

The water falls.

by

Willy Conley

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The water falls. was first developed in the fall of 1990 at the Boston Playwrights Theatre under Derek Walcott, the artistic director and Katherine Snodgrass, the producing director. The play was further developed at the First National and Worldwide Deaf Theatre Conference during August 1995. It was given a public staged reading on August, 11, 1995 in the Paul Mellon Arts Center in Wallingford, CT. Ken Albers was the director; Kathleen Parsons was the production stage manager; Diane Nutting was the stage manager; and Laura Ripplinger was the interpreter. The playwright wishes to acknowledge Frank Dattolo, the National Theatre of the Deaf, Ken Albers, and the following cast for their generous support:

JED:	Robert DeMayo
GRANDPOP:	John Basinger
FATHER:	Will Rhys
MOTHER:	Susan Jackson

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The following cast performed in the three area staged readings, which were directed by Tim McCarty, with Betsy Meynardie, Davina Snow, and Maria Towe as the stage managers – all who have contributed valuable input to the play's growth:

JED:	Willy Conley
GRANDPOP:	Mike Deninger
MOTHER:	Elena Blue; Sue Mather and Rita Corey (understudies)
FATHER:	Tom Allen

New York Deaf Theatre produced the world premiere of this play off-off Broadway at the Chelsea Playhouse June 3—22, 1997 with the following cast directed by Tony Allicino:

JED: Robert DeMayo
 GRANDPOP: Mike Deninger
 MOTHER: Maureen Woods
 FATHER: Michael Burnett

Cast of Characters

JED Deaf, early 20's, fluent in ASL, signs and speaks
 GRANDPOP Hearing, elderly, fit, signs and speaks
 FATHER Hearing, 40's, signs and speaks
 MOTHER Deaf, 40's, communicates by gestures, gibberish, and at times,
 in fluent ASL

Time: present
 Place: JED's loft

Note:

All interaction between JED and other characters takes place in his mind.

A collage of surrealistic movement in the characters, and in the water reflections and sounds should occur throughout the play. We need to see the way thoughts course and reverberate through JED's mind.

For the roles of JED, GRANDFATHER, and FATHER, it is important to cast actors who can sign and speak well, simultaneously. This portrays JED's bilingual relationship with his family the way I perceived it. In cases where it is difficult to achieve this type of casting, having the actors just sign is acceptable. And when a non-signing audience is expected, additional actors would be needed to voice the lines offstage.

A beam of light comes up on a transparent cup somewhere on stage with an I.V. bag hanging in midair above it. The I.V. should be piggybacked (two bags together) with the Y-shaped tubing visible. Water from the I.V. drips into the cup slowly and rhythmically. This will continue throughout the play. On the cyclorama is a reflection of the ripples in the water created by the drops. The sound of the drips should be synthesized so that it amplifies and reverberates at certain points throughout the play.

The reflection reveals a silhouetted tableau of a large cardboard box, and of JED, MOTHER, and FATHER in poses of grief. Long period of silence; the effect should be hypnotic as each ripple undulates behind the three characters.

A stream of white light comes up on the box. GRANDPOP'S is handwritten across the box's downstage side in large black letters. The light should spill onto JED who is standing behind the box.

JED

(sign only; no voicing)

I sit and watch the waterfall
While far from home miles away
and wonder....

He can't get through the rest of the poem. He explores the sign for "waterfall," incorporating the sign for "blood." Also explored is the "two" handshape representing the

legs of a person falling over the ledge of a waterfall. All of this should be done somewhat ambiguously.

JED toes the box around a little bit, hesitant about opening it. MOTHER and FATHER are still invisible to him. Finally, JED picks up the box to put it away. It is very heavy. After a bit of a struggle, he can't find a place to put it away. The stage and the walls are empty and boxlike with no openings for him. The box ends up sitting where it was. JED stares at it from a distance. The ripple reflection fades out. Whenever the reflection goes down, the dripping onstage should always continue.

MOTHER

Breaks out of her pose. Haunting and completely unintelligible. The way she does this should be vocal and gestural yet leave no clue as to what she's saying. As the play progresses, her articulation of this line becomes slowly clear until the very end when she says it succinctly.

Oohhaaaayyyyyyyaahhhhhhhhuuuhhhhahhhhhiiellllehhhhhhhhhhh...

Oohhaaaayyyyyyyaahhhhhhhhuuuhhhhahhhhhiiellllehhhhhhhhhhh!

JED

(incredulous; sign only)

What?

Looks around along the walls of the stage.

MOTHER

Oohhaaaayyyyyyyaahhhhhhhhuuuhhhhahhhhhiiellllehhhhhhhhhhh!

JED

Unable to find her.

(sign only)

What? Say that again.

MOTHER goes to the box and opens it. JED sees her now. In a trance, she gingerly takes out a pocketwatch.

FATHER

Breaks out of his pose.

Jed? Jed! Come here for a minute. Help me take down the Christmas tree lights.

JED

(sign and voice)

Shh! Look at Mom.

MOTHER stares ahead. Long pause. She clenches then unclenches her eyes. She puts the watch down. A photograph is taken out of the box. She looks at it, then stares ahead. Long pause. Eyes clench and unclench.

FATHER

Every night.

JED

Every night? Since....

FATHER

Mmhhh. Like she's watching a slide show of her past.

MOTHER puts down the photo and brings out an eyeglass case. She takes the pair of glasses — obviously an elderly man's style — and puts them on. Eyes clench and unclench.

Three weeks — the same thing.

JED

You didn't tell me she's been doing this.

FATHER

Audrey, hon.

JED gestures to FATHER to leave her alone.

(gently)

Get out of the way.

JED gives him an "Excuse me!" gesture.

FATHER

Hon, take those off.

(No response)

Audrey — c'mon snap out of it!

JED

Dad,...come here...over here...please? Can't you be a little more sympathetic?

FATHER

Your mother has got to stop doing this and move on.

JED

It's going to take some time. Be patient.

FATHER

What are you, a social work major now?

JED

(sarcastic)

Are "we" having a bad day?

FATHER

Stay outta this. Take down those Christmas lights. I want to talk to your mother, now go on. Go.

JED

You know, someday I'm going to have to go through your belongings like this.

FATHER

(pause)

It won't be as bad — I promise.

JED

You never know.

MOTHER

(solemn)

Oh aayyah uh ah i el, eh.

FATHER

What did you say, hon?

(No response)

Come on, let's put these away and go to bed.

FATHER closes the box. Both exit taking away the props except the pocketwatch that's left on the floor.

MOTHER

(almost offstage)

Oh aayy ah uh ah i el, eh.

JED picks up the watch and tries to get it back to his mother but she's gone already. The ripple reflection comes up. He examines the watch, reads the inscription on the back, and then puts it away in his pocket. He glares at the box.

JED

(sign only; no voicing)

I sit and watch the waterfall
While far from home miles away
And wonder... what's going through...
My grandfather's mind today....

Again, he can't get past this. More signs are explored, like "grandfather," "mind," "home," etc.

(to the box; sign & voice)

You bastard!

He kicks the box and stubs his toe. After hobbling around, he's lured back into staring at it again. Snapping out of it, he goes to a wall and leans against it. He puts his head in his arms. Ripple reflection goes down.

FATHER

Enters whistling — an earlier memory. He comes up behind JED and accidentally scares him.

Whoooops! Hahahaha. Been waiting down here long?

(No response)

Hey — it's been good having you home.

JED

I want to ask you something.

FATHER

(sees the box)

Whoa! What's that doing on the floor? Probably fell off the table.

JED

How is Mom? [*points upstairs*]...is she going to be—

FATHER

Opens up the box.

We got this from your grandfather's. Lots of good stuff in here. Look at all these screwdrivers! Nice, huh? Your grandfather collected every goddamn-sized screwdriver, from the little tiny ones...

Demonstrates by taking out the smallest screwdriver and the biggest, and twists them into the box as if he's screwing something into it.

...aalllllll the way up to the biiig ones—

JED

Is Mom going to be ok?

FATHER

Say what?

JED

Mom. She going to be okay?

FATHER

She's fine, she's fine. Need a vise grip?

Tries it out on the box edge.

(No response)

You don't want it?

JED

No...I feel something inside her.

FATHER

Ever seen a nifty little handsaw like that?

Saws on the box edge.

I love it. You need one of these for your tool box?

JED

You're not listening.

FATHER

What?

JED

I said you're not listening.

FATHER

I'm listening, I'm listening. You said you feel something inside her. And...?

(No response)

C'mon Jed, lighten up. It's what I keep telling your mother. Look, we saved some of Grandpop's clothes for you...

JED

Why do you think Grandpop—

FATHER

...some nice golf shirts...

JED

Why do you—

FATHER

...socks...

JED

Dad, why—

FATHER

...pants — what size is your waist—

JED

Stop! I don't want them.

FATHER

You told me you couldn't afford to buy clothes for school.

JED

I couldn't afford new clothes, Dad, not used.

FATHER

These are practically brand new. Grandpop probably wore them once and didn't like 'em.

JED

Why do you think Grandpop did that?

FATHER

(pause)

Mental.

JED

What?

FATHER

Something mental was screwed up about him. That's why he was a hypochondriac [*fingerspells fast*].

JED

A hippopotamus??

FATHER

No, no, not hippopotamus! Hypo-chon-driac — someone who imagines he's sick all the time.

JED

I know what it means. You fingerspelled too fast. Anyway, Grandpop seemed all right to me. Just old.

FATHER

Seemed all right? How would you know? You never talked with him all that much.

(No response)

Hmm? Did you? All right, let's see...here's some nice jackets that would look good on you. We won't have to buy you any next Christmas...here's what I think is real nice. Look at this. London Fog. You don't have a dressy raincoat, do you?

JED

I hate that mothball smell.

FATHER

Ah, the dry cleaners'll take that out. So, what do you think? Pretty nice clothes, huh? All about your size.

(No response)

It'll save you a couple hundred bucks.

He throws everything back into the box, picks it up and hands it to JED. The box is very light in FATHER's hands. When JED gets it, it's very heavy.

Look, take the box back to college with you and think about it.

JED

Drops the box.

Why do you want to give me this now?

FATHER

You're going back to college tomorrow, right?

JED

Yeah, but you could've shown me all this in the morning.

FATHER

Uh-uh, I need to get into school early tomorrow.

JED

Take a long breakfast for once. Have a father—son chat. It's not every day I'm home.

FATHER

Tomorrow's gonna be a crazy day and I've got to get in early because...

JED & FATHER

...that's what principals are for.

FATHER

Heh-heh-heh, you know me, huh? Look, If you don't want that, dump it. C'mon, it's gettin' a little chilly down here.

Brings JED close to him.

Hey — you know what else principals are for?

JED

What?

FATHER

Spanking!

Quickly gives JED a whack on his butt. FATHER runs off into the dark, then returns.

Heh-heh-heh. Hey Jed — never know when you'll need a dressy raincoat.

He mimes flashing himself with a raincoat. Exits. Ripple reflection comes up.

JED resumes the same pose before FATHER entered, putting his head in his arms, against the wall. Long pause. The box draws his attention.

MOTHER

Enters. Signs begin to take on a little shape, like “your” and “grandfather,” but the rest is still totally incomprehensible.

Yourgrandfatherahhhhhiiiiimmmelllllehhhh!

Exits. JED looks quickly around for MOTHER, but she's gone. He

inspects the clothes in the box, the last being the raincoat.

JED

(to himself; sign and voice)

The London Fog...look at this [*referring to the inside collar*]...wrote his name with a pen then crossed it out. Weird...wrote his name again with a black marker, HAMILTON J. SCOTT.

GRANDPOP, 65, in full military uniform, enters from the dark, tall and majestic. He sets down a slide projector case. He salutes with a sharp click of his heels. Every word is signed and voiced clearly and sharply.

GRANDPOP

Sergeant Hamilton J. Scott at your command.

Freezes in salute. Silence. In awe, JED carefully studies him. He looks at his grandfather from a distance.

JED

Grandpop! Relax, it's me.

GRANDPOP

Comes out of freeze; at ease.

(Silence)

JED goes to hug him.

Don't do that. Just had my uniform pressed. A handshake will do.

(Silence)

Are we going to hold hands all night?

(No response)

What's the matter?

(No response)

Jed. Let go, son. Jed. I said let — go!

Slaps JED's hand which makes him let go.

What're you all sentimental about?

(No response)

You've never been like that before.

(No response)

What's the matter with you?

(signs this literally)

Cat got your tongue?

(no response)

ANSWER ME WHEN I'M TALKING WITH YOU!

JED

I-I-I can't believe it. You're...you're...

GRANDPOP

More demonstrative with signs; he snatches JED's hand, as if he were a cat snatching JED's tongue.

That cat really got your tongue.

JED

You're signing!

GRANDPOP

I'm what?

JED

You're using sign language with me, you've never signed with me or Mom. Ever!

GRANDPOP

I don't know what you mean.

JED

You refused to learn sign language to communicate with me and Mom. You always told Mom that speaking and lipreading is the only way for us to learn English. "Sign language is for low-functioning deaf people,...not even a language." And, now I see you sign—

GRANDPOP

Will you stop that jabbering? What — are — you — talking — about? You seem confused.

JED

Sign language.

GRANDPOP

What is that? You keep saying that but what the hell is it?

JED

Grandpop, come on, you're using it. Look at yourself.

GRANDPOP

I'm not using anything. I'm just talking to you.

JED

You're signing to me.

GRANDPOP

Signing, signing, signing, or signing? [*uses four sign language variations of this word, similar or contradictory in concept*] I still think you're very confused. I'm just standing here talking with my grandson. If you call that signing, I don't care. What are you doing in my pajamas?

JED

I—I-I love the feel of-of cotton.

GRANDPOP

“Cotton...the fabric of our lives.”

JED

I've worn these ever since Grandmom gave them to me.

(no response)

Are you okay?

GRANDPOP

Your grandmother? When?

JED

You were in the hospital recovering from heart surgery. Remember I stayed with grandmom?

GRANDPOP

What for?

JED

Parts of this monologue may be done in gestures.

To keep her company. Help out around the house while she visited you at the hospital. Wow - I've never seen anyone give so much love and attention to another person. I went with her one night - you were still under heavy sedation. She knelt by your bedside and prayed for - I don't know - twenty minutes? After that, she just stroked your head very gently and warmly - like it was an egg, and she was trying to get it to hatch. She whispered something for the longest time. I couldn't understand what but it was touching to watch. This was her ritual when she visited you. I gotta be honest - seeing you pale, lying in bed hooked up to all those I.V's and tubes and machines. I felt nothing for you. But when I saw the way Grandmom looked at you, held your hand in hers, it...just broke my heart. Felt like she was dying. When I drove her home that night, your house was very cold. She gave me a pair of your pj's to sleep in. *(admittedly)* I was really proud to wear these after you survived your surgery.

GRANDPOP

Have you been rifling [*signs this word like a machine gun shooting*] through my belongings?

JED

No-no-not really. Mom and Da—

GRANDPOP

Is that my name on the box?

JED

Well, yeah.

GRANDPOP

And those are my clothes?

JED

Yeah.

GRANDPOP

So you've been rifling through my belongings.

JED

I meant Mom and Dad have. They gave me the box with some of your clothes.

GRANDPOP

(distant)

Oh...

JED

Something wrong?

GRANDPOP

I didn't think about that. *(pause)* Why are you looking at me so funny?

JED

You've changed so much!

GRANDPOP

What are you talking about, boy?

JED

You look fit.

GRANDPOP

I look the same.

JED

Oh no. You don't need your glasses anymore. You're not smoking; you always had a cigarette in your mouth. You had quite a paunch. A double chin. Now, your skin looks great.

GRANDPOP

Stop talking like a girl.

JED

I'm just admiring you, okay?

GRANDPOP

What am I, a laboratory rat?

Gestures a cut-open rat pinned to a specimen tray and examines it.

(pause)

So, what's with the raincoat?

JED

I don't know, thinking about wearing it. It's been raining all week.

GRANDPOP

London Fog. "There's a lot your life in a London Fog." Water runs right off of it. Nothing like that cheap shit that gets soaked all the way through.

FATHER

Enters.

Heh-heh-heh. Hey Jed — "There's a lot of your life in a London Fog." Never know when you'll need a dressy raincoat.

FATHER flashes him.

Water runs right off of it. Drip, drip, drip!

JED

(Smiles)

Yeah.

GRANDPOP

What are you smiling about?

JED

Nothing. *(to FATHER)* Why did you always make fun of Grandpop behind his back?

FATHER

I've never forgiven him for always being suspicious of me.

GRANDPOP

You look awful suspicious. What're you thinking about?

JED

What was he suspicious about?

FATHER

I'm a hearing man who wanted to marry a beautiful deaf woman.

JED

That's not why you married Mom, was it?

GRANDPOP

What's going on here?

JED

Wait a minute, I'm thinking.

FATHER

No, but your grandfather thought I married your mother just because she was beautiful and couldn't hear...like I was going take advantage of her for that reason.

JED

Mom's deaf, you can hear. So what?

FATHER

Try explaining that to him. He never understood that I fell in love with her not because she couldn't hear but because she could see. More than most people. She has the best eye for photographing people — you know that.

JED

Oh, yeah. She takes great portraits.

FATHER

But, you want to know something? You'll never find a portrait of your grandfather.

JED

No portraits — Grandpop??

GRANDPOP

I don't want a portrait! What do you want my portrait for?

FATHER

No portraits anyplace. He would never let her your mother take his picture. And you know what else?

GRANDPOP

What're you ignoring me for?

JED

Just wait! *(to FATHER)* What else?

FATHER

He didn't like the idea of your mother giving up her family name to me.

JED

What's the big deal?

FATHER

I don't know, guess he wanted his name to live on forever, and ever, and ever....

Exits signing "ever and ever" till he's offstage)

GRANDPOP

I resent being ignored. Don't you have any respect for your elders?

JED

How come you crossed off your name?

(no response)

Points to raincoat collar.

GRANDPOP

Oh that? Your grandmother wrote my name on it — with a pen. I told her if I lost that at the doctor's office, nobody can read my name in that light blue writing. Besides, it might wash off. You must write with a black marker — something permanent, so you can see my name in big, black letters. Say, where are we?

JED

Here.

GRANDPOP

Don't give me that smart talk. Where?

JED

In my loft.

GRANDPOP

I said, "where?"

JED

Here! In my l-o-f-t!

GRANDPOP

What are the coordinates? [*uses the five handshape sign for "graph", making horizontal and vertical movements in the air in front of him*]

JED

[*copies GRANDPOP's sign*] The what?

GRANDPOP

Latitude and longitude. [*signs with one index finger moving from North to South and with the other index finger, East to West. The fingers should intersect at a point*]

JED

I don't know. We're in Rochester, New York.

GRANDPOP

Traces his fingers along the imaginary map hanging in front of him.

43 and 13 North. 77 and 38 West.

JED

How do you know that?

GRANDPOP

You go to college here right?

JED

Yeah. But how —

GRANDPOP

I know exactly where you are on the map.

MOTHER

Enters and sits. GRANDPOP doesn't see her. JED stands behind MOTHER.

(a little clearer; still incomprehensible)

Your grandfatherahhhhhhhmmmmmm self,eh.

GRANDPOP

What's the date?

(No response)

GRANDPOP

What's the matter boy? I asked what's the date.

(No response)

Look at your watch!

JED

(not looking)

December the 12th.

GRANDPOP

December the 12th. Now what was so hard about that? Hmm?

JED

(barely visible and audible)

One year ago.

MOTHER exits.

GRANDPOP

I cannot understand you. What are you looking at?

JED

One year ago. Why, Grandpop?

Explores sign for “grandfather”.

GRANDPOP

I hear something dripping.

JED

Why?

Explores sign for “why” and the letter “Y”

GRANDPOP

What the hell is that dreadful dripping sound? I can hear it but I can't see it.

JED

I can see it but I can't hear it. Why Grandpop??

GRANDPOP

Are you on drugs or something?

JED

No!

GRANDPOP

Are you buying drugs with the money I invested for your college education?

JED

Of course not.

GRANDPOP

You could've used some of that money to buy yourself some furniture here.

JED

I did not use the money for any drugs.

GRANDPOP

Well, what did you do with my money?

JED

Never touched it.

GRANDPOP

Why?

JED

Pride.

GRANDPOP

Pride? [*looks at the handshape for "pride" and converts it to the handshape for "dumb"*] Stupidity! \$5,000 bucks is in there for your education. Yours for the taking.

JED

Sure, sure, if I studied business administration.

GRANDPOP

Is the money still in the bank?

JED

No.

GRANDPOP

No?

JED

No. (*pause*) I handed it over to Jack.

GRANDPOP

Jack? Jack who? Jack where? Which Jack?

JED

(pause)

Think, Grandpop.

GRANDPOP

Don't play games with me. Who?

JED

Your son.

GRANDPOP

Oh, that Jack?

JED

Yep, that Jack.

GRANDPOP

Are you telling me he has \$5,000 of my money?

JED

He needed the money more than I did. I don't know if he still has it.

GRANDPOP

That dirty, thievin' sonavabitch son of mine. HE'S A CROOK! YOU KNOW THAT? AAHHHRRRR! THAT JACK-ASS BELONGS IN JAIL.

JED

Uncle Jack got laid off from work.

GRANDPOP

BULLLLL...SHIT! [*signs "bull horns" and "shit"*]

JED

He still had a car and a house to pay off.

GRANDPOP

Oh, you're easy to take advantage of. Where's Jack?

JED

Hawaii.

GRANDPOP

HAWAII! HIS WHOLE LIFE HAS BEEN ONE LONG VACATION.

JED gestures he doesn't want to listen anymore — shields his eyes, walks away, or grabs hold of GRANDPOP'S hands to silence his runaway thoughts. Ripple reflection comes up and goes down.

(Silence)

GRANDPOP

Are you planning to keep me here long?

JED

Depends.

GRANDPOP

On what?

JED

You. Me.

GRANDPOP

You me what?

JED

You me coming to an understanding.

GRANDPOP goes to his slide projector case, opens it and lifts out a projector with a Carousel tray of slides. He flips the box upside down to use as a platform to set the projector on. The box is very light to him. All of his belongings spill out. The projector is set to project over

the heads of the audience. He takes out a long roll of electrical cord.

What are you doing?

GRANDPOP

Work.

Hands JED the cord.

Go plug this in.

JED

Work? You've retired! [*signs with "R" handshape and arms crossed on his chest; the sign should look like the crossed arms of a dead person lying in a coffin.*]

GRANDPOP gives him a hard stare.

I'm sorry I didn't mean that. It just came out like that. Honest! Retired, ha-ha-ha-ha.

JED looks at the way he signed with the "R" handshape - straightens out the handshape and makes it with the palms crossed over his chest.

JED

I had no idea that related to-to...you know.... I'll go find an outlet.

While JED searches high and low for an outlet, GRANDPOP turns on the projector with the clap of his hands.

GRANDPOP

"Clap on. Clap off. The Clapper!"

He projects slides with the snap of his fingers as if they were the remote control. Each finger snap should punctuate the end of every line of dialogue until where noted.

GRANDPOP sorts and arranges some of the slides. None of them have an image on them. JED notices the mysteriousness of all this and becomes dumbfounded.

What are they slides of?

(no response; signs bigger)

WHAT ARE THEY SLIDES OF? FAMILY?

(no response)

Impossible. Can't be family. You never took photographs. Mom always shot color slides for family gatherings. She felt slides were more permanent than color prints. Remember how Mom loved to get the whole family together for dinner and watch her slide show afterwards?

MOTHER

Enters.

(still incomprehensible)

Your grandfathershaaaaaahhh himself, eh.

JED

He signs and voices his lines, which he normally wouldn't with MOTHER, but does so thinking that emphatic use of two languages simultaneously would somehow bring her to her senses.

It's okay, Mom. It's okay. Everything will be all right.

MOTHER

Your grandfather shaaahhhh—

JED touches her. Her signs becomes progressively clear during this scene. Between the clear words (signs) are still pieces of gibberish.

Ohhh...call...

JED

It was an impossible situation.

MOTHER

...dinner...

JED

No, it wouldn't have helped having him over for more dinners.

MOTHER

...not sensitive...

JED

No, no, no. Now you look at me. You were very, very sensitive. You are the most sensitive person I know in the whole world.

MOTHER

...visit...

JED

Mom! Visiting more wouldn't matter.

MOTHER

...cologne...feel awful...

JED

MOM, DON'T! The Old Spice cologne set was fine. Stop feeling awful.

MOTHER

...crossword puzzles...

JED

Shakes her violently.

STOP! That's enough.

MOTHER

...tough life...

JED

I know, he's had a tough life.

MOTHER

...his mother, father deserted him...

JED

I didn't know that.

MOTHER

...You understand?...

JED

Of course, I understand.

MOTHER

Means what?

JED

His mother and father left him.

MOTHER

His grandmother!

JED

With great-great grandmom?

MOTHER

...military schools...

JED

Sent him to military schools?

MOTHER

Signs complete sentence.

And you know what else? Not many people know this.

JED

What?

MOTHER

He was a boxer.

JED

(genuinely surprised)

Amazing. Him? A boxer? I never knew that.

MOTHER

But, if he was a fighter then why?

Sign for "fighter" should be different than "boxer." Exits.

JED

(to himself)

If he was a fighter, then why?

GRANDPOP

Looking up at a slide.

I notice you're talking to yourself nowadays.

JED

(to the wall near where MOTHER left)

Tell me more.

GRANDPOP

(Pause)

What do you want to know?

JED

Huh? Oh! Uh...what are you doing?

GRANDPOP

What's it look like?

JED

Like you're reviewing some images. But, there's nothing up there.

GRANDPOP

That's because you don't see them.

JED

Oh, and you do?

GRANDPOP

Bright and clear..., “just like a Kodak moment.”

Gestures taking a picture of JED with a toothy smile.

(Silence)

JED

Is that why you had that false tooth?

GRANDPOP

Is what why?

JED

Did you get a tooth knocked out from boxing?

GRANDPOP

Stops snapping his fingers.

Who told you that?

JED

Never mind who. Can you still make your false tooth pop out like you used to?

GRANDPOP

No.

JED

Oh, come on. Please?

GRANDPOP

I don't think it's a good idea.

JED

Why not? You used to do it all the time. Made me laugh. Just once. Pleeeasse?

GRANDPOP

Slowly opens his mouth. JED grimaces and backs away.

What are you afraid of?

JED

Nothing.

GRANDPOP

I'm not going to bite you. No extractions. No bridges. Take a look.

The way GRANDPOP points to his mouth looks like the way he would put a rifle into his mouth. The "2-handshape" sign for "look" should slowly convert to a gesture of a double-barrel shotgun. At the right moment, the thumb should pop up like a trigger. He then takes the "gun" out of his mouth but continues to sign keeping the "shotgun" handshape throughout this little speech.

You know something... I've got this little ache back here near the medulla oblongata, the nervous tissue at the bottom of my brain that controls my respiration, circulation, and other bodily functions. It's hard to pinpoint because it's hidden by—

JED

NO, STOP IT!

Turns away and rubs his eyes.

You didn't need to explain with all that technical, biomedical terminology.

GRANDPOP

Big words! College is improving your intelligence. You graduating soon?

(No response)

Hmmph. You still playing around with that fairy theatre company?

(No response)

Go-to-war, is that an earring? That required to become an actor?

JED

I didn't bring you here to mock my life.

GRANDPOP

Well, what do you want?

JED

(pause)

I want...okay...I want to ask why you...no—

GRANDPOP

You don't want me to mock your life, then what — the — hell do you want?

JED

I want to know more about your life — questions I never had a chance to ask you.

GRANDPOP

Make 'em snappy.

Starts putting away slide equipment.

JED

Yessir!

GRANDPOP

Time's precious.

JED

Precious? You're the last person on Earth that would say that. You used to sit around—

GRANDPOP

I'm not on Earth anymore.

(long pause)

You're not going to get emotional on me now, are you?

JED

How...how come when I was 11...you stopped giving me pennies?

GRANDPOP

(chuckles)

Is that the question you've been waiting and waiting to ask me?

JED

Just answer it!

GRANDPOP

You started to whine, "Is that all you have, Grandpaw?"

JED

No! I really said that? Oh come on. I was only 11.

GRANDPOP

Taught you a lesson, didn't I?

JED

I didn't learn anything except that you were an angry old man.

GRANDPOP

Hell, I had a right to be angry.

JED

'Cause a little kid wanted more?

GRANDPOP

'Cause a little kid couldn't learn the value of love and giving.

JED

How was I supposed to know you gave me pennies out of love and giving? I thought that was your job as a grandfather. To get rid of things you don't want and give them to your grandchildren.

GRANDPOP

If you only knew how much love was behind all those pennies.

JED

You didn't look like you enjoyed giving me pennies. "Here, boy, go on take 'em." Why were you angry?

GRANDPOP

You were getting spoiled.

JED

Over pennies?

GRANDPOP

Every time you came over to visit, your grandmother would nudge me and say, “Hamilton, don’t forget to give Jed those pennies.”

JED

Grandmom saved those pennies for me?

GRANDPOP

Where was your appreciation for that?

JED

I never knew Grandmom did that.

GRANDPOP

You never listened.

JED

Grandpop — I’m deaf! Can’t get that through your head? I couldn’t understand half the things you said.

GRANDPOP

I communicate very clearly.

JED

You always had a cigarette in your mou—

(pause)

Weren't you ever spoiled?

GRANDPOP

No.

JED

Oh, come on.

GRANDPOP

Nothing to spoil me with.

Packing up his equipment.

Are we finished?

JED

Not yet. What's the hurry?

GRANDPOP

I've got a meeting to go to.

JED

A meeting? Where?

GRANDPOP

That's classified.

JED

Well, can you tell me who you're supposed to meet?

(No response; conspiringly)

Go ahead, I won't tell anyone.

GRANDPOP

(pause)

Some new, unhappy people.

JED

What? New, unhappy people? You mind explaining?

GRANDPOP

Doesn't your college teach you anything?

JED

DO YOU MIND EXPLAINING?

GRANDPOP

Don't flail your hands at me like that.

JED

Sorry. I just don't get it.

GRANDPOP

Do I have to spoonfeed everything to you?

(no response)

People who have committed suicide.

JED

People who've committed suicide. The new, unhappy people?

MOTHER

Enters, like in the beginning.

Oohhaaaayyyyyyyaahhhhhhhuuuhhhhahhhhhieeeeehhhhhhhhhh...

FATHER

Enters.

Jed, can you come home? It would be good for your mother.

MOTHER

Oohhaaaayyyyyyyaahhhhhhhuuuhhhhahhhhhieeeeehhhhhhhhhh...

JED

What?

FATHER

Your grandfather...

JED

WHAT? What happened?!

MOTHER

Oohhaaaayyyyyyyaahhhhhhhuuuhhhhahhhhhieeeeehhhhhhhhhh...

FATHER

Your grandfather...uh...passed away.

Exits, escorting MOTHER away.

JED

How?

GRANDPOP

(fingerspells) S-u-i-c-i-d-e. (then signs) Suicide.

JED

(Pause; in a daze.)

I see [*signs "see" literally*]. Why Grandpop?

GRANDPOP

You see? You si? You sea? You C? U.C.? O...U...C? [*"O" handshape emphasizes the open mouth, "U" handshape shows the gun going to the mouth, and "C" handshape indicates the exit wound behind the head*] What do you see?

JED

(horrificed)

See? I don't see anything. I'm just saying that I understand.

GRANDPOP

Do you understand?

JED

Sort of. I've thought about suicide before. I think everybody thinks about it at one time in their lives.

GRANDPOP

Do you understand?

JED

Not really.

GRANDPOP

Well then why did you say "I see"?

JED

I'm—I'm just trying to understand. Why are you barking at me?

GRANDPOP

I was a drill sergeant; it's the way I talk.

JED

I'm your flesh and blood, not one of your soldiers.

(pause)

Ok, so, you're having a meeting with these new, unhappy people soon?

GRANDPOP

Yes, my new family.

JED

What do you mean your new family?

GRANDPOP

My brothers, sisters, my children, my grandchildren.

JED

The new, unhappy people?

GRANDPOP

My family.

JED

What's wrong with your old family?

(no response)

Well, what was wrong with us?

(no response)

What do you do when you meet with your new family?

GRANDPOP

I give them a slide show and a lecture about suicide.

JED

After these people kill themselves?

GRANDPOP

Affirmative.

JED

What good's a lecture about suicide after they've already killed themselves?

GRANDPOP

It's not about prevention; it's a support group.

JED

What do you talk about?

GRANDPOP

I help them accept their decision to kill themselves.

JED

You help them?? Are they stuck in Hell, feeling guilty? You come down there and help them out?

GRANDPOP

I praise them.

JED

Oh, you go pat them on the back, "It's all right folks, you've made the right decision!"

GRANDPOP

Don't you judge me.

JED

This is totally absurd.

GRANDPOP

What do you know about s-u-i-c-i-d-e?

JED

Not much but I do know it's the most selfish thing a human being can do.

GRANDPOP

You don't know anything about suffering.

JED

I told my parents I felt what you did was a cop-out.

GRANDPOP

A cop-out?

JED

And-and that...that...it's against the law!

GRANDPOP lets out a long, hearty laugh.

What's so funny?

GRANDPOP

(Having trouble controlling his laughter)

It's - it's- hee hee hee a- gainst the -haha law...*(stifles coughs)* Against the law? What are the cops gonna do after somebody slits his wrists and bleeds to death? Slap handcuffs on him? Drag him off to jail?

JED starts to snicker at the absurdity of his own remark. GRANDPOP laughs again.

Lights dim on GRANDPOP as he goes into a pose where it looks like he's watching television.

FATHER

Enters. An earlier time.

(Having trouble controlling his laughter.)

Hey, Jed. Your mother — hahaha...—

Mother

Enters with better composure than before. She signs in ASL.

Actors should take liberty depicting this scene in grotesque, surreal ways.

(laughing)

That's terrible. You shouldn't tell him. My poor mother...hahaha...(to JED) your grandmother....

JED

What? What? What?

FATHER

You won't believe what just happened. Your mother was turning your grandmother over in bed —

GRANDPOP

(not signing)

QUIET! I'm trying to watch Jeopardy!

FATHER

Sh! Sh! Sh! *(whispering)* Your father just screamed "QUIET!" He's trying to watch tv — J-e-o-p-a-r-d-y [*gestures some features of the game show.*]

MOTHER

...she was feeling too sick to get out of bed so *(snickering)*...so...I tried to change the bed sheets while she was lying there. And...oh no, I —
hahaha....

GRANDPOP

SHUT UP IN THERE!

FATHER

(under control)

Keep it down! He said "shut up!" Anyway, your mother was reaching over her like this — to pull out the sheet that's tucked under the bed. She had to roll your grandmother over a little to pull the sheet out.

MOTHER

That's enough, it's terrible.

FATHER

And just when she rolls over, your grandmother ...hahahaha.. ...bblllrrrrfff!
She breaks wind...hahahaha...right in your mother's face.

GRANDPOP

(not signing)

GODDAMN YOU ALL LAUGHING! I MISSED THE ANSWER TO FINAL JEOPARDY. I missed the Final Jeopardy.

FATHER

(whispering)

Your father just roared — he missed the answer to Final Jeopardy.

JED

What was the Final Jeopardy question?

MOTHER and FATHER shrug their shoulders and exit, still laughing. JED is terribly disturbed by this.

(To the wall near where MOTHER and FATHER exits)

I don't think that's funny.

GRANDPOP

I don't care what you think, it's over.

JED

What?

GRANDPOP

IT'S OVER!

JED

What did you say?

GRANDPOP

(signing again)

I don't care what you think, it's over.

JED

NO, IT'S NOT. IT NEVER WILL BE! I have more questions for you.

GRANDPOP

Makes a motion to leave.

I've got that meeting to go to.

JED

Restrains him.

It can wait.

GRANDPOP
No it can't.

JED
WAIT!

GRANDPOP
Don't you put your fingerprints on my medals.

JED
WAIT! You can't go yet.

GRANDPOP
Who's going to stop me?
Leaves.

JED
(desperate)
I have something from Grandmom.

GRANDPOP
(pause)
What did you say?

JED
I have something from Grandmom, for you.

GRANDPOP
Where?

JED
Something that might interest you.

GRANDPOP
Don't tease me like that. What is it?

(pause; realizes what JED's up to)
I've already gone through all of your grandmother's belongings. Nice try.

Starts to leave again. JED becomes more desperate.

JED

What time's your meeting?

GRANDPOP

22:00 hours.

JED

Pulls out the pocket watch.

Well, it's...21:...35 hours according to old Seth Thomas.

GRANDPOP

Seth Thomas?

JED

"Hamilton - together till even after death do us part. Love, Anna Marie"

GRANDPOP

Give me that.

JED

After we're finished.

GRANDPOP

Now.

JED

No.

GRANDPOP

You're behavin' like that 11-year-old. Read my lips...hand -that - over!

JED

Do you remember what you always said whenever I got fever blisters on my lips?

GRANDPOP

I'll give you fever blisters on your lips right now.

JED

Do you remember?

GRANDPOP

You been kissin' them negroe girls again? Now give me that.

JED

Why did you say that?

GRANDPOP

You know I don't like negroes.

JED

Why?

GRANDPOP

No particular reason. I just don't like them.

JED

Come on, Grandpop, there must be a reason.

GRANDPOP

Do you like corn?

JED

Huh?

GRANDPOP

DO YOU LIKE CORN?

JED

Yeah, so are you—

GRANDPOP

Do you like potatoes?

JED

Yes, but what—

GRANDPOP

Do you like tomatoes?

JED

(pause)

Yeah, they're all right.

GRANDPOP

Do you like eggplant?

JED

God, no!

GRANDPOP

Why?

JED

No particular reason, I just don't....

GRANDPOP

(smiles)

Now hand it over.

JED

(pause)

I dated this very special, intelligent and loving woman named Keisha — one of the few women who could make me laugh and feel good...

GRANDPOP

Good. I'm glad you're not one of them homosexuals.

JED

...she had — *(really rubbing it in)* she had this sexual energy that could...*(gestures an "erection" growing on GRANDPOP)*. You could feel the energy vibrating off her skin. She was Black and Beautiful. And I've kissed her full red lips.

GRANDPOP stifles a cough.

The next day I looked in the mirror at my lips for fever blisters. Nothing!

GRANDPOP goes into a coughing fit.

(sarcastically)

Would you like me to get you a glass of water?

GRANDPOP nods. JED steps aside and watches MOTHER and FATHER

enter. GRANDPOP continues coughing.

FATHER
Come here, hon.

MOTHER
Are you using your voice?

FATHER
(sotto voce)
He can't hear us.

MOTHER
He's got ears of a bat.

FATHER
Well, I'm getting tired of hearing that at the dinner table.

MOTHER
He can't help it.

FATHER
Every time he and your mother comes over he can't help it, huh?

MOTHER
I'm sorry, what do you want me to do?

FATHER
I don't know. Make him eat here in the kitchen.

MOTHER
I ought to make you eat in here if it bothers you that much.

FATHER
I just might eat in here if it keeps up. You're lucky you're deaf and can't hear that racket.

MOTHER
Would you do that to your father?

FATHER

My father never needed attention.

MOTHER

Oh-ho!

FATHER

He didn't.

JED

Steps into the scene.

Grandpop's hacking his head off in there. Aren't you going to bring him some water?

MOTHER

I'm getting it. I'm getting it.

Exits.

JED

What's going on in here?

FATHER

Ah, nothing. We're just having a little argument.

JED

About what?

FATHER

About your grandfather disrupting the dinner atmosphere.

JED

He can't help it, Dad.

FATHER

Like mother, like son.

JED

What can you do?

FATHER

I'm going back in to eat and if he bursts out coughing again, I'm gonna — I'm gonna...(at a loss for an answer) spank him!

FATHER exits. Ripple reflection comes up and goes down. JED is back against the wall, head in his arms.

GRANDPOP

Where's my water?

JED

Mom's getting it.

GRANDPOP

Who?

JED

Mom! Remember her?

GRANDPOP

Audrey? Is she here?

JED

She comes and goes.

GRANDPOP

A college student! Still living with his mommy.

JED

Oh, do you miss her?

GRANDPOP

No, I'm just wondering if your mother is living with you.

JED

In some ways, yes.

GRANDPOP

(coughs)

Is my water coming?

JED

It's coming. *(pause)* Did you do that to get attention?

GRANDPOP

Do what?

JED

Coughing.

GRANDPOP

Of course not, I've got fluid build-up in my lungs.

JED

I see. Fluid only builds up whenever you came to visit for dinners?

GRANDPOP

For dinners?

JED

Uses gestures for some of this.

Yes, yes. For dinners. You cough and cough and cough and draw your chair back and - and you dab your watery eyes and mouth with a napkin and meanwhile, everyone has stopped eating and they're watching you. Was that a performance?

GRANDPOP

I don't have to stay here and listen to this bulllll — shit.

JED

You will as long as I'm standing here.

GRANDPOP

Goes into a boxer's stance. During this exchange he takes occasional swings at JED.

All right, come on. C'mon, c'mon, c'mon.

Pushes JED. He begins to walk in half-circles around JED, like a boxer sizing up his opponent. Gradually,

this builds up to a “dance” around the opponent.

(like a ring announcer)

Ladies, and Gentlemen...GRAND-father versus GRAND-son [*signs “grand” like “huge”*]. The GRAND event.

JED and GRANDPOP spar a bit.

C’mon, let's see if you're as tough as you talk. SISSY!

JED

SISSY? YOU’RE THE BIG SISSY. ALWAYS COMPLAINING: “MY TOE ACHES, MY BALLS ACHE, MY STOMACH ACHES, MY BACK ACHES, MY HEAD ACHES” — YOU’RE ONE BIG FUCKIN’ ACHE!

GRANDPOP

They were real aches. PUT THEM UP. COME ON!

JED

Oh, you imagined all of it. Mom agreed too.

GRANDPOP

What does your mother know? I had quadruple by-pass surgery. Was that in my head?

Mother enters and stands solemnly aside.

JED

We all knew that was real.

GRANDPOP

Okay then.

JED

Oh, man did she hurt. You talk about suffering, she suffered the most.

GRANDPOP

Why, she didn't care that much about me.

JED

Are you crazy? She loved you even when you cut her down.

GRANDPOP

(emphatic)

No...nobody loved me except your grandmother.

JED

She was always there for you before and after Grandmom died.
Why did you reject her?

(no response)

You've never really accepted Mom for the way she is, haven't you?

(no response)

Were you ashamed she turned out to be deaf?

(no response)

Ashamed she couldn't speak?

(no response)

GODDAMN IT, ANSWER ME! BECAUSE SHE WAS DEAF AND
COULDN'T SPEAK WELL? THAT EMBARRASS YOU IN FRONT OF
ALL YOUR ARMY BUDDIES? MAKE YOU LESS OF A MAN? HUH?
WHY DIDN'T YOU LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE? KNOW WHY?

(no response)

YOU NEVER HAD THE FUCKIN' TIME FOR HER! YOU KEPT
MOVING FROM TOWN TO TOWN. ARMY BASE TO ARMY BASE.
YOU NEVER GAVE HER ANY OF YOUR TIME!

(no response)

She was your oldest. Oh, she loved you. I never figured out why.

GRANDPOP

Me either. Now where's my water? *(pause)* I need to be near the water.

During the following exchange, MOTHER, FATHER, and GRANDFATHER circle fluidly around JED who looks out above the audience. All address the lines to the spot where JED looks.

MOTHER

The salt air, the ocean breeze will be good for my father.

JED

I agree, Grandpop needs to get out of his house.

FATHER

He'll complain about the humidity. His upset stomach. The frogs croaking.

JED

Oh yes, the frogs.

GRANDPOP

I hate frogs.

MOTHER

All I'm asking is one small favor.

JED

Just one small favor??

FATHER

One small favor?

JED

It's our vacation.

GRANDPOP

Have a little compassion my wife just died.

JED

I'm sorry.

MOTHER

My mother just died, have some compassion.

JED

I'M SORRY!

FATHER

He'll complain about the humidity. His upset stomach. The frogs croaking.

GRANDPOP

I hate frogs!

JED

The frogs.

MOTHER

My father needs to get out of his house.

JED

I agree, he needs to get out of his house.

FATHER

Just one small favor??

GRANDPOP

If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't have a home at the shore. You wouldn't even be here. You wouldn't have been born and Jed wouldn't have been born.

The movement stops.

(silence)

MOTHER

Please do what I asked.

Exits. During the following exchange, FATHER doesn't see or hear GRANDPOP, but JED does.

FATHER

Let's go do what your mother asked.

GRANDPOP

(to himself)

They're really making a fuss over me!

JED

How big do those blocks have to be?

GRANDPOP

Cut them the same size as cinder blocks.

JED

That big? Why?

GRANDPOP

That's what I have at home under my bed.

FATHER

You want to know what I'd say? Tough shit. Let him sleep flat!

GRANDPOP

I can't sleep flat. My head has to be higher than my feet!

JED

Come on, Dad. Let's just do it. For Mom.

FATHER exits.

GRANDPOP

Where the hell is my water?

MOTHER enters and slowly walks to the cup of water, picks it up, and holds it out. JED goes to meet her.

JED

She kept on loving you no matter what. And you had to...*(can't find the right signs)*... and Mom had to find you...all over....Why didn't you just swallow a cyanide pill — be over with it cleanly, peacefully?

JED holds the cup of water with MOTHER. They hand the water to GRANDPOP. Insulted, GRANDPOP slaps the cup out of their hands.

Water spills all over the downstage area.

(silence)

JED kneels down to the water and feels it, rubbing it between his fingers. MOTHER, who stands behind him, mirrors his hand movements.

JED

You see? Do you have any idea how my mother felt when she saw your blood like this?

(no reply)

MOTHER puts her hand on JED's shoulder.

Well, I hate to admit it. I must've inherited a little bit of my mother's love for you.

GRANDPOP

What do you mean?

JED

Isn't it obvious?

GRANDPOP

No.

MOTHER exits.

JED

I've been thinking a lot about you. If I wasn't you wouldn't be here.

GRANDPOP

I don't understand.

JED

I wrote a poem about you. It's not great but I wrote it.

GRANDPOP

So?

JED

Called it "The water falls." [*fingerspells "falls"*].

GRANDPOP

Uh-huh, The Waterfalls [*signs "waterfall"*].

JED

No. The water — falls. Period. Like fall down.

GRANDPOP

Oh, I see. The Water Falls [*signs "falls" like a cup of water spilling*].

JED

We'll see if you see. I wrote it when you were home alone while Grandmom was still alive...in the hospital getting chemotherapy. Here, I want you to have it now.

*He tries to slip the poem in
GRANDPOP's shirt pocket.*

GRANDPOP

I don't want it.

JED

Go on, read it.

GRANDPOP

I hate poetry, now get that thing out of my face.

JED

Then watch.

(signs only)

I sit and watch the waterfall...

*Looks over at GRANDPOP to see if
he's following along.*

I sit and watch the waterfall
While far from home miles away...

*Gives GRANDPOP a look to read
aloud with his signing. GRANDPOP
gives in.*

JED & GRANDPOP

(JED signs; GRANDPOP voices)

I sit and watch the waterfall
While far from home miles away
And wonder what's going through
My grandfather's mind today

Cancer cells multiply and build
...an evil metastasis marches
Destroys everything under the skin
He so delicately touches

Lying beside him in a state
His loving wife of fifty-five years
Fades before his eyes that
Well and sting with rapid tears

She will improve he thinks
Force-feeding her applesauce
Tainted with medicine — may
As well be a spoon of moss

Like a child with an old broken doll
Trying to fix the legs and arms
Pushing the stuffing back in
Not realizing the material has worn

There is hope...
It's in the hereafter
Just as water runs over the fall

*The last stanza should be signed using
all one handshape — the “palm”
handshape: “have”, “hope”, “up
there”, “heaven”, “compare”,
“water-running-over-a-ledge”. The
last sign should continue for a few*

beats with one hand showing water running over the ledge while the other hand shows water running beyond the ledge continuously.

(Silence)

JED

(sign and voice again; sarcastic)

You're not gonna get emotional on me are you, Grandpaw? Oh...I guess you see! "Till even after death do us part".

JED slips the poem into one of GRANDPOP's uniform pockets.

Light goes dim on GRANDPOP. He slowly freezes into the salute pose as in the beginning.

MOTHER & FATHER

Enter; no longer grotesque. MOTHER signs and FATHER voices very simply and clearly what MOTHER has been trying to articulate all throughout the play.

Your grandfather shot himself, Jed.

JED acknowledges this. They exit. At the box, he picks up Grandpop's raincoat delicately puts it on. Ripple reflection comes up even though the dripping on stage has stopped. We still see GRANDPOP, in dim light, standing in the salute pose.

JED

Some gestures and sign-mime should be used to add another dimension to this monologue. Gesturing a door slowly opening as JED describes each element he sees in the room.

Well Grandpop, I went back to your house after we buried you during a rainfall. Mustered up the courage to go into your bedroom. *[door]* Dad warned me — the cleaning service didn't do a very thorough job. *[door opening]* The room was cold — had that Pine Sol smell. *[door opens a bit]* Your bed, still at an angle, had been made. *[door opens some more]* My mother, your sons and daughters, were all going through your belongings, hoping to find something. I knew they hoped to find a suicide note. They never found it...or you never wrote it. *[door opens further]* Your bottles of cologne were standing in a neat row: Aqua Velva, Brut, Old Spice. Strange how they still stood upright after such a violent act. *[door opens all the way]* I looked up and saw stipples of your blood and flesh where the wall met the ceiling. I looked down at my feet. They were cold from wearing new shoes that were too tight. Near my feet I saw Mom's slide projector that you borrowed to pick out slides of Grandmom. And right on the lens — was a drop of your blood that fell from the ceiling.

The last ripple spreads out over the cyclorama. Slowly, GRANDPOP comes out of his salute and does an about-face.

JED puts his hands in the coat pockets. A piece of paper crinkles. He freezes. Thinks. Takes the paper out. After a long time, he builds the courage to open it. The paper is blank on both sides. He holds it up, turning it over and over. Nothing. He checks the other pockets. Nothing. He's shocked at first, then relieved. He smiles as if thinking, "Grandpop, you old sonavabitch! Had to have the last laugh, didn't you?"

JED crumples up the paper, walks away, and nonchalantly tosses the paper into GRANDPOP's box without looking. Lights go down and it should look like JED walked through the walls.

The end