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Product Code A0400-F

Masque

A Drama Mixing Mime, Movement & Realism

by

Lauren Johnson

“A solitude ten thousand fathoms deep
Sustains the bed on which we lie, my dear:
Although I love you, you will have to leap;
Our dream of safety has to disappear.”
—W.H. Auden, from Leap Before You Look

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Author's Note:

In *Masque*, mime and movement are incorporated into a “traditional” drama. Mime is, in itself, a heightened form of theatre, anything but realistic. This heightened form is meant to collide with the realistic situation of the play. When or if to use the traditional whiteface is a question that I have chosen to leave up to the director.

Characters:

PAUL GIRARD; *50s, a professor of mime and movement*

COLETTE; *his wife, around 50*

LOUIS; *their son, 18*

ELIZABETH MICHAELSON; *28, a student*

DAVID; *her husband, 30s*

SAMUEL JAFFE; *Chairman of the Theatre Department, 40s*

ANNE JAFFE; *his wife, 40s*

EXTRAS AS NEEDED

Masque

by Lauren Johnson

ACT I

(AT RISE: PAUL GIRARD and ELIZABETH MICHAELSON work a complicated mime and movement sequence. [They are NOT in whiteface here.] They wear theatre workout clothes; they are professionals. They have been intensely engaged for a while, as their sweaty condition indicates.)

PAUL

No! How many times, Elizabeth? Head up! Eyes forward. Don't move that front foot! You've got to isolate. *(Pauses to watch her)* You're breaking it! Be precise. No, no!

ELIZABETH

OK. Don't yell. Let's try it again.

PAUL

Try to be graceful; you're better than this. It's an audition, for god's sake, you only get one shot! *(Takes her foot in his hands and plants it hard on the floor)* Again! Better...that's it, better. *(Begins to move along with her)* Yes! That's the way! Don't hold it in...loosen, loosen, move.

(LIGHTS UP garden area right. COLETTE GIRARD digs in her garden. She wears an old straw hat and gardening gloves. From offstage, LOUIS, her son, calls out of his bedroom window.)

LOUIS

Mom! Where's Dad's tuxedo?

COLETTE

His tuxedo? What for?

LOUIS

For tonight!

COLETTE

He's not wearing a tuxedo; he's performing!

LOUIS

Not for him, for me!

COLETTE

You are not wearing your father's tuxedo! *(Shakes her garden spade at an unseen robin)* Oh no you don't, you sneaky little redbreast, leave these strawberries alone, you hear me?

(LOUIS appears in the yard.)

LOUIS

Mom, don't think it's my idea. He wants me to wear it.

COLETTE

Ask him to come here for a moment and speak to me about this.

LOUIS

Can't. He's not here.

COLETTE

Then how do you know he wants you to...

LOUIS

(Over his shoulder as he exits) Note's on the table. He'll be gone until three. Working with a student!

(LIGHTS UP on MICHAELSON kitchen. DAVID MICHAELSON enters and pours coffee, then calls for his wife.)

DAVID

Elizabeth? Liz? *(Finds a note propped against the sugar bowl on the table; silently reads then to self)* A tux? Shit. *(Sighs, puts down note and notices mess in the kitchen)* For Christ's sake. Look at this mess. *(Begins to clean)*

(SPLIT SCENE: DAVID / PAUL and LIZ. LIGHTS UP on PAUL and ELIZABETH, now practicing fencing with PAUL coaching. DAVID washes dishes. PAUL and ELIZABETH fence. Time passes. DAVID begins to get impatient. He crosses out of his scene area into PAUL and ELIZABETH's. For a minute he hangs between the two and calls to her.)

DAVID

Elizabeth.

(No one hears him. He calls again, and as he moves further into their scene we are in real time, he is really there in the rehearsal room.)

DAVID, *Continued*

Elizabeth!

(ELIZABETH jerks her head towards DAVID, breaking her concentration. PAUL's blow strikes her squarely on the shoulder.)

ELIZABETH

Ow! Shit! David! Don't ever do that!

DAVID

I'm sorry. It's almost four.

ELIZABETH

I could have been hurt!

DAVID

You said you'd be home by...I mean...I thought I'd come by and see if you...

ELIZABETH

What are you doing here?

DAVID

We're supposed to go to that thing at my cousin's before we...

ELIZABETH

We're trying to work!

PAUL

(To ELIZABETH) You should learn to stay focused.

(ELIZABETH spins on PAUL, surprised.)

ELIZABETH

What?

PAUL

David's waiting, Elizabeth.

DAVID

I'm sorry. It's just that...you said you'd be home by three.

PAUL

Go on. We'll continue next time.

(PAUL and DAVID regard each other as ELIZABETH gathers her things.)

ELIZABETH

Saturday?

(PAUL nods. ELIZABETH and DAVID exit. PAUL moves the sword absently, but expertly, then turns to put it away. Suddenly a masked assailant in Three Musketeers-type costume attacks him from behind. They fight, but the fight is a grand mime piece, staged, almost dreamlike, a choreographed mime fantasy of which PAUL is the hero. Another assailant

appears and is defeated. Then Another. This time it is DAVID. A fight to the death. PAUL is victorious. ELIZABETH, garishly masked and costumed as the damsel in distress, appears and throws herself into the arms of her hero. Thunderous applause follows. PAUL and ELIZABETH bow, ELIZABETH disappears as SAMUEL JAFFE, decked out in a tuxedo, enters holding a large framed plaque; an awards ceremony in progress.)

SAM

Our own Paul Girard, ladies and gentlemen. Paul, on behalf of the university and most especially the School of Theatre, it is my pleasure to award you the distinguished title Professor of the Year.

(There is much applause and cheering with cries of "speech, speech!" PAUL reorients himself. This is real. He laughs. He is elated. He accepts the plaque from SAM and holds it up. Gradually the room quiets down.)

PAUL

I cannot tell you how much this means to me, this celebration, this honor, this day, and all of you. I want to thank my students, Sam, the faculty and staff of the University, but most of all I want to thank Colette and Louis... *(Cheers swell)* ...who have loved me through hours of rehearsal, workouts, sore muscles, charley horses, torn ligaments, a few broken bones.

(There is laughter and calls from the audience; "that's right!" and "You...what about us?" PAUL holds up his hands for quiet.)

PAUL, *Continued*

After twenty-four years of marriage and eighteen years of fatherhood, they are still here, still loving me, so all I can say is please, both of you, come up here and stand with me, because this award is yours as much as it is mine...maybe more so.

(Cheers and applause as COLETTE and LOUIS come from the audience to the stage. LOUIS wears the infamous tuxedo. PAUL kisses and hugs them.)

PAUL, *Continued*

I love you both.

(The crowd goes wild, etc. LIGHTS SHIFT: A frozen moment as cameras click, click, flash in a frenzy. The clicking and flashing transitions into a post-ceremony reception. SFX: Party sounds with people drinking and talking. ANNE JAFFE, Sam's wife, has had a few to make drinks. She gives COLETTE a dramatic hug as SAM pulls PAUL and LOUIS away to talk to someone across the room.)

ANNE

Very exciting evening.

COLETTE

He's so happy. He's practically glowing. Teaching means more to him than anything.

ANNE

He's been at it even longer than Sam, God help him.

COLETTE

I remember the day Sam came here. As an associate professor.

ANNE

And I remember the day he got promoted to chair. Eight years later. (*Glances sidelong at COLETTE*) He was afraid Paul would take it badly. As a slight.

COLETTE

Oh no. Paul's not an administrator. He knows it. He's not diplomatic. He can be...impulsive. Emotional. You know...sometimes he doesn't have the best... (*ANNE shoots her a look; she shifts under it*) It's not a criticism. He's just not like Sam. He's an artist. (*A slight pause*) That didn't come out right at all.

(*ANNE flags someone down across the room. It is ELIZABETH.*)

ANNE

There's someone I think you should meet. (*Calls*) Elizabeth! Elizabeth!

(*ELIZABETH crosses closer with an uncomfortable tuxedoed DAVID in tow.*)

ANNE, *Continued*

Elizabeth, I want you to meet Colette Girard, Professor Girard's wife. His son is right over...

ELIZABETH

Yes. We've met before. At your house.

(*COLETTE is completely blank.*)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

At the cast party. I'm in the mime troupe.

COLETTE

Oh yes! Of course...how are you?

ELIZABETH

This is my husband, David.

ANNE

(*Sotto voice*) Who's clearly having a wonderful time.

COLETTE

David, hello.

DAVID

I am, actually, I'm just not used to the... *(Pulls on tux collar)*

COLETTE

I understand completely, look at my son, he's...

ANNE

...walking like he's got a chicken in his cheeks.

COLETTE

Anne, don't let him hear you say that! His father insisted he wear it.

DAVID

He looks...a lot like his father.

(Uncomfortable pause; drinks are sipped. ANNE gulps hers.)

ELIZABETH

Well, we should go, Dave.

ANNE

Absolutely. Don't want to miss Late Night, Dave.

(ELIZABETH nods, smiles and pulls David along.)

DAVID

Uhhh, right. Goodnight then.

(ELIZABETH and DAVID exit.)

COLETTE

What a nice couple.

ANNE

Charming. Let's get another, shall we?

COLETTE

Anne, maybe you've...

ANNE

Had enough? Maybe so. Maybe we both have, and one of us just doesn't know it.

(COLETTE takes this bait.)

COLETTE

You're especially witty tonight. Is something on your mind?

(ANNE stares at her, thinks, opens her mouth, then shuts it as SAM appears and takes her arm.)

ANNE

No, Collette. There is nothing on my mind.

(SAM moves ANNE along. As she exits, the move reveals PAUL talking to ELIZABETH. They are laughing about something. DAVID enters from outside.)

DAVID

Liz! The car's here!

(ELIZABETH turns and exits as COLETTE joins PAUL with a smile.)

COLETTIE

What a lovely evening.

PAUL

I'm tired. Are you ready? Louis! Are you ready?

(LIGHTS SHIFT as COLETTE and LOUIS exit off and ELIZABETH enters. It is THE FOLLOWING DAY. PAUL and ELIZABETH embrace passionately. He holds her close and kisses her. She kisses him back. After a moment, she tries to pull away. He holds her to him. She struggles lightly, then looks at her watch over his shoulder. She pulls away again.)

ELIZABETH

Paul! It's nine-thirty! You said the movie was over at ten!

(PAUL continues holding and kissing her.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

Paul, stop! We have to go...we didn't even rehearse at all!

(Finally ELIZABETH thrusts him away. They look at each other, a little surprised, for a moment. ELIZABETH breaks the tension.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

Didn't you have enough celebrating last night, Professor of the Year?

(She starts gathering her things, straightening her clothes. PAUL watches her.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

Paul...the other day...

(PAUL reaches out to touch her again.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

Listen! The other day, someone...Natalie, actually...kind of asked about us. (*PAUL stops touching her*) I mean, she didn't come out and ask if something was going on, but she hinted. Are we being...indiscreet?

(*PAUL gives a snort of laughter.*)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

I'm being serious. It's been...how long...almost a year, and this is the first time anyone has even hinted. Maybe we shouldn't work together quite so much...

(*PAUL starts to say something, but she goes on, suddenly frustrated.*)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

But I need your help with the piece if I'm going to have a shot at the L'Ecole. (*Sinks to the floor*) I'm not going to get in. This is crazy. It's the most prestigious...and it's in France, for god's sake. What am I thinking?

(*PAUL pulls her to him; soothes her.*)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

You have faith in me, you believe in me. I know, I know. My teacher. You give me strength. I just get so tired of waiting, Paul! I get so tired of waiting for something to happen!

(*He puts a finger to her lips, gently. She takes his hand and kisses it.*)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

I'm not giving up! But promise me, promise me...I'm going to get there this time. Everyday. I mean, there's nothing unusual about you working with a student...you do it all the time...Paul? Do you think people know?

(*LIGHTS SHIFT as PAUL leaves her and crosses into the stage left area to an armchair and sits. LIGHTS UP stage right where DAVID sits at a desk. ELIZABETH crosses to him. He looks up as she enters.*)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

(*To DAVID*) I thought you were working late.

DAVID

(*Indicates his work*) I am working late.

ELIZABETH

(*Looks over his shoulder*) That's not office work. I don't remember that last time I saw you draw freehand.

DAVID

I know. I just got in the mood all of the sudden.

ELIZABETH

Why a ship?

(DAVID shrugs and keeps working.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

I wish you would...

DAVID

Would...

ELIZABETH

Nothing. It's not you at all. What I mean to say is that I wish I could...

DAVID

Wish you could...

ELIZABETH

I wish I could change.

(Long pause.)

DAVID

Where were you tonight?

(SPLIT SCENE: LIGHTS UP on PAUL seated in armchair. COLETTE enters.)

COLETTE

Paul? Are you here? Oh, Paul! It was the most wonderful movie! I wish you had come.

LOUIS

He would have hated it! Dad, it was a sappy love story.

COLETTE

It wasn't sappy! It was beautiful!

LOUIS

Mom, they drowned! They drowned themselves! What's beautiful about that?

COLETTE

All right, it was tragic, but beautiful. Admit it!

(Laughs) Never!

LOUIS

COLETTE
You boys! True passion escapes you. Are you hungry?

LOUIS
I could eat something. Dad?

PAUL
Huh? What?

LOUIS
Are you hungry?

PAUL
Hungry?

LOUIS
Mom asked if you were hungry.

PAUL
She what?

(SPLIT SCENE: ELIZABETH'S HOUSE.)

ELIZABETH
I had a rehearsal.

DAVID
For?

ELIZABETH
An audition.

DAVID
Which?

ELIZABETH
The E'cole!

DAVID
With?

ELIZABETH
What is this, preposition day?

(SPLIT SCENE: PAUL'S HOUSE.)

LOUIS
Mom, never mind. I'm just gonna go to sleep. Dad?

PAUL
Hmmmmm?

LOUIS
We still going offshore on Saturday?

PAUL
Saturday?

LOUIS
I chartered the boat. You said we...I mean, it's ok. We don't have to.

PAUL
No. Of course we are. Absolutely. Saturday. Early, right?

LOUIS
Leave here at five a.m. So we're on?

PAUL
Yes. On.

LOUIS
Yeah, cool. Good night.

(LOUIS kisses his mother and exits.)

COLETTE
Are you all right? You seem distracted.

(SPLIT SCENE: ELIZABETH'S HOUSE.)

DAVID
I'm just asking. I'm interested in what you do.

ELIZABETH
Wanting to know what I do and being interested are not the same thing.

DAVID
Yes they are.

ELIZABETH

The intent is different.

DAVID

I don't know what you mean. You confuse me a lot lately. I don't mean to quiz you.

ELIZABETH

Oh, David. For god's sake.

(SPLIT SCENE: PAUL'S HOUSE.)

PAUL

I'm fine. Just...last night. I'm tired. The ceremony. It took a lot out of me.

COLETTE

You still amaze me. Still so perfect.

PAUL

No. Not perfect. Never perfect.

COLETTE

Close. As close as they come.

PAUL

That's quite a responsibility.

COLETTE

You wear it well. You're becoming...distinguished.

PAUL

(A snort of laughter) Old.

COLETTE

No, darling. I'm becoming old. You are distinguished. Men are lucky that way. You're everything you ever were, only more. I envy you that.

PAUL

How's the garden?

(COLLETTE looks at him blankly.)

PAUL, *Continued*

The garden. Your garden? How is it?

(COLLETTE stares at him, surprised.)

COLETTE

It's...fine. It's wonderful.

PAUL

Let's go out and see it.

COLETTE

You want to walk out to the garden right now?

PAUL

It's only a few yards away...what's wrong with that?

COLETTE

Nothing! Nothing...it's just...unlike you to want...

PAUL

(Amused) Am I really so set in my ways that you are practically overcome with amazement when I want to see your garden?

COLETTE

Of course not. *(Takes his hand)* I'd love to show it to you.

(SPLIT SCENE: ELIZABETH'S HOUSE)

ELIZABETH

Let's go to bed.

DAVID

I think we should talk...about...

ELIZABETH

David...

DAVID

We need to talk...

ELIZABETH

(Placing arms seductively around him) Why talk when we can just go to bed?

DAVID

Because...something's not right.

ELIZABETH

I know I'm being difficult...this audition...you know how much it means to me to do well.

DAVID

I know.

ELIZABETH

I'm so old...so much older than most of them...they're so young, they have their whole lives in front of them...

DAVID

Liz, you're twenty-eight. You have your...we have our whole lives in front of us.

(SPLIT SCENE: PAUL'S HOUSE; PAUL and COLETTE in the garden, at night. It is dark and a slightly chilly. SFX: night sounds; crickets and birds.)

COLETTE

Look at the cucumbers...I'm fighting with the insects for them right now, but I'm going to win that fight, I guarantee you that. And my arugula is unbelievably peppery, I got the fertilization right this year, and the tomatoes - well, you know how good I am with tomatoes.

PAUL

Things don't just grow.

COLETTE

What?

PAUL

They don't just grow. If I knelt here, and dug a hole, and put seeds in the ground, they wouldn't just grow, and make fruit, and feed us, would they?

COLETTE

They might. But they might not. A lot of things can happen to them.

PAUL

Colette...

COLETTE

What is it Paul? You're so...I don't understand. Your performance went so well. The mime troupe...

PAUL

Mimes! People tolerate mimes for about twenty minutes. Then they hate them.

COLETTE

Paul!

PAUL

It's true. Mime is dying. As an art, it's dying.

COLETTE

That makes you even more unique. Even more perfect.

PAUL

It makes me a museum piece. Not even that revered. I'm an antique. No. A...curiosity. Like in a shop.

COLETTE

You're an artist. An expert.

PAUL

I'm like a telephone with that... *(Motions in a circle)* What's that called? A rotary phone. No one has those any more.

COLETTE

That's not true...

PAUL

Like cassette tapes and...

COLETTE

(Trying to interrupt) Paul...

PAUL

(Talking over her) ...typewriters! With ribbons! Obsolete!

COLETTE

You're exhausted. Come inside.

(COLETTE begins the exit; PAUL sinks down heavily on a rock.)

PAUL

I'm going to stay here for a while.

(COLETTE hesitates.)

PAUL, *Continued*

I'm all right. Go on. I'll just be a minute.

(COLETTE exits reluctantly. PAUL sits and stares. Suddenly SAM, in the garish mask of a mock Indian Chief appear, straight out of a nightmare, dragging ELIZABETH. ANNE and LOUIS, as Indians, are there too. DAVID appears in the role of Davy Crockett, lugging a buckskin pouch.)

SAM/CHIEF

What you trade for girl?

(PAUL opens the top of the rock he was sitting on and produces an eggbeater. In answer, DAVID produces a food processor. PAUL pulls out a typewriter; DAVID, a laptop. PAUL produces an album; DAVID, a CD. The pace becomes more frantic. PAUL pulls out a hunting knife and DAVID an assault rifle. There is laughter at PAUL's expense. Frustrated, PAUL reaches deep and pulls out a rotary phone. As he thrusts it at SAM, it rings loudly. Too loudly. It sounds like an alarm clock which in fact it is. BLACK OUT. LIGHTS UP: COLETTE appears, in her robe. It's the next morning.)

COLETTE

Paul! Oh my god! Did you stay out here all night?

(LIGHT SHIFT: PAUL's classroom. PAUL pulls out a towel from his workout bag and wipes his face. He addresses his class, the students unseen.)

PAUL

All right, time's up for today. See you all on Wednesday.

(SAM enters and hangs in the doorway.)

SAM

Got a minute?

PAUL

Only one. I'm working with a student at noon.

SAM

Who?

PAUL

Elizabeth Michaelson.

SAM

(Beat) She's very talented.

PAUL

She has more experience.

SAM

Right. She's older, isn't she?

PAUL

She's twenty-eight. Or nine. Something like that.

SAM

So...how's the mime troupe coming along?

(PAUL picks up his workout bag and starts changing his shirt.)

PAUL

They're lazy. They're American actors. But I'm curing them of it. Why do you ask?

SAM

It's my job to ask these questions.

PAUL

(Changing his shoes) Sam, should we go have a drink?

SAM

I beg your pardon?

PAUL

How long has it been since we went and had a drink?

SAM

I don't know. Quite a while. Why?

PAUL

I think, Sam, the first thing you should do is decide.

SAM

Decide?

PAUL

Yes. You decide what you want to know, and then I'll decide if I'm going to tell you. Then we can go and have a drink. But you see, Sam, until you decide, I am in a somewhat difficult position.

SAM

You are in a difficult position?

PAUL

Yes. I can't burden you, my oldest friend, with something you can't decide if you want to know. So my decision hinges on yours. You see?

(ELIZABETH, with workout bag in hand, bursts in late and flustered)

ELIZABETH

Paul, I'm so sorry, David had the car and he's been...oh. Dr. Jaffe.

SAM

Hello, Elizabeth.

PAUL

You decide, Sam, and then we'll have our drink. Right now, Elizabeth and I have a rehearsal. All right?

SAM

I'll talk to you later, Paul.

(SAM exits; PAUL turns to ELIZABEETH. They stare at each other for a long moment.)

PAUL

Let's begin.

(LIGHTS SHIFT to LOUIS, fishing. PAUL crosses into the scene.)

PAUL, *Continued*

Any luck?

LOUIS

Absolutely zero.

PAUL

Ah well. It happens.

LOUIS

Yeah. I don't care. It's beautiful here. Take a look at that huge ship. She's a real beauty. Those sails...

PAUL

Gorgeous.

LOUIS

Yeah.

(They fish in silence.)

PAUL

You ah, ready to go? To college, I mean?

LOUIS

Ready as I'll ever be, I guess.

PAUL

I'm proud of you, you know. Beer?

LOUIS

Sure thing.

(PAUL hands him one and takes one himself.)

PAUL

To you. To your...success.

LOUIS

Thanks.

(Beat.)

PAUL

How much longer...do we have you for?

LOUIS

Oh, I guess another three months or so...

PAUL

Sam was surprised that you didn't want...that you didn't choose to...

LOUIS

That I didn't choose to come be with you guys?

PAUL

I told him about the other scholarship and all, but he knew you'd been offered one from us, so he just...

LOUIS

Dad...you know I can't go where you are such...

PAUL

No, no, I know, and Sam didn't mean you should have...

LOUIS

I know.

(Beat.)

PAUL

It's very impressive. Your scholarship and all. I was never a very good student.

LOUIS

Dad, it's an art scholarship. A painting scholarship. You know what kind of a student I am.

PAUL

Right. You are a terrible student, but a fine painter. I was a terrible student, but a fine actor.

LOUIS
And a fabulous mime.

(PAUL makes a disparaging sound.)

PAUL
So, what about Sherry?

LOUIS
What do you mean?

PAUL
Are you going to, you know, keep seeing her?

LOUIS
Sure. Of course. We...you know.

PAUL
What?

LOUIS
I don't know...we get along.

PAUL
That's good. That's important.

LOUIS
I know it is. Like you and Mom.

PAUL
Uh-huh.

(Moments pass; they fish.)

PAUL, *Continued*
Louis, are you ever...do you ever think about...I mean are you ever afraid that she might, well, leave you? I mean, she is older than you, and...

LOUIS
Just one year.

PAUL
True, but, people change, don't they...they go on to bigger and better things?

LOUIS
Well, I guess it would be a drag if she, you know, dumped me.

PAUL

But do you ever feel like...

(PAUL hesitates.)

LOUIS

Like...?

PAUL

You know...that feeling...are you, I guess, passionate about her?

LOUIS

I don't get you.

PAUL

Would it really hurt you, if she left? Are you, you know, crazy about her?

LOUIS

She's great. She's the best.

(PAUL struggles becoming more agitated.)

PAUL

I know that, but do you ever feel like you can't, as if—if the relationship were to end, you would...

LOUIS

I'm not sure I understand exactly what you...

PAUL

I'm asking you, do you ever feel as if, do you ever feel like you couldn't, you know, live without her?

LOUIS

Well, no, not really, actually.

PAUL

Does she feel that way about you?

LOUIS

God, I hope not.

PAUL

Why? Why do you say that? Why is that a bad thing?

LOUIS

Dad...are you OK?

PAUL

Yes, I'm fine, I just don't understand why it's such a bad thing.

LOUIS

Why what is?

(PAUL makes an effort then pulls himself together, dropping the subject.)

PAUL

Nothing. Never mind. Sorry.

(They fish and sip beer.)

PAUL, *Continued*

She's a fine girl. A fine student.

LOUIS

It cracks me up she's taking your class.

PAUL

It's just the beginning one.

LOUIS

She said she was taking it just to get in shape, but now you've got her so into it I wouldn't be surprised if she starts acting.

(LOUIS pauses. He wants to say something he can't quite phrase.)

LOUIS, *Continued*

You know, Dad, it's funny to hear her talk about you. It's like she separates you into two different people...my dad, and then this person, this professor she's got this, like, incredible admiration for. She's sorta, you know, crazy about you. As a teacher.

PAUL

That's nice, that's nice to hear.

LOUIS

They all are. Man, did you hear them at the ceremony? I never liked a teacher that much, not ever, in my whole life. They like, worship you. It's kinda weird, in a great way, I mean. But it's like you're two people - my dad, and then this great guy I hear about all the time. Two separate people.

PAUL

That's great, great. So, it's pretty serious then.

LOUIS

What is?

PAUL

You and Sherry, you and Sherry!

LOUIS

Well, how do you mean serious?

PAUL

Louis, I'm just...trying to say, ah, I know you care about Sherry, but don't rush into any commitment, you understand?

LOUIS

Commitment? That's the "c-word" for guys.

PAUL

What's the c-word for girls?

LOUIS

Dad! You know.

PAUL

Oh yeah. That word.

LOUIS

Girls hate that word.

PAUL

Yeah. I'm just saying, when you're young, you don't know what you want, or how you'll feel when you're, uh, like me. Old.

LOUIS

Dad. You're not old. Yet.

(They fish. Suddenly there's a scream. ELIZABETH appears, running from a Pirate, [an Errol Flynn-style DAVID], who grabs her and emits an evil laugh. PAUL stands and challenges him with a sword. LOUIS fishes, oblivious. A melodramatic fight ensues. PAUL triumphs. He reaches for ELIZABETH but she throws herself across the body of the vanquished DAVID, weeping dramatically. PAUL tries to console her but she pushes him away. He can't believe it. He stares at her, dumbfounded.)

LOUIS

Fish on! Dad! Hey! Reel your line in! Dad! Hello!

(LIGHTS DOWN on LOUIS followed by LIGHTS UP on SAM who stops PAUL as he crosses stage on his way to class.)

SAM

Paul—I've decided.

PAUL

You have, eh?

SAM

Why don't we meet at my house?

PAUL

Will Anne be there?

(SAM shrugs.)

PAUL, *(Continued)*

No. Meet me at the Four Seasons. Ten-thirty?

SAM

For old time's sake?

PAUL

Ten-thirty?

SAM

Why so late?

PAUL

Yes or no?

SAM

I'll be there.

(PAUL continues on towards the classroom. ELIZABETH meets him outside the door.)

ELIZABETH

I need to talk to you.

PAUL

What's the matter?

ELIZABETH

I can't meet you tonight.

PAUL

Why not?

(PAUL puts his hand on her arm; she shrugs him off.)

ELIZABETH

Paul...careful.

PAUL

What about rehearsal?

ELIZABETH

David threw a fit this morning...I'm never home when he gets home, he never sees me, the house is dirty, I never cook dinner on my days any more...

PAUL

On your days?

ELIZABETH

(Defensively) He cooks too.

PAUL

I'm sure he does.

ELIZABETH

(Irrationally) Don't make fun of him!

PAUL

I wasn't.

ELIZABETH

He knows something's really wrong...

(PAUL reaches for her and tries to hold her. She jumps.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

Don't! Are you crazy? I have to go. I can't work tomorrow either...

PAUL

Elizabeth! You audition for L'Ecole on the 12th!

ELIZABETH

I know that! Saturday...Saturday, we can work a lot...I'm not...I just have to make sure that David...

(She grinds to a halt.)

PAUL

All right! I'll see you on Saturday.

(ELIZABETH exits. LIGHTS TRANSITION to the Four Seasons Bar. PAUL crosses to the Bar and takes a seat. He is only alone for a quick moment until SAM enters.)

PAUL, *Continued*

You're early.

SAM

So are you.

PAUL

I felt like having a drink.

SAM

So have one.

PAUL

I felt like having one alone, before you got here. Maybe several.

SAM

So sorry to be prompt.

PAUL

One of your most annoying virtues.

SAM

Now you sound like the Paul I know.

(SAM laughs, and relaxing a little, sits down. The Bartender [DAVID] serves them a drink. They sit in silence for a few moments as they drink.)

SAM, *Continued*

We've sat here before.

PAUL

The night Louis was born. Afterwards.

SAM

You were a mess.

PAUL

They told me to go home. ICU, no visitors, not even me, him off in some incubator thing, so tiny...fingernails like this... *(Demonstrates)* Couldn't touch him, couldn't touch her. I was sure he would die.

SAM

But he didn't.

PAUL

That was the first night I ever felt...rage. Helpless rage.

SAM

I remember.

PAUL

I shouldn't have been drinking.

SAM

Probably not.

PAUL

You kept me from getting arrested.

SAM

Barely.

PAUL

You're my best friend, Sam.

SAM

But you keep secrets from me.

PAUL

And you tell me everything.

SAM

I guess not.

(A moment passes. PAUL laughs to himself.)

SAM, *Continued*

I want you to protect yourself. Why is that funny?

It's not.

PAUL

Paul...do you want me to be specific?

SAM

Sam, what makes you feel good?

PAUL

What makes me feel good?

SAM

Don't be a parrot, Sam, it's not a trick question. What makes you feel good? I want to know.

PAUL

What makes me...I guess...the kids, now that they've straightened up; Anne, most of the time, anyway; when I know we're doing a good show, when things are working out in the department...

SAM

Nice. That's all so nice. Now what gives you a hard-on?

PAUL

For heaven's sake, Paul...

SAM

Come on, what gives you a hard-on, you do still get them, I assume, or does the Board of Regents have to approve them first?

PAUL

When did you get so nasty?

SAM

I am not nasty. I am making a point, Sam, a point. Elizabeth gives me nice, and a hard-on.

PAUL

You're losing control of the situation.

SAM

Bartender!

PAUL

She's just a girl. She'll be gone in another year.

SAM

PAUL

Maybe I will be too.

SAM

You're an adult, Paul.

PAUL

Am I? I feel like a kid again.

SAM

Kids are selfish. You see that every day.

PAUL

Don't play big brother with me, Sam, it doesn't fit. I'll do what I like. God knows I've done enough of what's expected of me.

SAM

What about Colette?

PAUL

(Jeering) What about Colette? What about Colette? Am I only that?

SAM

I don't follow you.

PAUL

Is that what I am? I am husband. Father. Teacher. Is that how you see me?

SAM

I see you as a friend. A friend who's...mixed up...right now.

PAUL

I am not mixed up. I am happy.

(Silence. SAM rises.)

SAM

Don't talk like a stupid man, Paul. You didn't used to be one.

(SAM exits. PAUL sits for a moment, sipping his drink. Reality falls away. DAVID enters, dressed like an old West outlaw.)

DAVID

This town ain't big enough for the both of us.

(A shootout; PAUL is, of course, the fastest gun in the West. He steps over the body and out of the scene, into his house. COLETTE is in bed, reading.)

COLETTE

I thought you were having a drink with Sam.

PAUL

I did.

COLETTE

It's not even midnight.

PAUL

It was a short drink.

COLETTE

I see. Come to bed, honey.

PAUL

In a minute.

COLETTE

I got the first strawberries today. They're on the counter if you want some.

PAUL

Not hungry.

COLETTE

Did you eat? *(Pause)* I know better than to nag you.

PAUL

Thanks you.

COLETTE

You've lost weight.

PAUL

No, I haven't.

COLETTE

I can see it in your face.

PAUL

No, I haven't.

COLETTE

Come to bed.

(PAUL climbs into bed and takes her in his arms.)

COLETTE, *Continued*

(Surprised and delighted) Paul!

(LIGHTS CROSSFADE to ELIZABETH in her bed; DAVID sits nearby in a chair. He holds a drink in his hand. It is very late. ELIZABETH awakes.)

ELIZABETH

David?

DAVID

I can't sleep.

ELIZABETH

So you're having a scotch?

DAVID

I'm having three scotches. You talked through the first two.

ELIZABETH

I talked through them?

DAVID

You talked in your sleep.

ELIZABETH

That's ridiculous. I never do that.

DAVID

People change.

(DAVID is drunk. ELIZABETH is careful with him.)

ELIZABETH

Very philosophical for... *(Looks at the bedside clock)* ...three-forty in the morning.

DAVID

It's an observation.

(A pause.)

ELIZABETH

Are you ready to talk about it?

DAVID

When I was a kid I used to have these nightmares...

ELIZABETH

David. I know that.

DAVID

Just listen for a second.

ELIZABETH

I know about the nightmares.

DAVID

But what you don't know is that they started off as dreams. Beautiful dreams. Usually about pirate ships. Huge ships, with black sails on an ocean, like one in a Disney movie, uncomplicated, blue, with sweet little fish in it. Not the real ocean. It has reefs and rocks and sharks.

ELIZABETH

Honey...

DAVID

And in the dream part I'm the Captain of the pirate ship, and I have this white shirt, and everyone is terrified of me at first, but then they know that I'm good, and they love me.

ELIZABETH

David...let's not talk about...

DAVID

But then...something changes, and I'm not the Captain anymore, and they're going to drown me, and the ocean is filled with blood. And blood brings sharks. But the strange thing...I never get thrown overboard. I fight. I always wake up before they heave me over the side.

ELIZABETH

Did you have that dream tonight?

DAVID

I think I did.

ELIZABETH

And?

DAVID

I'm not sure if I'm in the boat or in the water.

ELIZABETH

And you think I know?

DAVID

Yes. I think you know.

ELIZABETH

I don't.

DAVID

When you find out...will you tell me?

ELIZABETH

When I find out.

DAVID

All right.

ELIZABETH

Come to bed now.

(He does; ELIZABETH holds him. LIGHTS CHANGE; ELIZABETH leaves the bed and crosses into the rehearsal room. ELIZABETH and PAUL have just finished rehearsal. PAUL enters and throws her a towel. They are both sweating and exhausted.)

PAUL

You're ready. I can't do anything more.

ELIZABETH

Let me get my breath. Then one more time.

PAUL

No. You'll kill it. Enough.

ELIZABETH

Once more.

PAUL

Let's go get a drink instead. Celebrate.

ELIZABETH

We can't do that.

PAUL

It won't be a secret much longer.

(ELIZABETH stares at him.)

PAUL, *Continued*

Louis graduates on Saturday. You'll get this; I know it. We'll be leaving then. *(No response)*
For France.

ELIZABETH

What if I don't? Get it?

PAUL

Well...

(PAUL shrugs his shoulders and smiles at her.)

ELIZABETH

I think we should be careful just a little bit longer.

PAUL

All right.

ELIZABETH

So...one more time.

PAUL

You're going to kill me.

ELIZABETH

I've never seen you get tired before.

PAUL

Between this and everything else...

(They look at each other for a moment.)

PAUL, *Continued*

All right then. Once again.

(They begin the routine, but shortly, out of nowhere comes SFX: romantic music and moonlight. PAUL takes ELIZABETH in his arms and they dance. As they dance LIGHTS RISE on their respective homes. DAVID and COLETTE speak to them as if they were there.)

DAVID

You're late.

COLETTE

You're home early.

DAVID
You said six o'clock.

COLETTE
I thought you said seven.

DAVID
I made a dinner reservation.

COLETTE
I haven't even thought about dinner.

DAVID
We missed it...they're booked after seven!

COLETTE
Maybe pizza?

DAVID
I need to talk to you!

COLETTE
Or we could watch a movie...

DAVID
I want to know what's going on!

COLETTE
I wasn't sure what your plans were.

DAVID
Don't just walk away from me like that!

COLETTE
Just let me know what you want to do.

(PAUL and ELIZABETH stop dancing and turn away from each other. They start to exit off. As they do, DAVID and COLETTE react.)

DAVID
Elizabeth! I'm talking to you!

COLETTE
Paul? Did you say something?

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK. END ACT I.)

ACT II

(AT RISE: SFX; fantasy lighting and music. PAUL enters. He's the romantic hero again. He mimes calling up to his beloved. Calls again. From somewhere above, ELIZABTHE appears, Rapunzel-like. It's the final scene in an adventure movie; it's the prince-rescues- the-damsel scene from a fairy tale. PAUL climbs the set, upwards, towards his beloved, but just as he reaches ELIZABETH, she vanishes. PAUL stands there, confused. COLETTE, dressed-up, bustles out carrying her coat and with a camera around her neck.)

COLETTE

Are you ready?

(PAUL blinks.)

COLETTE, Continued

Paul? We can't be late.

PAUL

Hm? Oh, right.

COLETTE

I promised we wouldn't embarrass him.

(She moves past him, down the stairs.)

PAUL

Embarrass him?

COLETTE

Well, that I wouldn't.

PAUL

What's embarrassing about us?

COLETTE

It doesn't mean anything.

PAUL

I have to leave by three.

COLETTE

He's just a baby... By when?

PAUL

Three.

COLETTE
Why?

PAUL
I have a rehearsal.

COLETTE
But there's a reception afterwards.

PAUL
It's important, Colette!

COLETTE
More important than your son's high school graduation?

(PAUL says nothing. A bad moment.)

COLETTE, *Continued*
I don't want to be late.

(She marches out, angry; PAUL follows. LIGHTS SHIFT; a reception. SAM, ANNE, and LOUIS stand in a group, talking. LOUIS is in his cap and gown. ANNE sips a glass of white wine.)

SAM
So, are you ready for the big move? Think you can handle living in the dorm?

ANNE
Sam, for god's sake, ask something else. Something more original. He's probably answered that one about a million times today.

(SAM turns to wave and speak to an [imaginary] passerby.)

LOUIS
If I have to kiss any more aunts I'm going to throw up.

ANNE
They all showed up, huh?

LOUIS
All nine hundred of them. Mom has a big family.

ANNE
Well, you look great.

LOUIS
Oh, please. Everyone looks stupid in these things.

ANNE

Umm, OK, but it's a traditional kind of stupid. I mean, you'd be stupider if you didn't get to wear one.

LOUIS

Ms. Jaffe, you're pretty funny for an...

(LOUIS catches himself)

ANNE

...old lady, you were going to say?

LOUIS

(Half laughing) No, I...

(ANNE punches him in the arm with tipsy good humor. SAM turns back around, starts to steer ANNE away. LOUIS stops him.)

LOUIS, *Continued*

So, I've got something to ask you, Dr. Jaffe.

SAM

Hmmm...What say? What is it, son?

LOUIS

What's wrong with Dad?

(He now has SAM'S attention.)

SAM

What's wrong with him?

LOUIS

Yeah.

(ANNE waits.)

SAM

I don't know what you mean.

LOUIS

He's edgy. And jumpy. And just generally acting weird.

SAM

He's acting...

He's like...wired all the time...

LOUIS

(Politely) Wired?

SAM

Shaky. Out of it.

LOUIS

Oh. I hadn't noticed.

SAM

No?

LOUIS

He seems fine around me.

SAM

Yeah? OK then. Maybe it's just me leaving home and all.

LOUIS

Sure.

SAM

(Looking around) Where is your father?

ANNE

He had to go. You know. Rehearsal.

LOUIS

Today?

ANNE

Right. Of course.

SAM

On your graduation day?

ANNE

Yeah. He was here earlier. For the ceremony. Listen, I gotta go talk to Mom and Aunt Clarice—see the look Mom's giving me? I've been avoiding Aunt Clarice since this afternoon—she smells like a gym sock.

LOUIS

(LOUIS shudders and marches off like a good soldier to greet the relatives. ANN spins on SAM.)

ANNE
A rehearsal? Today?

SAM
It's possible.

ANNE
(Bitter) And of course, you haven't noticed a thing. He seems fine around you.

SAM
Anne, enough.

ANNE
Poor kid, he probably thinks he's nuts.

SAM
Well what am I supposed to say, Anne? Tell me that!

(SAM stomps away. LIGHTS DOWN on Graduation scene with LIGHTS UP on PAUL at a table in a café. He is impatiently waiting; a coffee cup in hand. After a moment ELIZABETH enters, hurried.)

ELIZABETH
Paul!

(He jumps up, impulsively kisses her. She glances around.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*
Careful!

PAUL
No one's around. How did it go?

ELIZABETH
It went fine. Fine.

PAUL
I'm sorry I couldn't be there. Louis' graduation was...

ELIZABETH
I've got news.

PAUL
Are you happy with it? Did you do well? Tell me!

ELIZABETH

Yes, yes, it went fine. But...something else happened. Do you remember that audition Nancy sent me on...the movie one...

PAUL

No...Yes...last week sometime? But listen, did you get the names of the auditors? Was Simone there?

ELIZABETH

Paul, listen, I got the movie. I got it!

PAUL

Movie?

ELIZABETH

(Laughing) Yes! It's sixteen days...in L.A.! It's scale! I'm going to get my SAG card!

PAUL

But...when? Where?

ELIZABETH

In September. In L.A.

PAUL

But...what about L'Ecole? What if you get in?

ELIZABETH

It doesn't necessarily mean I can't...

PAUL

I mean, Elizabeth, you're not a movie actor, after all.

ELIZABETH

Who says?

PAUL

You're an artist. You're studying a very old, very treasured art form...

ELIZABETH

Who says I'll get in?

PAUL

I say!

ELIZABETH

And besides, Paul, I mean, mime is...

PAUL

What? Mime is what?

ELIZABETH

It's not, you know, it's not like I can...

PAUL

Like you can what?

ELIZABETH

I'm not trying to say it isn't beautiful...

PAUL

So, what then? Mime is what?

ELIZABETH

It's not that, it's just, I'm not sure that I'll get it.

PAUL

I know you will!

ELIZABETH

Well, then we'll cross that bridge, you know, later.

PAUL

But you wouldn't consider turning them down if you...

ELIZABETH

I've been in school a long time, Paul, I'm sick of school, I'm ready to move to either L.A. or New York...

PAUL

Sick of it! Elizabeth, L'Ecole Internationale is not some college, it's—

ELIZABETH

(Impatient) I know, Paul, but this is a great opportunity! There were a lot of women up for this part and I got it!

PAUL

Still, Elizabeth, it's not the same kind of work, it's not the same as...

ELIZABETH

Maybe I'd do better in film.

PAUL

You wouldn't...you're not— That's not acting! It's not theatre.

ELIZABETH

Don't be a snob, Paul. It's work.

(A moment of quiet. Then PAUL laughs.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

What's funny?

PAUL

I guess...I just never saw myself as much of an L.A. type. But I guess I'll adjust.

ELIZABETH

You'll...

PAUL

A new pair of sunglasses, maybe a new car...maybe a surfboard?

(He's still chuckling. ELIZABETH looks away.)

ELIZABETH

Well, nothing's for sure. Don't start packing yet.

PAUL

It's just that, well, the work is different out there. It's not about art. It's about money.

ELIZABETH

I could use some of that about now.

PAUL

What? What do you need?

ELIZABETH

Nothing! I just meant...

PAUL

I can give you some money if you...

ELIZABETH

I don't want you to give me money, Paul.

PAUL

But Elizabeth, if there's something you need and don't have...

ELIZABETH

David and I have plenty of money!

(A pause.)

PAUL
David and you?

ELIZABETH
We are still married.

PAUL
I'm aware of that.

ELIZABETH
Don't...don't pressure me, Paul.

PAUL
I'm not. I love you, Elizabeth.

(A silence falls between them. After a beat, ELIZABETH reaches over and takes PAUL's hand.)

ELIZABETH
I know. I love you too.

(Another long moment. PAUL stares at ELIZABETH, who stares at the table.)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(Finally) I have to go.

(ELIZABETH rises and crosses out of the scene. PAUL starts after her; changes his mind. LIGHTS SHIFT; the Garden. PAUL crosses to where COLETTE is on her knees, floppy garden hat on, spade in hand, digging furiously. PAUL waits to be acknowledged. No go.)

PAUL
Colette.

(She doesn't look up. Keeps digging.)

PAUL, Colette
Colette!

COLETTE
What do you want?

PAUL
I... Where's Louis?

COLETTE
Out.

Celebrating? PAUL

One would hope. COLETTE

He'd better not be drinking and driving. PAUL

He has good judgment. COLETTE

PAUL
You're angry with me. Why are you angry? *(No response)* I told you I had to go. I told you I had a rehearsal

(COLETTE doesn't look up. She is quite furious. PAUL is stumped, then, equally furious.)

PAUL, *Continued*
Goddamn it! Louis isn't angry! Why are you? This is shit, do you hear me? Fucking shit! I'm not going to put up with it!

(He is so angry that COLETTE looks up in surprise. They stare at each other. PAUL storms off. LIGHTS SHIFT as ANNE enters. COLETTE is taking off her gloves, her hat, etc.)

ANNE
You're going to have to ask him.

COLETTE
I have asked him.

ANNE
I don't mean ask him what's wrong. Not ask him nicely, non-specifically, honey, what's wrong, are you stressed, does your head hurt, do you want an aspirin, something special for dinner, time to yourself, a new car, a trip to Mexico, maybe a blow job...

COLETTE
(Actually shocked) Anne, for heaven's sake!

ANNE
(Quietly) I'm sick of them having it all their way all the time.

COLETTE
They don't!

ANNE

I mean, ask him specifically. Ask him! "Paul, are you having an affair!"

COLETTE

I never said that!

ANNE

But that's what you think.

COLETTE

(Knee-jerk) I do not!

ANNE

Yes, you do.

COLETTE

No!

ANNE

(Quietly) I do. And so does Samuel.

COLETTE

Now, listen to me, Anne. I have been married to that man for twenty-four years. I know him inside and out. I have been through...I have been through hell with him. I have been through birth and death with him. I know what he is capable of. He is not having an affair!

ANNE

No one really knows what another person is capable of, Colette.

COLETTE

I know!

ANNE

All right then. Fine.

COLETTE

I don't want you thinking something that is simply not true.

ANNE

I said all right!

COLETTE

(Softer now, explaining) We're making a transition, that's all. A transition. For me, it's not so hard, really. But for him, it's difficult. He's giving up so much.

ANNE

Paul? Giving up so much? Please! He's a man. He gives up nothing. You and I, we started giving up the minute we get married. We gave up our name. We gave up our home. We gave up our bodies, and our blood and milk and everything else it took to feed all those people who could only need, need, take, take, take from us! Tell me one time, just one time, that you ever asked him to give something up for you.

COLETTE

It's not me, Anne. I'm not the one asking.

ANNE

Then what? What exactly is he giving up?

COLETTE

His dream.

ANNE

(Snorts) His dream! What dream?

COLETTE

That he's still young. And always will be. He's seeing that one die, and it's hard for him. It's hard, Anne. He needs that dream.

ANNE

We all have to give that one up, Colette. It's just part of living, of getting older. It's what happens when you don't die.

COLETTE

I know that.

(A moment.)

ANNE

Colette, what would you do if he left you?

COLETTE

Left me? You mean, if he died?

ANNE

I mean left you. For someone else.

COLETTE

Anne, let's not go over this again. I've already told you...

ANNE

I'm just asking, what would you do?

COLETTE

Well, I...I suppose that I would...

(Colette is suddenly angry.)

COLETTE, *Continued*

What kind of a question is that? Are you trying to hurt me?

ANNE

No, I...

COLETTE

Anne, have you been drinking?

ANNE

Have I been drinking?

COLETTE

Well, have you? Don't pretend it's a silly question!

ANNE

Colette, please don't accuse me of...

COLETTE

I think you should go home now, Anne. I don't want to talk to you anymore when you're like this.

ANNE

When I'm like what, Colette?

COLETTE

When you're drunk!

(ANNE can only stare at her in shock as COLETTE stomps off. LIGHT SHIFT to PAUL and ELIZABETH, at a motel. She is getting dressed.)

ELIZABETH

Paul, I can't talk about this right now. I have to go. And, it's ridiculous. Where is my...

PAUL

What is?

ELIZABETH

...other shoe.? For you to leave here...Virginia. It's your home. You're an absolute...you're like a legend at that school. You've been there...

PAUL

Twenty-six years.

ELIZABETH

It's just...it's not going to happen.

PAUL

What's not going to happen, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

It's, you know, out of the...it's not possible. Under the circumstances.

(She finds her shoe.)

PAUL

What isn't possible? My leaving or my going with you?

ELIZABETH

Both. Either.

PAUL

(Quietly) Why are you doing this to me, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

I'm not...doing anything. I'm just saying.

PAUL

You just need to be patient. You'll know in a few weeks if you're accepted...maybe sooner...I can make some calls.

ELIZABETH

(Spinning on him, anguished) I want something to happen now! I want to get out of here! I want out of this college town! I'm twenty-eight! If I don't get out soon...all there is here besides college kids are hicks and senior citizens! I'm going Paul, I mean it!

(She throws her hairbrush, clothing, whatever comes to hand, into her bag.)

PAUL

What about David?

(ELIZABETH stops at the door.)

ELIZABETH

What about him?

PAUL

Is he going with you?

ELIZABETH
I...I don't know. I haven't decided.

PAUL
But you told him.

ELIZABETH
No.

PAUL
You haven't told your own husband that you're moving to L.A.?

ELIZABETH
Don't condescend to me, Paul! I'm not sure I want him to know. Maybe I'll just...leave. I don't belong to him!

PAUL
Just leave? Just leave just like that and move across the country?

ELIZABETH
How does anyone ever leave anything, except by just leaving?

PAUL
I can't believe you, I can't believe you can be so, so...

ELIZABETH
You don't own me, Paul, and neither does David.

PAUL
Of course not. I love you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
Paul...

PAUL
I love you more than I've ever loved anyone.

ELIZABETH
Paul...you're...I'm too young for you, Paul.

PAUL
(Disbelief) What?

ELIZABETH
You're a good man. But it's true.

PAUL

Please...don't say that.

ELIZABETH

I never thought you would...I mean, I thought we understood that this was...

(PAUL gets out of bed, comes over to her, takes her by the shoulders. His voice is urgent. He grips her arm.)

PAUL

You listen to me. You have responsibilities here. You have started things...invested in things. You can't just turn around and walk away from your responsibilities!

ELIZABETH

What are you talking about? My responsibilities? What about yours?

PAUL

I'm not the one walking away!

(ELIZABETH starts to laugh.)

ELIZABETH

You can't be serious! Do you hear what you're saying?

PAUL

You have a responsibility that you can't ignore!

ELIZABETH

To you? Is that what you mean?

PAUL

Yes! To me!

(ELIZABETH stares at him, almost bemused. A little chuckle escapes. PAUL puts his body between her and the door. It is done gracefully, but it is what it is. He stands there. She looks at him, weighing him.)

ELIZABETH

Please move, Paul. I have to go.

PAUL

We're not finished talking.

ELIZABETH

It's nine. I have to be home soon.

PAUL

I don't care about that.

ELIZABETH

Paul, I'm going to leave now.

(She moves for the door. He won't give. He takes her arm and holds her there for a long moment.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

(Quietly) Let me go, Paul.

(He doesn't. In a sudden motion, she wrenches her arm away and flings open the door.)

ELIZABETH, *Continued*

What's happening to you?

PAUL

Elizabeth...I'm sorry.

(ELIZABETH exits before he can say more. PAUL crosses to the bed, sits down. He is still for a moment, then reaches into his pocket and pulls a phone number out of his wallet. He dials a number.)

PAUL, *Continued*

Hello, this is Paul Girard. May I speak to Sandrine Conti? Yes, I'll wait. *(Pause)* Oh, Sandrine! You got my message? Yes. Yes. Elizabeth Michaelson. The audition would have been last week...yes...in New York...that's right...what?

(A long pause.)

PAUL, *Continued*

I don't understand. I mean, I don't see how that's possible. Could you look again? She was a no show? Elizabeth Michaelson? Michaelson...I wrote her recommendation...you are certain? *(Pause; pulls himself together)* Well, that certainly is a great disappointment. She was quite promising. Yes, I know how young people can be. *(Needing to get off the phone)* *(PAUL really, really needs to get off the phone.)* Thank you for the information...oh yes, Colette is fine...Louis too...listen, my dear, I have a conference with a student...absolutely...to you too.

(PAUL hangs up. He stares at the desk. He does nothing for a long moment. Quite suddenly, DAVID enters, wearing the old standard mime black and white costume. Grandly, he mimes a sword, the draw, stepping forward to challenge PAUL. But PAUL doesn't respond. He waves him away. DAVID doesn't give up. He implores PAUL, offers him a sword, tries to pull him up, tries to engage him. The scene is like an old mime routine that should be funny, but isn't. DAVID won't leave him alone. He mimes tapping PAUL on the shoulder, urging him to duel. PAUL shoves him viciously and crosses out of the scene, leaving DAVID sprawled on the floor, staring after him.)

(LIGHTS DOWN on DAVID and up on PAUL's home. LOUIS is standing, hands shoved in pockets, obviously waiting for his dad. PAUL enters. He walks by LOUIS like he isn't there.)

LOUIS

Hey, hey Dad!

PAUL

Oh. Louis.

(LOUIS waits for him to say more. He doesn't.)

LOUIS

Dad, want to go fishing day after tomorrow?

PAUL

Fishing? Don't you have school?

LOUIS

Dad, we're done. I graduated, remember?

PAUL

Right. Of course. But I have summer school classes.

LOUIS

I thought they didn't start until...

PAUL

(Vehemently) I have to prepare!

(LOUIS just looks at him.)

PAUL, *Continued*

(Regretful) Louis, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have snapped at you. Let me look at my schedule.

LOUIS

Did you and Mom have a fight?

PAUL

Did we have a fight?

LOUIS

Yeah. That's what I asked.

PAUL

Well...Louis...what...why would you ask that?

(LOUIS stares at him.)

PAUL, *Continued*

Well, yes, in fact, we did have a disagreement.

LOUIS

About what?

PAUL

Is that really your business?

(He immediately regrets this.)

PAUL, *Continued*

That was rude. What I meant is...

LOUIS

Well, I mean, I do have to live here. At least for another couple of months. With you two not talking to each other

PAUL

I'm talking to your mother.

LOUIS

Well, that makes one of you.

PAUL

(Surprised) She's not talking to me?

LOUIS

You mean you haven't even noticed?

PAUL

I...

LOUIS

Geez, Dad, you'd think you would notice!

(LOUIS is outraged, but his outrage turns to horror as his father covers his face with his hands and starts to choke with sobs.)

LOUIS, *Continued*

Oh my god, Dad, are you crying? Jesus! I mean, Dad, are you...are you all right?

PAUL

Oh, Louis, you don't understand what I'm...

LOUIS

Do you want me to get Mom? Dad? Please stop crying! Should I get Mom?

PAUL

No...don't tell her...Louis...don't tell her anything! I'm all right.

LOUIS

Dad, what's happening? What's going on?

PAUL

(Turning on him, irrationally furious) I said I'm all right!

(He leaves LOUIS staring after him. PAUL crosses from one scene to the next. LIGHTS UP on PAUL's office. He sits in his chair, buries his face in his hands. SAMUEL appears at the doorway, shifts to make his presence known. PAUL looks up, startled, composes himself.)

PAUL, *Continued*

Did you want to come in?

SAM

May I close the door?

PAUL

Have you come to speak to me about my "professional conduct?"

(SAM nods.)

SAM, *Continued*

Is this an official visit?

SAM

No. Just a visit from a friend. A concerned friend.

(PAUL pulls himself together grandly.)

PAUL

Well, my friend, please don't be concerned. Be happy. My life is just beginning.

SAM

What does that mean, Paul?

PAUL

It means, I am beginning my life over. With Elizabeth. We're moving to Los Angeles. She has been cast in a movie.

(SAMUEL just stares at him, disbelieving.)

Paul... SAM

PAUL
This isn't your concern, Samuel. I'll be resigning my position here.

Resigning! Your position! SAM

PAUL
It hardly seems appropriate to stay.

SAM
Have you completely lost your mind?

PAUL
Excuse me?

(SAMUEL is agitated. He rarely becomes agitated.)

SAM
I said, have you, Paul Girard, lost your fucking mind?

(PAUL starts to say something.)

SAM, *Continued*
What about Colette? And Louis! What about him?

PAUL
What about me?

SAM
What about you, you idiot! Just exactly what, who do you think you are? What are you going to do, Paul? Move to Los Angeles with Elizabeth Michaelson, who's married, do I need to remind you of that?

PAUL
People get divorced.

SAM
And you think she'll divorce him and marry you?

PAUL
Did I say that?

SAM
No. No, you didn't say that. So maybe you are not completely insane.

PAUL

You simply can't believe that she loves me, can you?

SAM

No! No, Paul, I simply can't believe that, and if you were in your right mind you wouldn't either. And even if she did, Paul, even if she did love you that still wouldn't make it right. You have responsibilities! You are a husband, a father!

PAUL

So?

SAM

You're a professor here, for God's sake!

PAUL

So what?

SAM

That is who you are, Paul! That is you, and running away with a woman half your age isn't going to change that one bit. You have to face that.

PAUL

I don't have to do anything I don't want to do.

SAM

Yes, you do, Paul! We all do. We all do. Do you think you're the only one, do you think you're the only man who's looked at a young woman and thought, good God, I have to have that, I can't live without that, I'll die if I don't get it? Don't you know we've all felt that way?

PAUL

This is different.

SAM

Oh, it's different. How? How is it different, Paul?

PAUL

It's different because she loves me.

(LIGHTS UP upstage left. ELIZABETH is in the rehearsal room, stretching.)

PAUL, *Continued*

Don't shake your head! She loves me!

(ELIZABETH stops rehearsing, checks her phone, puts it down.)

PAUL, *Continued*

Stop it! She loves me! She said so! She does! Stop it!

(PAUL shoves past SAM and out of the office. He crosses into the rehearsal room. He is in quite a state.)

PAUL, *Continued*

Why didn't you go to the audition?

ELIZABETH

Paul! Shhh! You're shouting!

PAUL

Damn right I'm shouting! What the hell is going on here!

ELIZABETH

How did you...

PAUL

I called them, of course. Did you think I wouldn't find out? Did you think they wouldn't tell me?

ELIZABETH

I was going to tell...

PAUL

They said you were a no-show! How could you do that, Elizabeth? How could you do that?

(PAUL is really shouting now. He grabs ELIZABETH, starts to shake her. SAM comes running in from the hallway.)

SAM

Paul! Stop it!

PAUL

Get out of here, Samuel!

(SAM manages to separate them. ELIZABETH backs away, grabs her bag.)

SAM

Paul, please! Stop it!

PAUL

(Still shouting) Get out of here, Sam! This isn't your business!

SAM

Elizabeth, please go home now. Right now. Please.

(ELIZABETH seems rooted to the spot, staring at PAUL, but then abruptly turns to go.)

PAUL

No! Elizabeth, don't leave! Don't leave me!

SAM

(Urgently) Go on. Get out of here, please!

PAUL

(Screams) No!

(PAUL grabs for her, almost catches her, stumbles as SAM grabs him. ELIZABETH flees in horror. PAUL shouts after her.)

PAUL, *Continued*

No...no...Elizabeth...please...!

(SAM holds PAUL around the waist. PAUL is stronger. He almost gets away, but when ELIZABETH disappears his strength leaves him. He crumples to the ground. SAM tries to comfort him. PAUL'S crying subsides. He grows quiet. BLACKOUT. Then SPLIT SCENE: STAGE RIGHT; PAUL sits in his armchair. His phone is in his hand. It is quite. STAGE LEFT: ELIZABETH packs a suitcase. LOUIS enters Right.)

LOUIS

Dad?

(PAUL doesn't hear him.)

LOUIS, *Continued*

Dad?

(PAUL jumps, spins around.)

LOUIS, *Continued*

Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

(PAUL indicates, without speaking, that he doesn't want to talk)

LOUIS, *Continued*

Dad...I want to ask you something.

(PAUL is impatient. He shakes his head "no".)

LOUIS, *Continued*

I want you to tell me the truth.

(PAUL puts his hands over his ears.)

LOUIS, *Continued*

Is there something...Dad...are you...

(PAUL bolts from his chair and exits. Stage left: ELIZABETH shuts the suitcase. She goes to pick it up; DAVID is there in the doorway.)

ELIZABETH

(Irritably) What is it? My plane's at five-thirty.

DAVID

It's only eleven.

ELIZABETH

I'm going out for a while.

DAVID

Where to?

ELIZABETH

I have to meet someone. I have a rehearsal!

DAVID

Who with?

ELIZABETH

Don't start with the goddamn prepositions again.

DAVID

I'm not...

ELIZABETH

And don't start with the questions either!

DAVID

Are you leaving me?

.

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes