that skylight.

(They laugh.)

CAROL

Wasn't the guy pissed off about the paint?

BRENDAN

Yea, he wouldn't pay us. No big deal, we had become one of his creditors.

CAROL

Well, it must have taken some nerve to ask for it after Michael had skydived through his window...

BRENDAN

Oh, I didn't ask for it. I just came back the next two days and did it over. It was dry by then.

MICHAEL

I didn't know that... You son of a bitch, that wasn't our fault. You came back here for two days?

BRENDAN

It didn't matter. We wouldn't have gotten paid. That morning the feds foreclosed on him. They had his furniture out on this deck by mid-afternoon. I had a good view from up next to the skylight.

(He laughs.)

CAROL

(To BRENDAN)

Did you keep painting?

BRENDAN

Yea.

CAROL

Christ, what an exercise in futility...

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN)

Why?

ANDREA

(Interrupting abruptly.)

What was the name of that pond we'd go to?

MICHAEL

"Ice house." It's still there.

ANDREA

Remember we'd all strip down and go swimming after work?

CAROL

Yeah. I wouldn't do that again. Now I turn out the lights and put a towel over the mirror when I take a shower.

ANDREA

I have beautiful memories of this island. Remember that whole summer Brendan made us listen to Van Morrison endlessly? "Have I told you lately..." I still love Van Morrison. Who doesn't love Van Morrison?

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

Did that have anything to do with you guys buyin' the place?

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN)

Did it Brendan?

BRENDAN

Andrea hasn't been happy for some time. She's been talkin' about this property ever since we moved to New York... Sometimes it takes me a while to catch up to my wife's wishes...

(He toasts ANDREA from
across the table.)

ANDREA

That is so sweet. Is that why you bought it? Brendan takes good care of me.

BRENDAN

Michael, you want to know one reason why I bought the house? I kept remembering that guy standing on this deck, right here, with the feds tagging his furniture. I found out later that his wife and children had left him that spring but he stayed. Even in the last days, living here alone, he was trying to put a coat of paint on this place to try to make his money back. In America it's competition for money and status. Love is secondary. People travel to the job. Not to the family and friends. I went to grad school with a guy. He was a friend. We both chose to work at the same fund. He took another job two years ago, two blocks down the street and now he tries to steal my clients. That extra money will buy you expensive toys, all the porn you want, your status in a world that won't remember you and an endless supply of fresh paint to cover a life of no purpose. Right, Michael? You're the poet. We only make friends with three or four people our whole life. You can go back to them anytime and pick up exactly where you left off - no re-introductions, no resume bullshit, no circling around sniffing each other. And then hopefully you fall deeply in love with one. That happened to me. You can feel it when it happens. But sometimes you also have to put it all on the table. Right, Michael? Risk it all. Risk it all for the person you love, so I bought this house... I bought this house. That guy had nothing. No one loved him. He was drunk at a bar trying to get yet another paint job. He had nothing.

ANDREA

(Rising, she goes over behind
BRENDAN and putting her arms
around BRENDAN'S shoulders
affectionately, kissing him
gently.)

It took me some time but your wisdom prevailed.

(They all laugh and toast
and drink.)

BRENDAN

(Kissing ANDREA in return
over his shoulder.)

And I love you more now than that night I first saw you in
Vineyard Haven and even more than that morning when you
came to me and I was painting on the roof up there.

(BRENDAN points up at the
roof.)

And I came down the ladder

(Pointing)

right over there and kissed you the very first time.

(ANDREA kisses the top of his head
and goes over to sit on the
potter's wheel, puts her glass of
wine down and begins to shape more
clay.)

So those are my lost years, but what have you guys been
doin'?

MICHAEL

(He gets up from the table.)

Nothing. Teaching down here all winter 11th and 12th grade
English, Moby Dick, Moby Dick, Moby Goddamn Dick. Not any
of them have read a bit of it. I think there is a comic
book that gets passed from senior class to senior class...

CAROL

...or the video of Gregory Peck in the movie...

MICHAEL

But it doesn't matter, I haven't even read it in five
years. I put out "a chap book" of poems which in my sicker
moments I make my students read. There are always one or
two sycophants who do - they get "A's". I make my senior
class memorize one of my poems each year. Guaranteed "A".

(He laughs.)

The accident - do you all know about that? I was out
trying to help somebody and got clipped by a car and pinned
on the Vineyard Haven Bridge - hospital for five months
hanging in a pelvic sling - I came out of it bloodied but
unbowed. I still drink.

(Lifts his glass.)

I guess that's not news.

Last February I stumbled on a hand calculator and after determining the exact number of days that I have been alive - given a leap year or two - I computed the approximate cubic footage of the Hyannis Ferry and determined that I had consumed enough bourbon to flood it four inches deep ... At which point my mission in life became clear and I determined that it would take me until the age of 96 to fill it to the port holes - So I jog and eat right now...

BRENDAN

(Looking around.)

You see - nothing has changed.

(They all laugh.)

Carol, what can you add to that?

CAROL

Michael is an actor in the summer stock down here - and he is wonderful.

MICHAEL

Not according to the critics in this last one... You know, they only kick the tires but they never look under the hood.

(They laugh.)

Hey, under the hood is everything - right? (He laughs.)

CAROL

It's not his fault. There is one critic who if you gave him free tickets to a baseball game, Michael swears, he wouldn't know it was nine innings.

(They laugh.)

MICHAEL

Yeah. Bad. Bad. Bad. No. Not really. As they say I'm the "bad actor." Real bad. Right Brendan? Isn't that what you mean?

CAROL

..Yeah, well I can confirm the truth of Michael's other story - about the accident - and nothing else really. I've been doing the nursing. We still rent the same house in Oak Bluffs - I nursed Michael back to health both in the hospital and at home after the accident. I think it brought us closer together... I think that's why we got married.

ANDREA

Any children planned?

CAROL

(Beat. She covers for
MICHAEL.)

No... One thing I will tell you, because Michael is too modest but, he is very brave. He was in great pain from that accident and he has been very brave...

MICHAEL

No, I'm not brave - I've never been brave. That's just Carol talking; to be brave you must see clearly the risk and choose to take it - that's the literary definition.

(Laughing.)

I do, however, have an immense capacity to endure pain, think of the hangover after drinking the Hyannis ferry dry, or worse, an entire class of 12th graders, dreaming about the girl next to them naked in the back seat and I've got them chanting:

"Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

My only consolation is that Dylan Thomas must feel worse and he's dead. Of course, if he happened to hear them - he most certainly is "raging."

(He laughs)

Forget about that.

(He raises his glass.)

That's all the news that's fit to print. Blah-Blah-Blah-Blah - Christ the liquor got me. I'll be forty next May... I'm just like you guys - just waiting for something to happen.

BRENDAN

May what?

MICHAEL

The end of May. Memorial Day weekend. Seems appropriate.

BRENDAN

Ahhh, Michael it's not that bad. We'll help you through it.

(Turning to the others.)

Won't we?

ANDREA

Yeah, vicariously.

CAROL

(Laughing at ANDREA.)

They were both cradle robbers, weren't they?

(ANDREA and CAROL laugh.)

BRENDAN

We'll open the house on your birthday. A big birthday party for Michael - the four of us. We'll keep it quiet. What are friends for anyway?

(To MICHAEL.)

Deal?

CAROL

Deal. To keep it cost effective I'll supply the bourbon. Okay, Michael?

MICHAEL

Sure...

(To BRENDAN.)

Why this house? What is the "other" reason, Brendan? Why this house?

ANDREA

(Joking, a little drunk.)

We really don't know Michael! It's not really about me, is it Brendan, it's about that graveyard. You researched it to death.

BRENDAN

No. It's about you Andrea. It is all about you. I live for you. I have lived for you since the first time I saw you.

ANDREA

Brendan waited for this place to go back on sale. He waited for four, what was it? Five years and he would come up here and visit the graveyard and collect arrowheads, old relics and pieces of old pots. Didn't you? Why did you do that?

BRENDAN

I went to the New York Library and researched the people in those graves. I'm not embarrassed.

ANDREA

Brendan knows all about those Indians in our backyard. Everything about them.

BRENDAN

Not everything. You can't know everything about them.

ANDREA

What don't you know about them Brendan?

MICHAEL

Talk about buried history, Andrea, remember how we all met? First day down here that summer. Brendan and I were down at the Leaside, sitting at the bar and you walked in all alone and go to the end of the bar and Brendan looks at you and then looks at me and says in his little voice: "I'm in love. I'm going to marry her..." And I turn to him and said "I'll bet I can get her in bed tonight." Brendan wouldn't bet. Remember that? But that is what happened, didn't it Brendan. Didn't it?

ANDREA

I didn't know that.

MICHAEL

Brendan was too smart to bet against me. Weren't you Brendan?

CAROL

Is that true Brendan?

BRENDAN

Yes.

CAROL

I was sleeping with you all summer and all along you were going to marry her?

BRENDAN

(He lifts his glass and addresses everyone in a panicked effort to change the subject.)

...Remember that Yeats poem you showed me? "The Second Coming" right? Let's name the house. I propose a toast.

To all of you who are my best friends and to this house
which we shall call: "The Second Coming."

(They all raise their glasses and
drink.)

ANDREA

(Drunk and bitterly from the
potter's wheel.)

With a name like that its hardly appropriate to
"consummate" it with a toast.

(She laughs and the others
are stunned for a moment.)

CAROL

(Trying to joke her way out
of the awkwardness.)

Well what are you proposing?

(She holds up four fingers
and looks around.)

"Fore Play"?

(She tries to laugh but
nobody joins her.)

MICHAEL

(To CAROL.)

Oh, that was cute. Let's call it: Sex, drugs and rock and
roll.

BRENDAN

"Us" you mean? The four of us?

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL is now very drunk.)

The trouble with that name is Brendan looks down on the
rest of us. He's got his Indians. He believes we waste our
lives. "Right Brendan?" You think that way about America?
"Right Brendan?" But you are the rich mother-fucker.
You're the "boss" aren't you, Brendan? Aren't you? I'm
not a tight ass like you! That's what you really think of
us, isn't it? I dare you to call it "The fuck'n Freedom of
our Four Senses."

CAROL

Jesus, Michael you're right. The liquor's got you.
Brendan, he doesn't mean it.

MICHAEL

Yes I do!

ANDREA

(Laughing)

There are five senses Michael. Smell, sight, sound, taste and touch, Michael.

CAROL

Michael knew that. He just forgot "taste" because he has none.

BRENDAN

We don't have to be like this.

ANDREA

Brendan, you are so, so... Borrrrrring!!!

(ANDREA, CAROL and MICHAEL start laughing.)

BRENDAN

(Covering for his wife and very embarrassed.)

She's a better person than I am... When she has something to drink she can go back to work.

(Referring to ANDREA at the potter's wheel.)

MICHAEL

(He drunkenly gets up from the table and joins ANDREA at the potter's wheel.)

Show me how to make a pot... It is sexual, isn't it?

CAROL

(To MICHAEL.)

Come on Michael, it's time for bed.

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL.)

Put your hand in the center. Put it in the center and move it out.

(Showing him.)

Dip your hand in the water. ...And then move it out gently.

CAROL

Come on Michael, time for bed.

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN.)

Maybe I didn't want it called "The Second Coming."

(MICHAEL loses control of the pot
and it spins wobbling on the
wheel.)

It's all wrong now.

(To MICHAEL with panic
returning to her voice.)

You don't know what you're doing, do you?

CAROL

Sometimes Michael drinks too much.

MICHAEL

That's not the problem. Sometimes I don't drink enough.

BRENDAN

(To ANDREA.)

I can fix it.

(He goes over to the potter's
wheel and kneels next to ANDREA
and with his cupped hands begins
to shape the pot back into form.)

Look.

CAROL

(Collecting dishes from the table
and heading back inside.)

Come on Michael. All good things must end - until tomorrow.

(She laughs.)

Get the door for me, will you?

MICHAEL

(Still looking at ANDREA.)

Good night.

(Helping CAROL with the door and
then exits.)

Andrea,

(Over his shoulder.)
Brendan'll fix it for you.
(He is laughing as he exits
into the house.)

BRENDAN
(Gently to ANDREA.)
It's just practice anyway?

ANDREA
(To BRENDAN softly.)
I'm so sorry.

BRENDAN
No problem they're friends.

ANDREA
No, I asked about children...

BRENDAN
What are you talking about?

ANDREA
I asked them if they were going to have children. It was horrible. I crossed the boundary. Maybe they don't want children. It's just always on my mind and the wine must have...

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN pulls up a chair and
snuggles down behind her.)
You shouldn't worry about saying things like that. It's
what you wanted to know.

ANDREA
You don't understand. There are some things you can't ask
anyone. All your friends, friends, friends talk - but
there are some things you just don't say.

BRENDAN
I'll tell them both tomorrow. It's something that is
important to us. I'll explain the situation...and if an
apology is necessary, I'll give it for both of us.

ANDREA

No... Please hand me my wine glass.

(BRENDAN gets up and hands her the wine glass.)

BRENDAN

You want a little more?

(She holds out her glass and he fills it. She nurses the glass of wine for the rest of the scene.)

ANDREA

You won't listen to me, will you?

BRENDAN

It's the right thing to do.

ANDREA

That's not the point, Brendan. You're going to do it whether I like it or not.

BRENDAN

Why do you hide from these things? You don't talk to me. I love you with all my heart. I don't think you even see that...

ANDREA

You say... You say... You take things head on. That's not the way to do it. Why can't you let things surround you? Why do you have to attack?

BRENDAN

It's the only way I know. I'm... I am afraid you have always loved someone else.

ANDREA

Someone else? No Brendan I still love you. Is it true what Michael said?

BRENDAN

I thought I told you that?

ANDREA

About the first time you saw me?

BRENDAN

Yes. All that summer I just waited and waited. It has always been you.

ANDREA

Why didn't you say anything?

BRENDAN

You wouldn't have considered me until you realized Michael is not who you wanted...

ANDREA

The last day of summer?

BRENDAN

...When you left him and came up here to me.

ANDREA

There you see you waited for me back then. You gave into sensation, memory and imagination. You waited until the world "surrounded" you. It's different than always being so plodding, so one step after another... And then attack!

BRENDAN

What do you have to hide? It's my fault.

ANDREA

We are still trying!

BRENDAN

(Beat)

Andrea if I can't bring you children will you still know how much I love you?

ANDREA

(She stands and addresses him.)

Please don't tell them. Just drop it. We can have our secrets.

BRENDAN

What if there will be no children? Could you still love me?

(He hugs her and she hugs him back and kisses him.)

Come on in, will you?

ANDREA

No. I want to sit out here for a while.

BRENDAN

Will you come in soon?

ANDREA

Yes

BRENDAN

I'll wait up for you. Tonight is supposed to be the night.

ANDREA

Why this house? Why them? What are you doing?

BRENDAN

It's not hopeless. The doctors haven't said it was hopeless...

(Beat.)

I love you...

(He waits for a moment watching her from the door. She does not answer and the third flashback of the play begins as ANDREA sits out on the deck with BRENDAN at the door watching her. The lights come up gently on one corner of the deck where MICHAEL is reading a book. After a moment he looks up at ANDREA and beckons her to join him.)

MICHAEL

Listen to this. I have your answer.

ANDREA

(She looks at him but does not move off of her seat.)

Go on...

MICHAEL

(Reading from his book.)

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,

Will be a tottered weed, of small worth held:
 Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies,
 Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
 To say within thine own deep-sunken eyes,
 Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.
 How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use
 If though couldst answer 'This fair child of mine
 Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,'
 Proving his beauty by succession thine.
 This were to be new made when thou art old
 And see the blood warm when thou feel's it cold.

Is that the answer you want?

(MICHAEL looks up at her.)

Nothing is "permanent" Andrea. Listen how he ends it. It rhymes "old" and "cold". It is a sonnet. Shakespeare wrote that four hundred years ago. Can't you still feel how he loved? There is no "permanent love" Andrea. There is only "perfect love".

(MICHAEL looks up at ANDREA and the lights fade on him and ANDREA is left alone again on stage. At the end of the flashback BRENDAN can wait no longer and he turns and enters the kitchen door, shutting it behind him softly.)

ANDREA

(Turning to answer BRENDAN'S question posed before the flashback but only an instant too late.)

...Yes, I love you too, Brendan.

(Turning back into herself. She puts her head in her hands for a further moment and then stands and enters the house.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1 SCENE 5

SETTING It is slightly before dawn the following morning. MICHAEL stands downstage on the patio dressed only in BRENDAN'S pants, bare chested, with the suspenders holding up the pants. He is barefooted and juggling the contents of BRENDAN'S pockets. There is a half empty bottle of bourbon on the table. From the knees down his pants are rolled up and wet.

MICHAEL

(Juggling)

One, two, three.

(He grabs one of the three objects that he is juggling and shoves it in his pocket as he tries to continue to juggle the rest.)

Where the fuck is the money clip?

(He goes over to the table and takes a slug of the bottle of bourbon and then resumes juggling other things he finds in the pockets of his pants. The handkerchiefs, keys, etc. ...His concentration is deep. The light in the kitchen goes on and it shines out on to the porch as the dawn continues to come up. MICHAEL pays no attention.)

BRENDAN

(From inside the kitchen offstage.)

Is Michael up yet?

CAROL

(From inside the kitchen
offstage)

I just woke up. I don't know where he is.

(BRENDAN and CAROL'S shadows can
be seen on the kitchen window.)

BRENDAN

(From within the kitchen.)

Maybe he got up early to walk the beach.

CAROL

(From within the kitchen.)

Sometimes he drinks all night. My guess is he's on the
other side of midnight.

(Beat)

You want me to set the table outside?

BRENDAN

(From within the kitchen.)

Should we just eat without them?

CAROL

(From within the kitchen)

Don't wait for Michael. He'll be back when he is damn
ready. Guest or no guest.

(She laughs to cover the
fact.)

BRENDAN

(Backing through the door with a
jug of coffee, cups, knives,
forks, and placemats on a tray.)

Here he is.

(Looking at MICHAEL.)

Did you come into our room last night to get those pants?

MICHAEL

(Stuffing his hands in BRENDAN'S
pockets and forcing the pants to
go up and down on the suspenders.)

Yes, I wanted to wear your pants.

(He reaches over to the table and takes a big slug from the bottle of bourbon and then turns to face BRENDAN.)

I wanted to feel the suspenders cut into my shoulders. I wanted to walk the property in your pants. I wanted to walk the beach in your pants without underwear.

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL.)

You can have those pants if you want.

MICHAEL

(Drunkenly.)

Can I go into your bedroom again?

BRENDAN

(A little nervous but covering it up.)

You've got the run of the house.

(CAROL enters through the screen door to the kitchen and stops, holding two cups of coffee in her hand.)

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN, completely disregarding CAROL.)

Okay, then I want to slide into your house. I want to dive in.

BRENDAN

(To CAROL.)

Hold open the door, I think he means it.

(CAROL keeps the screen door open with her elbow. To CAROL after MICHAEL has just dived, airborne through the door, and crashed into everything in the kitchen causing a loud noise inside. CAROL lets the door slam behind him.)

Yeah, that's Michael, he'll probably come back reincarnated as a "Die Hard" battery.

CAROL

(Handing BRENDAN his cup of
coffee.)

Tell me.. Does this make him a morning person?

BRENDAN

(Deadpan and loving it.)

Probably.

(They both set the table and prop
the tray against the house.)

CAROL

(Affectionately mocking
him.)

So are you going to be the tour director? You're the boss.

BRENDAN

What do you mean?

CAROL

Oh come on - you've got something planned.

BRENDAN

(Loving the attention.)

That's not fair.

CAROL

Come on - what's the schedule?

BRENDAN

I thought we could go down to the beach.

CAROL

(Kidding him)

And?

BRENDAN

We could get mussels off the rocks for lunch.

CAROL

That was spontaneous, right?

BRENDAN

I've been thinking about this since I asked you all to
come. I can't help it.

CAROL

It's true, once you care about someone, even if you see them ten years later they are eminently predictable.

BRENDAN

(Beat)

I apologize about last night.

CAROL

Andrea just was in her cups. Everybody was.

BRENDAN

We're trying to have a baby. It's been pretty ugly.

CAROL

I don't need to know about that.

BRENDAN

No, it's my fault. I don't want this weekend to fall apart. If it comes up it's all in the open. Friends, you know.

CAROL

Maybe there are some things I don't want to talk about...

BRENDAN

I just want you to know it's not her fault.

CAROL

You don't have to talk about this. Now I know.

BRENDAN

Yeah.

(Laughing.)

That was the ugly part. They showed me a slide. There were all these little fellows swimming around and then a whole bunch of like starfish hanging on the rocks.

CAROL

(Laughing)

Oh, gross.

BRENDAN

Gross? We're talkin' about the flowers of my family tree here.

CAROL

Starfish?

BRENDAN

Yea. Just hangin' out on the corner.

CAROL

...And smoking cigarettes?

BRENDAN

Yea, goin' nowhere.

CAROL

We shouldn't be laughing about this.

BRENDAN

That's okay. It's been four years. We've still got a chance.

CAROL

Are you embarrassed?

BRENDAN

I wasn't - until...

CAROL

Until what...

BRENDAN

Well, I went for the test. You know the room with a rack of magazines - that was what I was told. And this nurse hands me this little plastic cup and tells me to go in there. So I go in and there are no magazines. So what am I supposed to do - come back out again - that would be "embarrassing" - I mean at a fertility clinic - so when I do come out I wanted to make sure my shirt was all tucked in and my hair combed so nobody would know. So I check myself out in the mirror and open the door and handed the cup to the nurse and she looks horrified and in front of everybody she says, "We don't do that here - all we wanted was a urine sample."

CAROL

(Trying to contain her
laughter.)

Oh my God, Brendan, I don't believe that.

BRENDAN

Yea. It made me think I was a direct descendant of one of the starfish.

CAROL

(Bursting out laughing and hugging BRENDAN.)

Come on we can leave a note.

BRENDAN

I already left a note on the refrigerator. We'll be back by noon. There is a bucket and tongs in the shed down the road.

CAROL

How about bathing suits?

BRENDAN

We don't need bathing suits. We're only going knee deep.

(BRENDAN stops CAROL as if to complete his thought.)

Let me finish...

CAROL

Come on we can talk on the road.

BRENDAN

No. I have to tell you something first.

CAROL

I know what you are doing. I still know you very well.

BRENDAN

Do you?

(Thinking for a second.)

Are you sure?

CAROL

Yes. You just want to make sure I know this weekend is not about you and me. I know. You are bringing Andrea back to where you two got together? Aren't you?

BRENDAN

What makes you think that?

CAROL

Yea, I'm ready to talk about this before we go down to the beach. The last week of the summer you break it off? And last night I find out why? "The first time you saw Andrea you fell in love with her?" That is before you met me? It was never me? I mean who would do that? Now it's not what you thought it would be?

BRENDAN

I'm sorry.

CAROL

But it's okay because we were friends or something, all summer? We were sleeping together. We had great sex. It always felt like we had no secrets. But you had one secret? You were always in love with another person? Who we saw every day? Isn't it sort of what you are afraid of now? Didn't I have your love?

BRENDAN

No. I tried. I tried, but Andrea always had my love from the moment I saw her at the Leaside. Nothing I could do could change that.

CAROL

You're work'n too hard. We were in love once. Are you bring'n your wife to my husband to see if that is your problem? Or is he your gift to her?

BRENDAN

...Michael knows that we are perfect opposites. He knows that he is only a minor character in everybody's life except his own.

CAROL

You thought we were just friends?

BRENDAN

I think we still are.

CAROL

No marriage is perfect.

BRENDAN

Then change it or leave it.

CAROL

Brendan, we had stuff in common. Maybe that's all you need.

BRENDAN

Yes, we did. Yes we did. We enjoyed each other's company. We went on walks. We read books. We talked all night. You taught me a lot that summer.

(laughing)

You taught me chess?

CAROL

(laughing)

And I let you win you know.

BRENDAN

Now no one beats me in chess. In New York they have these open outdoor tables. I was having marriage problems and I would play for hours against anyone.

CAROL

Typical and predictable.

BRENDAN

...Often when I didn't know the outcome I would apply pressure. More and more pressure. You have to find out what people really want. Pressure resolves everything for better or worse but at least in the end it is resolved. Pressure breaks the locks and opens doors. It accelerates the future.

CAROL

If those two fall in love again I'll be available.

BRENDAN

(Laughs)

I love my wife. I need her. There is no one else.

(They start to exit for the beach.)

Carol, I know you think I'm wrong but, as a friend, I'm here to tell you if it doesn't work "then change it or leave it."

CAROL

I'm just saying... I'll bet you get wicked headaches from thinking so much. That's why you bought this house?

(She laughs.)

You are basically just a teddy bear. It is very romantic.
Do starfish get headaches?

(They both laugh and BRENDAN and
CAROL start to exit.)

BRENDAN

Carol, I'm sorry about that summer but I just want you to
understand. I just want you to understand.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1 SCENE 6

SETTING It is later the same
morning. ANDREA has been at the
potter's wheel for better than a
half hour and there are one or two
pots drying on a shelf behind her.
MICHAEL enters from the door. He
has just gotten up.

ANDREA

(Looking over at MICHAEL as
he enters.)

There's still coffee if you want it.

MICHAEL

Where are the others?

ANDREA

Down at the beach. They left a note. They'll be back for
lunch.

MICHAEL

I was up late.

ANDREA

You couldn't sleep last night?

MICHAEL

No.

ANDREA

Yea, I heard you after we went off to bed.

MICHAEL

I took a bottle down to the beach.

ANDREA

Did you hear us talking out here before we went to bed?

MICHAEL

(Looking at the pots.)

Did you fire up the kiln?

ANDREA

No.

MICHAEL

You'll never get them finished by tonight when we leave.

ANDREA

I know. I'm just doin' it for practice... Did you hear us talking out here?

MICHAEL

...Yes, I heard you. (Beat.) Then I went out the back door.

(Beat.)

So since I saw this morning before the others did I decided to sleep late. Sort of let them catch up. Brendan still gets up before dawn?

ANDREA

I don't know. I was asleep.

MICHAEL

As the sun was coming up on the other side of the Island, I happened to be standing knee-deep in the surf with the jug in my hand and the waves rolling up against the back of my legs and I saw your husband walking across the field toward the Indian cemetery with a broom - do you believe it - but for that matter I was wearing his pants at the time - and then he went back along the path, and the light went on in my room - my wife was getting up - And I decided to make an appearance on the porch.

ANDREA

(Laughing.)

Pull up a chair... What were you thinking about?

MICHAEL

(Sitting down next to
ANDREA.)

You know what I did yesterday while I was shucking corn? I agreed to paint this house again... So what's it like being married to Tom Sawyer?

ANDREA

(Laughs and reaches out to
touch him affectionately.)

It's nice to see you again.

MICHAEL

(Looking at the house.)

You wanna help me do it for old time's sake?

ANDREA

You don't have to do it. Besides Brendan and I have to take a ferry back this evening. I won't have time.

MICHAEL

Okay I'll do it after you all leave.

ANDREA

He didn't expect you to do it.

MICHAEL

Did he tell you?

ANDREA

Yes. He said you two had a nice, gentle moment. The kind he's been looking for and you said you'd paint the house. The offer is what touched him.

MICHAEL

He didn't think I meant it?

ANDREA

I don't think that crossed his mind.

MICHAEL

I can still paint a house.

ANDREA

He knows that.

MICHAEL

I'm amused you came back here.

ANDREA

(Surprised by the tone of
his voice.)

Why?

MICHAEL

I guess because I try so hard not to live in the past. I've got a lot of regrets. The past seems so easy to go back to. Why not? We both do? Different ones I guess. Why else would you come back here? It was your idea to buy the house, wasn't it?

ANDREA

(Wiping her hands and paying
real attention to him now.)

Brendan found it and offered it to me.

MICHAEL

What for?

ANDREA

It's sort of like Brendan says. Friends are hard to come by in middle age. Even the people you live with can grow cold.

MICHAEL

So it wasn't your idea to buy this house?

(Beat)

It was his?

(Beat)

Come on, paint the house with me. I could put you on a plane tomorrow morning. I've got to do it. I just don't want to do it out here all alone.

(Beat)

You're lying to me, aren't you? It was your idea to buy the house.

ANDREA

You're in pain aren't you? I can still feel it through all the lost time.

MICHAEL

I realized last night out on the beach - that is what this weekend was designed to do. Each of us was trying to feel something? Anything?

ANDREA

Last night I sat out here and felt all this stuff around me and inside of me. It frightened me. I went back into Brendan and we made love. I loved holding him in my arms with the windows open and the night air luffing the sheets at the foot of the bed. It seemed like for a long time before last night we had just had sex by appointment...

MICHAEL

Really?

(Beat)

I couldn't sleep last night because I realized that I have been so lonely. I mean for years. Maybe I realized that all I really can do is paint a house. Do you remember when we painted this house together before?

(ANDREA reaches over and hugs him.)

Christ.

(He puts his head in his hands as BRENDA and CAROL can be heard laughing and coming up the path to the house.)

It keeps getting thrown in my face by the happy campers.

(He points at the sound of
BRENDAN and CAROL.)

ANDREA

(Gently to MICHAEL, touching
his hand.)

I'll ask Brendan if he would mind if I stay.

MICHAEL

He won't mind. We are all friends...

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN and CAROL enter with two
or three buckets of mussels that
they have harvested from the
beach. BRENDAN also holds a
little plastic sand bucket as he
enters. He puts it to the side.)

Oh God, the beach was beautiful. Look what we've got.
Mussels. Buckets and buckets. We just rolled up our pants
and picked them off the rocks.

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN as he stands to
greet him as Brendan
enters.)

I'm goin' to paint the house this afternoon.

BRENDAN

(Putting down his buckets
and hugging MICHAEL.)

Michael, Michael, you don't have to.

MICHAEL

No, I made a promise. It's what I want to do.

BRENDAN

I won't allow it. Andrea's going to call some...

MICHAEL

I know all the contractors on the island. No. I made a
promise.

BRENDAN

If you want to do it we can all do it next spring when we come back up here to celebrate your birthday. Thank you though.

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN)

He wants to do it now.

BRENDAN

(A little surprised at her insistence.)

Let's eat lunch. We've got all these mussels. We can talk about it over lunch...

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN.)

It's important to him. We've been talking about it. It's a gift to you. I want to help him. I know it will be a long drive home alone for you tonight. Would you mind?

BRENDAN

(A little stunned and surprised but covering well.)

Let's make lunch and all talk about it...

ANDREA

Brendan, it's important to me.

BRENDAN

Andrea, if you want to talk...

ANDREA

It's not a secret or anything. He just wants to talk to me. Even among friends you can't tell everything to everybody.

BRENDAN

Andrea, I don't see why...

ANDREA

It's important to me.

BRENDAN

(Beat)

Okay. If that's what you want. Let's eat lunch and we'll pack the things and I don't mind driving alone...I can give Carol a ride back to Oak Bluffs... Andrea, before I forget -

(He reaches into a little plastic bucket he brought on stage with him.)

I found something for you.

(He lifts a little piece of broken pottery from the bucket and puts it in her hand.)

It's a piece of Indian pottery. It must be hundreds of years old. I thought you'd like it.

(He kisses her gently.)

Be careful.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1 SCENE 7

SETTING It is late the same night. The moonlight falls on the deck in a blue soft splendor. ANDREA is painting a window with a sash brush with the paint can next to her. MICHAEL is sitting on the deck and painting the lower half of the door. Both are drinking wine and the wine bottle sits on the table on the deck. They are drunk.

MICHAEL

Did you know I have perfect vision at night?

ANDREA

(Laughing.)

No.

MICHAEL

Yeah, I was tested. I could have been an astronaut.

ANDREA

(Laughing)

But what...

MICHAEL

...I can't see the door.

ANDREA

(Laughing)

Maybe God is punishing you for the last time we painted it.

MICHAEL

No, I think I have been blinded by California white wine.

ANDREA

Has this ever happened before?

MICHAEL

Yes, last night.

ANDREA

Don't even think about quitting. We don't have much more to do.

MICHAEL

Quitting? Who said anything about quitting? Just because I'm sitting down...

ANDREA

(Laughing)

I know that's what you're thinking.

MICHAEL

You can read my mind?

ANDREA

Yes, I can.

MICHAEL

Okay what am I thinking?

ANDREA

You're thinking about quitting - admit it?

MICHAEL

No. Wrong. I was thinking about "commitment" and "blindness" and about getting a cane, a white cane and ... strapping the paint brush on it... because I really want to finish painting this door.

(He crawls toward the table
with the wine on it.)

ANDREA

Where are you going?

MICHAEL

Help me find a cane, please.

ANDREA

(She puts her brush down and heads
toward the table. She is
laughing.)

Get back down here!

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL gropes for the wine
bottle.)

I think I found a really short cork tree - but the cork is gone.

ANDREA

Give me that bottle.

MICHAEL

Bottle?

(With mock surprise.)

My God it's liquor... and I want some.

ANDREA

No, you don't

(They wrestle playfully and then
fall into a kiss.)

MICHAEL

Guess what?

ANDREA
(Laughing)

What.

MICHAEL

I can... see again!

ANDREA
Then come back and finish the house.

MICHAEL

Do I have to?

ANDREA

Yes.

MICHAEL

Okay, but I have an idea.

ANDREA

What is it?

MICHAEL

Well, there's going to be some paint left ... right?

ANDREA

No, Michael.

MICHAEL

You don't even know what my idea is yet.

ANDREA

I can read your mind, remember?

MICHAEL

You think it's dirty?

ANDREA

Maybe not dirty...

MICHAEL

No, wait a minute. Listen. All I'm saying is nobody's done the porch.

ANDREA

Michael, what are you, crazy?

MICHAEL

All we have to do is get naked and become human rollers - really!

ANDREA

Put the brush in the paint can and finish the door.

MICHAEL

...Or we could sit in the can and then get a running start and go bare ass the full length of the porch.

ANDREA

Michael?

MICHAEL

Why not? We can go to the shower right over there.
(Pointing to the outdoor shower.)

ANDREA

Yea, a shower in the moonlight might be nice.

MICHAEL

You got him right where you want him, don't you?

ANDREA

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

He buys you this house...and all he can come home to is his dead Indians out there.

(Changing tones.)

You miss the chance, don't you?

ANDREA

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

The excitement... The reckless perfect...

ANDREA

Yes, sometimes I do...

MICHAEL

Yea, it's nice to talk to you this way. We've been friends. We've been lovers. We've been lovers forever...

(They kiss.)
 Who would be hurt by this? Come on.
 (He leads her into the
 house.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF ACT I)

ACT II SCENE 8

SETTING The set is the same
 except it is now late November or
 early December. The stage is bare.
 There are dried leaves on the
 deck. ANDREA enters the stage
 followed by CAROL. ANDREA holds a
 set of car keys.

CAROL
 Come on give me the car keys back.

ANDREA
 (Laughing)
 ...Just sit down. Did you have a nice Thanksgiving?

CAROL
 Come on.

ANDREA
 Please.

CAROL
 What's the big deal?

ANDREA
 Nothing.

CAROL
 Well then give me the keys.

ANDREA
 I'll give them to you in the morning.

CAROL
I'm spending the night here?

ANDREA
Yes, of course.

CAROL
Michael doesn't know that.

ANDREA
Call him.

CAROL
You told me not to let him know you were coming up here.

ANDREA
Just tell him you're out tonight.

CAROL
Give me the keys.

ANDREA
Please?

CAROL
What's going on here?

ANDREA
I need to talk to you tonight.

CAROL
I told you I will give you a ride to the hospital tomorrow.

ANDREA
Why do you want to drive all the way back up here tomorrow?

CAROL
Just give me back my car keys.

ANDREA
No.

CAROL
Why?

ANDREA

I don't want you to go.

CAROL

I have to go. Michael will want to know where I am.

ANDREA

Don't you ever just go out?

CAROL

No.

ANDREA

Does he?

CAROL

Yes.

ANDREA

Well, tonight you do.

CAROL

Give me the keys...

ANDREA

No, I want you to stay.

CAROL

I'll give you the ride tomorrow.

ANDREA

Don't you want to know why I'm here?

CAROL

I know what is happening.

ANDREA

I need to talk to you!

CAROL

I won't say anything. We all have our little secrets and I'll keep yours.

ANDREA

Please spend the night. We could sit out here and talk and... I need to talk to you about Brendan. I need to talk to you about Michael.

CAROL

Andrea, I can't.

ANDREA

I need to talk to you about us. I really need to talk out what I'm doing. You deserve to know what happened. Do you know already? How could you?

CAROL

I have to go. It would be nice, but I can't spend the night.

ANDREA

Okay.

(She throws CAROL the keys.)

Go.

CAROL

(She starts to leave.)

I'll pick you up tomorrow at six o'clock. Don't eat anything after midnight.

ANDREA

Are we still friends?

CAROL

What does that mean?

ANDREA

Are we still friends?

CAROL

Why do you question that?

ANDREA

He never said anything to you?

CAROL

Who?

ANDREA

You don't understand, do you?

CAROL

Sure, I know what you are doing.

ANDREA

Sure - you're a nurse. I know you looked up my name for tomorrow's procedure at the hospital so you know... Ask me!

CAROL

Andrea, I thought you both were trying to have...? If you don't want him just tell him.

ANDREA

(Beat)

Tomorrow will you give me a ride back to the airport?

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II SCENE 9

SETTING It is MICHAEL'S birthday of the following year, Memorial Day weekend. ANDREA and MICHAEL sit at the table on the deck after a late lunch laughing and whispering. The lights in the house are on and first BRENDAN'S and then CAROL'S silhouette can be seen moving in the kitchen, preparing to bring out MICHAEL'S birthday cake.

ANDREA

(Whispering to MICHAEL as
they sit alone together.)

What will your wish be?

MICHAEL

Wish?

ANDREA

Your birthday wish...

MICHAEL

(Beat)

I wish Brendan wasn't going to ask me to recite that poem.

ANDREA

Humor him.

(Beat)

He knows the one you gave out this year... He located one of
your students this afternoon.

MICHAEL

Where?

ANDREA

Some bookshop in Vineyard Haven. They had your chapbook.

MICHAEL

And he's going to surprise me with the request?

ANDREA

Yes... It is sort of sad. He's been reading it and
rereading it. Analyzing it. He snuck out to the Indian
graveyard to be alone. Be a good sport, will you?

MICHAEL

Sure. I don't care.

(He sneaks a dangerous kiss with
ANDREA as they sit together at the
table.)

Did he ever give you that poem he wrote?

ANDREA

No. What poem?

MICHAEL

The last time we were here we were stripping the corn and he told me he wrote a poem. He had it in his bedside table. He was saving it until the time was right to give it to you. He never gave it to you?

ANDREA

In the bedside table? No. He never gave me a poem.

MICHAEL

He is competing with me I think. The whole thing was pathetic.

ANDREA

(Beat.)

I'm packed. Just tell me when.

MICHAEL

Did you tell him anything?

ANDREA

No.

MICHAEL

He knows, doesn't he?

ANDREA

I don't know.

MICHAEL

He's got to sense something is wrong?

ANDREA

(Beat)

I think so.

MICHAEL

What?

ANDREA

Michael.

(Beat)

I feel sorry for him.

MICHAEL

Why?

ANDREA

None of it was his fault. He tried so hard.

MICHAEL

He'll survive.

ANDREA

(Pulling away from MICHAEL
for a moment.)

All winter I felt like I was slowly bleeding him to death.
He took me on a winter trip to St. Martin. Every day I
could feel him dying.

MICHAEL

I don't think he's given up.

ANDREA

I don't know.

MICHAEL

There is something going on.

ANDREA

Did you tell Carol anything?

MICHAEL

Hell no and she'd have to be in the same bed for her to
figure it out.

(Carol enters from the
kitchen.)

ANDREA

(In a panicked whisper.)

Quiet!

MICHAEL

(Laughing)

Well, it's true.

(To ANDREA.)

You're ready?

(ANDREA nods yes and grips his
hand to keep him quiet.)

CAROL

(Joining them after she crosses
the porch and starts to sit down
at the table with them.)

He cooked it up all by himself.

ANDREA

What?

CAROL

(Sitting down.)

The cake?

ANDREA

(Relaxing)

Oh.

MICHAEL

(Different in tone now that
there are three of them.)

I'll bet Andrea will clean up.

ANDREA

(Different in tone now that
there are three of them.)

Sure, what are women for?

CAROL

(To ANDREA.)

Am I wrong or has he been showing off all weekend?

MICHAEL

Yea, he's finally become the maître d' of his own house.

ANDREA

(In defense of her husband.)

Be nice, he made you a cake Michael... He is trying so hard.

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA.)

Carol was just kidding. Weren't you?

CAROL

(To MICHAEL.)

I just meant it in a nice way...

(BRENDAN backs through the screen door with the birthday cake ablaze with candles. They all sing "Happy Birthday" to MICHAEL.)

BRENDAN

(As the cake is put down on the table in front of MICHAEL.)

Okay Michael, make a wish.

MICHAEL

Wait, I'm thinking.

BRENDAN

...The Nobel Prize for literature. Here it comes.

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN.)

Shhh.

(Trying to protect him from the criticism of others.)

MICHAEL

Why not - I drink enough.

(The others laugh.)

BRENDAN

(Laughing with ANDREA.)

What do you mean "Shhh"?

ANDREA

Brendan, be quiet, you'll give it away.

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL.)

No. It's impossible - there will be a senior class next year.

(They all laugh.)

CAROL

(To BRENDAN)

No, that's not grand enough. (Beat.) We're talking about a full scale, statewide, Moby Dick book burning..

(To MICHAEL)

Right?

MICHAEL

No.

(He looks at BRENDAN)

I "wish"...

(He looks at ANDREA and she suppresses a laugh and then he becomes serious again.)

... that each of us is fortunate enough to be deeply in love again.

(MICHAEL blows out the candles.)

CAROL

(Slightly embarrassed by the sentiment.)

You can dress him up but you can't take him anywhere.

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL)

You mean that don't you?

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN)

No, he doesn't. Brendan, stop being such a good host.

BRENDAN

(To CAROL)

He was just covering up the Nobel Prize stuff.

(As spontaneously as possible.)

Do a poem. What was the poem for this year's seniors?

CAROL

(To the others)

It's the high point of his year "Secret Fun for Middle Aged Poetry and Pre-Puberty."

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL)

Go on, Michael.

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL)

Go on.

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN)

Behold the master of doggerel...

BRENDAN

Go on. It will be fun.

CAROL

Set it up for them, honey.

MICHAEL

(He stands and commands full
attention.)

Okay, you ready for this?

(He glances at ANDREA.)

It's always about 1) Youth, 2) physical exercise and 3) the
hint of sex. The motive is nothing but pure amusement. All
right, part one, quatrain, let's subtitle it
"Foreshadowing"...

(He is having a good time
over-embellishing.)

In the early spring when I was fifteen
My choices were baseball, tennis or crew.
Between Boston and Cambridge I had seen,
Rhythmic oars of singles, eights, fours and twos...
Four perfect ten beat lines - But "crew" doesn't rhyme with
twos."...It's my poem and I say I don't give a sweet shit.
Brendan - that's poetic license.

(He laughs.)

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL)

Go on.

CAROL

(To MICHAEL)

Go on, Michael.

MICHAEL

...Beneath the bridges of the Charles River,
I was appointed stroke. I paced the boat.
Our strokes made the running water deliver
Us forward. We would stroke and stroke and stroke.

(He is amusing ANDREA.)

"River" and "deliver", "boat" and "stroke". Okay?

(He continues, again,
cutting the line endings
with a gesture of his
hand.)

Listen.

(He cocks an ear.)

The fun part is my senior class is out there memorizing it
for the "A." Hey... I hear them in the back seats of cars,
memorizing, chanting, getting the rhythm right...the springs
go up and down - in iambic pentameter, of course.

(He laughs.)

BRENDAN

(Interrupting)

What's it about?

CAROL

Who cares? The seniors don't.

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL)

Go on. I'm sorry.

MICHAEL

(Answering BRENDAN as he
continues his comments and
then the poem.)

What's it about? (He laughs.) It's about...
(He humorously breaks back
into the rhythm and
recitation of the poem.)

...Lifting ourselves out of the brown water
Again and again. The coxswain pounds out,
On the gunnels, the rhythm of my order.
Tin cans and prophyllactics float about.

BRENDAN

"Water" "Order" "Out" "About"

MICHAEL

(Holding his hand up to stop
BRENDAN)

Now you've got to realize that I have responsibilities to
my class here. Every year I must finish with a hint in the
climactic couplet - No, No, No, No, orgasmic couplet. Why?
(He looks around.)

Two reasons 1) It's a "couplet" and 2) it's high school.
 But we are only allowed to hint at such things...
 Then the rhythmic silence of the contest broke
 And echoed beneath the bridges, stroke, stroke.

(MICHAEL bursts out laughing
 at the thought of this
 ribald poem in the minds of
 his senior class and then
 looks around at the others
 for approval and they join
 him.)

To get the "A" they have to stand up in front of the whole
 class, put their hands behind them, keep a straight face
 and recite it. They love it. It's a kick in the pants to
 the school on the last day. It's great.

BRENDAN

(Not realizing that "like"
 or "not like" is not the
 issue.)

I like it.

MICHAEL

No, you don't.

BRENDAN

I actually do.

MICHAEL

(Making fun of BRENDAN.)

Does it move you?

BRENDAN

Yes.

CAROL

(Trying to save BRENDAN.)

No, it doesn't. Everybody hates poetry.

BRENDAN

That's not true. It is a sonnet, right?

MICHAEL

(Pointing at BRENDAN.)

You got it - you can graduate from my class anytime.

CAROL

Brendan, he's making fun of you.

BRENDAN

As far as content... Clearly masculine.

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN)

Jesus - a student with interest? Make that an "A+".

BRENDAN

What does it mean?

MICHAEL

Assume the pseudo-psychological role of the early twenty-first century or late twentieth century critic, reviewer and biographer ...

(Whispering)

It means anything you want it to mean.

(He laughs.)

CAROL

(Mocking BRENDAN'S interest
as she kids with ANDREA.)

He's such a good host.

MICHAEL

(To the others.)

I'm just kidding. What would Sigmund Freud do with a poem like that?

CAROL

Honest answer?

MICHAEL

Yes.

CAROL

Burn it.

MICHAEL

(He grabs a candle in one hand and
a napkin, as if it were the poem
in the other.)

I like that. Freud questions the author.

(Holding up the napkin.)
 Explain this or I burn it. It's all garbage Brendan. Trash.
 It means nothing..

BRENDAN
 But the words were consciously organized. There is a
 detached quality - the "Prophylactics float about."

ANDREA
 (Laughing)
 Brendan stop - you're sacrificing an A+.

BRENDAN
 Or... the entry into the stone bridge...

CAROL
 Michael. Just cut the cake. I'm hungry.

BRENDAN
 ...And the echoes once inside.

MICHAEL
 (A little stunned.)
 Go on.
 (Looking at the others.)
 The poor man is looking for "inner meaning" among the
 trash.

(He laughs.)

BRENDAN
 It's my fault. I'm just not good at poetry.

ANDREA
 (Sensing danger.)
 Come on Michael cut the cake.

BRENDAN
 ...No, I want to know. I've been out of touch with this.
 Help me.

CAROL
 Let's change the subject.

ANDREA
 Cut the cake.

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL.)

... Stroke - stroke - stroke...

CAROL

Brendan?

BRENDAN

Okay, let's look at it from a different angle. Are you "waiting for something to happen"?

MICHAEL

My wish?

(To everyone.)

We all are, aren't we?

CAROL

(To BRENDAN.)

Yeah. I'm waiting for him to cut the cake for Christ sake.

BRENDAN

(To CAROL.)

Carol, listen - I'm just learning about a poem.

CAROL

Brendan, he doesn't even take his own students seriously.

BRENDAN

(To CAROL)

Well, they don't take him seriously, do they? I want to know about the poem. This is what I've been looking for. This is what I've lost.

(To the others.)

I want to know what he's talking about.

CAROL

(All of a sudden insanity breaks out as CAROL swings her arms at an insect flying around the table.)

Bug! Bug! Bug!

(She swats violently at the air.)

ANDREA

(Ducking and weaving and
swatting at the air.)

What is it?

CAROL

(Hysterical.)

Oh my God, is it on me? Spray! Spray! Where is the spray?

MICHAEL

(Stoically mocking CAROL.)

Honey, I'm sure they don't use spray.

CAROL

Is it gone?

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN persists.)

I want to know!

MICHAEL

No, you don't.

CAROL

(To BRENDAN aggressively.)

Poor Brendan, he's so cute. Still in his little ninth grade English class - looking for "inner meaning" ... Get a lottery ticket.

MICHAEL

(Deflecting CAROL'S
concern.)

Brendan, your fans want to know the "inner meaning."

BRENDAN

It's a scary way of looking at things. Maybe it's people unconsciously hiding things in their words but still with the deep need to speak, do you know?

MICHAEL

Sure the author could have decided not to write it...

BRENDAN

But he can't?

MICHAEL

Why not?

BRENDAN

The author strokes his hollow boat.

(He laughs.)

"The prophylactics float about..." He has no need for them...
He passes through the bridges, after the echo, out the
other side. He is sterile through and through.

(He laughs)

MICHAEL

(Stunned silence for a
moment.)

So what?

ANDREA

(ANDREA is stunned by the
admission. She realizes she has
aborted her husband's child not
MICHAEL'S as she had thought. She
inhales violently and turns away.)

Oh my God!

(And then gags and coughs as
she contains the thought.)

CAROL

(Looking at ANDREA and then
from one to the other and
then to MICHAEL, playing on
deadpan irony.)

I don't think it's an overreaction to the poem... As I
remember it was my first reaction.

MICHAEL

(To CAROL joining in on the
joke.)

Yes, some people are just so hung up on free verse ...

CAROL

Just think if it had been your novel.

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL)

Why didn't you tell me?

MICHAEL
(Offhandedly)

Tell you what?

CAROL
The accident? It was no big deal. It brought us closer together, if anything..

ANDREA
(To MICHAEL)
You should have told me.

MICHAEL
(Now guarded)
You mean I didn't?

CAROL
(To ANDREA, protectively)
Sometimes he doesn't like to talk about it.

ANDREA
(To CAROL)
Didn't I ask you about children?
(Beat)
I just thought I remembered asking you...

CAROL
(To ANDREA)
I told him not to worry.
(Beat)
Some of us just don't want children.

BRENDAN
(Interrupting, and pretending not to be interested.)
He just can't have children. It's no big deal. Remember, Carol told us he had been brave after the accident. I'm sure he told us.

(As he exits into the house.)
I've got a present. Everybody sit tight.
(The door slams behind him as he enters the house.)

ANDREA
(Shocked to CAROL.)
Did you tell him last fall?

CAROL
(To ANDREA.)
I didn't think you would mind ...

ANDREA
(To CAROL)
You promised.

CAROL
(To ANDREA)
I thought it would help us.

ANDREA
(To CAROL)
Did you tell him before I came up here?

CAROL
(To ANDREA.)
I thought it would help our marriage.

ANDREA
(To CAROL)
What did he do?

CAROL
(To ANDREA)
He understood.

ANDREA
(To CAROL)
You promised me after you told him I was coming up here?

CAROL
(Nodding toward MICHAEL but
addressing ANDREA.)
We didn't tell anybody. I made him swear. Come on, it's
just between friends ...

ANDREA
(To CAROL)
He didn't try to stop it?

CAROL

(To ANDREA)

Of course not. (Beat.) Why should he? If you don't want
Brendan's baby why should you have it?

ANDREA

(Looks at MICHAEL begging
him to explain.)

Michael?

CAROL

(To ANDREA)

What's the problem Andrea?

ANDREA

Nothing.

CAROL

(Beat)

Oh, Brendan's in there. I've got presents for you too,
Michael. I'll be right back.

(She exits.)

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

It doesn't matter...

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL)

How could you have done that?

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

You didn't want that child.

ANDREA

Brendan and I wanted that baby together...

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

But you don't love him. You said as much.

ANDREA

But we had tried to have a baby together.

MICHAEL

So what were you doing with me?

ANDREA

I didn't want us to hurt him.

MICHAEL

...But "you missed the excitement", didn't you?

ANDREA

Yes, that was what I said...

MICHAEL

When he comes back out of the house, tell him.

ANDREA

How did you find out I was up here last fall?

MICHAEL

I saw the phone message - that you had called Carol. I asked her.

ANDREA

I asked her not to tell you.

MICHAEL

We trade secrets.

ANDREA

I can't tell him.

MICHAEL

(Comforting ANDREA)

Come on, babe, don't be scared. You're lucky if it happens once in a lifetime.

ANDREA

Before the abortion, why didn't you at least tell me?

MICHAEL

(Beat)

It was in our best interest not to have the baby.

ANDREA

Was it intentional?

MICHAEL

When he comes back out - tell him. I can't do that for you.

ANDREA

You'll tell Carol?

MICHAEL

(Avoiding the question.)

Don't be afraid. Most people only dream for this chance. They buy Harlequin novels and cry in dark theaters at love stories. When it comes, if it does, you've got to take it.

ANDREA

I never wanted to hurt him, that's all.

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

Why did you come up here? Why do you keep inviting me up here?

ANDREA

(Interrupting)

Michael, you had no right to decide for me. You knew what I was going to do. You should have told me!

MICHAEL

I was thinking for both of us. Just tell him.

(Beat)

Where is Brendan?

BRENDAN

(From the shadows at the edge of the deck, he has been standing there, unnoticed for a while, listening as he folds and rips in half and folds and rips in half a single piece of paper until it is shredded into confetti.)

I'm here.

(Beat)

Tell me what?

MICHAEL

(Beat)

Do you know?

BRENDAN

What have you all been talking about?

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

For God's sake, tell him.

BRENDAN

(Softly)

What is it?

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL)

Let me talk to Brendan. Go in and get packed. Just let me talk to Brendan for a while...

(MICHAEL turns and enters the house.)

BRENDAN

(Before slowly approaching ANDREA he puts the shredded confetti in the trash can next to the door.)

I can't find the present I had for him... I looked under the bed...

ANDREA

Brendan, I'm already gone.

BRENDAN

You are the only person in the world I love. Why do you think I bought this house? Why did I organize this reunion?

ANDREA

I've already packed my things.

BRENDAN

I saw the suitcase under the bed.

ANDREA

It just happened. We were drinking wine out on the porch as we painted and he made fun of you.

BRENDAN

I know.

ANDREA

He said you were out there all the time with the dead Indians.

BRENDAN

I know.

ANDREA

Cause he says you're crazy.

BRENDAN

Crazy to love you?

ANDREA

Yes, and then he pours me a big glass of wine and we laugh.

BRENDAN

At me?

ANDREA

Yes, cause he says you're out there on the highway and he is with me.

BRENDAN

I guess I was halfway to New York by then.

ANDREA

I had this aching picture of you with both hands on the wheel.

BRENDAN

Just into Connecticut...

ANDREA

Four hours - four and a half hours after you left here?

BRENDAN

(Shaking his head as he thinks.)

Pressure... All or nothing at all.

ANDREA

What did you do?

BRENDAN

I turned up the radio.

ANDREA

Why?

BRENDAN

I just turned up the radio and rolled down the windows.

(Beat)

Fresh air.

ANDREA

Fresh air?

BRENDAN

Yea, I was singing with the radio, louder than the radio... staying the course.

ANDREA

Brendan, we don't talk.

BRENDAN

Why can't you see me? There were times I'd make the bed and you'd strip it and make it all over again - you were just mad at me, it didn't mean you didn't love me. It was our little pattern. I'd load the dishwasher and you'd pull out all the racks and put the cups and dishes back "the right way" but that didn't mean you didn't love me... You just can't "see me."

ANDREA

It's been over for years. Maybe I have been waiting. Maybe I talked you into coming up here so I could see Michael again. Maybe the mind works that way. I think he's right. That's what I've been waiting for.

BRENDAN

I love you. I want you to be happy... But look at me

(Beat)

I'm better for you than he is!

ANDREA

He laughed at you.

BRENDAN

That's okay. I love you more than he can.

ANDREA

He laughs at you now.

BRENDAN

Of course, because he thinks I have no love.

ANDREA

He took it from you?

BRENDAN

No, he laughs because he thinks I have no love.

ANDREA

Can't have?

BRENDAN

Yes.

ANDREA

You mean, never could have...?

BRENDAN

Yes. That's what he thinks. He has the excitement...

ANDREA

And you don't...

BRENDAN

Yes.

ANDREA

Because he thinks you are a fool? You have nothing to give?

BRENDAN

Maybe all I can do is solve the daily problems for you. Sweep the walk, pay the bills, tell you why you shouldn't worry at night before you turn your back and go to sleep. I love you more and I understand you... but you don't think I do. Look at me. "See me!"

ANDREA

(Breaks down in tears in
compassion for him.)

No. That's not it. I don't think that.

(She breaks down and turns
her face away from him.)

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to end it like this.

BRENDAN

In that room with the cheap paneling and my pants down around my knees and feeling so embarrassed.

ANDREA

We both tried hard ...

BRENDAN

... I remembered standing by the subway, standing in the crowd, and I saw a child holding his father's hand, as the train went by, and his father was holding the strap and the train was racing into the future, and I was standing there on the platform all alone. I came home to you and I was so ashamed.

ANDREA

(She turns away.)

Don't say that...

BRENDAN

(Breaking down.)

I bought you a potter's wheel so you could make things, by yourself. In business school they taught us that you can only gamble if you are detached. Andrea, I am good at only one thing. I have learned to see myself, with all my faults, honestly. Perhaps I can have no child with you. But I love you. I am not detached.

ANDREA

Brendan, don't say that.

BRENDAN

No, It's all right.

ANDREA

Brendan, you can have a child.

BRENDAN

...We've got this house...

ANDREA

...Stop...

BRENDAN

...And the potter's wheel for you...

ANDREA

You can have a child.

BRENDAN

All I want is your attention back! I want you back.

ANDREA

...I've got to tell you...

BRENDAN

No. Don't talk.

ANDREA

I have to.

BRENDAN

I just want you to hold me...

ANDREA

I have to...

BRENDAN

As if your life depended on it.

ANDREA

That's what you want?

BRENDAN

Yes.

(He hugs her.)

ANDREA

(Beat)

There is something alive about him, Brendan.

BRENDAN

Didn't you hear his poem? It's all about him. "I was appointed stroke. I placed the boat... The coxswain pounds out the rhythm of my order..." And he does it in his world of tin cans and prophylactics" - the used up. And he hears only "echos" in empty space - "Stroke, stroke." He has no soul. He is the one who has "no love." Didn't you hear his poem? He is empty. Selfish. Vacant. Sterile!

ANDREA

You caused this?

BRENDAN

You had to see him again in this place... I have to know what will make you happy. No matter what.

ANDREA

What about the place?

BRENDAN

I remember painting this house. I remember painting it up on the roof.

ANDREA

When they took the old man's furniture?

BRENDAN

Yes. When he broke your heart for the last time. Michael would not make a commitment to you and you came up here to be with me.

ANDREA

And this spring?

BRENDAN

You mean the birthday?

ANDREA

Yes.

BRENDAN

It had to happen this way... No matter what.

ANDREA

You knew?

BRENDAN

When I went down to the bookstore in Vineyard Haven to get the poem from last year's students - I wasn't surprised that they hated Michael.

ANDREA

Hated him?

BRENDAN

His kids hated him. I knew that poem before he said it. But then I studied it. I knew what questions I would ask. I went step by step. And as for the Indians out there.

(Laughing)

Obviously in the end nothing survived them - Hell they've got some businessman and his wife on their land.

(Quietly)

But to me somehow, they're a library for me to look at, Andrea. Every question that I have, they have answered.. They know the end but I believe they loved. Maybe better than we do. There is only transcendent love to save us from this universe.

ANDREA

Brendan, I don't know what I am going to do.

BRENDAN

Don't leave me...

(ANDREA bolts off stage running toward the beach away from BRENDAN. BRENDAN chases after her.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II SCENE 10

SETTING It is maybe ten to fifteen minutes later. MICHAEL exits from the kitchen door and is followed by CAROL.

MICHAEL

Where are they?

CAROL

Down on the beach.

MICHAEL

Give me the keys.

CAROL
I'll drive.

MICHAEL
Where are "you" going?

CAROL
I don't know.

MICHAEL
(Holding his hand out to
receive the keys.)
Then think about it for a while.

CAROL
(Laughing)
Oh, Michael, you always want everything "now."

MICHAEL
How long have they been down on the beach?

CAROL
(Laughing)
Hell, you wanted me "now" but that was ten years ago when I
was taking care of you.

MICHAEL
What are they doing down on the beach?

CAROL
Michael?

MICHAEL
What?

CAROL
Why are you going in such a hurry?

MICHAEL
(Increasingly more
flippant.)
I'm hungry and they didn't have anything in there except
shit that either came out of the sea or came out of the
ground two hours ago.

CAROL

(Laughing)

Yeah, I'd believe that.

MICHAEL

Give me the keys.

CAROL

No. I want to go with you.

MICHAEL

Okay, would you believe that I've got fifty dollars in my pocket and I'm goin' down to Oak Bluffs and I'm going to buy two, maybe three drinks and walk on the beach?

CAROL

Yes... I would.

MICHAEL

I'll bet you would. That's why I want the car. I want the keys, and I want out of here..

CAROL

They've had some little fight. We can't leave until we've said our goodbyes.

MICHAEL

What the hell is she doin' down on the beach for so long?

CAROL

Maybe they are in love again after some little fight..

MICHAEL

No. That's not what it is. It is about "reckless perfect love."

CAROL

Oh we are having a little hurricane? Where are we Michael? Over the Canary Islands or are we...

MICHAEL

No, Carol, you want to let it all hang out - total honesty?

CAROL

That would be a "first."

MICHAEL

You want to know what's the problem? "Reckless perfect love" is what it's all about.

(He starts throwing chairs against the house and trashing the porch as he speaks.)

It's not chairs or potter's wheels or houses. It's "reckless perfect love." And when you find it you can't forget it. But honey, there ain't no waitin' around for it either. That is what we could never talk about.

CAROL

We had that Michael....

MICHAEL

... No. We never did.

(CAROL violently slaps him across the face and retreats, shocked at her actions, to gather her composure.)

Remember all those secrets you shared with me back in December about her going to the hospital?

CAROL

Of course...

MICHAEL

About her aborting Brendan's baby?

CAROL

So they don't have a "reckless perfect love"? Not everybody can have that...

MICHAEL

(Beat)

She didn't know I couldn't have children.

CAROL

What are you saying?

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II SCENE 11

SETTING The lights rise on the Indian graveyard. ANDREA sits on one of the ridges completely out of breath. She looks over and down the edge of the beach to the bluff. The moonlight is blue on the bluff and the ink black sea rolls onto the beach below.

ANDREA

You can come.

(BRENDAN enters. He is out of breath.)

BRENDAN

(Laughing)

Did you see me drop to my knees on the beach? Woman - have you no mercy?

ANDREA

(Laughs)

Come on, sit down.

(She beckons to BRENDAN to sit beside her and he does.)

BRENDAN

At least friends?

ANDREA

Sure.

(Beat)

Funny where this would end..

BRENDAN

... Where it started?

ANDREA

Yes.

BRENDAN

You remember? You were coming up the driveway with the flashlight in your hand and I stood up on the roof. From a hundred yards we were looking in each other's eyes.

ANDREA

Yes. I remember that.

BRENDAN

I remember coming out here the first time too.

ANDREA

You do?

BRENDAN

When we got the job, at the Leaside, that morning I came up here ahead of you. The papers on the door had blown down to the dunes. So I came walking out here..

ANDREA

..And Michael and I followed in our yellow slickers..

BRENDAN

I saw you that morning from right here.

ANDREA

..It had stopped raining..

BRENDAN

(Beat)

This is where it happened back then. This is where I built my courage up. Remember? I brought you an arrowhead and some chips of pottery I found here.

ANDREA

Brendan, it's over.

BRENDAN

Is it?

ANDREA

Haven't you given up?

BRENDAN

(Beat)

I don't know.

ANDREA
Go. Walk back along the beach.

BRENDAN
Why?

ANDREA
I don't want to go back right now.

BRENDAN
Can I stay?

ANDREA
No. I don't want to go back with you.

BRENDAN
Is there hope?

ANDREA
No - I'm gone.

BRENDAN
And you will be happy now?...

ANDREA
Yes, I will.

(BRENDAN exits out of the light
and ANDREA sits quietly.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II SCENE 12

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN enters onto the porch
from upstage left exhausted. It is
about ten minutes later. MICHAEL
has been waiting. BRENDAN looks up
at MICHAEL.)

She's coming up the path, Michael.

MICHAEL

(Looking at BRENDAN
carefully.)

And you're coming back from the beach? That's a switch -
you coming from the beach and her down your path...

BRENDAN

Listen to me for a moment.

(He is very controlled.)

Sometimes we were lovers, sometimes we were just friends,
sometimes she may have hated me. That's not perfect but
that's what we had. We could have fallen in love again...

MICHAEL

(Looks at BRENDAN for a
moment.)

I'm sorry but I've got to pack some stuff in the car.

BRENDAN

(He is very controlled.)

Michael, listen to me.

(MICHAEL stops in his tracks and
turns to look at BRENDAN.)

MICHAEL

You had her for all time and you lost her. Maybe close
enough wasn't good enough.

BRENDAN

(He is very controlled.)

Listen to me!

MICHAEL

No, Brendan, it's over.

(Turns with the bags in his hand
and exits toward the car.)

CAROL

(Enters after MICHAEL
exits.)

Where's Andrea?

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN sits down, heart
broken, in a chair, alone
on the stage with CAROL.)

I chased her down to the beach and then I stopped.

CAROL

Brendan...?

BRENDAN

...I followed her along the beach and watched her climb the
dunes and rest in the field I'd cut.

CAROL

What do you mean you "stopped?"

BRENDAN

I stopped and watched her go.

CAROL

But you followed her up into the dunes?

BRENDAN

I've been chasing her for years and it's done no good...so I
let her go.

CAROL

Did you?

BRENDAN

The further she tried to get away, the harder I chased her.
The harder I tried the worse it made things. I can't chase
her anymore. It does no good.

(MICHAEL enters.)

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA who has entered
and has been standing at
the edge of the stage and
listening to BRENDAN.)

Let's go.

(He holds up the keys.)

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL.)

Okay. I'll get my bags.

MICHAEL

Good.

(He picks up some more
bags.)

I'll take these to the car and be back for the rest.

ANDREA

(She crosses and starts to
go into the house.)

Okay.

(Both MICHAEL and ANDREA exit, one
to the car and the other to get
her bags inside.)

CAROL

(Turning and whispering to
BRENDAN.)

Then you stopped loving her?

BRENDAN

(Beat)

No.

CAROL

If you still love her then why didn't you stop her?
(ANDREA enters from the
screen door.)

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN stops for a moment
and then confronts CAROL
face to face.)

It is in her hands now. She says this will make her happy.

CAROL

In her hands now? What about you?

(She stops, looks at BRENDAN and
then exits back into the house
without looking directly at
ANDREA.)

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN helps ANDREA
through the door.)

Do you want this place?

ANDREA

It's yours.

BRENDAN

(Sort of joking.)

It's too big. The place is yours you know. At closing
when I paid for it I had it put in your name.

ANDREA

Why?

(Beat)

Are you going back to New York tomorrow?

BRENDAN

Yes. If I can get on a boat, I will.

ANDREA

I'll get my things next week.

BRENDAN

I need a day or two ahead of you in New York - to get
things organized, you know. ... All I want is the books and
things like that.

ANDREA

I don't want the place in New York...Brendan, where are you
going to go?

BRENDAN

It'll be okay. I never really liked the East Side.

(Making fun of himself.)

Sort of stuffy.

ANDREA

(Gently pleading with him.)

Just stay in our place in New York.

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN stops her in her tracks
and holds her steady for a
moment.)

Andrea, it'll be okay.

ANDREA

(Beat)

Brendan, why did you cut the grass out there?

(She indicates the Indian
graveyard.)

BRENDAN

You had never been there before?

ANDREA

No.

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL enters again.)

Come on, let's go.

ANDREA

...Even back then you'd go and sit out there. I'd see you.

BRENDAN

I imagine them living all around here. A whole civilization
forgotten... Gone. Like the two of us gone from this
place.

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

Come on. Let's go. You'll see each other again.

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL)

No, we won't.

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

We'll see them again.

ANDREA

(Exploding at MICHAEL.)

No. Some things are final.

BRENDAN

(Laughing)

Michael, I'm betting Andrea's right on that.

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN)

Why did you stop following me on the beach?

BRENDAN

(Joking)

"Some things are final."

ANDREA

(Beat)

Yes.

(She picks up her luggage, gives it to MICHAEL and then exits back into the house.)

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN)

I'd forgotten that she had such a temper.

BRENDAN

I'm sure you won't be troubled by it again.

MICHAEL

Are you being funny, Brendan?

(Calling to ANDREA who is inside of the house.)

Andrea, let's go.

BRENDAN

What's the rush, you've got a whole lifetime together.

ANDREA

(Enters through the kitchen door and addresses BRENDAN.)

It was peaceful out there. That's all I'm saying...sitting out there with you...

BRENDAN

Put that out of your mind.

ANDREA

(Turning to face BRENDAN.)

What do you mean? What do you mean by that?

BRENDAN

(To ANDREA)

I mean you are a "coward."

MICHAEL

(Exploding at ANDEA.)

Come on! We've got what they all want. We've got the highway and the car with the windows down with the springtime all around us. They can't even remember that. Come on. You've got to run, run, run with it...

BRENDAN

(To ANDREA)

Is that what you want? You're in love with what the advertisers sell.

ANDREA

(To BRENDAN)

"Coward?"

(She is very angry with BRENDAN and will get her revenge.)

Michael, while you were in there packing I ran out of here...

BRENDAN

(To ANDREA)

Andrea?

ANDREA

(To MICHAEL.)

And I ran down to the beach and Brendan followed me.

BRENDAN

(To ANDREA.)

What is the point of this?

ANDREA

He's always been stronger than I am. But I kept running down the beach...

BRENDAN

Punishment?

ANDREA

When I couldn't hear him breathing behind me I stopped.

BRENDAN

What is this- punishment?

ANDREA

..And I waited and he wasn't there.

BRENDAN

Punishment for giving up...?

ANDREA

I looked at a figure down on the beach...and I couldn't tell if it had finally given up ...if it was walking away, at last.

BRENDAN

...Or punishment for loving you too much?

MICHAEL

(To BRENDAN)

You gave up?

BRENDAN

(To MICHAEL)

It was futile.

(He turns his back on the others.)

ANDREA

(Referring to sitting with BRENDAN on the dune.)

It was nice sitting together. We were both exhausted. The tension was gone...

(CAROL reenters from the screen door with bags in her hands and simply watches.)

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

Forget him. - with his buying' this house, and his Goddam suspenders, and his analyzing poetry.

ANDREA

...I didn't really want to come back to the house just yet. So I sat on the bank at the edge of the field for a while - the field was cut and there were little mounds under my feet. There must have been whole families beneath my feet. Who was he to them? They had never met. They had never spoken. They would not know what to make of this silly thing in suspenders and docksides with keys in one pocket and American money in the next...but he cut the grass for them. Why would he do a thing like that?

MICHAEL

(To ANDREA)

Are you coming?

ANDREA

(Beat)

Tomorrow at eight A.M. Pick me up right here.

MICHAEL

(Surprised)

You're not coming now?

ANDREA

No.

MICHAEL

(Beat. To ANDREA)

All right, see you at eight.

(MICHAEL looks over at Carol.)

CAROL

(She is angry.)

I'm not going with you...

MICHAEL

No hurry..

(Indirectly addressing ANDREA.)

We got a bottle of bourbon in the house?

(He stretches and looks around.)
Can you feel it...?

(Laughing and addressing
CAROL.)

The summer's just begun.

CAROL

(Her tone is changed.)

I'll get home.

MICHAEL

Oh come on, that's a long walk.

(Flips her the keys.)

Want the keys, honey?

(She doesn't catch the keys and
they slide across the deck and
stop. After a beat, MICHAEL goes
and retrieves them as he speaks.)

We can have a few drinks and then I think I'll drive down
to Vineyard Haven and look around.

(Beat. Looking back at
CAROL.)

No. Wait.

(He exits into the house and
reenters with the gun from the
kitchen in his hand.)

Look what I've got here.

(He shows them the gun. ANDREA
and CAROL scatter but BRENDAN
doesn't move, he just slowly turns
to face MICHAEL.)

BRENDAN

The drawer by the door. I put it there for you.

MICHAEL

Well good I found it.

BRENDAN

I brought it here for you.

MICHAEL

Well good. Maybe I fire off a few rounds?

(MICHAEL points the gun straight at BRENDAN and pauses. BRENDAN does not move. After a pause MICHAEL lifts the gun above BRENDAN'S head so that it no longer points at BRENDAN.)

Are you afraid?

(He looks over at everyone menacingly.)

I am just going to break some windows, maybe.

(He aims the gun at the house and pulls the trigger once and it doesn't go off, then again at the sky and a third time and it doesn't go off. He then points it back at BRENDAN.)

BRENDAN

Go on. Deadhead a pansy.

(Beat. BRENDAN stares down MICHAEL and then reaches into his pants pocket and throws the bullets, underhanded in front of MICHAEL so that they slide along the deck to rest in front of him and slightly past him.)

Here. It's not about her. Is it?

(Beat)

Checkmate.

(Referring to the bullets.)

Pick them up.

(BRENDAN turns his back on MICHAEL and after a pause MICHAEL just drops the gun and exits.)

CAROL

(She addresses BRENDAN who has his back still turned.)

I was apprehensive but Michael was scared to come up here last fall. I made him do it. Brendan, tell the truth. Turn around. "Fix it or leave?" You son of a bitch!

(BRENDAN still keeps his back turned.)

Andrea,

(CAROL turns to face ANDREA.)

I'm sorry. So much of this is my fault. If we had talked when you asked, so much of this would not have happened.

(She looks at both BRENDAN and ANDREA.)

I'm going to leave my bags here and pick them up tomorrow after you both are gone.

(She exits.)

BRENDAN

(Still with his back turned on ANDREA. Beat)

Are you there?

ANDREA

(Beat)

Yes.

BRENDAN

(Referring to CAROL and MICHAEL jokingly but still with his back turned to ANDREA.)

Have they gone?

ANDREA

(Surprised that BRENDAN doesn't understand.)

Yes. She has left him, Brendan.

BRENDAN

(Gently joking.)

Left him where?

(He turns toward her and faces her for the first time.)

ANDREA

Left him...

BRENDAN

(Beat. Bitterly joking.)

Not here I hope. I get a feeling the weekend's over.

ANDREA

(There is the roar of the car as it exits down the road.)

Can you tell that she has left him?

(BRENDAN goes over and sits at the potter's wheel.)

BRENDAN

(BRENDAN does not answer.)

Before you go would you teach me how to do this?

ANDREA

Why?

BRENDAN

I've always wanted to know how to make one of the pots.

ANDREA

...Because of the chips you found out there?

BRENDAN

I always imagine the girl who made the pots out on the beach by the ocean, centuries ago, and she fell and dropped one and then a man came to her and helped her up and he walked her down the beach... And with just that they fell in love.

ANDREA

(Beat)

Brendan, I have secrets...

BRENDAN

(Brushing the thought away.)

It doesn't matter. You are forgiven.

(He continues to sit at the potter's wheel.)

ANDREA

...I've done horrible things.

BRENDAN

Life is sometimes very, very hard, Andrea. It takes us away. It uses us up. Just bones and dust...and busted pottery.

ANDREA

(Beat)

What do you want?

BRENDAN

Will you go with him tomorrow?

ANDREA

(Beat)

He won't come back...

BRENDAN

Are you sure?

ANDREA

Yes.

BRENDAN

(Gets up from the potter's wheel and walks over to the kitchen window flower box and picks some flowers and bundles them into a bouquet in his hand.)

Spring flowers. I think they must be wild volunteers from the meadows. Wild flowers from the meadows. We could stay a little longer. We don't have to go right back to New York.

(Joking)

I'm the boss you know.

(He kneels in front of her and presents her the flowers and she accepts them.)

ANDREA

Brendan, you had a poem for me? About the flowers here? You had it in the bedside table?

(Beat)

Did you throw it out?

BRENDAN

Yes.

(Beat)

It is a sonnet. If Brendan can write them so can I.

ANDREA

"Is?" Is it gone?

BRENDAN

This morning when I saw the suitcase under your bed I ripped it up. I threw it away.

ANDREA

So it's gone.

BRENDAN

No. I remember it.

(He recites the sonnet. At the line breaks/rhymes he moves his hands as Michael had when he recited his poem.)

"Blue Flag."

Here lives feral beauty as metaphor:
A flowered meadow runs the storm water
Past our summer house to the inlet's shore.
It holds the flood when it rains, in order

That a semi-septic graveyard swamp marsh
On ninety two wild acres, that won't perk,
Might be the birthplace for this flower's start.
One spring, years ago, I gave her my heart:

The "Blue Flag" from the Iris family
Has a throat of speckled gold, and grows tall
On a solid single stem, fun, friendly,
But at her roots she's poisonous to all.

Self-preservation, as final duty,
Creates its own narcissistic beauty.

ANDREA

(Beat)

"Poisonous to all?"

BRENDAN

Not to me.

ANDREA

What do you want?

BRENDAN

You've got to decide.

ANDREA

Brendan, what are you asking me?

BRENDAN

(He goes back to the potter's wheel and sits down. He waits. Very strong and soft.)

I just want you to "see me."

ANDREA

(Beat. Tears slowly fill her eyes as she thinks and then she tells the story.)

...A long time ago, after Michael and I painted the house imperfectly, I fell in love with a boy who sat on a roof with a paintbrush in his hand.

(She circles behind him.)

He had seen them tag a man's furniture and drag it out onto the deck and cut his boat free and tow it down Island to be sold.

(She massages his shoulders.)

He was that man's last friend at ten dollars an hour - and he didn't even get paid... But strangely, long after Michael and I had left, and the man had stopped crying and had walked down to the road, even after the sun went down, I saw Brendan out on the roof all alone...

(Beat. And then she whispers softly.)

And he kept painting...

(BRENDAN, still looking forward, reaches one hand back up to his shoulder and grasps one of Andrea's hand.

He is quiet and very strong now as he sits at the wheel. As the lights slowly dim "Have I Told You Lately" by Van Morrison plays and the lights continue to dim and bleed out of their faces with the first words of the song.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF PLAY)

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

My objective for *The Naked House Painting Society* (NHPS) is to have it produced in regional theaters around the country, as well as New York professional theaters. My objective is to have a play that is well-crafted, cost-effective to produce, and both interesting and challenging for the actors, audience, and all the people who work on its production. NHPS reflects my belief that the power of deep committed love can transcend the accepted mediocrity and mendacity of the mundane life. NHPS is designed to contrast American culture and its priority for money, status, narcissism and the pursuit of sensation with the alternative: transcendent love.

What I would hope to accomplish at the 2020 National Playwrights Conference would be the following:

First, I would hope to collaborate with a director and/or a dramaturge to help me shape the script to more perfectly tell the story and accomplish the themes. I would ask that we go over the play page by page and beat by beat in order to efficiently communicate the conflict and get to the line of the story.

Second, perhaps after rewrites (I can work very fast), I would ask for the actors/actresses to do limited table reads and improvisation work to make sure that the characters' development and dialogue is in harmony with the story. For example, is the relationship between each character clear and authentic? Do we understand the depth of Brendan's love for Andrea? Where are the roots for love like this? How do they grow to understand this love more perfectly together?

Third, I would like to work with lighting and set designers to understand how the Indian graveyard can act as a separate location for the action of Andrea and Brendan but yet have the graveyard maintain its own spiritual characteristics to support the theme of the play. I would also like to work with the lighting and set designers on the staging of the flashbacks.

Fourth, I would ask those who watched each other work separately on this project gather to discuss the harmony of their efforts and get suggestions about the rhythm of the presentment of the play. Where did they lose focus or concentration on the story as it is told and why? How can we close those gaps?

More than anything, I want to spend a month immersed in the world of the O'Neill. I cannot express how important that would be for me. I cannot describe how I would be changed. I just know I need this collaboration.