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CEREMONIES OF PRAYER

A Play By

Evan Guilford-Blake

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CEREMONIES OF PRAYER

By Evan Guilford-Blake

The trees are tall gods
commanding a view
of my study. I bow
my head over my typewriter
and start the ceremony
of a prayer.

---David Ignatow
"Epilogue"
Tread the Dark

"... in many respects I personally am difficult to deal with ... There is an excuse for me, and that is the passion and the frequent absorption which everyone who paints, writes or composes must needs have."

---Vincent van Gogh
Letter to Theo van Gogh
December, 1883

This play is dedicated to the memory of Vincent van Gogh

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AWARDS

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CHARACTERS:

WILLIAM - *A painter working irregularly as a graphic artist because he is unable to hold a job. Middle to late 30s. Intense and prone to mercurial changes, even when in humor -- and often he is not. Committed to his work, and the idea of family, he very much wants to be a father. Kind when dealing with those to whom he is close, so long as they don't interfere with his priorities. There is very much of the child in his behavior.*

CRISTINA (SIEN) - *William's lover, middle to late 30s, once a prostitute. Tough, streetwise, defensive. Badly facially scarred (burn marks are suggested), with a pronounced limp, the result of an auto accident. She has had two miscarriages as a result of her injuries. Prone to extremes of temper, alternately manipulative and rude. A person for whom allowances must be made. She trusts no one, except, occasionally, Joanne.*

THEODORE (NED or TEO [Tay'-o]) - *William's younger brother, about 32, a successful art dealer, but not a hail-fellow-well-met. Extremely tolerant and patient, an excellent judge of art who recognizes his brother's talent. Although physically frail himself, he is very protective of William; and, while he understands intellectually why William feels he needs Sien, he rejects that understanding emotionally: He neither understands, nor sympathizes with, her.*

JOANNE - *Ned's wife, about 32. An art history major and sometime art teacher who is well-bred and -- usually -- diplomatic, but who knows when, and how, to assert control. She knew when she married Ned she would have to make allowances, and she does, while knowing that making them is costing her. Similarly, she accepts her husband's role as apologist, because she too believes in William. Unlike Ned, however, she does not understand the nature of William's attraction to Sien, nor Sien's to him; but she does understand Sien's dilemma, and feels compassion for her. She suffers from a congenital hearing loss and wears, of necessity, a hearing aid.*

THE SETTING:

A small, ramshackle house in a dilapidated section of a great urban area. There are three playing areas: A bedroom, the living room and the kitchen. A two-level set is suggested, in which case the bedroom is elevated. The necessary furniture includes a table or easel in the living room, where some of William's paint supplies (including rags) are kept.

THE TIME:

Early autumn of a year in the last half of the twentieth century

PLAYWRIGHT NOTES:

This is theatre, not history or biography. While the characters are, clearly, rooted in Vincent, Theo and Johanna van Gogh, and Sien Hoornik, they are *not* to be taken as literal representations, or modern-day equivalents, of them. Rare use has been made of things Vincent expresses in his letters, and there are occasional intentional parallels between the van Goghs' lives and the characters' of the play; but anyone who has studied Vincent's life -- as I have -- will recognize that the events of the play's life are not the events of his. It must be understood, therefore, that any attempt to "see through the veil" of the dramatic device is inappropriate.

The cast may be all of one ethnicity; but, while Joanne may be racially "distinct" from the others, under no circumstance should *only* Cristina be, as that might suggest a racial overtone which is absolutely contrary to any reasonable interpretation of my intentions regarding her relationships to the other characters, and to the world at large.

CEREMONIES OF PRAYER

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ACT I, scene i

(AT RISE: The house, about 7:00 PM on an evening in late September, in a year during the last half of the 20th century. CRISTINA is sprawled, asleep, on the sofa. After a moment, there is a KNOCK.)

CRISTINA

[Half-hearing, in her sleep] Huh-uh?

[The KNOCK is repeated. SHE starts to awaken.]

Wha'? Who...?

[Before SHE is fully alert there is a KEY IN THE LOCK. SHE sits bolt upright.]

What? Who's—

[SHE gets up, runs to a drawer and pulls out a gun. As SHE withdraws it, the door opens ...]

Don't, you, *move!* — you piece a—

[... JOANNE steps through, carrying a bag with two bottles of wine.]

JOANNE

Sien!

CRISTINA

Son of a bitch! Why didn't you knock?

JOANNE

I did. Twice.

CRISTINA

Well you should've waited. Where'd you get keys, anyway?

JOANNE

William gave them to us. Ned gave him a set of ours, too. For emergencies. I wasn't sure you were home. I called.

CRISTINA

Yeah, well I unplugged it. So I could sleep.

JOANNE

Oh.

CRISTINA

Don't stand there. I'm not gonna shoot you.

JOANNE

Just put it away; all right? What're you doing with it anyway? My God, you frightened me.

CRISTINA

Somebody tried to break in the other day. Goddam police station's a block away, you still got people tryin' ta break in. So William got it. *We* don't live in the suburbs. There's a lot of guns around *here*.

JOANNE

You know how to use it?

CRISTINA

Hell, yes. You remember my mother's bar?

JOANNE

Uh-huh. A little.

CRISTINA

We got one under the cash register; by the time I was twelve I could hit a beer bottle at fifty feet. The stockyards, they were worse than the docks're here. Siddown. I gotta check the food.

[*SHE puts the gun away and goes to the KITCHEN.*]

JOANNE

Okay. I brought wine. Pommard. You are making a roast?

CRISTINA

Yeah.

JOANNE

It'll go, then.

CRISTINA

Yeah.

JOANNE

I'm going to plug the phone in. In case Ned calls. And my sister has to be able to reach me.

CRISTINA

Go ahead. She got your kid?

JOANNE

Yeah. One more or less doesn't make any difference to her. [*Re: The loose connector*]
You unplugged both ends?

CRISTINA

Yeah. I always do; I don't now why.

JOANNE

Hnh. How're you feeling?

CRISTINA

Okay.

JOANNE

"Okay." What does that mean?

CRISTINA

It means, I feel *okay*.

JOANNE

Did you talk to William yet?

CRISTINA

No. This shit's good, huh? [*I. e.: the wine*]

JOANNE

That's what they tell me.

CRISTINA

[*Laughs*] Only wine we ever served was a buck a pint. Tasted like dog piss; *sweet* dog piss.

JOANNE

I think I choked on a glass of that once. Sorority initiation.

[*THEY laugh.*]

CRISTINA

I'm gonna try it. You want some.

JOANNE

Sure. [*CRISTINA opens the wine, pours, etc.*] What time's he finish?

CRISTINA

William? I don't know. Five, I guess. Maybe five-thirty. [*Beat*] He should be here. Unless he's comin' with Ned. Is he?

JOANNE

Maybe; they had lunch together. Did you talk to him today? Does he like it?

CRISTINA

No; he didn't call. Prob'ly he won't; like it, I mean; why should this one be dif'rent from the others.

JOANNE

Ned said the interview went well, and the agency liked the sketches he showed them. And that William seemed to like the place.

CRISTINA

He liked the other ones, too. And he didn't last a week at either of 'em. Last night? He promised me he'd stay at this one. "I'll try, Sien; I'll really try." ... Sure. Maybe dogs'll shit diamonds, too. Here.

JOANNE

Thanks. To your good health.

CRISTINA

And my good looks, too?

JOANNE

Sien—

CRISTINA

Yeah, yeah; never mind. To your health too.

JOANNE

Thank you. How is it?

CRISTINA

Yeah, it's good.

JOANNE

The house is starting to look nice. You've been fixing it up.

CRISTINA

[*Laughs*] Yeah, well; we been here a month, it was about time it looked like we lived in it. It's never gonna look like yours though.

JOANNE

But you've made it a lot more - comfortable. How does William like it?

CRISTINA

He likes the light upstairs. He don't care about the rest. [*Short beat*] I been savin' up some money -- he gives me some sometimes, and I had a couple bucks from before we moved ... He don't know about it, though; I keep it in there [*SHE indicates the KITCHEN*], hid. I wanna get somethin' for the house, I don't know what, somethin' nice, surprise him, or somethin' for th—... Somethin'; whatever. [*Short beat*] Place'll still look like crap. It's not worth whatever Ned's payin'.

JOANNE

When are you going to tell him, Sien?

CRISTINA

When I'm goddam good and ready, Joanne. What d' you care?

JOANNE

I'm concerned.

CRISTINA

For who?

JOANNE

For you; all of you. All of *us*, as a matter of fact.

CRISTINA

What's that mean?

JOANNE

I mean, it affects Ned and me, too. *Our* life.

CRISTINA

I'll tell him - when I make up my mind; *okay*? [*SHE drains her wine and refills*] You?

JOANNE

Not yet.

CRISTINA

That's right, you're the sipper. They teach you that in prep school? Or in college? To sip wine instead of drink it? huh?

JOANNE

Actually, my mother taught me that. She said it lasts longer; *and* you don't get drunk.

CRISTINA

[*With a laugh*] Shit; my mother taught *me* to drink it up fast; it was good for her business. And if I didn't drink it quick the trick would.

JOANNE

How is your mother?

CRISTINA

She's hangin' on how's yours?

JOANNE

She's fine. She's coming to visit next month. It'll be the first time she'll have seen Jill since she started to walk.

[*CRISTINA laughs.*]

What?

CRISTINA

Just, my mother wouldn't dare show her face around *here*. She 'n' William hate each other's guts. When I first moved in with 'im she lost her star attraction. [*Snorts a laugh*] And she was real pissed when I came *here*.

JOANNE

Does it feel like home yet? or are you still getting used to all the changes?

CRISTINA

Nah; cities are all alike.

JOANNE

I never thought so.

CRISTINA

Yeah, they are. Some got docks, some got slaughterhouses, some got movie stars. But they're all alike.

JOANNE

Well, now that you're settled in you can start getting out a little. See the ---

CRISTINA

We don't have no money to "get out," Joanne.

JOANNE

There's a lot to do here that doesn't cost much. Have you gone downtown yet, there're a couple--

CRISTINA

Yeah, sure; I can put on my bonnet every morning, pretend like it's Halloween, and gimp on over.

JOANNE

If you don't want to walk you can take a bus. It stops right at the corner, the ride takes—

CRISTINA

I don't like the bus.

JOANNE

But it's a way of getting around. Out of the house now and then.

CRISTINA

Buses - smell bad. People throw up on 'em and they never clean it up.

JOANNE

Sien – if you want to stay here and feel sorry for yourself, go ahead. But there *are* things to do and places to go.

CRISTINA

Hey, fuck you, Miss Model, Miss Isn't-She-Pretty. Just—

JOANNE

Cristina.

CRISTINA

What.

JOANNE

I would - *like* to try to make things a little easier.

CRISTINA

Yeah? For who?

JOANNE

For all of us ... Look... I know there's a lot going on now, and I *know* it's hard for you. But it's hard for Ned, and William; *and me* too. And if you'd just - relax a little it would make it easier for ev'ryone.

CRISTINA

[*With a note of concession*] Yeah; yeah... [*SHE drinks*] What's your necklace? That stone.

JOANNE

This? Just a piece of agate.

CRISTINA

It's - nice. Real nice.

JOANNE

Thanks.

CRISTINA

Yeah ... So - what time's Ned comin'?

JOANNE

Pretty soon, I think. He's still getting ready for the new exhibit, but he wasn't going to stay too late tonight.

CRISTINA

Neal's?

JOANNE

Um-hm. William's been talking about it?

CRISTINA

Hell, yes. It's the only thing he *does* talk about; except his painting: Neal this, Neal that. Jesus; William thinks he's some kind a god.

JOANNE

[*With humor*] Ned likes his work, too.

CRISTINA

Yeah, *it's* okay. *He's* a little prick though. The week he stayed with us? he treated me like crap; and he, one time, he, he tried to ... I told him to blow himself; so he left me alone. Fin'ly.

JOANNE

I haven't met him yet. But one of these days I guess I'll have to.

CRISTINA

Yeah, well. My mother has a saying for that. "Better you than me."

JOANNE

Oh, thanks, Sien. You're *all* heart.

CRISTINA

Um. [*SHE drinks*] Anyhow, I'm glad he's not comin' in for this thing; William'd prob'ly want him ta stay here. That'd be a real pain in the ass.

JOANNE

Or else *we'd* get stuck with him; sometimes I think Ned feels every artist's welfare is his sole responsibility.

CRISTINA

Man, talk about a pain in the ass...

[*THEY laugh.*]

Ned sellin' anything?

JOANNE

Yes, he is. The market's pretty good right now.

CRISTINA

How come he never sells anything 'f William's?

JOANNE

William's work ... it's just not a "popular" style. The galleries – they're very slow to accept new work. Ned tries; it just takes time for the public to - get *used* to somebody.

CRISTINA

Yeah. 'Specially somebody like William.

JOANNE

He's not the easiest person to get used to. Sometimes I wonder how you managed.

CRISTINA

He - he treats me okay; better'n my husband; *he* didn't want no ki— I mean [*Almost incredulously*] he wanted me ta have an a—... [*SHE drinks*] Shit... William, y' know; he tries. He just takes it so serious, his paintin', I mean.

JOANNE

He is good, Sien.

CRISTINA

Yeah, yeah, yeah, he's good, he's brilliant. He tells me every night.

JOANNE

[*With humor*] Ned always tells me the same thing.

CRISTINA

First time we went out? He took me to this museum. Cheap date, they don't charge you nothin' t' get in. [*Laughs*] He kept showin' me these dif'rent pictures and talkin' about 'em, how this color meant this, that color meant that; I didn't understand none of it; I liked a lot of 'em, though; but not like he did. I mean, some of 'em, a couple, he stood in front of them and started cryin'. [*SHE drinks*] And then we went back to his room and he showed me some of the stuff he painted. "It's as good as the stuff in the museum," he says. "As good as some of it, anyway," he says, "and someday they'll see it."

JOANNE

I think they will.

CRISTINA

Maybe... I don't know if it's any good. But I like it; the colors're okay, they, I don't know, some of 'em I look at and they scare me, and some of them make me feel good.

JOANNE

Did you ever tell him that?

CRISTINA

Nah. He don't care what I think.

JOANNE

He does. I think he cares a lot. You should tell him.

CRISTINA

Ah, I don't know.

JOANNE

Okay... but anyway, that's how I felt too, the first time Ned showed me his work. Scared; and good. His paintings are - very different.

CRISTINA

People got to buy them.

JOANNE

They will. It just - takes time.

CRISTINA

Yeah. [*Yawns*]

JOANNE

How long did you sleep?

CRISTINA

I don't now. An hour maybe. I get tired all the time.

JOANNE

The baby. I did too.

CRISTINA

I didn't— I mean, before.

JOANNE

[*Gently*] You - lost them very early.

CRISTINA

Lost them ... Lost them. The fuckers *died*. Died, Joanne. D-I-E-D.

JOANNE

Cristina! You're not the only one—

CRISTINA

I— I'm—

JOANNE

[*Without pause*] —who, who...

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] —I didn't mean...

JOANNE

Yes; well...

CRISTINA

[*SHE tears*] Oh shit. [*SHE gulps her wine*] I'm - sorry, Jo, I'm - just so tired.

JOANNE

[*Beat*] Okay... Why don't you - take a short nap.

CRISTINA

The food...

JOANNE

I'll take care of it. [*SHE goes to the KITCHEN, looks in the oven*] When did you put it in?

CRISTINA

I don't know. Before I lai'down.

JOANNE

What?

CRISTINA

[*Louder*] Turn your thing up. – Before I laid down.

JOANNE

You don't have to yell. ... It looks fine. Shouldn't be too much longer.

CRISTINA

Just, you gotta watch it; make sure it don't burn.

JOANNE

[*With humor*] I can do that. Actually I'm pretty good at watching things; you learn that working in galleries.

CRISTINA

[*Responding to the humor*] Yeah. Guess you would.

JOANNE

Now go on.

CRISTINA

Okay. Okay. [*SHE starts to the BEDROOM*] Jo? It - hurts sometimes. My stomach.

JOANNE

When's the last time you saw the doctor?

CRISTINA

Yesterday. She didn't find nothin'. I want ta see another one.

JOANNE

I'll make an appointment for you; with mine, the one who deli—

CRISTINA

My sister knows one; from when she lived here. I got an appointment with him. She said he's pretty good; and he's cheap. She saw him a couple times. [*A bitter laugh*] To get an abortion.

JOANNE

Sien—

CRISTINA

She said he's good. He don't only do that.

JOANNE

All right. But I think you should see mine, anyway. To be on the safe side. I'll make the appointment, okay?

CRISTINA

Yeah; okay. Okay. Uhp— I forgot my wine.

JOANNE

You should go a little easy on that. It's not good for you, now.

CRISTINA

[*With humor*] Man, you're worse than the doctor. I'm goin' upstairs.

JOANNE

Get some rest.

CRISTINA

Uh-huh. Yeah. [*SHE exits*]

JOANNE

Oh, God... [*SHE goes to the phone, adjusts her hearing aid and dials*] Hi, Emily, it's me ... No; just, the phone here was off when I got in, I thought you might have tried to reach me ... I just wanted to make sure Jill got to sleep ... Fine ... Did she finish her dinner? ... Good ... All right ... Well, call if there's any problem. ... Okay ... Bye.

[As SHE hangs up there is a KNOCK. SHE opens the door. NED is there, with a briefcase.]

William? --- Oh, Teo.

NED

Good evening, darling.

[THEY kiss, briefly.]

JOANNE

Where's William?

NED

He's not here?

JOANNE

No.

NED

[With a sigh] Well. *[With humor]* Maybe things were going so well he just - lost track of time.

JOANNE

Uh-huh.

NED

Or – perhaps he's working a little late; making an impression. [*JO nods*] He'll be here any minute. Where's Cristina?

JOANNE

Upstairs, resting.

NED

We're our own hosts, then?

Uh-huh. JOANNE

That's not so terrible. NED

Not at all. JOANNE

How's Jill? NED

Charming Emily, when I left. She ate like a horse today; her cough's completely gone. I even took her for a walk this afternoon; she climbed out of the stroller three times. JOANNE

Well, that's good. NED

For her, maybe; *I* had to chase her. How's the gallery? JOANNE

Oh... The paintings finally arrived. NED

Well, thank God for that. They're all right. JOANNE

Oh, yes; they're fine. But... Y' know, Neal's still a good painter, but this work ... You saw the slides... NED

Uh-huh. JOANNE

His earlier work, it - it had more, *imagination*. He's changed; everything's so - literal. NED

He'll sell well, then. JOANNE

I suppose so. NED

At least he's a *good* painter. JOANNE

NED

[*With humor*] At least.

JOANNE

Do you want some tea?

NED

No, thanks.

JOANNE

Wine? I splurged on a Pommard.

NED

Will you join me?

JOANNE

Actually, you'd be joining *me*; Sien and I were - enjoying it.

NED

Then yes; that'd be very nice. [*JO pours*] Cheers.

JOANNE

Cheers.

NED

Mm. It *is* good... I talked to Boussard this afternoon.

JOANNE

Again? You're a glutton for punishment. [*NED coughs, badly*] Ned— Are you—

NED

Oh. I'm sorry.

JOANNE

Neddy—

NED

No, it's— I, I just swallowed the wine badly.

JOANNE

[*Short beat*] The wine... You sound worse.

NED

[*A little too strongly*] I'm all right, Joanne, there's nothing to be—

JOANNE

I'm just asking.

NED

Yes ... Well; I am all right.

JOANNE

Did—

NED

And I took my medicine. Scouts' honor. [*HE makes the appropriate sign*]

JOANNE

All right.

NED

... There's plenty of space; at the gallery. I only asked for one small room. He won't hear of it.

JOANNE

His *artists* aren't the only ones who lack imagination.

NED

One of these days he's *got* to listen.

JOANNE

No, my dearest, he doesn't. He has a very successful gallery that represents the "best" painters. He's *got* to listen to no one; not even you. At least, not as long as you work for him.

NED

Is that a hint?

JOANNE

It's nothing quite so subtle as a hint.

NED

Jo, I— I'd like to open our own; it's expensive.

JOANNE

Yes. It is.

NED

Perhaps when Jill's a little older. When *I've* developed a more - well-to-do clientele.

JOANNE

It'll be expensive then, too.

NED

Yes. But, but now ... it's too risky, there're a lot of things - a lot of people, depending on us.

JOANNE

Sometimes I think there may be too many people depending on us. On you.

NED

William needs me.

JOANNE

I need you.

NED

I know.

JOANNE

I know you *know*. But sometime, you'll have to *do* something about it. Neddy, what's it been, seven years?, eight? you've been supporting him?

NED

It isn't so much.

JOANNE

It's not the money. Someday he's got to learn to make his own way.

NED

But not yet. Not 'til he gets - settled. The doctors said he'd - *need* some time; and he's been doing well, it's only been a year since he, since the—... Just a few more months, Jo.

JOANNE

If we've talked about this once we've done it a dozen times. It's *always* "a few more months."

NED

But he's *here* now. It'll just be 'til he feels a little - at *home*. Until I can convince Boussard that his paintings *will* sell.

JOANNE

What if they don't? Suppose he never sells a painting; do you support him the rest of his life? Do—

NED

Jo, it won't be the—

JOANNE

[*Without pause*] —*we* support him? No! What about *our* life, what *we* planned. Ned, I'd like us to be able to do *something* without worrying if William was going to be all right. I'd like us to have a gallery; I'd like us to have another baby; soon. Us. You and me and Jill.

NED

I'd like that too; but he doesn't have anyone else. He never has. That's why he needs *me*. His work's my work. His goals, they're all *I* want.

JOANNE

All?

NED

[*Long beat*] No; not all. I'm sorry.

JOANNE

Are you?

NED

Yes; I am. I didn't mean - that. I'm sorry... [*JOANNE shakes her head*] We'll have a gallery.

JOANNE

Will we?

NED

Yes. I promise. In a year; two at the most; and a fine one, too. At least, I hope it'll be; for our sake, as well as the artists'. Maybe even more for theirs; they need someone to show faith in them, to keep up *their* faith in themselves; before they lose that little - hope that sustains them. It's so easy for me; I only need to help them. And William's right, I do even that badly.

JOANNE

Ned—... You've got limits. We've *all* got limits.

NED

No. Not all. Not William.

JOANNE

Even William. Especially him, I think.

NED

No. Oh, there're things he can't do, yes; but his painting ... that has no limits. What he sees ... there's, there's no horizon line, it's as though he's looking straight into the heart of God. You see that, don't you?

JOANNE

Sometimes.

NED

When we were kids, he used to take me for walks, in the woods or along the old roads ... and there was an old mill [*HE laughs softly*]; we used to go there, sit and talk; for hours. He seemed so - wise then, so old and so wise... And he'd show me things; show me how to look at them: How a robin's wings gained color as it flew from its nest; how the light made rainbows when the little stream broke across the rocks, or the textures of the night above the oaks as it weaved through them ... Those aren't things *we* can see, Jo; we don't know how to look for them. We see birds or water or the sky— but not their *natures*, we see the colors but not the harmony, shapes but not patterns ... we miss them, with our limits, and we need the artist who has none to make them appear. We need William ... much more than he needs us, I'm afraid.

CRISTINA

[*SHE has entered, unnoticed*] Bullshit.

NED

Cristina.

CRISTINA

He's not here yet, is he?

JOANNE

No.

NED

Good evening, Sien.

CRISTINA

[*Sullenly*] Good evening.

NED

How are you?

CRISTINA

What d' you care?

JOANNE
Sien, will you please—

[**TOGETHER**]

NED
I'm trying to be pleasant.

CRISTINA

Don't try. You'd be happier if I was dead.

JOANNE

Stop it.

CRISTINA

It's the—

JOANNE

I mean it, Cristina.

CRISTINA

[*With obvious effort*] All right. Good evening, Theodore. [*HE nods. To JO*] You hungry yet?

JOANNE

No.

CRISTINA

Well, I am. It's almost eight. The shit— excuse me, Theodore, the *food*'ll be burned.

JOANNE

He'll probably be here any minute.

CRISTINA

He'll be here when he runs out of money to drink up. You gave him some, didn't you, Neddy?

NED

I— ...

JOANNE

Did you?

CRISTINA

Sure he did.

NED

Just a few dollars. He had to have—

CRISTINA

How few?

NED

Twenty.

CRISTINA

Twenty ... Shit; he'll show up – around midnight, unless he drinks himself loony again or finds some scummy little—

JOANNE

Cristina! *Shut, up.* Damn it!

CRISTINA

[*Pause*] I'm—...

NED

Look, maybe we ought to go.

JOANNE

No. No, Ned, we'll stay.

NED

All right.

JOANNE

Come on. I'll help you finish dinner.

CRISTINA

Sure. Dinner.

JOANNE

We'll just be a few minutes.

NED

Take your time. I've got work.

[JO joins CRISTINA in the KITCHEN.]

JOANNE

I thought you were resting.

CRISTINA

I couldn't.

JOANNE

Well, you'd better calm down.

CRISTINA

That's what he's doing. He's out drinking. Whoring.

JOANNE

Why do you *think* that? William doesn't drink that much any more. He hasn't since he got out of the hospital. And he's not - whoring. He loves you.

CRISTINA

Bah.

JOANNE

He does, Cristina.

CRISTINA

[*Building*] William don't love me. His painting; he loves his painting. Nothin' else. If he could fit his dick in the hole in his palette he'd screw that instead of me.

JOANNE

Is that why he brought you here? That's why he insisted Ned let you come before he'd agree to?

CRISTINA

Oh, *I'm* nice to have around, someone to make his coffee, a warm body when he can't afford a real model. [*Laughs*] But, y' know, even then? even *then* he fills in the face with somebody he used t' know before he met me. Not me. He can't stand to look at his stuff and see *me* in it.

JOANNE

There are drawings of you; lots of them: There's that beautiful charcoal in the living room, and Ned's got a whole series he—

CRISTINA

He used to. Not no more. Not one, since we moved here. I'm *too* ugly now—

JOANNE

I wish you would—

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] —There was a joke about me – d'you know that? I'm famous, back home, this joke *made* me famous. – There're these two guys talkin' in a bar, see, and the first one says, I used to live on a farm, and I lost a bet once and I hadda screw a sheep, and man, that was awful; and the second one says, hell, that ain't nothin', I used ta live in the mountains and I lost a bet once too, and *I* had ta screw a bear, and man, that was *really* awful; and down at the end of the bar, this third guy shakes his head and says, he says, you guys don't know what awful is; I lost a bet once too, and *I* had ta screw Sien. And the first two guys, they say together: Now man, *that's* awful. Isn't that funny, Jo? I heard that joke fifty times, maybe a hunnerd; guys'd look at me in the bar and point and then I'd see 'em talkin', and I'd hear 'em laughin'. Laughing. Well come on, Jo, laugh. *Don't you think it's funny?*

JOANNE

No. No, Cristina; I don't.

CRISTINA

My husband did. – *William* does; he laughed at it. I heard him; first time I ever saw him, somebody was tellin' it to him and he laughed till he spilled his beer, and then he came over t' me and said "'Scuse me, I just lost a bet" and he handed me a twenty – so I took him upstairs. First time I ever saw him. 'D you know that, Little Snow White? Did you? Huh?

JOANNE

That was a long time ago. He doesn't laugh at you. You know that.

CRISTINA

[*Mocking JOANNE's tone above*] No. No, Joanne, I don't... He comes home and all he talks about's his painting, his drawing, his life. I'm nothing. Nothin'—

[*OFF, WILLIAM is heard singing lustily.*]

God damn him.

WILLIAM

[*Entering*] Ned, Ned, Neddy, my little brother, how *are* you?

[*NED reaches to embrace him.*]

WILLIAM

Oh, careful, careful! –
[*Whispers*] I've got paint on me.

[**TOGETHER**]

CRISTINA

Well, look who decided to show up.

WILLIAM

Cristina! A jolly hello to you too, my—

NED

[*Not a greeting*] Hello, William.

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —angel. Hello, Jo.

CRISTINA

We been waitin' on you to eat dinner.

WILLIAM

I'm not hungry.

CRISTINA

Good. Up yours then.

WILLIAM

I *am* thirsty.

CRISTINA

Why? You been drinkin' all night.

WILLIAM

No. No, I've been working. Oh, I had a drink. A beer. Two in fact. But *only* two; and *small* ones; see, I still have ... fifteen dollars. *And – I have been working. Hard; very hard.*

CRISTINA

Yeah? You were *workin'* this late? Crap.

WILLIAM

Yes, my love, I was, I—

JOANNE

William, I think you should have some coffee. I'll put the water—

WILLIAM

You are too kind, Joanne. Too kind. But no. I don't *want* "some coffee." I *want* to answer Cristina's question. Was I working, *this late*?

CRISTINA

Never mind.

WILLIAM

No, no, Sien. I *do* mind. Especially you. I mind everything you say. You're half my life. Did you know that? Did you?

CRISTINA

Bullshit.

WILLIAM

Bullshit? Well ... perhaps. Perhaps not half. But, a large part. A large, large part.

NED

William, sit down. Please.

WILLIAM

Yes, of course. – Ah, wine. A Pommard no less. [*To JOANNE*] Your beneficence no doubt. Well, to your health.

CRISTINA

What's this? You got paint on your jacket. *And* on your pants. *Paint*.

WILLIAM

Um. I do. It doesn't matter.

CRISTINA

It doesn't matter?! This is your good suit, William; your best suit. You can't wear it to work like this, it's ruined.

WILLIAM

Now Sien—

CRISTINA

What.

WILLIAM

I ... don't have to wear it to work. Isn't that lucky, Ned; I don't have to have it for work? Jo, don't you—

NED

William...

CRISTINA

You quit.

WILLIAM

No, no. [*Long beat; then, quickly*] He let me go.

CRISTINA

He—! *William!*

WILLIAM

Cristina, the things they wanted me to draw! -- anthropomorphic laxative bottles with seductive smiles; can you believe this, Jo: I came back from my lunch break and sat down at my board and there it was: A memo from the art director. Here; I saved it. Ahem. "Prepare a representation of the product intended to appeal visually to the male-age-30-to-50 market. Use the bottle's *shape* as the basis of the visual. Add human characteristics." – I refused, of course. I went into his office and told him, flat out: I am not inspired by shitty products. He missed the pun entirely.

NED

And he fired you.

WILLIAM

On the spot.

NED

[*Sighs*] I'll call the agency tomorrow, perhaps if I talk with—

WILLIAM

No, Neddy; don't. There's no *art* work there, nothing creative. They want everything symmetrical, bland, still. Nothing is still, Ned; nothing, ever, even when it seems to be. *Art* reveals motion, it doesn't entomb it.

CRISTINA

You should of done it. Done it and forgot about it like anyone else.

WILLIAM

I'm not anyone else; I couldn't. [*SIEN shakes her head in disgust.*] But there's no reason to be upset. I wasn't idle today, believe me. I *did* work.

CRISTINA

Yeah? Doing what? Painting?

WILLIAM

Yes, of course. I was - here. [*HE reveals a canvas*] Here. On the docks, painting the moon and the water and the people. It was beautiful; Sien, the blues, the blues were - incredible, you've never seen blues like this, shades of blue blended by the light and the darkness, the water and the moon and the streetlamps, by the cries of the birds, and the laughter and the footsteps of the whores and the sailors walking by. I was here. I hadn't intended to paint, you know. I went there to think. *I* was worried about losing the job - then, too. But I had my case, of course, and I sat there, looking out, thinking. All I really *meant* to do *was* think, perhaps to draw a few moments before the light began to fade; and then to come home. But, oh ... oh, the light. The blues. The light ... When I sat down, it was both so bold and so shy I felt I must try to paint it. People stopped to watch me - they often do, you know, they think "here's some - loony, just sitting by himself with an easel in the heart of the city, he'll be killed or, at the least, his paints will be stolen." But I'm not, and they never are. - People watch and, and there becomes - an *awe*, of what I'm doing, it's like a rite that overwhelms them, the act of creation, a ceremony of prayer, both solemn and invigorating, an act of love between God and man that births itself on my canvas.

CRISTINA

And so you come home two hours late, without a job, without callin', b'cause you were screwin' with your paintbrush.

WILLIAM

No, you don't under—... I am sorry, Cristina. I am.

NED

This is—...

WILLIAM

Not very good, perhaps?

NED

No. Not at all. It's very good.

WILLIAM

No. It's only a beginning.

NED

May I show this?

WILLIAM

No! It's incomplete. I just told you that. If you want to show my work, show what I've got upstairs, show what *you've* got in your house.

NED

I do. You know that.

WILLIAM

[*Reluctantly*] Yeah. [*Beat; then as if HE just entered the room*] I'm late, aren't I? I'm sorry. What've you made, my angel?

CRISTINA

Go to hell!

[*SHE storms to the BEDROOM, pours a drink and swallows from it, then sits on the bed.*]

WILLIAM

Sien? Cristina?

JOANNE

You might have phoned.

WILLIAM

I was on the docks.

JOANNE

There *are* telephones there.

WILLIAM

I couldn't leave the canvas. It would have been stolen. And I couldn't pick everything up, find one and come back. I would have lost the light.

NED

Perhaps you should go and talk with her.

WILLIAM

Yeah. Yeah. Excuse me. [*HE exits*]

JOANNE

You have to talk to him.

NED

God; I don't know what to say any more, I— [*HE coughs*]

JOANNE

Ned—

NED

[*Still coughing*] I'm fine. Just, it's a little damp tonight. [*HE takes an inhaler out and uses it*] There. You see; I'm fine.

JOANNE

Fine. You're fine... Oh, Neddy! ... I'll make you some tea.

NED

No, no; don't bother. It's nothing, really. [*HE suppresses another cough*] It's just ... there's been a lot of stress.

JOANNE

Yes; there has.

NED

I mean at the gallery; with the paintings being delayed and ... everything. And, Neal's show is *my* show. At least, that's how Boussard sees it. If it fails...

JOANNE

Boussard wears blinders. Like the rest of them.

NED

Perhaps. But that's why this exhibit is so important: It's a chance; if Neal's things sell I'll be able to show more new work, other artists no one knows yet; like William. And I'm the only one who can sell that, all the paintings no one else ... understands.

JOANNE

You mean no one else is *willing* to understand them. They all sell what's certain not to cause their judgments to be questioned.

NED

Not really. They just don't ... *see* it, the way you and I do. They haven't learned to look ahead... New painters are so rarely appreciated. And if Neal's show fails, he won't give me another chance.

JOANNE

[*With distaste*] And if it succeeds, *Boussard* will be the visionary.

NED

[*With humor*] The way of the world, my love. But at least he's giving it a chance.

JOANNE

Umm... You know, Teo, sometimes you make me really angry.

NED

Angry? At me? Why?

JOANNE

Because, my dear, you are too generous.

NED

[*With humor*] Am I?

JOANNE

You're a very good man, Theodore. And I love you. Even when you make me angry.

NED

Thank you. I love you too. [*HE coughs mildly*] Ohh! What a nuisance.

JOANNE

I'll make you some tea. With honey; that'll help.

NED

It's just the time of year. But thanks.

[*JOANNE goes to the KITCHEN. NED follows. THEY freeze. LIGHTS shift to the BEDROOM, where SIEN sits.*]

WILLIAM

[*As though continuing the action begun earlier*] I'm sorry, Cristina.

CRISTINA

Sorry. That helps a lot.

WILLIAM

I know it's a weak word. But you don't try to understand.

CRISTINA

Oh, I understand: You need to paint. That comes before everything else.

WILLIAM

[*Quietly*] Yes. It does.

CRISTINA

What about me?

I love you.

WILLIAM

You love me.

CRISTINA

Yes.

WILLIAM

You want t' know somethin', William? Your love is pigshit. Gimme my drink.

CRISTINA

You shouldn't drink so much.

WILLIAM

Up yours. You shouldn't live like a leech off your brother. Give me my drink. [*HE does*]

CRISTINA

You weren't very - kind down there, Sien.

WILLIAM

[*Laughs*] "You weren't very - kind down there, Sien." Oh, God. What d'you think I am? Another Jo? some sweet little girl outa a nice Cath'lic school? Here: I'm real sorry: "Oh, dear Father, kindly forgive your humble servant Sien for not bein' very kind down there." Is that what you think I am?

CRISTINA

Sometimes I wonder if I know.

WILLIAM

Well stop wond'rin'. I'm a whore.

CRISTINA

Sien, th—

WILLIAM

I'm a whore! A year don't change nothin', ekcept, ekcept I'm uglier now, I'm too ugly for anyone who isn't blind.

CRISTINA

You're not, Sien, you've had—

WILLIAM

"You're not, Sien;" you're not, Sien; you're *not*, Sien. **You're not, Sien!** Goddam you, I *am*. Why won't you see things the way they are! I know what I am. Jo knows what I am, Ned knows what I

CRISTINA

CRISTINA, *Continued*

am. *Why won't you admit it?* I'm not some little model you can make perfect on a piece of canvas, I'm a whore, William—

WILLIAM

No, y—

CRISTINA

Oh, yes, William. Yes. I am. I do things with my hands, and with my tongue an' with my slit. For money, oh, it's for money, yes; they always think it's for love – you think it's for love, don't you? – but it's for money and it feels so good, don't it, the way I stroke and suck and squeeze, yeah, it does, it does, an' my body's soft, isn't it, here, close your eyes – *close your eyes!* – there, now you can't see me, I look like ev'ry woman you ever knew, you ever dreamed of, you ever want'd 'r loved 'r held, but *I'll* do anything you want, *I'll* be anything you wish—

WILLIAM

No...

CRISTINA

Yes! Anything you can imagine, I c'n do, I will do; you like the whip, hm? You wanna whip me? Or the razor? My breasts're still beautiful, you could cut them, hmm? or here, light a cigarette? put it here, on my thigh, watch the skin spit and bubble? Anything, William, anything, because I'm yours, I'm yours. I'm yours... [*SHE whispers the last few words; then, as a burst of laughter*] *Or anyone else's, so long as he pays me.*

WILLIAM

No. No.

CRISTINA

No? -- You don't think so?

WILLIAM

No. Not now.

CRISTINA

[*A cry of utter fury, despair and anguish*] William! [*SHE falls against him in tears*]

WILLIAM

It's all right. It's going to be all right. You'll see. I promise.

CRISTINA

William?

WILLIAM

Yes, my darling?

CRISTINA

I'm - pregnant.

WILLIAM

You're ...

[*THEY freeze. The LIGHTS shift.*]

NED

I, um - I'm worried about him; I - just don't know how good it is for him to ... be with Sien.

JOANNE

[*Beat*] She's pregnant, Ned.

NED

Pregnant?

JOANNE

Yeah.

NED

William didn't say anything, he—

JOANNE

He doesn't know.

NED

Oh, God. When?

JOANNE

In the spring. If she - decides to have it.

NED

If?

JOANNE

If.

NED

... Dreams are such strange things, Jo. I wonder sometimes why God gives them to us.

JOANNE

They're so we have something to strive for; to hope for.

NED

I guess so. [*JO gives him the tea*] He's always wanted a child; a family.

So has she...
JOANNE

Umm.
NED

Drink the tea, Teo. While it's hot. It's good for you.
JOANNE

Yes. Thank you. Thank you.
NED

[Scene]

ACT I, scene ii

(AT RISE: Immediately following, in the BEDROOM.)

You're - pregnant? [*As the meaning strikes him, instantly excited*] We're going to have a baby?
WILLIAM

I'm - not sure.
CRISTINA

Not sure? I don't understand.
WILLIAM

I - don't know if I want it.
CRISTINA

Don't know? What do you mean, of course we want it, it's wonder—
WILLIAM

No! I don't know if *I* want it, William.
CRISTINA

How could you not want it?
WILLIAM

[*Angrily*] How could I?
CRISTINA

Sien, it's a marvelous thing; a baby, a chance to leave a mark on the world in a way no painting ever could, we've talked about it, so many times, I've—
WILLIAM

CRISTINA

No; *you* talked about it. I didn't. You don't understand.

WILLIAM

What don't I understand?

CRISTINA

What *I* feel! What it's like to - be the things I am, to know the things I know.

WILLIAM

You're like all of us; you've made mistakes. I understand that, I've forgiven—

CRISTINA

That's not what I mean!

WILLIAM

Oh. What do you mean?

CRISTINA

I mean - my children are dead. Dead; inside me; and you've never known what that's like, it's like havin' a, a part *ripped* out a you. I get nightmares; ev'ry night, I go t' sleep an' I remember an' it's like they're dyin' again, I c'n *feel* 'em; ev'ry single night; dying. You don't know what that's like, you can't; and you don't know how I shake ev'ry time you come in me. *I hate your seed*; I hate it, I'm afraid it won't grow and I'm afraid it will and, an', an' - it'll ... I'll ... it'll die too. Like the others... *My children, William!* My still, still-born children. And I'd *rather kill this* one instead of—

WILLIAM

Cristina, please, lis—

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] — waitin' for *it* to die too. I'd rather spit it out a my body before there's any life; before there's any hope. And there's—

WILLIAM

Cristi—

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] —*more*, *William*. There is more. You ... you don't, you *can't* know what it's like, to be like this. [*Indicates her face*] I was pretty, before you knew me, before the accident.

WILLIAM

You are still.

CRISTINA

No! Don't say that, it's not true! I know what I look like. *I c'n see myself in the mirror, William: I, am, ugly. Ugly, William, and terrible! I'm somethin' people turn away from when they go by. They look at each other an' cover their mouths an' whisper about me. I know that, 'cause I stop in the street sometimes an' look back, and I catch 'em, I catch 'em, starin', and turnin' away quick, like they seen a crime, a rape or a murder, somethin' too disgusting for their clean-an'-pure little lives, somethin' they wanna forget, real fast, so they c'n go home and eat their dinner without throwin' it up.*

WILLIAM

It's a small thing, my love—

CRISTINA

Small!

[TOGETHER]

WILLIAM

—and I *do* understand. I do.

CRISTINA

You understand like shit.

WILLIAM

Cristina: Look at me: What do you see? What?

CRISTINA

I don't now.

WILLIAM

Something - pretty? [*CRISTINA shrugs*] I've never been pretty; not in body or in manner. People look upon me as ridiculous; you know that: there's that fool with his paints, they say; they snicker: there is that *imbecile* who paints, and paints, all those *strange* pictures, he looks and acts like a loony, he's scrawny and unkempt and ill-tempered. You've seen them; you've heard them.

CRISTINA

Yeah. But it's different! You got—

WILLIAM

Sien – when they pass *me* on the street I *don't* stop. I don't care that they look; I know what they see isn't me, not what I *am*, only what I appear to be. That's all they see of you, a face that's known misfortune, a leg that's been hurt. But—

CRISTINA

Oh, Chris'!

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —they don't know your soul, they don't know your power,—

CRISTINA

What're you—

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —*and you have it. You, have it, God's given that to you – you can bring forth life, from your body, you can bring forth that beauty, create, in flesh and blood - something worth - so much more than what I can make from paint or pencil. But you and I, we know that. We know each other and so we understand what the rest of the world will not.*

CRISTINA

No. I don't know that. I'm not like you. I'm like them: I only know what I see: this body and this face. An ugly cripple whose children died before she could make them live, and who's afraid this one'll die, too.

WILLIAM

I'll help you; I *will* help you, and the baby, so that nothing goes wrong this time. *Our* child will be born.

CRISTINA

How?

WILLIAM

What?

CRISTINA

How the hell are you gonna help me. How *can* you? You paint pictures an' you don't get along with anyone who says they're not worth what *you* think they are. And you know what they're worth, William? *Nothing*. They're worth nothin', b'cause no one'll buy 'em. Even your brother, the great art dealer, can't find nobody stupid enough to *pay* for any of your "art." You paint an' you paint and we live on his charity, in this - shack, b'cause you won't keep a job, you won't compr'mise and paint what people *will* buy, you sneer at all the people who buy what you refuse to paint, an' you offend ev'ryone, because *they're* all wrong an' *you're* all right. So what're you gonna do to help me? Pray? God don't care; He don't help no one. An' how can you?

WILLIAM

I try. It's ... just so difficult...

CRISTINA

Yeah, yeah.

WILLIAM

I'll - try harder. I will.

CRISTINA

Sure. You'll try.

WILLIAM

Why did you come to live with me? Why did you come *here*?

CRISTINA

I don't now. I should of stayed where I was. What I was.

WILLIAM

Do you hate me so much?

CRISTINA

Hate you? [*Long beat. Then, gently*] No.

WILLIAM

Thank you. [*Beat*] Do you remember the day we met?

CRISTINA

Yeah I r'member it. It was cold, and rainin' like piss-on-ev'rything. My mother wouldn't serve you, you were so wet.

WILLIAM

And you made her.

CRISTINA

You were shiverin'. You were gonna get sick.

WILLIAM

I *was* sick. I'd just gotten out of the hospital.

CRISTINA

The loony bin.

WILLIAM

The - psychiatric ward, Sien; and I *did* have the flu.

CRISTINA

Yeah. You looked like you were ready ta pass out.

WILLIAM

I think I was... You were very kind to me.

CRISTINA

You had money.

WILLIAM

No; not because of the money. [*CRISTINA does not respond*] I might have died.

CRISTINA
Yeah, well; so what.

WILLIAM
You don't mean that.

CRISTINA
The fuck I don't.

WILLIAM
You don't.

CRISTINA
There wasn't anybody else in the place, it didn't make no dif'rence.

WILLIAM
Is that why you helped me home?

CRISTINA
For Chris' sake! You lived half a block away, you looked like shit. I didn't want you - droppin' dead in—

WILLIAM
And stayed with me; held me, until I fell asleep?

CRISTINA
You couldn't even undress yourself! You—

WILLIAM
And came back later and brought me aspirin and soup?

CRISTINA
So what? Huh? So fuckin' what. You didn't have *nothin'*. Nothin' to eat even. [*Pause*] It was - what you said. In the bar.

WILLIAM
[*Perhaps a lie*] I don't remember.

CRISTINA
No. A course you don't. You only said it b'cause you were crazy. An' sick.

WILLIAM
Tell me.

CRISTINA
You said I looked - ... [*SHE can't say it*]

Gentle. WILLIAM

Yes. Yeah. CRISTINA

You did. Like an angel. WILLIAM

Oh for Chris' sake. Like 'n angel! Shit. CRISTINA

You did. That's why I drew you as one. WILLIAM

The drawin' downstairs? CRISTINA

Yes. Gentle, Sien. Gentle Cristina. WILLIAM

No one - no one'd said that. Not since... [*SHE indicates her face*] CRISTINA

They told that terrible joke about you. WILLIAM

Yes. Yes; you didn't laugh. CRISTINA

It made me very angry. I never understood. Never. WILLIAM

What? CRISTINA

Why you stayed; in the bar, I mean; with your mother and those people. WILLIAM

Why? It was - my home! *They* accepted me. Besides, I brought in business. Ev'rybody wanted to screw the ugly cripple. CRISTINA

No! Don't say it. That, is, over. Over. WILLIAM

Maybe... William? CRISTINA

Yes? WILLIAM

[*With difficulty*] Hold me. CRISTINA

Are you cold? Here, you should put on— WILLIAM

No... Hold me. CRISTINA

Here. [*HE holds her*] WILLIAM

William? I'm - glad; about the baby. CRISTINA

Thank you... thank you. WILLIAM

Do you love me? CRISTINA

Yes. I do. WILLIAM

As much as your paintin'? ... No. CRISTINA

I do love you. Very much. WILLIAM

How do you know that? CRISTINA

I - don't know... I want to help you. I want you to depend on me. It would be - hard for me without you. WILLIAM

Would it? CRISTINA

WILLIAM

Yes. It was hard for me before. I was - lonely; often.

CRISTINA

You always had a woman.

WILLIAM

No. Not always. Sometimes, sometimes there was the need to - *have* one, but there wasn't ... one.

CRISTINA

You said there was.

WILLIAM

When?

CRISTINA

That night. When I brought you the soup. [*WILLIAM looks puzzled*] In your drawin's; the girl in them.

WILLIAM

Oh ... yes. Once. [*Beat*] I want to draw you again.

CRISTINA

Why?

WILLIAM

You'll be even lovelier now that y—

CRISTINA

Oh, for Chris' sa—

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] Sssh; sssh. You'll be even lovelier with the baby inside you. Like Jo was; remember, when they came to see us? – how - *pink* she looked. [*CRISTINA giggles*] What?

CRISTINA

Like a little piglet; you said she looked like a little piglet.

WILLIAM

[*Laughing with her*] She did. But don't tell her I said that.

CRISTINA

Will I look like a piglet, too?

WILLIAM

Perhaps. Perhaps. A very pink, very pretty, little piglet. [*CRISTINA giggles*] And anyway, it's been months since I drew you – not since Neal was with—

CRISTINA

[*With contempt*] Neal.

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —us. It was so nice there, in the evenings, the three of us together... He made some especially lovely ones of you [*HE indicates one on the wall*]; don't you think?

CRISTINA

They're ugly. That one too. Yours're the nice ones. The one downstairs, it's nicer th'n any of *his*.

WILLIAM

Well, that one's special, but the rest... [*Laughs gently*] Oh, no. Of course you think that but, Neal's are so ...*fine*, so textured. I'm afraid mine are just - scratches.

CRISTINA

I still think yours're better. Your paintin's, too. *They*, they - make me feel good.

WILLIAM

They do?

CRISTINA

Yeah.

WILLIAM

Thank you. [*HE kisses her*] Well ... Will you come with me to Neal's exhibition? ... Hm?

CRISTINA

If you want.

WILLIAM

Yes; I'd like that.

CRISTINA

Did you love her? That other girl you drew?

WILLIAM

... Yes; but it was when I was very young. She - didn't love me.

CRISTINA

I love you.

WILLIAM

I know.

CRISTINA

You were so gentle with me. No one else was. Except my husband. Not even him, all the time. But you were - kind; the way you touched me... Touch me, William. Touch me. Touch me.

WILLIAM

Yes, my love.

[LIGHTS change. The following continues, as though without break, the dialogue between NED and JOANNE. At some point, THEY move to the LIVING ROOM.]

NED

When did you find out?

JOANNE

... Last week. She called me.

NED

Why would she - give it up.

JOANNE

I don't think she wants to. But it's frightening, when you lose a baby; you're always afraid after that.

NED

You still think about him?

JOANNE

Don't you?

NED

Yes. Often.

JOANNE

If anything'd been wrong with Jill...

NED

But nothing was. Nothing.

JOANNE

Thank God. *[SHE makes the Sign of the Cross]*

NED

Yes.

JOANNE

Anyway ... I think she's afraid of that; and that she won't know how to be a mother.

NED

I don't understand.

JOANNE

[*With humor*] Well, I can't imagine why. [*SHE kisses him*] I was afraid of that, too.

NED

You were?

JOANNE

Uh-huh.

NED

Why? You're a wonderful mother.

JOANNE

I didn't know what to expect; sometimes I didn't even know how I felt. It was like, like - I didn't have any control; over what was happening, inside me, like it was, I don't know, all going to happen in *spite* of me, I guess and then there'd be this - *person* on earth I'd be taking care of and...I prayed, Teo; I prayed a lot: I didn't know what else *to* do. Believe me: It's frightening. Men *don't* understand.

NED

[*With humor*] Maybe not. But we've got our fears, too; being a father – ho-boy! I worried, a lot; about providing, if I could teach.

JOANNE

[*With humor*] I never did. You were always a wonderful teacher.

NED

Of art, maybe.

JOANNE

Of everything. But especially art; that's why I fell in love with you.

NED

[*With a laugh*] Oh, really?

JOANNE

Oh, yes. I knew I was in love the first time you took me through the gallery.

NED

[*Laughs*] If I'd known that was going to happen I'd have brought you there much sooner.

JOANNE

I mean it.

NED

So do I. I'd been trying to find a, a - an excuse to take you there for weeks; and when you finally came I felt like a complete idiot; I kept listening to myself talking about art, art, art; it was like I couldn't shut up. What I really wanted to talk about was you.

JOANNE

Did you?

NED

Yes.

JOANNE

You've never told me that. [*NED shrugs self-consciously*] Anyway, I wanted you to keep talking about art.

NED

That was why you kept asking questions?

JOANNE

Uh-huh.

NED

I thought it was because I was making you nervous.

JOANNE

Oh, no; not at *all*. It was wonderful; you told me how to *see*, what all those "terrible new artists" were doing. All the ones they warned us against in school. I finally began to understand them. And I realized I probably never would have if it hadn't been for you.

NED

And you kissed me.

JOANNE

Yeah. [*NED laughs self-consciously*] What?

NED

Oh ... What I wanted to do, when you did that... I wanted to take your arm and lead you back to my apartment, then pour you a glass of the reddest wine you'd ever seen and kiss you between your every sip.

JOANNE

You've never told me that, either.

NED

No.

JOANNE

Oh, Neddy. That would be wonderful. Will this do? [*SHE lifts her wine*]

NED

Splendidly. Splendidly.

[*JOANNE sips her wine. NED kisses her gently.*]

I love you. You make me so - very happy.

JOANNE

Umm. [*Beat. SHE sighs*]

NED

What?

JOANNE

Oh, just ... William.

NED

What about him?

JOANNE

Being a father. What if it's - too much for him.

NED

I don't know. Perhaps ... perhaps not having it -- at least not now -- *would* be best.

JOANNE

Neddy! That would be—... *She* wants it. And she's better off having it here, with us, than living in her mother's bar and— ...

NED

I - suppose so, but...

JOANNE

But *what*?

NED

I don't know. I - don't know.

[*During the last few lines, WILLIAM exits the BEDROOM and enters the scene.*]

WILLIAM

[*Restraining his excitement*] Sien's sleeping. *She's* - ...um, taking care of all this – it's worn her out.

JOANNE

The rest will be good for her. Shall we eat? You must be hungry.

WILLIAM

No; I'm not. You go ahead.

NED

I'm not either.

JOANNE

You need to have something.

WILLIAM

She's right, Neddy. A slice of meat, some—

NED

A little later.

JOANNE

Later.

WILLIAM

Some wine; I want some wine.

JOANNE

It's right there.—

WILLIAM

Ah. Yes.

JOANNE

[*Without pause*] —You are not helping things; you need to take care of yourself.

NED

Why should I, when you take such good care of me?

JOANNE

It's not funny, Theodore.

NED

I'll eat, Jo. I promise. Only, not just now. I promise. Later.

[HE moves to kiss her. SHE avoids it and goes into the KITCHEN.]

WILLIAM

[Offering wine] Here, I'm being a terrible host. Do you—

NED

No. Thanks.

WILLIAM

Ahh. I'm tired.

NED

You've had a long day, a hard day.

WILLIAM

But a good one.

NED

Oh? I'm glad... About the job, William—

WILLIAM

Ach. Don't talk to me about the job. What nonsense. "The job"; talk to me about Art, about Painting. Tell me about Neal's show; is it impressive?

NED

In - its way; there're more than thirty pieces; almost all of his recent work.

WILLIAM

All the things he's written me about. Oh, I want to see them.

NED

His work has - changed since you last saw it. It's still good but - it isn't - how do I say it? it's not as - vigorous as it was.

WILLIAM

No?

NED

No. He's experimenting less now, working more within what's - contemporary.

WILLIAM

Neal? Doing popular paintings?

NED

Yeah.

WILLIAM

I don't believe it.

NED

You'll see for yourself. He wants to live, William. He wants to sell. This work will.

WILLIAM

... He must come *here*.

NED

I - what do you mean?

WILLIAM

[*As to a child*] He must *come* here, Ned; *stay* here. With me. To paint. He needs a place to paint where he may do what he *can* do.

NED

William, th—

WILLIAM

It'll be good; for both of us.

NED

How's he going to live? Even if this work sells, he's so much in debt that—

WILLIAM

He's a great painter. He needs your help.

NED

My help? You've got to be realistic. The money - my own expenses are so high, with Jill; and you, you need—

WILLIAM

It won't cost so much. Besides, you'll sell his paintings. There're buyers for them; *you said so*. And once his work *starts* to sell you can sell his better things too.

NED

But there's more—

WILLIAM

Neal's a much finer painter than I am. You know that; if he's here I can— I *will* learn from him. Just like I did when we were together before.

NED

William! He... he walked out on you when you were - *ill*, when you were - least yourself. You might have bled to death if your landlord hadn't happened—

WILLIAM

It was my fault he left. The things I did; I, I made his life terrible. But I'm better now. You know how well we got along when he stayed with us when we were still living in—

NED

That was for a week. *One week.*

WILLIAM

Yes; and so? *It was good for both of us.* We sketched every day, he was - without worry. And he'll be so much more relaxed without having to fret about this bill or that one; he'll be able to *paint*, more and better than he's ever done before.

NED

I don't know. There are *other* things to consid---

WILLIAM

What is there not to know? What "other things?" It must be done, Teo; it *must* be done, for everyone's good.

NED

I can't be responsible for everyone. You don't understand how difficult it ---

WILLIAM

No, Teo. *You* don't understand. You rent this little house for me – a house, I call it, to be generous; but it's hardly more than a shack – and you let me have some food, a few dollars worth of paint, a few brushes and some canvas; and you say to me: That is what I can do for you, William; that is what I can afford, anything else you'll have to go out and get a *job*. But I can't *have* a job – you know that; it interferes with my painting. *Nothing* must be allowed to interfere with that. *Nothing*. And *Neal* - is a part of my painting. But – must I get a job, if Neal is to be here? Is that the only way the "expense" can be "afforded?" If so, if I've put that much burden on you, *so* much that something so *necessary* must be forgone, I'll do it – some job, some-where if I must. *Must* I, Neddy?

NED

No, William. No.

WILLIAM

Good. Good, I'm glad you understand that. [*Beat. With a sigh*] Oh, Teo; I need the company of another artist, someone I can talk to, who shares—

NED

There are artists here, accomplished—

WILLIAM

No! *Not* like Neal, *not* that I know, *not* that know me!

NED

[*Short beat*] What about Sien?

WILLIAM

What *about* her?

NED

[*Quickly*] She may - interfere.

WILLIAM

Interfere?

NED

With what - you want to do. She won't like having Neal here.

WILLIAM

Of course she will. They've met; I know – it was only "one week" – but we'll become great friends, the three of us.

NED

I don't think so. I think she'll be very unhappy. I think she'll make *you* very unhappy. Both you and Neal.

WILLIAM

I see. You're worried about Sien and me. Well, that's new.

NED

I'm worried about *you*.

WILLIAM

I'll be fine. We'll be fine. With or without your help. I *can* get a job. We'll get by.

NED

I'm only saying Sien and Neal may not get along well; and that would hurt you.

WILLIAM

No. What you're *saying* is that if I want Neal to live here, Sien must leave; and if Sien doesn't leave you won't help Neal come here.

NED

No, I'm not. I'm just trying to explain the problems.

WILLIAM

Don't try to explain what you don't understand. There are no "problems" and anyway, *if* there are they're mine and I will manage them.

JOANNE

[*Entering*] William, why are you shouting?

WILLIAM

Shouting? I— ... We were - discussing; Art.

JOANNE

So loudly?

WILLIAM

It's a subject Teo and I both feel strongly about.

NED

It's all right.

JOANNE

My wine, please?

WILLIAM

Yes, of course.

JOANNE

How was Sien? when you left her.

WILLIAM

Asleep. She's - not quite well. Tired.

JOANNE

There wasn't anything ... wrong?

WILLIAM

No; no, nothing's wrong. A little nap and she'll be fine.

JOANNE

Good.

NED

William and I were just talking about Neal. William thinks it would be a good idea for him to come here.

JOANNE

Here?

WILLIAM

With me – with us. Here.

Now? JOANNE

Of course. The sooner the better. WILLIAM

William— I don't know whether this is a good time; Cristina - hasn't been feeling well, and Neal coming might upset her— JOANNE

[*Unnoticed, SIEN appears. SHE stands and listens.*]

[*A belief, not in arrogance*] Sien will be fine; if *I* want Neal here she'll welcome him, to please me. WILLIAM

This is a small house, there isn't— JOANNE

Nonsense! There's plenty of room. He can sleep in the studio, or down here; in good weather we'll— WILLIAM

He c'n sleep in hell. CRISTINA

Cristina! WILLIAM

Not in my house, William. He will not spend *one night* in my house. CRISTINA

JOANNE [TOGETHER] WILLIAM
Sien, why don't you— But I need him here to help me—

CRISTINA
What about what *I* need? What about *my* life? Huh? Is this what you meant, you'll help me? You'll take care of me? I c'n *depend* on you? Huh?

Sien, I... WILLIAM

CRISTINA [TOGETHER] JOANNE
What. *What!* Sien, please; sit down, this is—

CRISTINA

Fuck you.

NED

Sien, we're trying to help—

CRISTINA

An' fuck you too Neddy; and your help. I want help, I c'n call my mother. I c'n go back to her bar, she'll help me. Oh, yeah, she'll help; I'll be an even bigger attraction now; don't you think? They—

WILLIAM
Cristina—

[TOGETHER]

JOANNE
Don't, you'll hurt yourself if—

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] —could all screw the ugly, crippled, *pregnant* whore, they'd love that, William, oh, yeah, that'd bring 'em in like rats, like rats. [*SHE pounds her stomach with her fist*]

WILLIAM
No, don't, please—

[TOGETHER]

JOANNE
Please, let me help you—

CRISTINA

Why not? Huh? Huh?! WHY NOT? *WHY THE FUCK NOT.*

WILLIAM

The baby, Cristina...

CRISTINA

That's right, the baby. The baby. Worry about the god damn baby, worry about god damn Neal, worry about your god damn painting. Well, *fuck* them, William. Fuck them *and* you! Just - fuck, you - *all!* [*SHE storms out*]

WILLIAM

Cristina, no ... Ned—...?

[*HE looks quickly to NED, then JOANNE, then runs out.*]

JOANNE

Neddy ... what...

[*NED gestures helplessly.*]

[*End of Act I*]

ACT II, scene i

(AT RISE: The same night, about midnight. JOANNE is barely visible, asleep in the BEDROOM. NED is sitting on the sofa, asleep. WILLIAM enters, sees him, stops, then closes the door and goes to the KITCHEN, takes some food from the refrigerator and stuffs it into his mouth, then goes to a cabinet, pulls out a glass and, from his pocket, a pint bottle. HE empties the contents but returns the bottle to his pocket, then takes a partly filled fifth from the cabinet, pours and chugs. HE returns to the LIVING ROOM with the bottle and his glass, debates waking NED, then, tickling him, does so.)

NED

Uhh. William! [*WILLIAM says nothing*] Are you all right? [*WILLIAM nods*] Where's Sien? ... You didn't find her.

WILLIAM

Have a drink, Neddy.

NED

No. Thank you.

WILLIAM

Good. More for me. [*HE laughs*]

NED

William? Have you b—

WILLIAM

She didn't call, huh.

NED

No.

WILLIAM

I don't know where she went. I went outside ... she was gone. Disappeared. Nowhere. She must've got on a bus, there was a bus just pulling away. I don't know. I looked everywhere -- bars, hotels, diners. I didn't know where else to look. I even, I even went to the police station. They didn't see her.

NED

I'm sorry.

WILLIAM

[*Sotto voce*] Slut.

NED

What?

WILLIAM

She's a slut!

NED

William; you're drunk.

WILLIAM

[*Laughs*] As, a, *skunk*. I bought a half-pint – is this a half – no!; whole one. I bought a whole pint! An' I *drank* a whole pint.

NED

You shouldn't; something might - happen.

WILLIAM

Something? The euph'misitc and myster'ous *Some - Thing?*... Well, we can hope, can't we, Theodore.

NED

[*Strongly*] Don't say that. Don't.

WILLIAM

Yes; you're right. I'm sorry.

NED

I - will have one after all.

WILLIAM

Good. Here.

NED

Thanks.

WILLIAM

What'll we drink to? Hm?

NED

To - your future?

WILLIAM

[*Laughs*] Oh, Neddy, you're such an innocent. [*Laughs again, begins to lose control*] To my future. Oh, that's wonderful. My future.

[*Gradually and persistently, WILLIAM's laughter turns to sobs -- wracking, wrenching sobs, replete with tears.*]

NED

William ... William, here; here, William, it'll be all right, it will be all right. My little brother, here, don't cry, don't cry.

WILLIAM

[*In utter anguish*] Neddy!

NED

Yes, William. I'm here, I'm here. Ssh. Ssh. It'll be all right. [*Cradling WILLIAM's head against his own shoulder, NED strokes his hair, his cheek, to soothe him*] There. There. Drink this. That's it. Now -- breathe; slowly. Slow-ly.

WILLIAM

Neddy? I'm so - scared.

NED

I know.

WILLIAM

She won't come back.

NED

She will. She was - just upset. She needs to think things out a bit. On her own.

WILLIAM

Yes?

NED

Yes. Yes.

WILLIAM

Where's Jo?

NED

Sleeping.

WILLIAM

[*A loud whisper*] We'll wake her! We have to—

NED

No, no, we're fine. She sleeps like the dead; we both do, but Jo— [*HE shakes his head in mild amusement*] especially without ... [*HE indicates: the hearing aid*] She wanted to stay... until Sien came; or in case she called. But she's so tired. Taking care of Jill; and, and this... it's very hard on her.

Jill's all right?
WILLIAM

She's with Emily.
NED

Oh. It's very late?
WILLIAM

After midnight.
NED

Are you very tired?
WILLIAM

Don't worry. We open late tomorrow. I can sleep.
NED

I woke you up.
WILLIAM

I was just dozing. *You* - you look tired. You've been working too hard.
NED

No. I haven't been working hard enough. These - petty little jobs, the petty little people ... *they* wear me out. More than painting ever has. More than painting ever could.
WILLIAM

Yes. But your energy ... [*With humor*] I still wonder at it, where it comes from.
NED

I don't know; maybe it *is* the - *illness*... When I was in the - hospital, there were days, even weeks, when I couldn't eat, or walk the grounds, or even sleep. But I could always work. Except, except when they... The doctors, they gave me drugs, pills and shots and, *and the treatments*, I couldn't *see* anything, then, everything disappeared, all the colors, the patterns, it was like I ---
WILLIAM

I know. I know.
NED

Yeah. Yeah... Oh, God... It was terrible. It frightened me. I don't want to go back there. Please.
WILLIAM

You don't have to. You're better now.
NED

WILLIAM

Yes... But I did paint there. Sometimes?, sometimes I even painted and I - I didn't remember it; they told me, they said I stood at my easel or sat with my pad and drew – and there *were* the pictures – but I don't know where they came from.

NED

From God, perhaps.

WILLIAM

Yes; I prayed a lot too; for - peace... Peace. ... When I thought I was dying– and I was lying there – I felt so – peaceful; I thought of you. And Mother and Father. [*Changes*] And – there was no pain. That surprised me; it didn't hurt at all... There was – just, peace... But, I think God can't give me that; maybe He gives me the pictures instead. Maybe they all come from God's own sadness, when He hears my prayers but He knows He can't answer them...

NED

Perhaps the pictures are the answers.

WILLIAM

[*During this, HE walks about, ending at the drawing of SIEN*] I don't know, Neddy. I don't know why God wants me to be so - sad. It's always there, the sadness, and, and – so often ... I feel like I'm being - swallowed by it, like I'm drowning, and then everything seems colored – no, *color*, colors, I look at a field and all I see are ripples of green and yellow, faces are only waves of browns and grays and pinks, there're no shapes, no solids... I think I see - the natures of things, at those moments; things as they seem to the soul, not as the eye sees them.

NED

Yes.

WILLIAM

It is, so much, the sadness. [*At the drawing. HE touches it*] Even among the joys. [*Suddenly with animation*] Do you remember the old mill?

NED

Of course. – What made you think of it?

WILLIAM

I don't know. Us talking here now, like this, I guess. We haven't done it for so long.

NED

You were away. We wrote. And we called.

WILLIAM

I know; but it was different. We used to talk there, about things, anything and everything.

NED

[*With humor*] You used to talk; *I* used to listen.

WILLIAM

[*With humor*] Things've changed a lot, huh?

NED

Oh, a *lot*.

WILLIAM

I told you of all my dreams.

NED

You told me of all *our* dreams.

WILLIAM

And you sang me lullabies – [*Sings, heartily*] *Sleep, my child, and*

WILLIAM and NED

[*Sing, boisterously*] *Peace attend thee, / All through the night, / Guardian angels God will send thee*

NED

Yeah.

[**TOGETHER**]

WILLIAM

all through—

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —and, and *I* gave *you* advice; good advice. "Smoke a pipe, there's nothing so relaxing, nothing so good to help you think." You remember?

NED

Oh, yes; I couldn't forget. I was fifteen, Father caught me smoking one one night and grounded me for a month. You were older; you could get away with it.

WILLIAM

And besides, *I* was the rebel, the one he didn't know what to do with. I think they weren't ready for me, Mother and Father. Their lives were too - different.

NED

You weren't the - easiest person to deal with, either.

WILLIAM

No. I'm not, still... How have you *managed* all these years? How have you put up with me?

NED

Put up with you? I haven't put up with you. I love you.

WILLIAM

A loony. All I've—

NED

Don't say—

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —ever done is take from you.

NED

No. All you've ever done is give. Your paintings, William, they give me so much more than I've ever given you.

WILLIAM

They're yours; whatever's good in them. As much as they're mine, they're yours. Without you I would never have begun.

NED

Thank you.

WILLIAM

Ah, little brother: I missed you. While I was away. I missed our talks.

[*As NED speaks, the PHONE RINGS. WILLIAM looks quickly at him, then runs to it.*]

NED

Me too. I—

WILLIAM

Yes! ... Oh; yes ... No, Emily. She hasn't ... Just a minute. [*HE gives the phone to NED*]
Emily.

NED

Emily? Is everything all right? ... Oh, good; I was afraid --- ... No; no, William told you ... He did; they haven't seen her either ... I don't know; Jo's asleep now; probably till morning, I suppose. If that's okay ... Thank you ... Well; sleep well ... You're sure everything's all right, Jill hasn't— ... Good. Kiss her for us ... Thanks; you too ... Good night.

WILLIAM

Jill's all right?

NED

She's fine.

WILLIAM

Good. I hoped it was Sien.

NED

She'll be back.

WILLIAM

She won't stay.

NED

Of course she will. You'll just have to make her understand. About Neal.

WILLIAM

Understand? No; she won't.

NED

Y' know, I've - been thinking about it. You ... you may be right. It might be a good idea, him being here.

WILLIAM

You think so? Why? Now, I mean?

NED

Well, it's like you said: You'll help each other; and if his work sells things'll be easier for him.

WILLIAM

What about Sien?

NED

William ... Sien - might not be - the ... right person to ... You understand?

WILLIAM

Why don't you like her? She's never hurt you.

NED

I don't dislike her. She's just - very rough.

WILLIAM

So am I.

NED

It's different. What you feel, for your art, about the world, sometimes it's hard for you to control that.

WILLIAM

Sien feels things too.

NED

But she doesn't understand them. She doesn't understand the things you understand; or the way you understand them.

WILLIAM

She's never had the chance. She learns. Since she's been with me, she's *been* learning; now she looks at things and *sees*. And, and -- they make her feel good: My paintings. She told me that. Tonight. She *said* that.

NED

Perhaps. But she doesn't appreciate what you do, she's not really sympathetic. You *know* that. And I...

WILLIAM

It's hard for her; she tries, she, it's - hard.

NED

I know. But I ... think - you'd be happier ... with someone else.

WILLIAM

Someone else. Like who?

NED

I don't know. [*With some enthusiasm*] You'll find someone. Here; when you get to know people.

WILLIAM

You didn't like Kay, either.

NED

That's not true. But she was very young. So were you.

WILLIAM

But maybe, maybe if I'd married her...

NED

[*Gently*] She didn't love you. You know that.

WILLIAM

She might have, in time.

NED

No.

WILLIAM

No. You're right.

NED

She couldn't have dealt with your painting, either.

WILLIAM

Oh, Neddy... Neddy, so many times I, I feel such a *desire* to embrace *someone*: A woman; a child. Maybe if I *had* a wife, a family, I wouldn't *have* to paint, not need to so badly, so strenuously that it wipes out everything else I might be.

NED

I - ... It's what you - must do. You must paint.

WILLIAM

Yes. Yes; the other, that's just excitement; isn't it? It ... it wouldn't last. Would it?

NED

No.

WILLIAM

No ... Sometimes, I think you know me better than I know myself, I wonder which of us *is* the older.

NED

[*With humor*] You taught me everything I know.

WILLIAM

Why *didn't* you like Kay? You never told me.

NED

I *did* like her. But you wouldn't have been happy. With her.

WILLIAM

[*Suddenly*] If I had been, would *you* have been?

NED

What do you mean?

WILLIAM

Is there *anyone* who I'd be happy with?

NED

[*Carefully*] I want very much for you to be—

WILLIAM

But not with Kay; not with Sien.

NED

I just - don't know - whether Sien's *good*, for you.

WILLIAM

I know, Neddy. I know. I—

NED

All right, I didn't mean—

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —*can* take care of myself *and* I—

NED

I know that, I'm not trying—

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —*can* take care of Sien. If we're such a burden—

NED

You're *not* a bur—

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —just tell me. Tell me. We'll find a way. We can live without your money. We'll get along. You understand? I don't want another dime from you; *we* don't want another penny. I refuse it. *We* refuse—

NED

William, listen to—

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —it. I'm not helpless, I've done all kinds of work, I can sit at one of their asinine art boards and draw their asinine bottles, I can paint popular pictures like Neal. I can, Neddy. I will.

NED

I know. But I don't want you to *have* to do that. I *want* to help you. You're not a burden.

WILLIAM

You want to help me?

NED

Yes, I do.

WILLIAM

Then don't interfere!

NED

I'm *not* interfering. William, my God, all I've ever wanted is to be sure you're all right, that you're able to live; and to paint, the way you've always said you wanted to! *I* want to be sure you can eat, dress, have a roof over your head.

WILLIAM

I want to be sure we have this baby. We are going to have the baby, Theodore. Sien and I. With or without your help. Sien wants the baby. *I* want it.

NED

All right, William! All right! I'll help you, however I can.

WILLIAM

Then sell my paintings! That's the help I need from you. That's the only help *I need*: A little respect for the work I do; and for the woman I love.

NED

[*A reflex; if HE could call it back, HE would*] Love?

WILLIAM

Yes. *Love*. Is that so strange, Teo? Is that so - un-ac-cep-table, that a painter can love someone, other than his brother I mean, who he's *expected* to love, who he is *obligated* to love; that he can love a woman whose face is scars and whose soul is scarred worse? that he can love her because he sees in her -- as he *cannot* see in those who have nothing to overcome -- he sees in her a goodness, a beauty, a loving that she herself is terrified of? Is that so - peculiar? And is it so peculiar that she can love him in return, love him though *he's* of no consequence to anyone else, although he's frightened and mad and all oh-so-often despairing? That they can love each other, that they can want to share a life, have a child, be a family – *is that so very, very strange?!*

NED

I –... [*Pause*] I'm sorry. I didn't mean–... You're right; I've been... I'm sorry.

WILLIAM

[*Sighs*] We're both upset. It's late; we need to sleep. [*HE pours drinks*] Here.

NED

Yeah.

WILLIAM

It's just that ... there's so little I want. So *little*. Just to, to paint, and to share my life, with a woman and a child; only, to take away the loneliness.

NED

Are you so lonely? Still?

WILLIAM

Sometimes. Sometimes I feel this - indescribable *loneliness*, so large, so empty, so - without hope that nothing can fill it; not even painting. That comes closest. Painting - covers it, but it doesn't *fill* it. And I feel - ... if I didn't work at those moments, I, I think I'd lose hope forever. I can't live without a little hope, just enough to let me go on. But to have a wife; to have a *child* ... Listen, Teo; you know what I thought the first time I saw Jill; I thought: Ah, *there* is a canvas. There is a canvas so rich with hope that all the pain a person has ever borne will disappear beneath it, a canvas to *inspire*, to be painted with all the colors of the heart and soul and mind, the earth and sea and sky, a canvas so empty and yet - so - so, *filled*, there's no room for loneliness to exist. There is you, there is Jo; and you'll never feel loneliness again because she'll always, she'll fill you with that hope. I want that. I need that; just - just as much as I need to paint. I need them both. To have just one...

NED

I understand.

WILLIAM

Do you?

NED

I think so. I look at Jill - all that - openness, all the things she'll become, what she'll learn from us, and love ... Yes. I do understand. It *is* hope.

WILLIAM

Is that so much to want? So terribly much?

NED

No... William? About ... about the baby; let me— Please ... let me help you, at least until he's born.

WILLIAM

[*With humor*] He?

NED

Or she... Maybe, maybe by then I'll have made some progress. You're still new here, still getting settled. In a few more months people will begin to know you, know your work.

WILLIAM

And *then* you'll be able to show it? At the gallery?

NED

Perhaps. At least, I can show it to Boussard again. He - doesn't find it uninteresting.

WILLIAM

Okay. But only as a loan. It comes out of whatever I make from the sales.

NED

Yes. Of course. [*Emotionally*] Thank you.

WILLIAM

Boussard *likes* my work? Why didn't you tell me?

NED

[*With humor*] He doesn't *know* whether he likes it. It confuses him. It's not only yours, of course; all the new artists do... I'm glad I'm not a painter. It's too hard a life.

WILLIAM

You'd be a fine painter.

NED

No; I don't think so. I love the painter's vision because – I don't have it.

WILLIAM

You'd learn. I'd teach you. We could go somewhere, together, the two of us; we'd paint and draw from dawn till sunset.

NED

It's something I've thought of; more than once, too. Yup, that'd be wonderful. But who'd pay for either of us, then?

WILLIAM

[*Missing the joke*] We wouldn't need much—... [*Getting it, but taking it seriously*] Yes. What'll I do. I have to go to work, I've got to find a way to help. The bills, you can't pay—

NED

It'll be all right, we'll find something; something that won't keep you from painting.

WILLIAM

Ned— you could, maybe you *could* call the agency tomorrow?

NED

You've – what about another bookstore; or a framer's; an agency – isn't a very good place, they're difficult, the pressure's—

WILLIAM

No. I *must* work at one. The money's better there. And I can do it. Please. Call them? This'll be the last time, I promise; just one more chance? That's all. Please?

NED

I really don't think—... All right. If you think it's...

WILLIAM

Yes; yes, I do. I made a mistake; I'll tell him that, they'll let me come back. Don't you think so?

NED

Perhaps.

WILLIAM

They will. My work's good – they liked the sketches, didn't they? And, and I'll ... I'll do the design he wanted. Tonight; now; I'll bring it in to him after you call and everything'll be okay. Here, look [*HE pulls out his drawing pad and begins drawing*]; you see – the bottle, the bottle is shaped like ... this. There; and arms – slender arms, long fingers – see, they seem to – *beckon* you *hither*. – And the legs ... like a dancer's, straight; bent slightly at the knee, unh-hnh ... now the face – what do you think? Something exotic, maybe Asian? Or Hispanic; yes, that's it, Hispanic, raven hair, just a bit of mystery around the eyes and mouth ... and — [*HE reveals it*] There! What do you think?

NED

[*Laughs*] Oh, William.

WILLIAM

What? Isn't it good? It's only—

NED

[*Without pause*] —William, you amaze me.

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —a quick sketch, of cour— What?

NED

You amaze me. Yes; it's good; it's *very* good. It's frighteningly good, that you could draw something so meaningless so quickly and so well. It's as fine in its way as that [*The canvas WILLIAM showed in Act I*] is in its.

WILLIAM

They'll like it?

NED

I think they'll like it very much.

WILLIAM

Then they'll take me back.

NED

I don't know, William.

WILLIAM

They have to. I need the job.

NED

[*Gently*] We'll find one; if not there, another.

WILLIAM

Okay. Okay... It, it just has to be a good one. For Sien's sake, for the baby's...

NED

William?

WILLIAM

Umm?

NED

What will you do about Neal?

WILLIAM

What can I do; there're painters here, you said.

NED

Yes. But are you, will you - be *able*, to work with *them*?

WILLIAM

I'll have to. I couldn't let Sien leave; not now... They're at the heart of everything; Sien and the baby. *They must be*. This [*The canvas*], this isn't real life, this isn't *people*... What time is it?

NED

Almost one.

WILLIAM

One. Where is she? Maybe I should call the police again. No; it wouldn't do any good.

NED

You're tired. Why don't you lie down in the studio; get some rest. I'll wait up.

WILLIAM

No; I couldn't sleep. [*HE pours*] You?

NED

Maybe you shouldn't—...

WILLIAM

[*Pointedly, but not angrily*] I'm all right. [*Short beat; NED nods*] You?

NED

A small one. Yes; enough. [*HE drinks, and begins to wheeze*]

WILLIAM

Teo? *Teo*? Are you all right?

NED

[*Waving him off, but unable to stop wheezing*] Yes; I'm fine.—

[*WILLIAM embraces NED tightly.*]

NED

[*Without pause*] —It's—don't worry, I... [*HE uses the inhaler*]

[**TOGETHER**]

WILLIAM

Oh, Neddy. Neddy; my little brother. It's my fault, I've upset you.

NED

No. It isn't. It's, it's— Could you, could you get me a glass of water?

WILLIAM

Yeah; I'll get some.

[*HE runs to the KITCHEN, gets water and runs back as NED uses the inhaler.*]

Here.

NED

Thank you. [*HE takes a pill*]

WILLIAM

Ned – what is it?

NED

The asthma. Just the asthma. I'll be all right. Really. Once the show opens. Believe me. I will. [*Yawns*] Oh.

WILLIAM

You never used to – wheeze like that... You should go to sleep.

NED

No; I'm all right, I'll sit up with you a while longer.

WILLIAM

No; go to bed. I want to draw anyway; I'll work on the sketch.

NED

I don't think you ought to be alone now. You've had—

WILLIAM

[With sudden violence] I'm all right, Ned. [Beat; quieter] I'm all right.

NED

I didn't mean— Well. Okay. I'll ... rest a while.

WILLIAM

Yeah... I'm sorry. I'm nervous.

NED

I know. It's all right. *[HE starts out]*

WILLIAM

Thank you. Neddy?

NED

Yes?

WILLIAM

I *do* love you.

NED

I know you do, William. I know you do.

[NED goes to the BEDROOM, removes his coat and shoes and lies down. WILLIAM looks at the telephone, pours another drink, swallows half of it; then HE takes his pad and begins to work.]

[Scene]

ACT II, scene ii

(AT RISE: Several hours later. In the BEDROOM, both NED and JOANNE are faintly visible. WILLIAM is asleep, his drawing pad on his lap, sheets of crumpled paper scattered about. CRISTINA opens the door quietly then stands at the entrance looking in. She sees WILLIAM, comes in and closes the door carefully. SHE walks into the LIVING ROOM and looks at him for several moments, then goes to the BEDROOM. SHE sees NED and JOANNE.)

CRISTINA

Shit.

[SHE quietly gets a suitcase, opens a drawer, pulls out clothes and stuffs them into the case. When SHE's done, SHE leaves – holding the still-open case – then closes the door and then the case. SHE sets it near the LIVING ROOM door, puts on her coat, then goes to the KITCHEN and withdraws a box or a jar which has been hidden there. SHE removes the (banded) money inside.]

Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, one. Twenty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, two. Ten, twenty, thirty, -five, forty, -five, fifty, -five, and— *[Riffles the ones]* Shit.

[SHE stuffs it into a coat pocket, then comes back to the LIVING ROOM, takes a folded sheet of paper (with the word "WILLIAM" hand-printed on it) from a pocket, looks at it and moves toward the table or easel where WILLIAM's painting supplies are kept. SHE inadvertently kicks a jar of brushes.]

Damn it! [WILLIAM stirs but doesn't waken. SHE checks him, then lays the note among a pile of paint rags; and goes to the phone.] I want a cab ... 1890 River Drive ... To – the train station ... Yeah ... Right away ... How long? ... Can't you get one here quicker'n that? ... Yeah, all right. *[SHE hangs up, then unclips both ends of the phone cord and sets it aside, out of immediate sight. SHE stands a moment, then goes to the sleeping WILLIAM and reaches to touch him, but pulls her hand back. At last, SHE starts to cry, silently.]* William ... G'bye, William. God damn you. God damn you!

WILLIAM

What? Sien!—

CRISTINA

Oh, shit.

WILLIAM

[Without pause] —Sien, my angel. –Where've you been? I've been so worried, I was so—

CRISTINA

Yeah, like hell you were. You were so worried you just drew yourself to sleep.

WILLIAM

I was up all— what time *is* it?

CRISTINA

I don't now. Five somethin'.

WILLIAM

I *was* drawing. Here, look ... see, this is what the ad agency was asking for, I've been working on it all night so I'd have something to show them when I go back; I *am* going back, Ned's going to call them today and I'll go in and show them this; they'll like it, don't you think so, it's *exactly*—

CRISTINA

Shit.

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —what they want. I'm— what?

CRISTINA

I said: Shit. So what. They'll take you back and you'll quit again; in a day 'r a week, you'll get pissed off about somethin', it won't be “artistic” enough for you, you'll walk out all—

WILLIAM

No. No, I swear to you, not this time. I *will* stay, I *will* make it work, I want to, for y—

CRISTINA

[*Quietly, which is perhaps even more unsettling to WILLIAM than her anger*]... Bullshit... It don't make a difference, anyway. I don't give a damn any more. I'm leavin'.

WILLIAM

What?

CRISTINA

[*Tiredly*] I been thinkin' about it all night, I called my mother an' we talked, I'm leav—

WILLIAM

No! You can't.

CRISTINA

Yeah. I can. I am.

WILLIAM

But ... why?

CRISTINA

[*In a mix of laughter and tears*] Why? Oh, shit. William!

WILLIAM

What about, what about – *you*, the baby, what'll...

CRISTINA

You don't have ta worry about me. I got along before; I'll get along now.

How?
WILLIAM

I got – ways.
CRISTINA

Please; don't. The baby. What about the baby?
WILLIAM

The baby's all – taken care of.
CRISTINA

I don't understand.
WILLIAM

I took care of it, William! You c'n just forget about it. Forget it.
CRISTINA

I -... I can't just— I want the baby. *I want us* – to have the baby, to be a family.
WILLIAM

Sure; like you wanted to take care a me.
CRISTINA

Yes. It's hard, I know, *I'm* hard, but—
WILLIAM

Yeah well forget it. There's no family. There's never gonna *be* a family.
CRISTINA

Please. One chance. *One* – chance.
WILLIAM

[During the following, HE grabs at her, misses, and tears her pocket. The money spills onto the floor.]

No more chances. For a year you been tellin' me things're gonna be dif'rent, they'll be dif'rent if I live with you, they'll be dif'rent if we move here, they'll be dif'rent if somebody'd buy your goddam paintings; well, they're not, they're never gonna be, not with a baby and not for goddam sure with Neal here, and let go a ---
CRISTINA

What's that?
WILLIAM

CRISTINA

What? Oh, shit. [*THEY both reach for it. WILLIAM gets there first*] Gimme it, William.

WILLIAM

Where did you get it?

CRISTINA

It's mine. What difference does it make? ... My mother sent it to me. Western Union. So I could come.

WILLIAM

Your mother? Western Union?

CRISTINA

Yeah.

WILLIAM

I don't believe you.

CRISTINA

Too bad.

WILLIAM

[*Grabbing her again*] *Where did you get it?*

CRISTINA

[*Warning*] Let go a me.

WILLIAM

Where?!

CRISTINA

I said – *let, go!*

WILLIAM

[*HE does; a beat; then, quietly*] *Where?*

CRISTINA

[*Quietly*] I'm tired. I don't wanna fight.

WILLIAM

Where.

CRISTINA

[*Short beat*] I told you. I got ways.

WILLIAM

You got—... No; you didn't. You didn't.

CRISTINA

I ... I, don't, wanna, fight. Just, gimme the money.

WILLIAM

No.

CRISTINA

Gimme the goddam money! [*SHE lunges for it*]

WILLIAM

I said no!

CRISTINA

All right; all right, you wanna know where I got it? Hmm? You wanna know *exac'ly* where I got the money? I earned it. I *earned* it, I went down to the docks; it was crowded down there, an' dark, an' I went into bars an' pool halls an' any place I saw a lotta men; and I went up to 'em. An' I – touched 'em, I whispered to 'em an' I licked—

WILLIAM

No, Sien—

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] —their ears — *You wanted ta know, William*, that's what I did, I did that and then I went with 'em, someplace, anyplace they wanted ta go, to a room or a dark corner or the alley out back, wherever they wanted, and I did whatever they wanted me ta do—

WILLIAM

No—

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] —an' they gave me money. Twenty dollars, or thirty, or fifty, and then they went wherever they went an' I found some other bastard who wanted *his* cock sucked, an' I—

WILLIAM

No! No!

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] —made—... I made *all* that money. So it's mine. Give it to me... Well? You still love me? You still want me to stay? You still want ta take care of me?

WILLIAM

Neddy was right. God damn you. [*HE throws the money at her*]

CRISTINA

Yeah. Neddy was right. An' my mother was right. You're an asshole. [*SHE starts toward her bag*]

WILLIAM

Cristina...

CRISTINA

What.

WILLIAM

It's my fault. Tonight; now – I've, I drank too much, I, I mean, I think—

CRISTINA

Oh, shit.

WILLIAM

[*Quickly*] But before – here, and what you did, the, with the baby: That's my fault, *my* fault, I,—

CRISTINA

[*To herself; incredulously*] What I did with the baby...

WILLIAM

[*Without pause; not in reaction to CRISTINA's line*] —what you said—

CRISTINA

God damn.

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —you, you— – but it doesn't matter, it,—

CRISTINA

[*Not to him*] You—. – Son of a bitch!

WILLIAM

[*Without pause*] —I— I'm sorry. Cristina, I need you. Please, I'll do whatever—

CRISTINA

You got your painting, William. That's what you need. Isn't it. The rest's all bullshit,—

WILLIAM

No! I swear to you—

CRISTINA

[*Without pause; overriding him*] — 'cause all you'll do is whatever you have to do *ta paint*. That's all that really matters to you, Wil-liam. I know it. *You* know it. So don't give me—

WILLIAM

No! I—

CRISTINA

You know it, William. I'm in your way; Ned's right. I always been in your way. This'll be easier for you, you c'n live here, you an' *Neal* c'n live here and you—

WILLIAM

No, he won't c—

CRISTINA

[*Without pause*] —can paint, you c'n paint together, and eat together an' drink together an' you can screw together, I don't care; and you won't have to worry about nothin', not me, not gettin' a job, not takin' care of nobody. [*SHE picks up the painting*] Here. You c'n start now; you can finish this. Another masterpiece. Maybe Ned c'n sell it. Here. Take it. [*WILLIAM shakes his head*] Take the goddam thing. *Take it.* [*HE doesn't move*] You don't want it? [*HE shakes his head*] Fine. Fine. Then fuck it too.

[*SHE smashes the painting into an edge of a chair, ripping the canvas.*]

WILLIAM

Sien! [*Before HE can act, SIEN repeats the action, leaving the painting hopelessly ruined*] No. My painting! [*HE lunges, at her, to knock her away from what's left. HE picks it up and looks at it, handling it as a father would a broken child*] God, damn, you. God damn you.

[*Again, HE lunges for her. CRISTINA ducks away, gets the gun and points it at him. HE stops short.*]

CRISTINA

Don't you touch me. Don't you *touch* me. You son of a bitch.

WILLIAM

My painting.

CRISTINA

Who gives a fuck? Huh? Who really gives a fuck.

WILLIAM

Gentle; how could I ever think you were gentle.

CRISTINA

An' how could *I* ever think you were kind. Tell me again, why don't you. Tell me again how – gentle I am. Tell me again how much I matter to you, tell me how much you love me.

WILLIAM

You destroyed my painting!

CRISTINA

Tell me, William.

WILLIAM

You – whore.

CRISTINA

Yeah. I'm a whore. And you're a pig. A pig, and a lousy painter whose whole *life's* not worth the—

[WILLIAM leaps at her; THEY struggle.]

Let me go. Goddam it, get your goddam hands *off* a me!

WILLIAM

I'll kill you, I'll kill you!

[HE pushes her away, wresting the gun from her and pointing it at her.]

I'll kill you.

CRISTINA

Yeah? You will? You will? Well go ahead. Kill me. My life's nothin' but shit anyway. So's yours. The only dif'rence is I know it's not gonna change. *You* keep thinkin' somethin's gonna save you, *God's* gonna save you. Well He won't. He don't save *nobody*... So kill me. *Kill me*... It won't make one *damn* bit of difference... What're you waitin' for, William. Do it. *[Finally, SHE moves toward her case]*

WILLIAM

No!

[HE fires the gun, at the drawing of SIEN on the wall, shattering it. Upstairs, NED tosses in the bed and half-awakens; HE rises to lean on one elbow, looks at the sleeping JOANNE, then listens a long moment, silently debates whether to go downstairs, but, as the following is quiet, HE lies back down. As NED wakes, CRISTINA, as though riveted to the spot, looks at WILLIAM, then the drawing, then WILLIAM.]

[Weakly] Cristina... I...

[CRISTINA again starts to the suitcase, slowly and warily.]

WILLIAM, *Continued*

Please. Please.

[*SHE picks the suitcase up.*]

Please. You can't.

CRISTINA

Yeah, William. Yeah. [*SHE leaves*]

WILLIAM

Cristina...? It's so - much, to—... So much... [*HE gets the drawing and stares at it disbelievingly*]
Cristina? Please; it'll be all right. It will. I'll, I'll *get* the job back. I can still paint; and we can
have another baby, and you and the baby, you'll model for me, that'll be enough, the three of us,
I'll take care of you, you'll take care of me, we'll ... I forgive you, Cristina. God forgives you.
You'll forgive me? Won't you? My angel, please forgive... Cristina? *God?* Please?

[*HE looks at the drawing, the painting, the room, the door; then carrying the drawing, runs out.*]

[*OFF*] *Cristina! Cristina!* [*HE re-enters. At the top of his voice*] *Cris-ti-na!*

[*NED wakes abruptly, JOANNE a bit more slowly as NED gets up from the bed. WILLIAM, using the gun as a hammer, destroys the rest of the drawing. JOANNE grabs for her hearing aid and inserts it as NED rushes downstairs.*]

God damn you. God damn you, I'll kill you, you - whore, you - whore. [*Etc., until NED intervenes*]

JOANNE

[*Over WILLIAM*] Neddy- ?

NED

I don't know.

[*HE reaches the LIVING ROOM, as JOANNE reaches the top of the stairs.*]

William! My God, what are—

[*WILLIAM turns to them, the gun in firing position.*]

JOANNE
William, no!

[**TOGETHER**]

NED
William!

WILLIAM

[*HE looks slowly. Then, dazed*] What?

NED

[*Quietly*] William.

[*HE approaches WILLIAM carefully. The following should overlap frequently.*]

NED
Give me the gun, William.

[**TOGETHER**]

JOANNE
Ned!

NED

Come on; give it to me.

[*WILLIAM shakes his head, keeping the gun pointed.*]

JOANNE

I'll call the police, Neddy—

NED

No. No; the hospital.

WILLIAM

Sien's gone.

JOANNE

[*Overlapping*] Yes; all right.

NED

[*Overlapping*] Give me the gun, William.

WILLIAM

You were right; she's just a whore.

NED

Come, sit down; we'll talk.

JOANNE

[*SHE discovers the phone is dead*] It's— the cord's missing—

NED

Oh, Christ. William! William, where's the cord? Where's the cord for the phone, William?

WILLIAM

The cord?

NED

William, we need to make a call; we need a doctor, right away. Where's the—

WILLIAM

No. No more doctors.

JOANNE

William...

WILLIAM

No!

NED

All right; it'll be all right... Jo: go to the police station. It's the next block.

JOANNE

Ned, I—

NED

Go, on!

JOANNE

... All right. [*SHE leaves*]

WILLIAM

Sien's gone.

NED

Perhaps not; perhaps she's— She came back?

WILLIAM

Yes. But she's gone now... The baby's dead.

NED

Dead?

WILLIAM

She killed it.

NED

She told you that? [*WILLIAM nods*] Please: Give me the gun.

WILLIAM

The gun? The gun? [*HE looks at it, then lowers it*] I'm - tired.

NED

I know. I know. You've been up all night, you need to get some sleep, to rest; here; why don't you lie on the—

WILLIAM

Yes; rest.

NED

Come; I'll help you...

WILLIAM

No; stay away. [*HE points the gun. NED backs away*]

NED

All right. All right... What happened?

WILLIAM

The painting's ruined. The drawing.

NED

You'll make others.

WILLIAM

Will I?

NED

Yes. You just need some time. Some rest.

WILLIAM

Rest. No; you mean, go to the hospital again.

NED

Perhaps. Only for a short while.

WILLIAM

They won't let me paint there.

NED

Only for a little while; then you'll be able to paint as much as you like. No one will interrupt you.

WILLIAM

No... they won't let me. They'll give me the drugs again: I won't be able to see. I couldn't bear that: Sien; the baby; and the painting. I can't bear that.

NED

William, please, listen to me, it will, we'll find a really good—

WILLIAM

No. Sien was right. Nothing will change; and God won't change it: the sadness will last forever...—

NED
No, we can make it, we'll—

[TOGETHER]

WILLIAM
[Without pause] —But we
should pray.

NED
Pray?

WILLIAM

Yes. Yes... For peace; for our souls. For Sien's, and my baby's; and our own... Will you pray with me?

NED
Yes. Of course.

[WILLIAM kneels. NED kneels nearby.]

WILLIAM

Now ... Our Father which art in

WILLIAM
Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy
Kingdom come. Thy will be done on
Earth as it is in Heaven.

[TOGETHER]

NED
Our Father which art in Heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name. Thy
Kingdom come. Thy will be
done on Earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we
forgive our—

[Long beat] Forgive us, Father.

[WILLIAM, still kneeling, suddenly shoots
himself in the stomach.]

NED
William!

WILLIAM
Oh; Teo.

NED
William— My God. Oh, William. [HE tries to minister to the wound]

WILLIAM
It's all right, Neddy.

NED

What?

WILLIAM

It's all right. No pain.

NED

What do you mean? Oh, God; the bleeding; I must stop the bleed—

[HE runs to the table/easel with the paint supplies and grabs a pile of rags – and, unwittingly, CRISTINA's note – then returns to WILLIAM and presses the cloths to the wound. As HE does, the note falls onto WILLIAM.]

WILLIAM

No; stay with me.

NED

We'll get an ambulance, you'll be all right, they'll be able to take care of you as soon as—

WILLIAM

[Discovering the note] What's this?

NED

I don't know.

WILLIAM

From - Sien. Read it.

NED

Not *now*, William; I have to stop—

WILLIAM

Read it, Neddy!

NED

When you're taken ... *[With quiet vehemence]* *Shit!*

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes