The Play: The Day After Mother’s Day

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In
Creative Writing

by

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Certification of Approval

I certify that I have read The Play: The Day After Mother’s Day by David Warren Skibbins, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at San Francisco State University.

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Abstract

THE DAY AFTER MOTHER’S DAY is a multi-character play written by David Skibbins and inspired by his experiences as primary caregiver for his parents in their last years. In this play, three adult children struggle with the task of providing care for their demented mother and generate options which range from indentured servitude to homicide. This darkly toned comedy explores these almost overwhelming issues and finds redemption from a very unexpected source. With the Baby Boomers slowly becoming the dependents of their offspring this issue gets more critical every year. Aging parents, and the lack of resources to care for them, impact many American families. This play is meant to inject a little levity into this dire situation, and to open a dialogue about how caregivers can avoid the end-game choices these characters face.

For many of us, our parents are becoming children again. Cost for their daily care rise every year. Paying for care they need is phenomenally expensive and far outside the reach of most of their children. Our government and our society do not seem to care. We are on our own. In this play, three of these adult children gather to celebrate Mother’s Day with their demented mother in a post-COVID world. Stretched to the breaking point, both financially and emotionally, matricide looks like an attractive option. This play explores how they negotiate those morally tempestuous straits and find redemption.
Preface

I had the bittersweet honor of being the last child alive to help my parents transition out of this life. Each of their deaths brought up different issues, and being the caretaker for both of them was a hard educational experience. A few years later I was in the MFA program in playwriting, when an odd thought appeared, “What would that experience have been like if both my sisters were alive to go through it with me?” That was the seed kernel for my play, The Day After Mother’s Day. It became an exercise in bringing many the shadow thoughts and feelings of a caretaker to the surface and embodying them in my characters. Eventually, it took on a life of its own and became a play about potential homicide and redemption at a price. Set in a trailer four characters deal with end of life issues; Sally, the often demented mother of the family, Vicky, daughter of Sally, the worn out and alcoholic caretaker, Susan, Sally’s daughter who escaped the tragedy of the situation by moving to Texas, and creating her own tragedy, and David, the manipulative ne’re-do-well son of Sally who want to find a quick and lucrative way out of managing Sally’s care.
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The Day After Mother's Day

A Play in Two Acts

By David Skibbins
CAST OF CHARACTERS

DAVID, in his early forties, SUSAN and VICKY's brother

SUSAN, in her fifties, VICKY and DAVID's sister

VICKY, in her late forties, SUSAN and DAVID's sister

SALLY, in her eighties, their mother

SETTING

SALLY's Double-wide trailer. We see the kitchen/dining room and living room. In the living room is a small couch (that converts into a single bed) in front of the TV, a TV tray, a counter that sets off the kitchen (on it a half-gallon bottle of cheap whisky). By the counter are two bar stools. There is a very small dining table with two chairs. off Stage right there is a door to the tiny bathroom, and a door to the bedroom, Center stage is the door to the outside. That whole place is tacky and messy and hasn't been cleaned in far too long.

Time: The day after Mother's Day, last year
ACT ONE- SCENE ONE

Living room/Kitchen/Dining Room in a double-wide trailer. It is a mess. SALLY, in a soiled muumuu, is lost watching the TV and clutches her purse as she sits on the small couch. There is a stuffed animal toy cat on the couch with her. She completely ignores DAVID who is talking with someone on his cell phone.

DAVID

(Angry) Just chill! Don’t threaten me! (Beat, then backing way off) No, no easy, easy. Don’t take offense. I mean no disrespect. I know you want your money. (beat) Hey, hey, hey. You don’t need to scare me, I get it. I was going to get it to you yesterday, honest. But my Mother got sick and . . . Right... Tomorrow. The whole 200. No problem. And, ah thanks... (The guy on the other end hangs up on him. He looks at his phone.) Anatoli, my most excellent friend.

SALLY

(Calling out) Vicky!
DAVID

(Goes over to SALLY who ignores him) Mom, you always gave me great advice about stuff like cleanliness, godliness, and don’t turn your back on the ocean. How come you never told me to avoid private poker games with players of the Slavic descent? ... No answer, huh. Anyway, my dear sister has been gone, for frickin’ hours. She went out to do a little shopping. In Paris, I think. It’s just you and me, your beloved son... David?

(SALLY looks up at him with no recognition then goes back to watching TV.)

DAVID

(to SALLY)Right. Hey, it wasn’t my idea to be your baby-sitter, believe me. Let’s see what Vicky has that she might not need.

(David starts going through drawers and cupboards, everywhere, rifling through everything, looking for something to pawn.)

DAVID (cont.)

You don’t mind if I look around a little? I happen to be in need of a little spare change. Like 200 bucks for my best friend, Anatoli? You go on watching Judge Judy while I see what I can...
(Finds the liquor cabinet. Holds up a bottle.) (to SALLY) May I? Well, thank you, kindly. Don’t mind if I do. (Drinks out of the bottle and carries it with him).

(Keeps poking around, opening drawers, cupboards)
DAVID (CONT.)

Hey, Mom, where’s Vicky’s kitty-cat? Mugsey, right? Here kitty, kitty. Nope. No wonder this place doesn’t have that memorable feline smell. I guess Mugsey departed to that great sandbox in the sky.

(Finds a set of papers, a medical report, in a drawer. Starts to read as he talks)

DAVID (CONT.)

Hey. Well, well. Mommy, here’s your doctor’s report. (Reading it) Um hum. Coronary artery disease. (To Sally) Every day’s precious. But, and don’t take offense, if you do want to surprise the doctors and just pop off and leave me $200, it’s just fine by me, really. (Tosses the report down, checks watch, looks at outside door) Come on, Vicky! Two hours for Christ’s sake. (In a pitched voice imitating Vicky) “I want to make something nice for Susie. After all, she hasn’t been here since Dad died. (Checks watch) Damn it, Vicky. (In her voice) ‘Davy, can you take care of Mom for a half hour or so, so I can go over to the Safeway?’ Where the fuck is she, Mom? ? A Bar? A Church? Hawaii? I get it. You’re not going to spill the beans on her, are ya? Well, you sure know how to keep a secret. Knowing Vicky, it’s a motel.

SALLY

Vicky?

(DAVID heads over to SALLY)
DAVID

Yep, that’s who we’re talking about. Vicky’s on a sabbatical. Hey, what do you have in here?

(He reaches for SALLY’s purse but SALLY clutches to her tightly)

DAVID (CONT.)

OK, OK. No problem. You get more flies with honey than you do with vinegar. And even more flies with a little Jim Beam.

(He heads over to the counter and pours a big glass of whisky from the bottle on the counter, and brings it back to SALLY while talking)

DAVID (CONT.)

Hey Mom, I think we can make us a deal.

(He holds out the glass. SALLY reaches for it, but DAVID pulls it away)

DAVID (CONT.)

Ah Ah, not yet. Tradsies. You want the drinkie, I want the pursie.

(Brings the glass closer and takes the purse with the other hand. SALLY Takes the drink, and starts drinking and watching TV. David takes the purse to the table and starts going through it.)
DAVID (CONT.)

OK? Let’s see, Mom. What do we got here? A spare $200 you’d be glad to lend me? (Pulls out tissues, glasses, a photograph, lifesavers) Crap, crap, and more crap. Ah ha!(takes out a wallet and goes through it.) Oh, Vicky. She knows me too well. She cleaned you out, Mom. (Goes back in the purse) Gotta be something in here besides chump change. Hummm, a secret pocket. And (Pulls out savings deposit box key). Ah, Mom, this is so generous of you.

(Puts key in pocket. Starts putting everything back in purse and takes it to SALLY as he speaks.)

DAVID (CONT.)

Thank you so much. Tell you what. This will be our little secret, OK?

(Tosses SALLY the purse which she grabs and clutches. Then DAVID turns around, sees the audience, startled)

DAVID (CONT.)

Shit! Oh, Hi. Startled me there. Hello, audience. Didn’t think I saw you out there, did you? Hey, it’s OK. I don’t mind you watching me. You can keep our little secret, too. After all, you’re just spectators, voyeurs. Enjoy the show.

(Goes and gets a bar stool, brings it over and sits downstage as he talks to the audience)
DAVID (CONT.)

You know, I can almost hear you out there, muttering to yourself, “What an ungrateful son!” “What a monster!” “Thief.” Just chill. I'd like to school you about something. If you weren't sitting there, stuck in your seat, only watching this because your partner loves theater, you wouldn’t even know I exist. There’s a whole tribe of people living all up and down this coast that you don’t even see. We’re the invisible ones. We’re a little too proud to beg, and a little too stubborn to show up at the shelter in Ukiah. We’re the Scroungers, the Squatters. You call us transients. You know what that means? Evanescent, transitory, ephemeral. You see us as a wispy passing cloud. We live on someone else’s couches or in deserted buildings, which most of us try not to burn down. We don’t know if tomorrow will find us on the street, on the road, or on our way to jail. Most of us don't even know where dinner is coming from, although, thanks to my sister, tonight I have that problem taken care of.

You don’t see us and you don’t give a damn. You’re all nested, cozy and warm, in your nice, little predictable, burglar-proof cocoons. Hey, no judgement. If I had a nice 2 bedroom on the Ridge I wouldn’t notice those wanderers either. You don’t see us because we scare you. We scare you because you know you are not that far away from being one of us. I think you know, a couple of bad breaks and you’d be out here with me. That’s why you don’t want to see me. This key right here... this key is my inheritance, and I’m taking it. A little backstory here. Dad’s dead. Meth. Mom, well, see for yourself. Sister Vicky is mooching off Mom’s SSI and Disability. Vicky hasn't lifted a finger to work for three years, other than babysitting Mom. No rent, no job,
free booze, and an occasional boyfriend. Not a bad gig. My oldest sister Sue, who you will have
the displeasure of meeting soon, she’s the stay-at-home-in-the-Texas-mansion, marry-the-
millionaire, time-for-my-tennis-lesson, sister. She sure as shit doesn’t need any more money. I
don’t know what’s in this box, but maybe it’s enough to get Anatoli off my tail. I may be stuck
but at least I don’t have to spend the next hour and a half /watching this shit.

(Enter VICKY carrying a bag of groceries.)

VICKY

/Who are you talking too?

DAVID

(Startled)Jesus!

VICKY

I asked you not to use his name like that.

DAVID

Don’t worry. I talked to Christ and he gave me full permission to use his name any damn way I
please. Hey, I’m glad you could make it back. I was beginning to wonder if you’d jumped a bus
to Vegas.
VICKY

Don’t think it didn’t cross my mind. How’s Mom?

DAVID

An absolute kitten. Speaking of which, where’s Mugsey?

VICKY

I don’t know. She just wandered off last week and never came back.

DAVID

Probably, wanted cleaner pastures. This place is a pigsty. You know Susan is going to have a conniption fit when she sees what a dump you live in.

VICKY

Shut up. You’re living in an abandoned motel. Pot calling the kettle black. Now, can you help me with these groceries?

DAVID

Sorry, babe. I have overstayed my welcome.
VICKY

Darn it, David. Come on, just help me for once. The last time you “came to visit” it was to mooch off some of the COVID relief check we got.

DAVID

Hey, I can’t help it if I’m not quite a taxpayer. And thanks for the loan.

VICKY

You’re a scrounge, that’s what you are. When exactly are you going to pay us back?

DAVID

Very soon, I promise!

VICKY

Can’t you stay ten more minutes? I’m just trying to make tonight a special Mother’s Day dinner. /I could use...

DAVID

/It’s the day after Mother’s Day, but who’s counting?
VICKY

And you’re getting a free meal out of it. Is it too much to give me a hand putting a few groceries away and maybe helping me clean up a little. She’s your mother, too.

DAVID

Actually, yes, it is too much. And besides, I was adopted. Didn’t you know?

VICKY

You wish you were adopted. You’re just like Dad. Please. Now, come on!

DAVID

I’d love to. Really, I would, because you invite me over here so often for your delicious dinners. Let’s see, when was the last time? One, two, three years ago? Oh yes, Dad’s funeral, the last time Susie condescended to visit us. That fateful burnt Pot Roast night.

VICKY

Shut up! You never miss a chance to rub that in, do you? Besides I’m making you and Mom’s favorite dessert, espresso cupcakes.

DAVID

Actually, I prefer the ones you make with Irish Cream
VICKY

Tough. These are for Mom.

DAVID

Whatever. Look, I gotta split. Got a date with a banker. See you later on tonight. I’ll bring the Alka Seltzer.

(And out the door he goes, waving to the audience as he leaves)

VICKY

(To the closing door) Thanks a lot. As usual. (Goes over to SALLY and sees SALLY with a glass of whisky) How you doing, Mom... Damn that David. (Takes glass away while SALLY reaches for it) No, the Doctor said no more alcohol.

(VICKY finishes it herself as she goes back to groceries, and puts them away as she talks during this scene)

SALLY

Mugsey?

VICKY

(Goes over and hands her the stuffed animal cat)
No Mom, Mugsey left. But here is a kitty. Nice kitty. (Sally bats it away) Sorry! Hey, Susan’s coming up here tonight, Mom. She couldn’t make it here on Mother’s Day but we’re just a day off. I guess that really doesn’t matter to you. I told her you were not doing well, and if she wanted to see you she should hurry. God will forgive my little lie. Anyway, it worked.

SALLY

Lemonade?

VICKY

Sure, Mom. Just a sec. Anyway, we’re going to have a real nice dinner. No pot roast this time, I promise. Hey, guess what? I saw Betty at the store. She said Fred might be getting a divorce. You remember Fred? He used to come over here at night? He might be coming back over here soon. God, I hope so! It’s been a long time.

(While talking, VICKY takes SALLY’s empty glass and crosses to kitchen refrigerator and pours lemonade out of a big pitcher. On her way to deliver the lemonade VICKY notices the audience.

After delivering it VICKY goes center stage to talk to them.)

VICKY (cont.)

Oh. Hi there. I didn’t notice you before. Sorry. I know the place is a bit of a mess right now. But you are welcomed, anyway. Have you been here a while? I know we don’t know each other, but, if you don’t mind, I have a sort of odd question to ask you. Did you see me brother try to steal
anything? He usually walks off with something every time he visits. Which is why I have to make sure he doesn’t visit /very often.

SALLY

/Lemonade!

VICKY

Right Mom, I got it right here. (To audience) Just a sec. (Gives SALLY the glass, then goes back to the audience) And that’s why I put all our valuables in the trunk of the car this morning. I bet it was slim pickings for him. Serves him right. I hope he didn’t bad mouth me. Sure, I’ve had some problems. But that was all before. Now I have found my new life in Jesus Christ our Lord. You Christians out there know exactly what I mean. If there are any Christians out there. Well, I know that God gave Mom to me to learn how to serve, and I accept his will. Jesus is helping me cut back on my drinking. And who knows, maybe Jesus is bringing my ex-boyfriend, Fred, back into my life. That would be a miracle. Fred is a sweetie, and really good with Mom too. My Pastor told me I had to cut it off because he was married, and that I was committing a sin and all. So I did... eventually. It’s hard to be alone. I’ll tell you a secret. I got my brother and sister to come home for this dinner, so that they might get a taste of what I have to endure week-in and week-out. What they don’t know is that I’ve got a couple of things lined up, including drinks with Fred, and I’m just going to dump Mom on them for a while. Serves them right. See what it’s
like. Shush. Keep it between us. Well, it’s been really nice meeting you. I’ve got to get this dinner in the stove. I’ll see you later.

Blackout

END SCENE

ACT ONE- SCENE TWO

(SUSAN, sitting at the dining room table with a drink. Vicky moves around her setting the table.

The place is only marginally cleaner. SALLY is clutching purse, lost in the TV.)

SALLY

Vicky!

VICKY

Just a sec, Mom.

SUSAN

Oh Vicky, Vicky, Vicky. Look, she’s way beyond a little demented. She's as lost as last year's Easter egg. And that smock she’s wearing smells like piss. As a caretaker you really suck. You can’t even take care of your cat, let alone your mother.
VICKY

I don’t know what happened to Mugsey. I keep expecting her to show up at the door. I guess she adopted someone else. Besides, don’t talk about Mom that way. Have some respect. She’s sitting right here!

SUSAN

Mom’s lost in General Hospital. Where she should be sent off to. She can’t hear me, and even if she did, she’d forget it in a minute.

SALLY

Vicky!

VICKY

(to SALLY) Hold your horses, Mom. I’m talking with Sue. (To SUSAN) And I can too take care of her. I’ve been doing it for over two years.

SUSAN

You’ve been drinking her booze and living off her Social Security since I left. Look, you’re the one who guilt-tripped me into coming out here. You’re gonna have to listen to what I have to say. Mom looks like shit, this place is a rathole She hasn’t had a bath in God knows how long, and you stink too. Don't even try to pretend / that you are handling this mess.
VICKY

/ You have no idea how hard this is. It’s all on my shoulders. I had a great life before Dad died. I loved being a Vet Tech. I had my own apartment. Now, all I get is a lumpy couch to sleep on. During the COVID lockdown I nearly went crazy. Mother, it seems, doesn't like to wear a mask, and it was impossible to take her out anywhere. I couldn’t leave this place. It was like living with a fu... with a damn anchor around my neck. Hell -- heck yes! I do have an occasional drink, stuck with her 24-7. And I don’t smell. I’m sorry I invited you. Go back to your goddamn, fat oil man or banker or whatever he is and just leave us alone!

SUSAN

Tut tut, Vic. Using the Lord’s name in vain. What will Jesus think? And Hank is a financial analyst, not an oil man. And he has lost 45 pounds since you saw him. He looks good these days. Too damn good. (Beat) Believe me I would love to hop on a Southwest right now and get the hell out of this squalor. But I’m not going to leave Mom in this garbage dump.

VICKY

Oh yeah? And what are you going to do? Pack her up and take her off to San Antone? She’ll fit right in with your beautifully decorated mansionette. And I am sure Hank will welcome her with open arms, just like he welcomed me.
SUSAN

Maybe if you hadn’t puked all over his swimming pool deck and come on to his gardener, my husband might/ have shown you more...

VICKY

/You are so full of it. I had the flu that weekend. And I was just being nice to that guy. The two of you treat him like your own Hispanic slave.

SUSAN

Mother Teresa, I’d know you anywhere. (Beat, smiles) Too bad you missed out on Carlos.

VICKY

Susan! You didn’t!

SUSAN

Many times. He turned out to be a sweet, sweet man.

VICKY

(Not really meaning it) You are so bad! Shame on you. What if Hank found out?
SUSAN

Hank’s been doing the CEO’s wife for years. Don’t worry about Hank. One text to his CEO and he’s out of a job. But look, bringing Mother home is a non-starter. We use our home for business and for necessary entertaining, and we cannot have her underfoot. Sorry, but we’re not running a Board and Care Home. We have to make a /living.

SALLY

/Vicky!

VICKY

(To SALLY) Two minutes, Mom, please! (To SUSAN) A living? A very nice living, too. While I’m stuck / in this trailer trash

SUSAN

/If you could only hold down a job you could make a nice living too. (Break) Hold it. Here we go again. Seems like we argue every time we talk. Let’s stop this. We’re here to deal with Mom. I think we need to bring the State / in to help take care of...

VICKY

/Don’t tell me, Miss Moneypenny that you can’t afford /to take care of...
/SUSAN

/Enough! No more fighting. Really, Vicky. Stop. Truce. And my family sure as shit doesn’t have an additional $15,000 a month to throw at this, in spite of what stories you make up. You think I’m living in the lap of luxury down there. Well think again. We’re in a recession right now, and besides Hank and I ... forget it, you wouldn’t /understand.

/SALLY

/Vicky!

/VICKY

(to SUSAN) What I understand is that you, at least, have a someone to curl up with at night. I’m alone. I have nothing but Mom and a stuffed cat toy to keep me company.

/SUSAN

What about that guy you were seeing?

/VICKY

Fred? Married. Anyway, I’m trapped. I can’t date. Not with Mom here. Kind of a romantic buzz kill. So what is it you want? You just want to dump her on the state? Where does that leave me?
SALLY

Vicky?

VICKY

Mom. What do you want?

SALLY

(Beat) Lemonade.

(VICKY takes SALLY’s empty glass and crosses to kitchen refrigerator and pours lemonade out of a big pitcher for SALLY and a splash of whisky out of the half gallon bottle on the counter into a glass for herself, all while SUSAN is talking.)

SUSAN

Look, if you can prove Mom has no means of support, Social Security has to take care of her. Get her to sign a Power of Attorney in your name. Transfer the title to this dump and then put in the paperwork proving that she is indigent, except for SSI. Vic, if you don’t do something you are going to be stuck with her until / she dies...

SALLY

/ Vicky
(VICKY brings the glass to SALLY who puts down her purse and takes the glass without looking away from the TV)

VICKY

Here ya’ go, Mom. (Beat while SALLY ignores her.) (To SALLY as she walks back to her own drink) You’re welcome, Mom.

(Enter David, in a great mood, carrying a paper bag, which he sets on the kitchen counter as he talks.)

DAVID

Ah, the whole fam damnly. Susan, you deigned to make it up from the Alamo. Long time no see.

SUSAN

Much to your regret, I’m sure, Davy. What brings you here, dearest brother of mine? There’s nothing in this dump left to steal.

DAVID

It’s great seeing you, too, Sis. I’m here to celebrate Mother- Husk Day. Hi, Vic. How’s Mumsy Darling doing?
VICKY

Ask her yourself.

(DAVID goes over and squats down next to SALLY)

DAVID

Hello there, Mother Dear. Good to see you again. How are you doing?

SALLY

Who are you?

DAVID

(Get up) Well, that answers that question. (Walks over to SUSAN) Perfect timing that Vicky brought us all together tonight. I have some good news for us all. This morning I happened to run across a savings deposit box key /and I thought that...

VICKY

/You little thief.

DAVID

Hey, you left me with her, while you disappeared for three hours.
VICKY

I deserve some kind of break. I’m with/ her 24-7...

DAVID

/Yeah yeah, we all know, Florence Nightingale, how heavy /your burden...

VICKY

/Shut up, you /sneaky...

SUSAN

/Both of you shut up. So, Davy, after you cleaned out the deposit box of any valuables and pawned them, what else did you find?

DAVID

Susan, always the optimist. Mummy and Dads cleaned it out years ago. Remember what Daddy always said, “We’ll spend our last cent as we take our last breath.” At least he was wildly successful at that. All that was left was some papers, damn it. I needed some cash.

SUSAN

I’m sure, based on your arrest record, that we can absolutely trust you about that. So what did you find?
DAVID

Hey, those were misdemeanors, never a felony. Anyway, thanks to me, it appears our parents forgot to cash in on a life insurance policy on our beloved mother.

VICKY

How much?

DAVID

Seventy-five grand. And her will, also in the box, splits everything three ways. So that’s twenty-five grand apiece, plus whatever we can get for the trailer.

VICKY

Wait a minute. I get the mobile home. After all that I’ve done...

DAVID

This heap can’t be worth more than ten grand. You can buy our share in it and have money left over for plenty of cigarettes and Jack Daniels.
VICKY

Fu...(ck, catches herself)...to Hell with both of you. You both left. And you left me with her. With no support. Don’t even think that you... I should get the whole seventy-five grand for / all that I’ve...

SUSAN

/Enough! Both of you are jackals fighting over road kill. Knock it off.

DAVID

Sorry, Your Highness, but some of us aren't hooked up with a skanky-rich bangster. I know twenty-five grand is shopping money for you.

SUSAN

You know nothing about my life. Both of you, stop this. Mom is still alive. So can we stop picking over her bones?

VICKY

Don’t even pretend to be Mom’s champion now. Where were you /all these years...
SUSAN

/You’re a saint, Vicky. We all know that. That is why Jesus is going to have you sit on his lap when you go to heaven.

VICKY

(Checks her watch) You can insult me all you want, but you will not insult my faith or my savior. You two are both a big pain in my behind. So dam...so darn quick to judge me. Well, you just walk a hour or so in my shoes, and see how easy it is for you. Right now. I’m going out. The meatloaf is in the oven. One hour at 350. You two can take care of Mom for a while. See how it feels. It’s about time! (Heads for the door)

DAVID

Going out to call on your old lover?

VICKY

You know what? I just might.

(She charges out the door before they can object. Beat.)

SALLY

Vicky?
DAVID

Shit. I did my share today. You deal with it.

SUSAN

(Goes over to SALLY) Hi, Mom. It’s Susan. What do you want?

SALLY

(SALLY grabs her purse) Vicky?

SUSAN

No, Mom. Susan. Remember me? Your daughter? (Beat) What do you need?

DAVID

Hope it’s not her plumbing. I’m not wiping her ass.

SUSAN

(To DAVID) Shut up. (To SALLY) Mom, what do you need?

SALLY

Vicky? Lemonade.
SUSAN

You’ve got some right here.

(Hands SALLY her half full glass of lemonade that SALLY forgot that she had)

SUSAN (CONT.)

Here you go.

(SALLY starts drinking and goes back to watching TV)

DAVID

That was touching.

SUSAN

(Get up) Great. Next time you deal with her. And I hope it’s a bathroom run.

DAVID

Easy now. I don’t do toilet. So Sis, let’s talk about that insurance money.

SUSAN

I told you...
DAVID

No, I’m sorry. I was rude. Truce. I apologize. I know you are no billionaire. In fact, I’m betting right now, with the market and everything, things are probably pretty tight for you. How is your little girl doing? Wait, not so little. She must almost be ready for college.

SUSAN

Her name is Megan. I know you have forgotten that. And yes, she got into Rice University.

DAVID

Rice. That is pricey. I’m betting that twenty-five grand wouldn’t hurt right now. And hey, I’m fine with Vicky keeping this dump. I was just pulling her chain.

SUSAN

So generous of you. So cut the crap Davy and tell me how much you stole from that safety deposit box.

DAVID

OK, OK. I had an urgent debt that needed paying off. Life threateningly urgent. And it ain’t all paid off yet. Really, all I could get for that crummy jewelry was fifty bucks.
SUSAN

Try again.

DAVID

OK. A hundred bucks. But I spent a little on an investment for all of us. Look, this Mom thing is a no-win situation for everyone. Seriously. Vic is drinking herself into the grave with all this caretaking. Mom is in La-La-Land and is also in damn good health. She doesn’t have Alzheimer’s, you know. She can go on like this for another decade or so. Both of us are strapped for cash. Maybe it is time to help Mom on her journey onwards.

SUSAN

You're suggesting that we kill our mother.

DAVID

No, not exactly. That’s way too harsh. Look, I’m just saying, this isn’t as bad as you paint it. She’s not really our mother any more. Did she recognize you? (Beat) Exactly. This is a shell of our mother. Mom is long gone. This vegetable is just sitting there sucking our life blood away. If you care anything about your sister / you would at least...
SUSAN

/ Don’t even try that one. You made our parent’s life a living hell, and then disappeared for two years, leaving Mom and Dad a mess. I took care of everyone. And when you did get out of rehab, you were no prodigal son!

DAVID

Like I said, I’m not perfect. You’re not perfect. That’s not the point. All I’m saying is that I don’t think you’re ready to have our loving mother move to Texas anytime soon.

SUSAN

(Looks over at SALLY) I was talking with Vicky about having the State take care of her.

DAVID

Dream on. I don’t know about Texas, but in California, if there are siblings with money around, there is no way the State is going to take over. Me, I am so broke that I’m in the clear. Same with Vic. But you, dear Susan, you’re going to get saddled with her, no question about it. It’s called the filial responsibility law, look it up.

SUSAN

I didn’t know about that.
DAVID

Sue, Mom will outlive Vicky. Almost half of caregivers die before the ones they’re taking care of. And I’ve seen Vicky weaving around this town in her beater-mobile, no Mom in the car, and in no sober shape to be driving. You might not have to wait until her liver takes her out. If she got arrested, some Social Worker is going to walk in here, and Mom will be on the next flight to San Antonio.

SUSAN

You’re crazy if you think I would have anything to do with harming her. I know Mom liked the two of you a lot more than me, but I’m not going to be her murderer.

DAVID

I know. I know. It’s a big decision to make. And I’m not pushing it or anything. I just think it is an option that needs to be put on the table. And I’m not about to do this on my own. I need you behind me. You’ve been our real Mom since we were kids, and I need your support on this. Not that any of us have to make any decisions right now. But I just want to add one thing. I’m not talking about causing Mom any pain.

(Takes a small brown medicine bottle out of his pocket and puts it on the counter in the kitchen, then steps away from it as he talks)
DAVID (CONT.)

Here is what I bought with the extra cash from the Safe Deposit box. I have a friend of a friend of a friend who is a vet. It is Nembutal, enough to put down a horse. I mean, it’s just enough to have Mom gently fall asleep and then just/ not wake up.

SUSAN

/I cannot believe you did that! That’s horrible. I don’t want...

DAVID

Slow down. No one is pouring her a cocktail right now. It’s just an option. All I’m saying is that you’re on the brink of having Mom sitting in your living room. I’m just asking that you think about it, OK?

SUSAN

I’m not going to stay with you one more minute. You are a monster. I’m going back to my motel. You’re on your own. (Starts for the door)

DAVID

No, no, don’t. Please. I’ve had enough baby-sitting Mom for one day. Stay. Please.
SUSAN

I promised to call my daughter now.

DAVID

You can do it here.

SUSAN

/Goodbye! Besides, service is good for your soul. And your soul needs all the help it can get.

DAVID

I served already! You sound like Vicky. Anyway, Just think about what I said. OK?

SUSAN

(As she is leaving) OK, I’ll think about it. And by the way, from the smell of it, Mom needs to be changed.

DAVID

Sue!!!

Blackout

END SCENE
ACT ONE- SCENE THREE- Later that day

(The light is softer as we head towards evening. SALLY is still in front of the TV, in a cleaner muumuu, and DAVID is squatting down talking to her.)

DAVID

(To SALLY) (singing) Happy Day After Mother’s Day to you, (speaking) you frickin’ rutabaga. Just keep ignoring me. My mother shuffled off this mortal coil months after Dad died, and left us with you, a healthy, mindless, animated corpse. I’d finish this job right now, if I could get away with it. But I need the girls in it too. Sue will come around. Look, Zombie-Mom, (Vicky Enters in a good mood) I’m not going to let you be an albatross around our necks. You are not going /to drag us ...

VICKY

/What’s that all about?

DAVID

(Startled) / Jesus, Vic. Scare me to...! Oh, sorry about that ‘Jesus’
VICKY

Where’s Sue?

DAVID

She fled back to her motel room.

VICKY

And how are you and Mom getting along?

DAVID

Terrific. And Judge Judy really slammed it to that unscrupulous Auto Repair service. Glad I was around to witness that.

(VICKY notices the small bottle of Nembutal on the counter)

VICKY

What the heck is this?

DAVID

That’s the beginning of a long conversation. One better entered into with a drink in hand.
It’s five o’clock somewhere. (takes her wrist and checks her watch) Oh, look. It’s five o’clock in Gualala. What would you like? Jack?

(DAVID pulls an unopened bottle of Jack Daniels from the bag he brought in)

VICKY

No. Um, sure... OK, thanks.

(As DAVID is talking he opens the bottle and pours them both a drink, with VICKY’s drink larger, and they both sit at the table.)

DAVID

Actually, Sue went off to think over a plan I was discussing with her, but I really wanted to talk it over with you, first, because you are a faith-based person. Here you go, bottoms up.

(Both take a drink)

VICKY

What do you want? You never bring over liquor unless you want something. Spill it. And not the liquor.
DAVID

Gee, thanks. Let me start by apologizing for giving you shit about this trailer. Of course, it’s yours. I even think Sue and I should chip in a couple of grand from the inheritance to fix it up for you. You deserve it, for everything you’ve done for Mom. When I was snooping around-- and I do apologize for snooping around-- anyway I found that latest report from her doctor, too. Damn, she is in pretty good health for a woman who just sits around watching TV all day.

VICKY

She doesn’t just sit around. I take her out sometimes. It’s hard, but I try to give her some exercise.

DAVID

I’m sure you do, and I’m sure it is hard. She is a stubborn old woman, no doubt. Would you like a ‘freshen up’ on that drink?

(As she talks David goes and brings the whisky bottle over to the table and pours her some more. He keeps her glass full throughout the conversation)

VICKY

So cut the bull and tell me about this plan that you and Sue have.
DAVID

We both think that this current arrangement with Mom is really way too stressful and demanding on you. It’s not fair. And yet neither of us can take Mom right now. I think Susie said it best when she said, “This isn’t really Mom any more.”

VICKY

Every so often her eyes lose that glaze, and she says a word or two that makes sense. But it’s been a while since that happened.

DAVID

Exactly. So, I don’t really go to church or anything, but I can’t imagine a God who wants to make your life so miserable when all you wanted to do was help out. That bottle over there...

VICKY

Stop. Right. There. (Vicky gets up and walks over to bottle.) I thought it looked familiar. This is from the Vet I used to work for. (Looks closer) Phenobarb... this is what we use to put down.. I don’t want to hear this. I don’t know if you have looked at the Ten Commandments lately but they haven’t been revised. Number Five is still “Thou Shalt Not Kill.”
DAVID

I know, I know. But really, I don’t know if it’s murder if there isn’t anyone left inside that shell. But I’m not sure. That’s why I wanted to talk it over with you. I mean, that commandment stuff was laid down before we ever had to deal with AIDS, or extended life spans, or dementia or your little affair with Fred...

VICKY

Shut up about that!

DAVID

Sorry, that wasn’t fair. It’s just that the adultery thing is a sin, too.

VICKY

Leave it.

DAVID

Hey, I’m a fuck up too. An arch-sinner. A lot worse than you. But I do care about you. And I think we need to figure out how those Commandments can be applied right here, right now, at a time when things are just a lot more grey.
VICKY

I don’t think there is anything grey about murder. It seems pretty black and white to me.

DAVID

No, I know, But in these days of physician-assisted-suicide, medical powers of attorney, and Death with Dignity, I think things have gotten a little more muddled.

VICKY

/A sin is a sin.

DAVID

Absolutely, But, if Mom was in a coma, I know she left instructions not to prolong her life. We had long talks about that after Dad died. But Vicky, that thing over there is just in a couch coma. She is taking down your life, and I think that’s the last thing Mom would want. This medication is just a way for her to “go gentle into that good night.”

VICKY

A sin is a sin.
DAVID

Look, this is a really big decision, and not one we have to make right now. I put the meatloaf in about a half an hour ago. Let’s just enjoy tonight’s dinner and all just sleep on it, and maybe tomorrow we can see how we all feel. I need to head out. But all I am asking for now is that you just think about what I’m saying, OK? Just think about it.

VICKY

You are kind of evil.

DAVID

I know. But I may be the only person in this family that is looking out for you, and not just using you, Vicky. Think about that. I gotta go. See you later, OK?

VICKY

OK.

(DAVID exits)

Blackout

END SCENE
ACT ONE- SCENE FOUR. Late afternoon.

(SALLY on the couch, VICKY in the Kitchen, cooking. SUSAN on one of the bar stools, with a drink.)

**VICKY**

David was saying...

**SUSAN**

Stop right there. I don’t want to hear another word about that low-life brother of ours. He’s done enough to ruin this trip already. Let’s declare this a David-free zone.

**VICKY**

Well, I love that idea. The meatloaf will be done in about 15 minutes and I’ve got to get these cupcakes mixed and in the oven. They need to cool before I frost them. I’m baking Mom’s favorites.

**SUSAN**

We do have to talk about Mom’s care.
VICKY

I’m taking care of Mom just fine. (Reading recipe) Now where did I put the baking powder. It’s been a long time since I baked anything. It’s got to be around here somewhere.

SUSAN

This is more important than your cupcakes.

VICKY

Ah, here it is.. OK that’s the dry ingredients. Now for wet. Two eggs. Didn’t you have some plan about the State?

SUSAN

Yes. That’s out. Our brother, he who shall not be named, told me that plan won’t work. Filial something-or-other.

VICKY

Good. I didn’t like that idea anyway. Vanilla. Think I should add some almond extract, too? She isn’t doing so bad.

SUSAN

The last time I was here, she knew my name!
VICKY

Yes, and that was three years ago. (Looking at recipe) Fold in beat gently. Fold in? What does that mean? Oh, you don’t cook, do you?

SUSAN

I cook! What, do you think I’m Scarlet O’Hara?

VICKY

I should have read this recipe before I went shopping. Brown sugar? Who has brown sugar? Look, sometimes Mom’s fine. I mean, like she’s in there somewhere. She just can’t get out.

SUSAN

She hasn’t moved off that couch since I came in this room. Is there some sort of special Medicare fund that pays for nursing care?

VICKY

Sour cream? hum, I have some pretty old milk. That should do. What did you say?

SUSAN

I think we need to find another place for Mom.
VICKY

God damn it Sue, you’re not the boss anymore. I’m not a little girl you can shove around like you did for fifteen years.

SUSAN

Then stop acting /like a little girl and...

VICKY

/Stop bossing me around. I mean it. Your reign as queen of this family is over, as of right now. (Walking over to SUSAN with the cookbook) Just shut up and read me this recipe. (Hands SUSAN the book)

SUSAN

(Stand off. Long beat. Sigh. Then...) “Mix together the dry ingredients in a large bowl.”

Blackout

END SCENE
ACT ONE- SCENE FIVE- That evening

(Optional: The smell of cupcakes baking spreads out into the audience. It can be done with Vanilla flavoring in boiling water.) SALLY is still in front of the TV, eating a plate of food from the TV tray while she watches the screen. Kitchen is now a bigger mess, dirty pots and pans all over. VICKY is sitting beside SALLY, also eating from the plate on her lap. DAVID and SUSAN are eating at the small dining room table. VICKY gets up and heads for the kitchen)

VICKY

And now, for the (Bad French accent) piece de la resistance, dessert.

SUSAN

Ooh la la. (Good french accent) ‘Piece de la Resistance’. How cosmopolitan.

VICKY

You’re not the only one who took French in high school.

SUSAN

You flunked out of that class didn’t you?

DAVID

Wow. Dessert. Who has room? What could top that dry meatloaf?
VICKY

Shut up, freeloader. (She brings them out, serves SALLY as she talks.) Mom’s favorite cupcakes with espresso buttercream frosting!

DAVID

Do they have a filling of Jack Daniels?

SUSAN

David!

DAVID

Well, that’s what would make them Mom’s favorite.

SUSAN

You are such a jerk!

VICKY

OK, Shut up both of you and just eat your cupcake.

(SALLY drops her plate off her lap and onto the floor)
SALLY

Vicky!

VICKY

Shit. (Gets up and goes over to clean it up during SUSAN’s monologue. SUSAN comes
downstage to chat with the audience.)

SUSAN

Hi. While we've got a minute, I wanted to introduce myself. I thought it might be important that
you get to see things from my side. Some of you will get it. I'm talking to all those first-borns out
there. The rest of you have no idea how hard it was for us. Your parents were tired by the time
they got around to raising you, and you got away with murder. We had to do it right. And not
only that, but then we had to take care of you annoying little twerps who came after us. I've been
holding this family together since I was about seven. Mom had her not-so-little drinking
problem. Dad was a logger. Sometimes he dropped in at home to sleep. After high school, us
kids grew up and fled our separate ways, well except for Vicky who clung on to Mom like a
barnacle. As you can see, my sibs haven't done very well at growing up. I haven't seen much of
them. Nothing really, since Dad died. Me, I've ducked the poverty curse. I created a great life for
myself far away from this whole cesspool, with a lovely home and my beautiful and brilliant
daughter, Megan. I don’t want to get pulled back into their crap. Sometimes you need to draw
clear boundaries, just to survive. You can understand that, right? I can see that some of you out there know exactly what I mean.

(She walks back to the table, sits down, begins eating her cupcake, and then to VICKY)

SUSAN

This is pretty good, Sis.

DAVID

“Pretty good.” Yep, damned with faint praise.

SUSAN

(Same time as VICKY) Shut up.

VICKY

(same time as SUSAN) Shut up.

DAVID

So, are we going to talk about our plan?

SUSAN

Not “our” plan, brother dearest. Your homicidal plan.
VICKY

(To SUSAN) I thought you and--

SUSAN

Are you kidding? It’s a crazy idea. And besides what happens when they do an autopsy and find out we poisoned her?

DAVID

Glad you’ve been doing some thinking about it. Look, she is what, 83, and has coronary artery disease. And a DNR. No coroner is going to give a shit about this death. The county coroner is already massively backed up with cases.

SUSAN

And you know that because...

DAVID

Googled it. Vicky shows up in tears and says, “She got all confused, started mumbling and then she just collapsed.” Slam dunk.

VICKY

Just a second. I never said...
DAVID

Hypothetical, that’s all. Just talking hypothetically.

SUSAN

Look, I don’t even know why I am in this conversation. I’m flying back to Texas tomorrow. You two do whatever you decide. I am out of it.

DAVID

Come on, Sue. I would never do something like this on my own. We’re all involved. You’re the oldest. We all look up to you...

VICKY

I don’t.

DAVID

(To VICKY) Shut up. (To SUSAN) We all look up to you for the big choices. Putting Dad in that Assisted Living Facility, the funeral. I would never leave you out.

SUSAN

Thanks a lot. I don’t want to be a part of this.
DAVID

But could you live with it if something like this did happen, right? That’s all I want to know.

VICKY

Stop it, David. Sure, I am sick of taking care of Mom. Sure I wish one of you would pick up the slack. There’s nothing I wish more than to just get in my car and drive off in any random direction and see what I could find. I think about that every time I walk out that door. But this is murder! I’m not going to poison my mother.

DAVID

No, I understand that. I would never ask you to do something like that. I would take that one on myself.

VICKY

You are just creepy.

DAVID

I know we are all ambivalent about this. And who could blame us. It is a really big decision, and one that shouldn’t be taken on lightly. I think we all just need to think on this. Let’s just table it for now, and sleep on it. Consider all the possibilities: On the down side, Mom getting sent to
Texas. On the up side, Vicky getting her old job back as a Vet Tech. There are a lot of things to factor in. All I am asking is for you both not to close your mind to any option right now, OK?

VICKY

Whatever.

Blackout.

END OF SCENE

ACT ONE- SCENE SIX- Later that evening.

(SALLY is still in front of the TV. VICKY is passed out beside her. SALLY stands up and does a little dance to shake off tension. Then she walks down stage center)

SALLY

(To the audience) Oh, whew. It's a relief to get out of that body. If you live long enough, you’re going to find out how much aging really sucks. Everything leaks, out of so many unacceptable orifices. My memory leaks. It’s so shot full of holes. I can't say what I think, and a lot of the time I can't even think what I think. Dementia. “There’s the respect that makes calamity of so long a
life.” OK! I can still quote a little Shakespeare. Time for some introductions: I’m Sally's soul. Yes, you do have a soul, so you can stop chewing away on that thorny problem. Of course, you have a soul. Where do you think dreams come from? So do intuitions, hunches, and crazy meaningful coincidences. A lot more besides, but that’s on a need-to-know basis... Well, all that good stuff comes from your soul when you are young and healthy. Not so much so when you are an antique rubbish heap of a person. When I go back into Sally's body all that magic just dissolves away, and I’m back to staring at the TV screen. But when I dream... ah, when I dream, I am the powerful, literate, thoughtful person that I was before dementia. Oh, and every so often, during the day, for a few seconds or so, I can break through, and I'm back in my body with all my memories intact. I can even say a few words. But those moments are coming less and less often. Most of the time I can't do much more than be a witness to my slow and steady decay. I’m still alive, so there must still be work to be done. I’m sure it has to do with my children, Boy, they’ve been a handful, those kids. Sue, Miss Controlling. Trying to run the household all the time. I wasn’t the best Mom. I admit, sometimes I needed her help. Vicky, the lost one. And Davie, my dear little Davie. My late-in-life surprise. An incorrigible criminal, but so funny and charming. I was way too soft with him. I loved those little ones. Before they grew up. Now, my children all want to get rid of me, and I can't really blame them. The only problem is that they are moving into the planning phase. I would gladly die to make their lives a little better. But they would never escape the guilt of killing me. I need to save them before they do something they will really regret. Oh, oh. My body needs to go to the bathroom. You might need a break, too. We'll talk later.
(SALLY gets back into her chair, grabs her purse and crumples up)

SALLY

Vicky!

Blackout

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

ACT TWO- SCENE ONE- Still later that evening

(VICKY is asleep on the pull-out bed/couch. SALLY opens the bedroom door and stretches then she notices the audience and comes down center)

SALLY

I hope you enjoyed your break. I love this time of night. My moldy brain is shut down and I get to pop out and wander around a little. Aging is a lot tougher than dying. And I’m talking about OLD Aging. Not Late Middle Aging. Not ‘Oh look, I have a new wrinkle’ aging. Not ‘Why can’t I lose these ten pounds?’ aging. I mean stumbling, aching, confusion, eyes, ears and bladder aging. Every morning of our life when we wake up, fate deals us a new hand. But the hands you get dealt in old age, well I never expected to be playing those cards. ‘How can I sign my name with this arthritis?’ Will I need my Depends today?’ ‘What happened to my life?’ A few years ago, I’d get dealt an occasional good hand, a good day, and I’d go through that day almost normal. I didn’t realize at the time that those days were only a short streak of good luck. Now, here I am, entombed inside a crumbling fortress, looking around frantically saying, “Hold on! I still have work to do!” Eventually, maybe tomorrow, the game will be over. Thank God. My body may thrash around a bit grasping
for the next breath, but inside I will know that all that suffering, worry, fear, anger, shame, weariness, grief, loneliness, (singing) “All my trials, Lord, soon be over.” Here is a tip you all you out there, straight from the soul’s mouth. We stay alive for as long as we have work to do. I’m still working even though I need help taking a piss. Just by being the confused, crotchety, selfish jerk that I am, I do work for other people. They get to discover those parts of themselves they never knew existed. Dark parts. Light parts. My work is all about my kids, an ungrateful lot if ever there was one, but each one, worthy of redemption. If they can find it. Looks like it’s going to be a close race between redemption and homicide. I’m trying to figure out how I can help. Let’s see if I can slip into one of Vicky’s dreams and give her a little helpful nudge. Give us a minute to switch the scene around a little. And wish me luck.

(SALLY goes back to her bedroom and closes the door.)

Blackout

END SCENE

ACT TWO- SCENE TWO- In Vicky’s dream.

(The pull-out bed/couch is now back to a couch. VICKY is opening a can of cat food in the kitchen and spooning it into a cat dish. There is a much larger, dream-like, brown bottle of medicine, like the one DAVID brought, and on the same spot on the kitchen counter. The lighting is odd- maybe purplish dream lighting. Maybe some soft background music.)
VICKY

(Puts bowl down) Here kitty, kitty. Mugsey, come on, breakfast time. Kitty kitty? Mom, is Mugsey in there with you?

SALLY

(Vibrant voice from behind the bedroom door) Yes, but she’s just lying on the bed. I guess she doesn’t want breakfast today.

VICKY

Come on, baby. It’s your favorite. Come eat.

(SALLY comes out of the bathroom dressed for a yoga class, sweats, headband, carrying rolled up yoga mat. She stretches.)

SALLY

Vic, you worry too much about that cat. She’s happy where she is. Just leave her bowl on the floor. She’ll eat it when she feels like it.

VICKY

No, I don’t think so. She just sits around watching the TV all day. Do you think I should take her to the vet?
SALLY

Well, you can’t take her in this morning. I need the car. I have a Yoga class and then I have some errands.

VICKY

But Mom, if she’s sick...

SALLY

She looked OK to me. She’s just old. Have you thought about putting her down? (Picks up big medicine bottle) Why don’t you give her some of this?

VICKY

(Grabs it away from SALLY and puts back on counter) Mom! No! Not that! How could you? I love Mugsey. I thought you did too. Look, I’ll set up a vet appointment for this afternoon.

SALLY

OK, Sweetie. I trust you to do what needs to be done. You’re a good girl, Vicky. You take very good care of that cat, even though I know she can be a pest sometimes, what with dead moles, and hair balls. She doesn’t show it very often, but I think somewhere in her little feral cat heart, she loves you and thanks you for all that you do for her. Mugsey is lucky to have you as her owner. I’ll see you around 1:00. You can have the car then. (Leaves)
OK, Mom. Thanks. (Going into the bedroom) Mugsey, sweetie. How are you feeling? (Sound of a loud “Meow”)

Blackout.

END OF SCENE

ACT TWO- SCENE THREE

(The couch is pulled out to a bed. The original-sized medicine bottle is back on the counter. VICKY is waking up on the couch, disturbed from the last evenings dream. She is alone. Gets up, stretches similar to the way SALLY stretched, and then kneels down at edge of couch and starts to pray.)

VICKY

Good morning, Jesus. Thank you for this new day. (Sighs) Yesterday was really confusing for me. My family kind of drives me crazy, as you know. I really don’t know what your will is for me and for Mom is right now. My minister says you sometimes speak to us in dreams. Well, if that was you, I think I know what you were trying to tell me. But last Sunday he preached that you sometimes come to us in the form of other people. And sometimes they are not at all the
people you would ever expect. Is Dave trying to help me? Is he trying to .... Jesus, I know I
should love and honor my parents, but I am so sick of bathing her, dressing her, feeding her, and
wiping her butt. Sorry. I really think she’s lived long enough. She’s not happy. I sure as heck am
not happy. Don’t I get to be happy? (Rote) In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy
Ghost, Amen. OK. (Gets up)

Blackout.

END OF SCENE

ACT TWO- SCENE FOUR Later in the morning of the next day.

(SALLY, in a muumuu and clutching her purse, watches TV. DAVID is drinking coffee at the
table. He has a leather messenger bag by the side of his chair. VICKY is straightening up the

trailer.)

DAVID

Oh come on, Vicky! It’s just a dream. They’re just mental bits of garbage that we throw out
every night so that we are free to be rational the next day.

VICKY

It’s not nonsense.
DAVID

OK, fine. If you’re going to be that way, then let’s just look at that dream. Mom picked up the Phenobarbital. Maybe she was trying to give you a message. Maybe she was begging you to be a good Vet and put her down.

VICKY

That wasn’t what the dream was about at all. You’re just trying to twist it around so that I’ll do what you want me to do.

DAVID

This isn’t just for me. It really is for you. Vic, your life is stalled. This is going to be your last chance. And look, I can help out. Your old Vet, the guy who sold me that bottle, he’s looking for a new tech. You could get your old job back. If you weren't Mom’s indentured servant.

VICKY

Stop it. What’s the matter with you? It’s a mortal sin.

DAVID

Now, don’t get all holy righteous on me. Easy, easy, don’t take offense. I know you are a good Christian. Hey, and you know what? You’re right. You really busted me. This isn’t just all for
you. I need your help. Vicky, I’m desperate. I made a really bad bet with a really bad man with a
Russian accent. He may kill me if I don’t find a way to pay him off.

VICKY

I knew there was something like that going on.

DAVID

Sis, we help each other out. We have each other’s backs. We always have. You and me against
the world. Against Dad, and sometimes against Susie too. And then when Dad died, Sue left us
to have to deal with Mom all by ourselves--

VICKY

/You didn’t deal/ with..

DAVID

/We never could count on our parents. It’s always been you and me. So here we are again. On
our own.

VICKY

I’m sorry I can’t help. Really, Dave. And I don’t agree that Mom is totally gone. I think Mom is
in there somewhere /and I can’t...
DAVID

/You’re her slave. ‘Vicky, Lemonade' And then she ignores you. She just takes and takes and takes.

VICKY

I think that too, sometimes. And I hate her sometimes. But in that dream...

DAVID

Stop it. Dreams aren't real. Look around. This is real, changing her wet Depends is real, cleaning up her mess is real, hauling her carcass around is real. She doesn't love you, she barely knows that you exist. Hell, your cat loved you more than your mother does, and she took off. Mom is gone, too. You have to face it and move on. Look, let me make a deal with you. All I want is $200 to pay off that debt. (Going over to the table, begins writing as he talks) You get the rest on my share of Mom’s inheritance. Just wait a second before you answer. I’m not trying to trick you. I’ll write it all down and sign it. (Sniffs) Oh and by the way, you better check in on Mom. I think she just had an accident.

(The following scene goes on as VICKY goes to SALLY, takes her to the bathroom, takes care of SALLY’s business, and then comes back with her and seats SALLY back on the couch.)
VICKY

This is what I’m talking about. (Imitating DAVID) ‘Vicky go check in on Mom.’ That’s what I do. Check on Mom. 24-7! Vicky cleans the floor when Mom dumps her dinner on it. Vicky takes care of Mom’s urine and Mom’s bowel movements while her brother goes out gambling with some Russian mobster. Vicky cleans, and shops, and sleeps alone at night while her sister has an affair with her pool boy...

DAVID

(Looking up from what he has been writing) Sue what?

VICKY

Shut up. None of your business. All of you are out there living a free life while I am the only one who gives enough of a shit to take care of our mother. And here is something you really will never understand because you are such a selfish prick. It is a royal pain doing all this caretaking but it makes me feel good too. Just serving another person instead of my own selfish needs. Sometimes that can feel warm inside. I matter, I really matter to another person who needs me. And that is something you will never have.

(DAVID comes back over to VICKY with the paper he has been working on, having not heard a word she just said.)
DAVID

OK, now this makes perfect sense. Let me just run /through it with you...

VICKY

/Stop. Please. I know. I’m not as clever as you. I should jump at the chance to be free. But I’m not like you. Even though what you say makes sense, I just can’t do it. I won’t do it. Maybe that dream I had was garbage, but it woke me up to what’s true for me. In my dream, my cat needed me. And in my life my Mom needs me. And besides, I don’t really know what I would do if I wasn’t taking care of her. So, I’m sorry I can’t help you with your gangster friend. I gotta go. I’m late for my Women’s Gathering at church. I usually take Mom, but not today. I’ll be back in an hour or so. Take care of Mom. And try not to kill her, OK? Bye. (leaves)

DAVID

Hold on. Just wait a minute, Vic... damn. (Rips up paper. To SALLY) Shit. Oh well. This wasn’t legal anyway. She probably knew I was bluffing. OK, Mom, what am I going to do with you?

SALLY

Vicky?
(Takes out cell and dials, saying) One down, one to go. Hi. Sue! Come on over to Mom’s. We need to talk right away.

Blackout

END OF SCENE

ACT TWO- SCENE FIVE- Still later the next day.

(SALLY, still in a muumuu and clutching her purse watches TV. DAVID and SUSAN are drinking coffee at the table.)

DAVID

Vicky’s too Christian and too weak to ever lift a finger against Mom or anyone else. And what did that ever get her? This crummy trailer and a drinking problem.

SUSAN

I didn’t come over here to tear Vicky apart. I have a plane to catch in a couple of hours.
OK, so I wasn’t completely truthful yesterday. I know, I know. What’s new? (Hands the papers over to SUSAN who reads through them as he goes on) There was a Will in that box, too. Mom didn’t divide things up equally like I said. She was too smart for that. She’d never trust Vicky or me with her money. She knows us too well. See, here, you are the executor of the estate, to divide the money up as you see fit. So legally, you could use a big chunk of that money. All I need is a couple of thousand. You could give Vicky the trailer and use the rest for your family. I wouldn’t fight you on it, and Vic will eventually go along with anything.

SUSAN

David, David, David. Just stop. I’m not going along with this lamebrained scheme of yours.

DAVID

OK, Sue. Let’s just cut the bullshit. I think it is time you were honest with me. You’re wearing the same dress that you wore to Dad’s funeral three years ago. Your hair is in desperate need of a new dye job. Your nails look like shit. You are not the Yellow Rose of Texas. And that pool boy you nailed was payback, right? What the hell is really going on?
SUSAN

Goddamn Vicky, she’s got a big mouth. We’re having a few problems. Nothing that we can’t handle.

DAVID

He wants a divorce, doesn't he?

SUSAN

How the hell do you do that. It’s so annoying.

DAVID

Another, younger woman, right?

SUSAN

And the company she just inherited. I’ll get the house, and maybe just enough to barely live on.

DAVID

But not enough to send your daughter to that fancy school she is dying to go to, right?

SUSAN

Hank says St. Philip’s Community College is good enough.
DAVID

She deserves better than that!

SUSAN

Why don’t you just kill Mom yourself, and leave us out of it?

DAVID

Look, if an old lady with a heart condition and dementia dies, and her family is grieving, no one is going to think twice about it. But if a guy with a criminal record shows up with the body and he is the only one grieving, that is going to look suspicious. And suspicious is the last thing we want.

SUSAN

How sentimental. Give me that. (Glances over will) Bringing me in to cover your ass. I get it. You must be in a real mess.

DAVID

Well, yeah. I am. A bad man wants a chunk of money from me.

SUSAN

This isn’t another one of your cons, is it?
DAVID

You got no reason to trust me. But I swear it’s the truth.

SUSAN

Mom is holding us all back. Give me a sheet of paper.

(DAVID pulls out a sheet from his bag. SUSAN starts writing on it as DAVID talks.)

DAVID

I know, I’ve been a fuck up since I was a kid. Hell, you know that. You had to clean up a couple of my messes. And now I’m in a fucking potentially lethal mess. But this plan gives me a chance. I could get out of this hell-hole town. I could go to New York or Alaska and start all over. Become the man I know I could be, if I just had a fresh start. Sounds stupid, I know. But I can see it. All I need is a small nest egg to start.

SUSAN

(SUSAN hands DAVID a sheet of paper.) Here’s the deal. I’m not doing anything until you sign this statement that all you want is 2K. Also, that you won’t contest the will or anything that I do as Executor. Sign this and date it.

(DAVID does and then holds it up next to his face)
DAVID

Pull out your cell phone and take a picture of me. With the date stamp this JPEG, it’s almost as good as a notary.

(SUSAN buys it and does just that)

DAVID CONT.)

Cheese.

SUSAN

So exactly what do you want from me for all this?

DAVID

(Hands SUSAN the paper) OK, so now we go on to Phase Two. We’ve got a lot to talk about. I have sketched out some of the details but I want to run them by you. But first, I really gotta take a crap. I’ll be right back!

(DAVID goes to bathroom and closes the door)

DAVID (cont.)

Smells like a shit sachet in here.
(SUSAN walks over to SALLY)

SUSAN

Mom. I don’t know if this is right. Is this something you really want? Is it time for you to go? Look, I know you never liked me very much. We never got along, you and I. You hated that Daddy liked me so much. But, that’s not my fault. I resented your drinking and you resented me raising Dave and Vicky. But somebody had to.

(SALLY, looking straight ahead at the TV holds out her purse to SUSAN.)

SUSAN(CONT,)

What. (Beat. SALLY shakes the purse.) Ok, I’ll take it. (SUSAN finally takes it) Why? (Beat.) What do you want? (Beat.)

(SUSAN starts going through the purse)

DAVID

(From behind the door) Who you talking too. (Grunts) I’ll be right out. This is just taking more time than I thought it would.
SUSAN

(To SALLY) There’s nothing in here. (Pulls photograph out of purse.) Oh, I remember when you took this. We went out shopping for a prom dress. Just us. You had that waitress take this picture. You’re smiling at me. (Looks at SALLY, then back in purse) That’s it? No other pictures? That’s the only picture you carry around? I’m going to keep this, OK?

(Sally, staring straight ahead, makes a tiny nod. SUSAN hands the purse back to SALLY).

DAVID

(Offstage) Damn these opiates. Constipated as hell, but I’m coming. Just a minute longer.

SUSAN

(gently) God damn it, Mom! It would be a lot easier if I hadn’t found this damn picture. I was glad to get away from this family, believe me. You gave Davie all the attention. Or Vicky when she got sick, which she did a lot. You just leaned on me and hoped I would pick up the slack. Which I always did. I never thought you gave a shit about me. (Looks at picture) Damn. The only picture.

(Beat. SUSAN walks over to the table and rips up the document she wrote. Then she goes over to SALLY.)
SUSAN

OK, Mom, you win. I’m out of here. I will come back. Maybe next Mother’s Day. (SUSAN kisses SALLY’s forehead and as she leaves)If David doesn't kill you first.

(Susan exits. Then David comes out of the bathroom)

DAVID

Hey, sorry that took so... Sue? Susan! (Walks over to the table and picks up pieces of the document) Oh, shit. Goddamn it. Sisters. No fucking use, either one of them. (Beat) Well Mom, I guess it comes down to you and me.

(DAVID goes to counter, pours out some bourbon in a glass and pours in the entire contents of the medicine bottle.)

DAVID

That should do the job. (Then walks over to SALLY.) “If you want something done right, do it yourself” as Dad used to say. Ten thousand times. (Sighs) God, I hope Vicky isn’t right. I really don’t want to end up in Hell for this. No, that is all bullshit. Hell is tomorrow and the devil is Anatoli. Right, Mom? Hate to do this, but I don’t want my leg broken either. You always pulled me out of my scrapes. One last time. Thanks. .

(DAVID kneels down by SALLY and holds out glass)
DAVID (CONT.)

Here ya go. Bottoms up.

(Instead of taking it, SALLY reaches out and strokes DAVID’s cheek)

SALLY

(In a moment of clarity) Davie. My sweet Davie.

DAVID

Mom?...(Touches her cheek) Ah, shit.(He intentionally pours the drink out on the floor). Hi Mom. Fuck.

(As the lights start to fade, we hear the sound of cat insistently meowing and scratching at the door)

Blackout

END OF PLAY