

HAUNTINGS

A Full Length Play
Without Intermission

By
Rob Dames

HAUNTINGS has no production history. It has had one reading by the Eclectic Theatre Company in Los Angeles. It was a finalist in the 2016 Stanley Drama Awards.

Contact:
Rob Dames
10251 Century Woods Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90067
213 507-3761
RLDames44@aol.co

CAST
(in order of appearance)

MAUDE... She is a woman in her late 70s to early 80's. She appears to be at peace and comfortable in her life. She is a woman of quiet strength, but no one's doormat. There are signs of early dementia.

ALFRED... He is a couple of years older than his wife, Maude. He walks with some effort and wears an expression of perpetual discontent. He is not a pleasant man to be around. He is grouchy, rude and inflexible in his attitudes. He rules his kingdom that is his apartment and broaches no disagreement.

CATHERINE... She is a woman in her early fifties. She is well dressed. She is a professional woman and carries herself with confidence. She is caring and often the mediator. She is separated from James.

JAMES... He is in his fifties. He is separated from Catherine. He is the son of Alfred and Maude. He has no love lost for his father. They have been at each other for forty years with no end in sight.

MEGAN... She is mid-twenties and naturally attractive. She is the girlfriend of Will. She is a modern young woman who can be a hard-ass when necessary, but is also easily upset. She is probably passive/aggressive.

WILL... He is late twenties, good looking and works out which is not too difficult because he is a personal trainer. He is the son of Catherine and James. He is in many ways a lost soul searching for his place in the world. He is the third generation of male in this family and has been left to fend for himself while the two older generations continue their battle.

TATTOOED MAN... Age undetermined between 25 and 40. He is heavily tattooed on his arms, neck and even part of his face. The tattoos give him somewhat of a mythical appearance. Physically, he should probably be thin in keeping with the various human representations of death in art. He is a paradox as he is harsh, witty and intelligent.

HAUNTINGS

Synopsis

Alfred and Maude have chosen today to die. Maude is fatigued by her sadness. Alfred holds a secret that has isolated him from any human interaction and his only way out is death. They have instructed their family to be with them on this evening. The family has no idea why they have been commanded to attend. The atmosphere between Alfred and his son, James, is tense and hateful. This is the most apparent damage Alfred's secret has caused. The family is anxious to learn why they have been summoned but Alfred will not reveal the reason. That inscrutability adds to the family's frustration and intensifies the animosity. As the anger builds, an armed man covered in tattoos takes them hostage. For the family, it is a frightening event. For Maude and Alfred, this Tattooed Man is their appointment with Death who has come to assist them in their suicide. Once that plan is revealed, Alfred is forced to disclose his secret. It is a horrible secret, but having been exposed, the pain and anger and sorrow of the past forty years are diminished without the mystery that has fueled them. For the truth is: nothing is as devastating as secrets and the walls they force one to build to guard those secrets.

Setting:

An older urban apartment in a middle class neighborhood slowly turning to lower class. The apartment is dark with little natural light. The feeling is one of melancholy, even defeat. The set can be implied with free standing doors and necessary furniture.

"NOTHING MAKES US SO LONELY AS OUR SECRETS."

Paul Tournier

"WHAT IS MAN? A MISERABLE LITTLE PILE OF SECRETS."

Andre Malraux

"YOU'RE ONLY AS SICK AS YOUR SECRETS."

Twelve Step Saying

HAUNTINGS

LIGHTS UP ON:

After a few minutes MAUDE enters from the kitchen. She is in a happy mood, singing to herself. She carries a **cup of tea**. She carefully places the cup on the table adjacent to her chair. She is cautious to put the warm cup on some protection, perhaps an envelope remaining from an earlier mail.

She crosses to an armoire. From inside, she retrieves a birthday present sealed in a plastic bag. She removes the present. It is wrapped as though it is for a child. The paper appears old and faded.

MAUDE

(softly singing)

“Happy Birthday, to you. Happy Birthday to you...” Such a lovely little boy.

She regards the present, smiles a wistful smile, kisses it and places the gift on the table.

She crosses to a woven basket. In the basket are a variety of puzzle magazines. She sorts through them and chooses one. Throughout, she whistles a tuneless, airy sort of sound.

She crosses to a chair and sits. She checks her pockets and digs out a pair of reading glasses. She slides them onto her face and opens the magazine and searches among the pages. After a moment of searching, she realizes that she has finished all the puzzles in this issue.

MAUDE (CONT)

Oh shoot... Already did this one. Where’s your head, Maude?

With difficulty, she rises from the chair and crosses up to the desk where she dumps the magazine into a trash can. She returns to the basket of magazines. She surveys various issues.

MAUDE (CONT)

No... No... No...

She locates a more recent issue.

MAUDE (CONT)

Ah... There we are...

She places the good issue on her chair and carries the rejected issues to the kitchen and tosses them in a trash can.

At the same time, ALFRED enters the hallway outside the apartment. He carries a small paper bag. He grumbles as he fumbles to remove his keys from his pocket.

Maude returns to her chair and plops down in it.

From a souvenir cup on the table alongside her, she retrieves a ballpoint pen. She scribbles in the margins of the magazine to make certain the pen is functional. Content, she begins her puzzle.

Finally, Alfred places the bag on the floor then pulls his keys from his pocket and opens the front door.

Maude works quietly and with dedication on the puzzle for a few minutes pausing now and then for a sip of tea.

With some difficulty and more grumbling, Alfred retrieves the bag from the hall floor and enters the apartment.

MAUDE (CONT)

(without looking up from her puzzle)

You could have knocked, Alfred. I was sitting right here.

ALFRED

And how would I know that?

MAUDE

Because I'm always sitting right here.

ALFRED

Not always.

MAUDE

Most of the time.

ALFRED

That's not always.

Silence between them.

Alfred places the paper bag on the table closer to his chair than Maude's.

MAUDE

So...?

ALFRED

"So?" "So" what?

MAUDE

Any trouble?

He takes a vial of pills from his pocket. There is no 'prescription' label on the vial.

ALFRED

Does it look like it?

Silence between them.

Alfred places the pills on the table between them. He sees the birthday present on the table. He picks it up to look more closely.

MAUDE

That took a long time.

ALFRED

It took what it took.

(regarding the present)

This shouldn't be here.

MAUDE

I don't want to go without it.

ALFRED

You can get it when it's time.

Silence between them.

Alfred returns the gift to the armoire and exits to the kitchen. Maude defiantly retrieves the gift and places it on the floor near her chair. Alfred returns with two glasses.

MAUDE

What kind of pills did you get?

ALFRED

(points to pills)

That kind.

MAUDE

Are they strong enough?

ALFRED

If you're going to ask all these questions, you should have gone yourself.

MAUDE

Maybe I should have.

ALFRED

But you didn't.

He places the glasses on the table.

MAUDE

(chiding)

Alfred... this is a special occasion. Get the good glasses.

ALFRED

What does it matter?

MAUDE

Because it does.

Alfred grumbles as he picks up the glasses and returns to the kitchen.

Maude crosses around the table and removes a bottle of vodka from the bag.

Alfred returns from the kitchen carrying two elegant glasses, perhaps crystal. He places them on the table.

MAUDE

Why did you get vodka?

ALFRED

Does it matter?

MAUDE

You shouldn't be so grouchy. You should be in a good mood. We've been waiting a long time for this day.

ALFRED

What do you want me to do? Dance a jig?

He crosses to the desk and retrieves an older portable radio and an over-the-ears headset. He carries these to the table and places them on it.

MAUDE

I just think champagne might have been more festive.

ALFRED

Vodka was cheaper.

MAUDE

You know, Alfred, you've been a sourpuss for forty years now and I've put up with it because I married you for 'better or worse'. Of course, I thought there would be more better than worse.

ALFRED

What's your point?

MAUDE

My point is... this is the last day you have the chance to be nice to me. You might want to give it a try.

ALFRED

Hmmm...

Alfred takes his place in the chair. He plugs the headset into the radio and begins to fiddle with the dials.

MAUDE

Never mind. Just listen to your stupid radio.

Silence between them.

After a moment, Maude rises and crosses back to the desk. She retrieves a calendar and returns to her chair. She regards the calendar for a moment.

MAUDE (CONT)

Is it today?

Alfred removes the headset.

ALFRED

What?

MAUDE

Today... is it today?

ALFRED

It's today.

He starts to replace headset but is stopped.

MAUDE

You're certain?

ALFRED
Of what?

MAUDE
That it's today.

ALFRED
It's today.

He replaces headset.

MAUDE
(loudly)
What's today?

ALFRED
Today is today.

Pulls headset off, annoyed.

MAUDE
But what is today?

ALFRED
August eleven.

MAUDE
Because if it's not today, then we should wait for the good day.

ALFRED
It's today. If it wasn't today, I wouldn't say that it's today. I might say it's yesterday or I might say that it's tomorrow, but I didn't. I said it's today and it is today. End of discussion.

MAUDE
"Better or worse..."

Silence between them.

Maude takes the calendar back to the desk and puts it in its place. She is returning to her chair when she sees some dirt on the carpet. She picks up a little something, then exits to the bedroom.

When she returns she has the vacuum cleaner.
Upstage of Alfred's chair, she plugs it in and
begins to vacuum the carpet.

ALFRED

(reacting to the radio)

Oh for God's sakes... I'm trying to listen to the game.

Maude turns off the vacuum.

MAUDE

Baseball?

ALFRED

It's August.

MAUDE

I know. August eleven. That's today. Just a few more minutes.

Maude turns on the vacuum again.

ALFRED

Do you have to do that now?

Maude turns off the vacuum.

MAUDE

I don't want anyone to think we lived like pigs.

ALFRED

We won't care.

MAUDE

All right... sourpuss...

Silence between them.

Maude returns the vacuum to the bedroom.
Alfred returns to listening to the radio.

Maude crosses to the desk. Once again, she
retrieves the calendar. She regards it for a
moment, then crosses down to Alfred. She
holds the calendar in front of him to get his
attention. He pulls off his headset.

ALFRED

For Pete's sake, how many times do I have to say that it's today.

MAUDE

That wasn't my question. When did you see Dr. Bauer?

ALFRED

What?

MAUDE

When did you see Dr. Bauer about your...? You know.

Maude vaguely waves her hand in front of her groin area.

ALFRED

Prostate. It's not a dirty word. I saw him about my prostate. Didn't care much for the exam.

MAUDE

When was that?

ALFRED

The fifth.

MAUDE

Of August?

ALFRED

The fifth.

MAUDE

On a Wednesday?

ALFRED

For God's sake, you're holding a calendar. Look it up.

MAUDE

Today is Tuesday?

ALFRED

Don't know. Look at the calendar.

MAUDE

A calendar only works if you know what day you are looking at.

Carrying the calendar, Maude exits to the kitchen. Alfred puts his headset on again.

Maude roots through the kitchen trash until she finds today's newspaper. She reads the date and compares it to the calendar. She tosses the paper back in the trash and returns to the living room. She holds the calendar in front of Alfred who removes his headset.

MAUDE (CONT)

You were right... today is the eleventh.

ALFRED

That's what I said.

MAUDE

And I said you were right.

Maude returns the calendar to the desk and returns to her chair and takes up her puzzle book.

There is a lengthy pause as they go about their distractions. Then...

MAUDE (CONT)

(loud enough for him to hear)

And you spoke with him?

ALFRED

(displeased removes headset)

Not much to say to a man with his finger up my backside.

MAUDE

Not Dr. Bauer. Death. Did you speak with Death about helping us die today?

ALFRED

Not directly.

MAUDE

But we have an appointment?

ALFRED

We have the appointment, we have the pills, we have the vodka. Can I listen to my ballgame now?

MAUDE

I would have preferred champagne. It's festive and sparkley.

ALFRED

So drop an Alka-Seltzer in the vodka.

Alfred puts the headset back on. Maude returns to working on her puzzle, then puts the puzzle down. She picks up the pills and examines the vial. She holds the pills out to get Alfred's attention.

MAUDE

There are no instructions.

ALFRED

(removing headset)

What?

MAUDE

There are no instructions. Should we take them now?

ALFRED

Not until he arrives.

Alfred takes the pills from her. He replaces the pills on the table. Maude picks up her puzzle book. She starts to work on the puzzle, but stops. She has a questioning look on her face.

MAUDE

Is Death a he?

ALFRED

It's a figure of speech. I don't know.

MAUDE

But you said "he". "Not until he arrives."

ALFRED

Figure of speech.

MAUDE

So he could be a “she”.

ALFRED

Could be a “he” could be a “she” could be a cocker spaniel... Can I please listen to my ballgame?

MAUDE

Fine. If you want that to be the last thing you hear in your life.

ALFRED

(pointedly)

The last thing I hear will be silence.

MAUDE

I don't think you can actually hear silence.

ALFRED

I wouldn't know.

MAUDE

Listen to your ballgame. I won't say another thing.

Alfred puts his headset on again. Maude exits to the kitchen and returns with a dish towel and a spray can. She begins to dust around the room spraying the surface as she dusts. Alfred begins to cough.

ALFRED

What are you doing?

MAUDE

Dusting. I want the place to be tidy when we go.

ALFRED

What are you spraying?

Maude holds up the spray can to see what she has.

MAUDE

Whoops... I grabbed the Easy Off oven cleaner instead of the Pledge. Where is my head...?

Maude exits to the kitchen and returns with the Pledge. She continues to dust. As she dusts the table, she again regards the vial of pills.

MAUDE (CONT)

Will the pills work without his permission?

ALFRED

(smugly)

Ah... So you think Death is a male?

MAUDE

I never said that.

ALFRED

You said “without his permission.”

MAUDE

Figure of speech.

A pause as Alfred, pointedly, turns up the volume on his radio. Maude continues with her dusting. After a moment or two, she turns down the volume on Alfred’s radio and...

MAUDE (CONT)

Everything is arranged for today?

ALFRED

(removes one earpiece of the headset)

I think so.

MAUDE

But you don't know.

ALFRED

I know.

MAUDE

How many pills will we take?

ALFRED

Don't know.

Will he know?
MAUDE

He'll know.
ALFRED

Is he a doctor?
MAUDE

Don't know.
ALFRED

Maude gives him a look of disapproval.

A pause as Alfred concentrates on his game.
Alfred closes his eyes as he listens to the game.
Maude finishes her dusting and returns the cloth
and Pledge to the kitchen. When she returns...

Where is he... or she?
MAUDE
(impatiently)

He'll be here
ALFRED

When?
MAUDE

When he is.
ALFRED

But he knows it's today?
MAUDE

It's today.
ALFRED

A pause.

MAUDE
I'm happy we finally decided to do this. I feel peaceful. I wonder what it will be like,
don't you?

ALFRED
No.

MAUDE
Do you think after death, you can still listen to baseball?

ALFRED
Wouldn't know.

MAUDE
I must say... this is very exciting.

In the hallway, CATHERINE enters. She takes a breath to prepare herself then knocks on the door.

MAUDE (CONT)
Is that him ...or her?

ALFRED
Can I see through the door?

MAUDE
You said we have an appointment.

ALFRED
For sometime today.

MAUDE
That's not really an appointment. You should have made a real appointment.

ALFRED
It's for today. Today is the day. So it's a real appointment.

Catherine knocks again.

MAUDE
Do you want me to get it?

ALFRED
No.

Alfred puts aside his headset, rises slowly from his chair and crosses to the front door. Halfway there he stops and returns.

What?

MAUDE

Alfred hides the pills in a drawer of the table and tucks the bottle of vodka behind his chair.

Don't want to ruin the surprise.

ALFRED

He returns to the door and opens it.

Hello, Alfred.

CATHERINE

Kisses him on the cheek. His response is totally neutral. He turns and walks away from her.

It's Catherine.

ALFRED

I see that.

MAUDE

Catherine enters and places her purse on the desk. Alfred crosses back to the door.

You born in a barn?

ALFRED

What?

CATHERINE

The door.

ALFRED

Sorry.

CATHERINE
(not really)

He closes and locks the door. Maude starts to rise from her chair.

It's nice to see you, Catherine.

MAUDE

CATHERINE

Don't get up, Maude.

She settles back into her chair.

ALFRED

It's good for her to move. She gets stiff.

Alfred returns to his chair, sits and returns the headset to his head. Catherine leans over and kisses Maude.

CATHERINE

How are you, Maude?

MAUDE

(indicating Alfred)

Better than Mr. Sourpuss. Did you have any trouble parking?

CATHERINE

I took a cab. So what's the big event?

ALFRED

You'll know when it's time to know.

CATHERINE

(biting her tongue)

Okay...

MAUDE

You look nice, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Thank you. I was at George Logan's memorial service. It was very touching.

MAUDE

Alfred didn't want to go.

ALFRED

Didn't like him.

CATHERINE

It was a nice memorial. There were quite a few people there.

ALFRED

They only came for the free food.

CATHERINE

I was surprised how many of his friends were still alive.

ALFRED

I'm surprised he had friends.

CATHERINE

(pointedly to Alfred)

Pot, kettle.

Maude starts to get up again.

MAUDE

Would you like a tea or coffee?

CATHERINE

Stay there. I'll get it myself.

Catherine exits to the kitchen.

MAUDE

You could try and be pleasant, Alfred.

ALFRED

I could.

JAMES enters the hallway. He looks grumpy.
He wears a rumpled shirt and slacks and is
unshaven. He tries the door but it is locked.

MAUDE

(reacting to the knob turning)

Who's that?

ALFRED

Probably James.

James knocks on the door.

MAUDE

Are you going to get it?

ALFRED

No.

Maude pulls her self up from the chair and crosses to the door. She peers through the peephole and turns back to Alfred.

MAUDE

It's James.

ALFRED

That's what I said.

Maude opens the door. James enters. She smiles at James.

MAUDE

There's my big boy. Give your mother a peck.

JAMES

Hi, mom.

James hugs his mother awkwardly and kisses her cheek.

MAUDE

Don't you have a key?

JAMES

You think he'd give me a key?

ALFRED

Why would I give him a key? He doesn't live here.

MAUDE

Are you okay? You look tired.

JAMES

I'm fine. What's going on outside? I had to park over on Westgate. The police are up to something down near Delmar and Skinker. Traffic's a mess.

MAUDE

Your father has an extra parking place in the building.

JAMES

He won't give me the clicker for the garage door. No key, no clicker.

ALFRED

Because you're irresponsible. You'll lose it and some thief will use it to break in.

JAMES

What's he going to do drive around the whole city zapping every garage door in town?

ALFRED

Don't get smart with me.

JAMES

If I was "smart" I wouldn't be here.

Catherine enters from the kitchen with a cup of tea. James sees her and is not pleased.

CATHERINE

Hello, James.

JAMES

Why is she here?

CATHERINE

Nice to see you as well.

JAMES

(to Maude)

You said this is a family thing.

MAUDE

And Catherine is your wife.

JAMES

She's not my wife. We're divorced.

CATHERINE

Actually we're separated. So legally I'm still your wife. You just don't get any of the benefits.

JAMES

Fine.

(to Maude)

So what are we doing here today?

Alfred warns her with a look.

MAUDE

Ask your father?

JAMES
(he'd rather not)

So what's this all about?

ALFRED

You'll know when you know.

JAMES

Why do I even bother? I knew this was a waste of time.

ALFRED

Nobody's making you stay.

JAMES

Good.

James starts to the door.

MAUDE

James, please. For me.

JAMES

It's impossible to even have a conversation with the man. Every word that comes out of his mouth is angry or confrontational.

ALFRED

You get what you deserve.

JAMES

Yeah. What did I do to deserve you?

MAUDE

James, please...

(as an explanation)

He's listening to the Cardinals..

JAMES

Why can't you watch the game on TV like a normal person?

ALFRED

Baseball's a radio game. Are you staying or leaving?

MAUDE

(to James before he can respond)

Could you open a window? It's a little stuffy in here.

JAMES

(indicating Alfred)

I would have said 'suffocating'.

James crosses to the windows and opens it. We hear sirens.

JAMES (CONT)

Something big going on out there.

James crosses back from the window.

CATHERINE

Anything I can do, Maude?

MAUDE

Maybe you could put some cookies on a plate.

James finds the bottle of vodka on the floor behind Alfred's chair. He picks it up.

JAMES

Vodka? Since when do you drink vodka?

Alfred rises and snatches the bottle from James.

ALFRED

What I drink or don't drink in my house is none of your business.

JAMES

Yeah, you're right. It's not my business and I don't give a damn.

ALFRED

Language.

JAMES

Piss off.

Alfred raises his hand as if to slap James.

MAUDE

Alfred! Stop it!

Catherine grabs James by the arm and begins dragging him towards the kitchen.

CATHERINE

James, give me a hand.

They enter the kitchen.

CATHERINE (CONT)

Could you try to be nice with your father for once.

JAMES

It's none of your business, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Don't bite my head off. It's him you hate not me. See if you can find a big plate.

James rummages through the cupboards.

JAMES

Do you have any idea what this get-together is all about?

CATHERINE

Not a clue. Maude called me and said to stop by that there was going to be a big announcement.

JAMES

(finding a plate)

This okay?

CATHERINE

(takes the plate)

Yes.

MAUDE

You don't like James, do you?

ALFRED

No.

That's a terrible thing to say. MAUDE

I know. ALFRED

Do you hate him? MAUDE

No. ALFRED

Then what? MAUDE

It's between him and me. ALFRED

Still... I'm happy we're including the children. MAUDE

Child. ALFRED

There are two. MAUDE

Were. ALFRED

Still... MAUDE

It can't be both 'are' and 'were'. ALFRED

You should explain to James what we're doing. MAUDE

We'll tell him once Death is here. ALFRED

Who else is coming? JAMES

CATHERINE

I think it's just Will and maybe his girlfriend.

JAMES

Remind me of the girl's name before she gets here otherwise Will is going to be giving me crap.

CATHERINE

You've met her before. They've been together for a couple of years now.

JAMES

(grumpy)

But I don't remember her name.

CATHERINE

I don't need that attitude, James. Her name is Megan.

JAMES

Sorry.

(trying to change the subject)

What do you think about this one?

CATHERINE

She seems nice. I liked Cindy better.

JAMES

Which one was Cindy?

CATHERINE

The one before Megan.

JAMES

The one with the funny tooth.

CATHERINE

That was Annette.

JAMES

She was cute... except for that tooth. She should fix that tooth. Think that's why they broke up?

CATHERINE

I have no idea. Something stinks in here.

Catherine searches for the bad smell.

JAMES

You know which one I liked... the redhead.

CATHERINE

Allison. She was a little too trashy for me. Is that what you liked about her?

JAMES

No. I like that at Christmas one year she told my father that he was an ignorant old fart.

CATHERINE

Like I said... trashy.

JAMES

It seems like all the girls he picks are desperate.

CATHERINE

Desperate? For what? To join this loving family? It smells like something died in here.

JAMES

Oh, it did, believe me it did. I think it was called human kindness.

Catherine is still searching for the bad smell.

CATHERINE

Have you thought about what you're going to do with this apartment when your folks pass away?

JAMES

Probably rent it out until the market comes back then sell it.

CATHERINE

It might be nice to give it to Will. Sort of an inheritance from his grandparents.

JAMES

The place is a tomb. I just want to get rid of it.

CATHERINE

No, you want to get rid of your parents.

Catherine opens the fridge and locates the smell.

JAMES

Not her. Him.

Catherine removes a plate from the refrigerator on which is an overly ripe piece of pot roast.

CATHERINE

My God, this roast is completely rancid.

Catherine dumps the meat into the plastic bag and puts the empty dish in the dishwasher.

JAMES

Everything in this place is rancid. This is where hope goes to die.

CATHERINE

Take this out to the trash.

James exits out a back door from the kitchen to a steel staircase leading down to the rear of the building. Catherine sprays an air freshener around the room and begins to clean the place.

In the hallway, WILL and MEGAN enter. Megan is checking texts on her phone.

Will's phone sounds an incoming call. He checks the screen and answers.

WILL

Hey, Micky, what's up...? I can't tonight we're at my grandparents.. What are you guys up to?

MAUDE

There's somebody in the hall.

ALFRED

So?

MAUDE

Maybe it's him.

ALFRED

Too early.

MAUDE

You said he didn't give you a time.

ALFRED

Too early.

MAUDE

You should have made an appointment.

ALFRED

It was made for us.

MAUDE

By Dr. Bauer?

ALFRED

No. A man who I was told could arrange these things.

MAUDE

What man?

ALFRED

The man who sold me the pills.

MAUDE

Was he a pharmacist?

ALFRED

No. Just a man who sells pills.

Will doesn't knock. He just opens the door and walks in. Megan follows.

WILL

Boo!

Maude jumps slightly startled. Alfred doesn't even flinch.

MAUDE

Goodness...

ALFRED

Told you it wasn't him.

WILL

Hey, Gramps, Gramma... This is Megan.

Will offers a hand to bump knuckles with Alfred. Alfred reluctantly responds.

MEGAN

Hi..

MAUDE

Hello, dear.

WILL

(back to phone)

Are you watching the ballgame...? I don't know. I'll find out... Who's winning, Grandpa?

ALFRED

Them.

Megan's phone sounds. She looks at the screen.

MEGAN

(to Will)

I'll take this outside.

Megan exiting to the hallway

MEGAN (CONT)

Hi, Mandy... Hang on...

She exits and closes the door behind her.

MEGAN (CONT)

No. Celebrating tomorrow night.... Yeah, it's today but we had to go to Will's grandparents tonight... I'm twenty-five, but I feel forty.

MAUDE

Where'd your young lady go?

Will still on phone, gestures towards the hallway but Maude doesn't notice.

WILL

Bite me...

MAUDE

I'm sorry.

WILL

Not you, Gramma. Micky... *Hear what...?*

(to Maude)

You have any beer or something cold?

(Maude doesn't respond.)

Gramma...?

MAUDE

What, honey?

WILL

Beer?

MAUDE

No thank you. It makes me gassy. But if you want one, there's some in the icebox.

Will exits to the kitchen.

WILL

Hey, mom. I think Gramma's losing it.

MEGAN

Hey, did you have lunch with Sara today? Sorry I couldn't come but... Who?...

(slightly nervous)

Adam Turner? I don't know why Adam Turner would ask about me? I only know him from Will's softball league...Why? What did he say? That's bull shit. It never happened...

WILL

Wait... are you talking about the guy who plays third base for Fredreckson Plumbing? Turner something, right?... Seriously? He did Arnie's wife? What a douche...

CATHERINE

Can you get off the phone for five minutes?

WILL

Gotta go, Mick.

Will hangs up and slips the phone in his pocket.
He crosses to the refrigerator and gets a beer.

WILL (CONT)

Whew, I smell dead people. Is dad coming?

CATHERINE

He's here. He's taking out the trash.

WILL

So, what's going on? Grandpa never likes to have company.

CATHERINE

I have no idea and as usual your grandfather isn't in a conversational mood.

WILL

Gotta be something or he wouldn't have commanded our presence. Just hope it's quick.

Will exits to the living room with his beer. He sits and dials a number on his phone.

MEGAN

Okay, so it did happen. I don't know why. I guess I was having one of those days when it seemed like my relationship with Will wasn't going anyplace and... It's not a big deal. I only slept with him one time....

(Megan's phone sounds)

Hang on. I have another call.

(she switches lines)

Hello...?

WILL

Meg, it's me. You gonna come in?

MEGAN

Sure. Give me a sec...

(she switches lines again)

Okay, I've gotta go inside. We'll talk later, okay?...

James enters the hallway and sees Megan on the phone.

JAMES

You locked out?

MEGAN

No, no... I was finishing a call.

JAMES

You could have finished it inside.

MEGAN

It's finished. *We'll talk later, Mandy. Bye...*

JAMES

Cindy, right?

MEGAN

No that was the one before me. I'm Megan.

JAMES

Sorry.

James and Megan enter from the front door.

WILL

Hey, dad.

JAMES

Will... You have any idea why we're here?

WILL

Me? Right... nobody tells me shit.

ALFRED

Language.

WILL

Sorry.

With the finger circle at the temple, Will indicates to James that Alfred is a little crazy. Catherine enters from the kitchen with the platter of cookies and napkins.

CATHERINE

What took so long?

JAMES

Cans were at the curb.

ALFRED

It's Tuesday. Trash pick-up is Tuesday. Cans belong at the curb on Tuesday.

JAMES

Is that why we're here? To celebrate cans at the curb day.

MAUDE

Oh no, it's a lot more important than that.

ALFRED

(to Maude)

Enough.

WILL

It's crazy out there. What's with all the cops?

JAMES

I don't know. One of them asked me a few questions, but wouldn't tell me anything. I think they're looking for somebody.

ALFRED

Riff raff. The neighborhood's full of riff raff.

WILL

(to James)

What's 'riff raff'?

JAMES

Anyone your grandfather can't tolerate.

WILL

Wow. There's a lot of riff raff in the world.

Will looks to James for approval. James gives him a smile. Megan enters.

CATHERINE

Maude, this is Will's girlfriend... Megan.

MEGAN

Will introduced us.

MAUDE

Thank you for coming, dear.

ALFRED

Should she be here?

MAUDE

She's Will's girlfriend.

ALFRED

But they're not married.

JAMES

(indicating Catherine)

Neither are we. Can I go?

ALFRED

I wasn't talking to you so don't give me any of your lip.

JAMES

(to Will)

Anymore beer?

WILL

Fridge.

James exits to the kitchen.

MEGAN

I'm sorry. Is this just family?

CATHERINE

It's fine, Megan. You're very welcome.

MEGAN

I understand if it's only family. I'm not offended. Should I go?

CATHERINE

No.

MAUDE

He's just a grumpy old fart.

ALFRED

Language.

Maude gives him the "raspberry". Will's iPhone sounds. He answers.

WILL

Hey, Ted, what's up?... Naw I'm at my grandparent's.... Got no idea why. It's some big secret.

ALFRED

Why does anybody need a phone in his pocket?

James returns with a beer.

JAMES

Some people enjoy human contact.

ALFRED

(to Will)

Put that thing away.

WILL

Listen let me get back to you... huh...? Oh crap, I completely forgot.

(to Megan)

Hey, happy birthday, babe.

MEGAN

Thanks, hon.

CATHERINE

It's your birthday?

MEGAN

Yep. Twenty-five today.

MAUDE

Happy Birthday.

MEGAN

Thank you.

WILL

Yeah, I'm still here...

Will moves to Megan and puts his arm around her.

WILL (CONT)

Of course, I got her a present and I'm taking her to dinner...

(caught off guard)

What?

Will removes his arm from around Megan and moves away speaking in a low voice. Megan is texting on her phone.

WILL (CONT)

Hang on.

Will exits to the kitchen.

WILL (CONT)

A ring? Why would I get Megan a ring?... Where'd Carly get that idea?... No, no we've never talked about getting married. I mean, not for real. Meg might have said something like, 'Do you ever think about us getting married?' But that's just like - you know - after sex talk. Nothing serious... Crap... If I don't propose to Meg, do you think she'll dump me...? Ask Carly what she thinks... Well, call her then call me back...

Will hangs up and paces the kitchen.

James wanders up to the living room window and looks out. There are still periodic blasts of sirens.

Megan is busy texting.

James crosses back to Alfred.

JAMES
(trying to be polite)

How's the ball game?

ALFRED

It's a ball game.

JAMES
Is it almost over, because I'd like to know why we're here.

MAUDE

Should we tell them?

ALFRED

Not yet.

JAMES

Jesus...

Will dials a number on his cell.

MEGAN

May I use your bathroom?

MAUDE

Of course, it's through there. The bedroom's kind of a mess. I was cleaning out closets. Sorry.

MEGAN

No problem.

Megan exits through the bedroom. James' cell phone sounds. He takes it out of his pocket and looks at the screen, then answers.

JAMES

Will...?

WILL

Yeah. Could you come to the kitchen for a minute?

JAMES

Okay...

James hangs up and exits to the kitchen.

JAMES

What's up?

WILL

I need to ask your advice.

JAMES

Okay...

WILL

I'm trying to figure out if I should get married.

JAMES

Oh crap, is Cindy pregnant?

WILL

Cindy? I haven't seen Cindy in like three years.

JAMES

I mean...

(indicating living room)

...the girl out there.

WILL

No. Why?

JAMES

I figured since you're asking about marriage, that she might be...

WILL

No, no.

JAMES

Then why are we talking about marriage? Why would you want to do that?

Will realizes this conversation is going
nowhere.

WILL

Never mind. Thanks, Dad.

JAMES

Okay.

James starts to go then stops.

JAMES (CONT)

Listen, if she's telling you she's pregnant, get a test. Don't take her word for it.

WILL

She's not pregnant. God, every time you're around grandpa, you get this attitude.

JAMES

Yeah... well... Never mind.

James exits to the living room.

CATHERINE

Is there anything I can do for you, Maude, while we're waiting?

JAMES

I have a better idea. Why don't we leave and you can call us when it's time to reveal the big secret.

CATHERINE

(cautioning)

James...

MAUDE

You know what would be helpful, Catherine. You can go through all the drawers in the desk and toss out any papers we don't need?

CATHERINE

(puzzled by this request)

Okay...

Catherine crosses to the desk and begins to look through the drawers.

Will dials his phone.

WILL

Ted, Will... Let me ask you -- How old were you when you married Carly?... I'm only twenty-seven. Doesn't that seem a little young to get married?... It seems young to me. Hang on a sec, let me Google it...

Will pulls up Google on his phone's browser and uses the audio search function.

WILL (CONT)

(speaking distinctly)

What is the average age for a man to get married?

He reads from the screen then repeats to Ted.

WILL (CONT)

It says in Wikipedia the average age for a man to get married in the U.S. is 28.4. So I've still got about a year and a half.... I don't know. I've got to think about this. I'll call you later.

Will paces anxiously. He takes a half smoked joint out of his pocket and starts to light it then thinks better of it. He exits by the rear door to the exterior and lights the joint.

CATHERINE

Maude, are there any particular papers I'm looking for?

MAUDE

No, I've just been meaning to clean out those drawers and haven't gotten around to it.

CATHERINE

What's the hurry?

Alfred...?
MAUDE

No.
ALFRED

Catherine looks at James clearly thinking this a bit odd. James shrugs it off.

I'll do it.
JAMES

James crosses to a desk and begins rooting through the drawers. He grabs a trash can and begins dumping the contents into it.

Crap.
JAMES (CONT)

(Into the trash can.)

Crap.
(Into the trash can.)

Crap.
(Into the trash can.)

CATHERINE
(scowls at him.)
What are you doing? You can't just toss stuff. There might be something important in there.

Fine. You sort.
JAMES

CATHERINE
(sotto to James)
Something's going on, James. This isn't normal.

JAMES
Normal? Do you forget where we are?

James takes a seat near the desk. Catherine pours the contents of the trash can on the desk. She starts sorting through the drawer's effects.

CATHERINE

What would you like me to save, Maude?

MAUDE

Important papers, pictures that you might want after we're gone.

Alfred clears his throat as a warning to her.

JAMES

I don't need any pictures.

Maude rises and goes to them.

MAUDE

I'll help.

CATHERINE

(To Maude)

Maude, are you and Alfred okay?

ALFRED

We're fine. Just getting rid of the crap.

JAMES

See...

Catherine has a handful of papers. She shuffles through them.

CATHERINE

I don't know what half these papers are.

(reading an old paper)

I didn't know Maude was your mother's middle name.

JAMES

Her first name is Hortense but she hates it.

MAUDE

I hate it.

CATHERINE

How come you never told me?

JAMES

Why would I?

CATHERINE

We were married for twenty-five years. Normally, a quarter of a century is a sufficient amount of time for a couple to share their family histories.

Maude finds an old photo in a frame.

MAUDE

Oh, look at this. I thought we'd lost this photo. Alfred must have stuck it in a drawer and forgot about it.

Maude passes the photo to Catherine.

CATHERINE

When was this taken?

James, seeing that she has a photo, ignores her.

MAUDE

It was on Mother's Day. I remember that because we always went to Buckingham's restaurant on Mother's Day and that's Buckingham's. James looks like he's about five. Yes, five. He was in kindergarten. Oh my goodness... that's his school uniform he's wearing.

Catherine starts towards James with it.

CATHERINE

It's you and your brother, William.

JAMES

(Not looking at her)

I don't want to see it, Catherine.

Maude crosses to Alfred with the photo. She shows it to him.

MAUDE

Look what I found.

He looks at it, then...

ALFRED

(abruptly)

Put it back.

MAUDE

All right...

Maude crosses and places the photo on the desk
then returns to her chair.

CATHERINE

I think I've got everything, Maude.

MAUDE

Thank you, dear. James, could you take this to the trash.

MEGAN

(entering, sees an escape)

I'll do it.

Megan grabs the trash can.

ALFRED

Cans are at the curb.

MEGAN

Okay...

MAUDE

Thank you.

MEGAN

Those are some great vintage clothes on your bed.

Megan exits out the front door.

MAUDE

That reminds me. I wanted to toss all those old clothes out.

CATHERINE

You sure? Why are you getting rid of everything?

MAUDE

We're not getting any younger. No sense waiting till the last minute.

(Teasing Alfred)

Although that's kind of what we're doing.

Alfred warns Maude with a look.

MAUDE (CONT)

Just keep the best things... and that nice blue dress you gave me for Christmas. I want to be buried in that dress.

CATHERINE

Okay, Maude, there's something you're not telling us. Why are you planning your funeral?

MAUDE

We're not getting any younger.

CATHERINE

But you're not sick?

MAUDE

Let's just say... Death could arrive at any minute. Everything's fine, Catherine. I just want to get rid of all those old clothes. You can give them to Goodwill. Okay?

CATHERINE

Okay... James. Come give me a hand.

Catherine starts to the bedroom area.

JAMES

(sarcastically)

You do realize our "separation" is official, don't you?

James follows her out of the room. Maude crosses up and looks out the window then while returning to her chair stops and looks at a photo on the wall. She removes it and carries it to Alfred.

MAUDE

You were a very handsome young man.

ALFRED

What?

She shows him the photo.

MAUDE

Our wedding picture. You were very handsome.

If you say so...
ALFRED
Alfred returns to concentrating on the game.

Did you love me?
MAUDE

When?
ALFRED

When we were alive.
MAUDE

We are alive.
ALFRED

Do you love me?
MAUDE

Yes.
ALFRED
A long pause... The city sounds fill the void.
Sirens draw closer.

Is there more?
MAUDE

More than what?
ALFRED

More than "yes".
MAUDE

No.
ALFRED
(Another long pause...)

Isn't "yes" enough?
MAUDE

Yes.
(Pause)

Still...

ALFRED
“Still”?

MAUDE
More would have been nice.

ALFRED
Hmmm...

Maude replaces the photo on the wall.

James and Catherine enter the kitchen from the bedroom hallway. Through the door window, Will sees them and ducks down still smoking his joint. They each carry arm loads of old clothing. Catherine dumps it on the counter and digs out a couple of large plastic bag and goes about stuffing the clothing in the bags.

CATHERINE
There’s something they’re not telling us.

JAMES
Just let it go.

CATHERINE
Have you spoken to either of their doctors lately?

JAMES
No.

CATHERINE
Maybe you should call.

JAMES
What would that change?

CATHERINE
You know if your father dies first, you’re going to have to move in here to help Maude.

JAMES
Not going to happen, so just stay out of it.

CATHERINE

You know there are times I miss you. This isn't one of them. Give me one good reason why you won't move in here?

JAMES

Ghosts.

CATHERINE

It would be good for you, James, to live with your ghosts for a while.

JAMES

You know how I feel about this place, about my father. I don't want anything to do with either of them.

CATHERINE

Your family experienced one of the worst tragedies a family can have. That leaves a serious emotional wound.

JAMES

(adamantly)

We are not going to discuss that.

Alfred removes his headset. He searches for something.

ALFRED

Where'd you put the pills?

MAUDE

I didn't put them anywhere. You put them in the drawer.

He takes the vial of pills from the drawer and wrestles with the childproof cap.

MAUDE (CONT)

You should have done that earlier.

ALFRED

I didn't.

Alfred is still trying to open the pills, but unsuccessfully. He crosses to the kitchen. James is standing in front of the drawer, Alfred wants to open.

Move.

ALFRED (CONT)

James steps aside and Alfred retrieves a pliers from the drawer. He returns to the living room and using the pliers, he attempts to open the vial. He does not succeed.

MAUDE

Maybe he opens it after he arrives.

ALFRED

Maybe.

Alfred gives up his battle with the cap. He puts the pliers on the desk and returns to his chair. He pauses before he sits, working something over in his head. He makes a decision and states...

ALFRED (CONT)

Life with you has been all a man could wish for... Maude.

MAUDE

What?

ALFRED

That' s the "more".

MAUDE

Oh...

Alfred waits to see if there will be reciprocation. There is nothing. He sits and replaces his headset.

Will enters the kitchen from the outside.

CATHERINE

Where were you?

WILL

Just... uh... getting some air.

JAMES

You could have shared that air.

WILL

Huh...? Oh, yeah... funny. I'm gonna go check on grandma.

Will exits the kitchen and crosses and sits near Maude.

WILL (CONT)

Gramma, can I ask you a question?

ALFRED

Why don't you phone her?

MAUDE

Of course, dear.

(sniffs)

My goodness... what is that cologne you're wearing.

WILL

I don't know. Not important. Hey, how old were you when you married grandpa?

MAUDE

I was seventeen.

WILL

Seventeen?! How old was grandpa?

ALFRED

I was nineteen.

WILL

You're kidding? Why'd you get married so young? Was Gramma... you know?

MAUDE

No, I was still a virgin. Although your grandfather tried several times to change that. He had this big Oldsmobile. The back seat was as large as a...

ALFRED

Do you mind?

MAUDE

We got married because we were in love. Are you thinking of getting married?

Will thinks about this a moment then, surprising himself with his answer.

WILL

Yeah... yeah, I kind of think I am. Hell, why not.

MAUDE

Oh, I'm so sorry we'll miss the wedding.

WILL

Huh?

ALFRED

Zip it.

Megan returns to the hallway and stops before entering.

MEGAN

I just think Will has this problem understanding love... Probably because of his father. Somebody has to teach you how to love. It's not something you develop naturally like breathing...

A digital sound indicating a text has arrived pings. Megan pulls a second iPhone with a different color case out of her pocket and reads the text.

MEGAN (CONT)

Oh my God... Adam just texted me 'Happy Birthday'... No, on my business phone. He must still have that number...

Megan is typing on her second phone and talking on her first.

MEGAN (CONT)

Hang on. I'm texting to Adam... Just 'Thank you', that's all...

Will dials his phone.

WILL

Ted, Will. Listen forget Carly I think I'm going to go for it... It. Marriage. I've been thinking what makes any relationship work? Communication, right? That's something Megan and I have in spades... Thanks. Do you know a good place to buy a ring... not too expensive?... Cool. Call me back with the address. Thanks, Man.

(hangs up)
Grandma, do you know where Megan is?

ALFRED
She's outside with her stupid phone.

WILL
Thanks.

Will crosses and opens the door to the hallway.

WILL (CONT)
Meg...?

MEGAN
Give me a couple of minutes, okay?

WILL
Yeah. But I've got something important.

Will closes the door and returns to the apartment. He crosses up to the window. He is in deep thought.

CATHERINE
I know you don't want to hear this, James, but for all the years I've known you, you've kept, whatever this secret is, locked inside you. It sucked the life out of our marriage and it's sucking the life out of you. Don't you think it might help to talk about it?

JAMES
We've been down this road, Catherine. There is nothing to talk about. He hates me and has hated me ever since William died.

CATHERINE
But why?

JAMES
You really want to know ask him because I sure as hell don't know. Now drop it.

James angrily exits the kitchen Catherine follows.

CATHERINE
You're miserable. Is that how you want to spend the rest of you life?

JAMES

Just back off, Catherine.

Catherine angrily returns to the kitchen.

ALFRED

No wonder she's divorcing you.

JAMES

Just stay out of it, old man.

Alfred starts out of his chair for James.

ALFRED

You do not talk to me like that in my house.

Maude steps between them.

MAUDE

Stop it. This is supposed to be a happy occasion.

Will dictates his text sotto voce.

WILL

Megan Powers, will you marry me?... This is Will.

Will reviews the text and hits send.

In the hallway, Megan has finished texting and slips the second phone into her back pocket. She begins to open the door. Her first phone sounds indicating a text has arrived. Before she can check it out, a TATTOOED MAN, looking very agitated races into the hallway. Megan screams in fear. He grabs her and forces her into the apartment.

TATTOOED MAN

Get inside. Now... Just do it.

Will is looking at his phone waiting for an answer but jumps up startled. Alfred and Maude remain calm. Maude even smiles.

What the hell...!

WILL

Language.

ALFRED

Dad, call the cops!

WILL

Will starts towards the Tattooed Man but is stopped when the man pulls out a handgun. Catherine races in from the kitchen.

Oh my God...

CATHERINE

Nobody calls anybody. Just calm down.

TATTOOED MAN

Tattooed Man shoves Megan towards Will who gathers her in his arms.

I was getting worried that you wouldn't show up.

MAUDE

What?

TATTOOED MAN

You know this guy?

JAMES

We never actually met, but your father arranged for him.

MAUDE

Told you he'd be here. You're always so impatient.

ALFRED

Not always.

MAUDE

Most of the time.

ALFRED

"Most of the time" is not always.

MAUDE

TATTOOED MAN

Okay, okay...

(waving the gun)

Let's can the chit chat, okay?

MAUDE

(pushing the gun down)

You won't need that gun. We have pills.

Tattooed Man backs away and raises the gun again.

TATTOOED MAN

(Confused)

Pills? What are you talking about? What kind of pills?

MAUDE

I don't know. You'd have to ask...

JAMES

Mom, what the hell is going on?

MAUDE

Can we tell them now, Alfred?

ALFRED

Now, you can tell them.

Maude is beside herself with joy. She stands erectly like a school girl giving a presentation.

MAUDE

As you know, your father and I are getting up in years. So we talked it over and after careful consideration, we have decided that we've been on this earth too long and although we've had many wonderful times, well... let's just say the things haven't gotten better will not get better. So, we both agree that it's time for us to move along. So we bought some pills and...

CATHERINE

Maude, you can't...

ALFRED

Let her talk. She's been waiting all day for this.

(to James)

We're going to die. That should make you happy.

JAMES

Mom...?

MAUDE

That's uncalled for, Alfred. It's all right, children. This is a very happy day.

She crosses to James and Catherine and takes James' hand in hers.

MAUDE (CONT)

We've thought about this for a long time. I know you're upset and you'll be sad, but you have to understand... at our age death is not as frightening as it is for you. We look forward to finishing the cycle. We'll be okay. You'll be okay.

WILL

Grandma...

MAUDE

(tenderly patting Will's cheek)

It's okay.

CATHERINE

Are you sick, Maude?

MAUDE

No, dear. I'm as well as this old body can be. And isn't that a good thing to go now in the comfort of my own home surrounded by my family rather than waiting to die in some horrible hospital.

ALFRED

Let's move this along.

Maude crosses towards the Tattooed Man who steps back not knowing what is happening.

MAUDE

James, Catherine, Will, Megan...

(Indicates Tattooed Man)

This is who we've been waiting for. Meet Death. He's here to help us end our lives. So, please, make him feel welcome.

Maude politely applauds.

Alfred tries again to open the pills.

Megan begins to sob in Will's arms.

Catherine looks completely lost.

Tattooed Man looks totally baffled.

MAUDE (CONT)

(pushing the gun down)

You can put that gun away. Like I said it won't be necessary.

TATTOOED MAN

I think I'll just hold on to it for the moment.

MAUDE

If it makes you feel better. But we prefer the pills... not as messy. Are you okay with that?

ALFRED

Let the man do his job.

MAUDE

You're the one who was in a hurry. Show him the pills.

Alfred brings the vial of pills to the Tattooed Man.

ALFRED

I couldn't get it open. You want to try?

MAUDE

Are they the good pills? I'd like to just drift off to sleep and never wake up. Will they do that?

ALFRED

I told you they're the good pills.

MAUDE

But he's the expert so I'm asking him.

ALFRED

And I'm your husband and I'm telling you these are the good pills.

MAUDE

You don't even know what they are.

ALFRED

They're pills... good, deadly pills.

TATTOOED MAN

Hey, just calm down, okay?

ALFRED

I'm calm. So let's get started. How long is this going to take?

TATTOOED MAN

I don't know. I just got here.

MAUDE

And we have vodka. Is that okay? I thought champagne would be more appropriate...

ALFRED

Vodka is stronger.

MAUDE

We had champagne on our wedding day.

ALFRED

No, we had sparkling cider because my father was a boozer and we didn't want him to get smashed.

MAUDE

I had them switch it to champagne. I was not getting married on cider.

ALFRED

Well, today we have vodka and there's nothing you can do about it.

TATTOOED MAN

Stop it. Stop it. No more talking.

MAUDE

Now you've upset Death. I'm sorry.

TATTOOED MAN

I said no more talking.

(indicates Alfred and Maude)

You two go back to your chairs.

Alfred and Maude start to their chairs.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

No, wait...

(to Alfred)

You lock the door.

Alfred locks the front door then returns to his chair, flips it into the reclining position and takes a comfortable lounging position.

ALFRED

Okay, I'm ready. You ready, Maude?

MAUDE

Yes. No, wait...

Maude picks up the birthday gift, settles into her chair and holds the gift to her chest.

MAUDE (CONT)

Okay, now I'm ready. How do we start?

ALFRED

We should start by opening the pills.

Alfred pushes chair back down and starts to bring the vial to Tattooed Man.

ALFRED (CONT)

Here it says "Push and turn", but I couldn't get it to work.

MAUDE

He has arthritis in his hands.

Alfred starts to the desk.

ALFRED

I have a pliers, but I couldn't...

TATTOOED MAN

Whoa, whoa, whoa... Get back in the chair. Put the pills on the table.

Alfred does as he's told. Will's phone rings. The Tattooed Man grabs it from him.

WILL

Wait... I'm expecting an important call.

The family regards Will like he's a total idiot.

TATTOOED MAN

Are you really that stupid? Everybody... Cell phones... drop them on the floor.

He grabs Megan's cell from her hand.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

(to James and Catherine)

You, two...

James pulls a phone from his pocket and drops it.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

(indicating Catherine)

You...!

CATHERINE

(points to desk)

In my purse.

TATTOOED MAN

Get it.

Catherine crosses to the desk and gets the phone and adds it to the pile of phones.

CATHERINE

You're not very smart. I could have had a gun in that purse.

MAUDE

Catherine... manners...

The Tattooed Man points to Maude.

TATTOOED MAN

You...

MAUDE

Oh I don't have a phone. Alfred thinks they're unnecessary.

TATTOOED MAN

That's not what I was going to say.

ALFRED

Let the man talk. She always interrupts people.

MAUDE

I'm sorry.

TATTOOED MAN

No problem. Just pick up all the phones.

JAMES

I'll do it.

James starts towards the phones, but the
Tattooed Man pushes him down.

TATTOOED MAN

You just stay there.

MAUDE

That kind of roughness is not necessary. They're just here to watch us die.

TATTOOED MAN

(To Maude)

Ma'am... pick up the phones, please.

Maude hesitates.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

Don't be afraid.

MAUDE

I'm not. I'm just a little stiff.

ALFRED

She spends too much time in that chair with her puzzles.

MAUDE

I'm much more active than you are. I clean. I do laundry...

TATTOOED MAN

Okay, okay... Just pick up the phones. I won't hurt you.

ALFRED

But you'll still kill us, right?

TATTOOED MAN

One thing at a time, okay?

Maude gathers up the phones.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

Now throw them out that window.

Maude starts to the window.

MAUDE

Should I throw the phone from the desk? It's cordless.

TATTOOED MAN

Uh, yeah. Thanks.

Maude collects the handset from the desk. She takes the phones to the open window and tosses them out. She watches them fall.

MAUDE

Oh, dear... one of them hit Mr. Marlott's car. I hope it didn't do any damage.

Maude returns to her chair.

ALFRED

What's he going to do? Sue us? We'll be dead. He'll have to sue the estate. It will be James' problem. Of course, he'll probably screw it up.

JAMES

(to Tattooed Man)

Look, I don't know who you really are and I don't care. I think it should be obvious that you're dealing with a couple of crazy old people, so if you are here to rob us just take what you want and go. We won't give you any trouble.

MAUDE

James, be polite. Death is our guest.

JAMES

Mom, he's not Death. He's just some punk from the street. Probably the person the police were looking for.

ALFRED

You always think you have all the answers.

JAMES

Look if you want to die. Go right ahead, but leave mom out of it.

CATHERINE

James, he's your father.

JAMES

This is none of your business, Catherine. Mom, this guy's not Death.

TATTOOED MAN

And you know that, how?

JAMES

Because I'm not an idiot.

TATTOOED MAN

So you've met Death before?

JAMES

Death is not a person.

TATTOOED MAN

(to Alfred)

You're right. He thinks he knows everything.

(to James)

Death is not a person, huh? You ever seen the paintings of Bosch or Bruegel or Grier or Kubin?

JAMES

No. Maybe. Even if I had they're just paintings.

TATTOOED MAN

How about mythology? The Irish Banshee, now that's a female specter of death or Azrael, the angel of death or in the movie, 'The Seventh Seal' where Death plays chess.

JAMES

That doesn't prove anything. Those are all fictional.

TATTOOED MAN

Fiction is the interpretation of reality through the eyes of an artist.

(pause)

Didn't know I was such an intellectual ghoul, did you?

JAMES

This is idiotic.

MAUDE

I must admit you don't look like I expected.

TATTOOED MAN

Who were you expecting? The Grim Reaper, Father Time, the classic Skeleton in a Robe, The Black Death...?

(to James)

All human images by the way.

MAUDE

I didn't mean to insult you. We've never killed ourselves before.

TATTOOED MAN

No shit.

ALFRED

Language.

TATTOOED MAN

What?

ALFRED

There is never any reason to use vulgar language.

TATTOOED MAN

This is definitely one for the books.

MAUDE

Are we going to do it here or should we go lie down on the bed?

ALFRED

Here. I want to die in my chair.

MAUDE

We might be more comfortable lying down. I put fresh sheets on the bed this morning. The blue ones you like.

(rising)

Oh, I forgot to spray the room with lavender.

Maude starts to exit.

TATTOOED MAN

Ma'am... no spraying. Just stay here.

MAUDE

I just think the bed would be a more comfortable way to go.

ALFRED

In the chair. I'm comfortable in my chair.

Alfred flips the chair to recline.

MAUDE

All right, we'll do it in the chairs.

(to Tattooed Man)

Should we take the pills now?

TATTOOED MAN

You on some kind of deadline?

No one reacts.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

That was a joke... 'deadline'?

Nothing from anyone.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

(using gun a microphone)

Hello, is this thing on?

MAUDE

It's just that today is the day. We planned this. We are ready to die. Should we take the pills?

Tattooed Man looks around, trying to make sense of this mad house.

TATTOOED MAN

Let's not rush into anything, okay?

MAUDE

(reluctantly)

Okay.

ALFRED

Don't take too long. We want to get this over with.

TATTOOED MAN

(indicates Will and Megan)

Yeah, yeah... okay, you two... Will and...?

JAMES

Cindy.

CATHERINE

Megan.

TATTOOED MAN

Grab a seat on the floor.

Will and Megan do as instructed.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

(to James and Catherine)

And you two...

MAUDE

James and Catherine...

TATTOOED MAN

Sit over there.

James and Catherine take a couple of chairs.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

(to Alfred and Maude)

And your names are?

ALFRED

We thought you'd know. We thought that Death would have some sort of list.

MAUDE

Aren't our names in your appointment book?

JAMES

He's not Death. He's some punk.

TATTOOED MAN

Punk? I'm not really fond of that word.

CATHERINE
Don't badger him, James.

JAMES
Who's side are you on?

CATHERINE
I'd just like us all to get out of this alive.

TATTOOED MAN
Listen to her, James. She's a smart lady.
(to Maude and Alfred)
So what are your names?

MAUDE
Sorry. I'm Maude. He's Alfred.

TATTOOED MAN
That's better.

MAUDE
What should we call you?

TATTOOED MAN
Keep it simple... call me Death.

MAUDE
(to Alfred)
You were right. He is a he.

Tattooed Man looks out the window then
relaxes. The sirens seem to have gone away.

TATTOOED MAN
I may be here for a while so why don't we get to know each other? Who wants to go
first?

Nobody responds to the Tattooed Man.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)
Okay, I'll pick.

Starting with Alfred and ending with Alfred.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

(quickly, pointing with his gun)

Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, catch a tiger by the toe. If he hollers let him go. Eeny, meeny, miny, moe. You're up big guy. So what did you do for a living, Al?

ALFRED

Alfred, never Al...

TATTOOED MAN

Whatever. So what did you do?

ALFRED

You don't know? Are you sure that you're Death?

TATTOOED MAN

Yeah, I'm Death.

ALFRED

Do you have any identification or proof?

JAMES

Are you completely crazy? Do you really think Death has an ID card or a badge or something?

Tattooed Man shows his 'Death Head' tattoo.

TATTOOED MAN

How's that for an ID?

JAMES

That means nothing. The sixteen-year-old girl who cleans the lobby has a heart with a knife through it. Does that make her a heart surgeon?

TATTOOED MAN

I wasn't talking to you, smart-ass.

(To Alfred)

Answer the question. What did you do for a living?

MAUDE

He was an engineer.

TATTOOED MAN

Like a...

(Gestures a whistle pulling)

Whoooooo.... Engineer?

MAUDE

No. Civil. He designed bridges and roads.

TATTOOED MAN

Jesus, you must have been bored out of your mind.

MAUDE

He was a very important man.

ALFRED

I hated it every day.

MAUDE

You never told me that.

ALFRED

Why would I?

MAUDE

Because... Life with me has been all a man could wish for...

Alfred stares at her for a long minute, then...

ALFRED

Can we die now?

TATTOOED MAN

Can I have ten minutes to catch my breath? Do you have any idea what kind of day I've had? Car wrecks, fucked up surgeries, shootings, wars, stupid skateboard tricks... it never ends... so give me a little time to catch my breath before I eliminate yours... okay?

MEGAN

(teary)

I don't want you to die on my birthday.

WILL

It's okay, baby.

MEGAN

(over-reacting)

It's not 'okay'. You shouldn't say it's 'okay' when you know it's not.

WILL
(calming her)

Okay, okay... it's not okay...

MAUDE
(rising)

Where are my manners?

(to Tattooed Man)

You want a sandwich or something?

JAMES

If he's really Death, Death doesn't eat.

TATTOOED MAN

And you know that, how?

JAMES

I assumed...

TATTOOED MAN

"Assumed?" You know assumed makes an ass out of "u" and "me".

(No reaction from James.)

You don't think that's funny?

JAMES

Maybe the first two hundred times I heard it.

TATTOOED MAN

God, you people are dull. Maybe you're the one who should die.

MAUDE

No. Please. We really counted on this being our day.

TATTOOED MAN

Why?

ALFRED

It's August eleven.

JAMES

Of course, that's what this is about.

TATTOOED MAN

What's the occasion? You sick?

No.
MAUDE

So give me a reason.
TATTOOED MAN

MAUDE
(reluctant to go into it)
Why do you need a reason?

TATTOOED MAN
Let's just say I have to fill out a report. You know... who died, why, how and the reason.

WILL
Makes sense.

JAMES
Really? You're buying that crap?

WILL
Don't bite my head off. I'm just trying to help. If there's no reason, then maybe they won't die.

JAMES
That's just stupid.

WILL
When did you become grandpa?

JAMES
You don't know what you're talking about.

TATTOOED MAN
Hello... Can I get a little respect here? I'm Death, remember?

CATHERINE
But I do. I spent twenty-five years with you watching you staring off into the void, closing yourself in some sort of emotional prison, not letting anyone in, rejecting all attempts to get close to you. It got to the point that when you would snap at me with your bottled up anger, I was happy because I actually made contact with you. Sound familiar?

TATTOOED MAN
How in God's name did I get into this? I think I just answered my own question.

ALFRED
Can we do this?

TATTOOED MAN

I'll decide when... got it?

ALFRED

You know what... if you don't want to do this we'll find somebody else.

TATTOOED MAN

Unbelievable... how many Deaths do you think there are? You know when at sporting events idiots yell, "You da man!" Well, when it comes to death... I am da man.

MAUDE

He's sorry. He didn't mean anything by it. It's just that... we kind of planned everything for tonight...

TATTOOED MAN

Yeah, if you've got a sandwich that would be great.

MAUDE

Chicken, okay?

TATTOOED MAN

Yeah.

Maude starts to the kitchen.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

Wait. Is there a phone in the kitchen?

MAUDE

No, that was our only phone. Alfred finds them annoying.

JAMES

He finds any human contact annoying.

TATTOOED MAN

Good. Oh... and lots of mayonnaise and salt.

MAUDE

That's not really good for your health...then again you probably don't worry about that.

Maude exits to the kitchen. Tattooed Man returns to the window and looks out.

WILL

What do you keep looking for?

TATTOOED MAN

Let me ask you something. What do you do for a living?

WILL

I'm a personal trainer.

TATTOOED MAN

Must be quite an intellectual challenge. Let's make a deal. I won't tell you how to do jumping jacks and you don't worry about how I run the death business, okay?

He crosses and takes a seat in Maude's chair and speaks to Alfred.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

So... how's it been?

ALFRED

What?

TATTOOED MAN

Life. This life you want to end.

ALFRED

Okay.

TATTOOED MAN

That's it? "Okay?"

ALFRED

Yeah, I think that sums it up.

TATTOOED MAN

I see.

(Pause)

So you endured the plague of locusts that ate your entire herd of cattle leaving you and your fifteen children destitute and dining on wet mud?

ALFRED

What?

TATTOOED MAN

And when the barbarian throngs invaded your village and raped your wife and burned your home to the ground, you survived?

ALFRED

I don't know what you're talking about?

TATTOOED MAN

I'm talking about grief, anguish, suffering, pain, loss... any of these things apply?

ALFRED

It's not really any of your business.

TATTOOED MAN

Oh, but it is. Sowing random, senseless death upon the land is one thing, but you want death on a schedule. So give me a reason.

Maude pokes her head in from the kitchen.

MAUDE

Would you like tomatoes on that sandwich, Mr. Death?

TATTOOED MAN

Please, just Death. No thank you. I'm allergic. Pickles would be nice if you have them.

MAUDE

I do.

She returns to the kitchen.

TATTOOED MAN

You think about that reason, Alfred.

Tattooed Man crosses over to James and Catherine.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

So what do you think about the folks offing themselves, Jimbo?

JAMES

None of your business.

TATTOOED MAN

You don't seem real upset about the possibility. The girl's upset and she's not even family, is she?

JAMES

Stick it.

TATTOOED MAN

Oooo... feisty. The boy kind of looks upset. Your wife is upset. But you don't seem to feel anything, am I right?

JAMES

Ex-wife.

TATTOOED MAN

(to Catherine)

Really...? What happened? Was Jimmy dipping his cookie into some strange honey pot?

CATHERINE

Our marriage perished from boredom not sex.

JAMES

Just shut up, Catherine. That's none of his business.

CATHERINE

And what I say is none of your business, so you shut up.

TATTOOED MAN

Uh-oh... feisty.

(to James)

My money says she wasn't the boring one.

JAMES

I don't need your opinion about my life.

TATTOOED MAN

I'm beginning to think that anger might be your only honest emotion. What's that all about?

Maude enters. She is carrying a plate with a sandwich and a glass of milk.

MAUDE

Alfred and James don't get along. Is milk okay?

TATTOOED MAN

Yes. Thank you, Maude. Why don't they get along?

Tattooed Man sits and begins to eat.

MAUDE

It's a secret. Alfred won't tell me and James won't talk about it. But it's something that happened a long time ago. It happened when James was...

ALFRED

(cutting her off)

All right. That's enough chit chat.

Alfred opens the vodka.

ALFRED (CONT)

Let's get this done.

CATHERINE

Maude, we don't want you to die.

MAUDE

It's okay, Catherine. Everything is fine.

MEGAN

Please, don't die.

MAUDE

Maybe Will would like some of the furniture after we're gone to start his new life. Would you, Will?

MEGAN

What new life?

WILL

Grandma, you're not going to die.

ALFRED

Does this look like the kind of furniture a twenty-seven year old would have in his apartment?

MAUDE

They're family heirlooms.

ALFRED

It's crap.

TATTOOED MAN

(to Alfred)

So, what's with you and Jimbo?

ALFRED

I won't talk about it.

TATTOOED MAN

You know, Alfie, I'm not a patient man. If you don't start cooperating I am not going to kill you.

(Takes a bite)

Good sandwich, Maude.

MAUDE

Thank you. I make my own mayonnaise, but I use light oil.

TATTOOED MAN

You and James on the outs also, Maude?

MAUDE

I don't see him much or my grandson.

TATTOOED MAN

You think they'll miss you when you're gone?

MAUDE

Maybe at first, but they have their own lives to lead.

TATTOOED MAN

And you'll be moldering in the grave.

MAUDE

We're being cremated. Alfred is claustrophobic.

(beat)

What's it like?

TATTOOED MAN

What?

MAUDE

Dying? You read so many different things. You know... the white light and stuff like that. Is it complicated or is there someone to show you the way? And what does a soul look like? I think... I think it's going to be okay... maybe even peaceful. Although being born isn't that peaceful so maybe dying isn't any easier. Are there really angels? It would be so exciting to meet an angel...

A Cell Phone rings.

Tattooed Man spins towards Will and Megan.

Megan looks petrified.

The Tattooed Man grabs her and pulls her to her feet.

Will jumps up and grabs the Tattooed Man by the arm.

WILL

Leave her alone.

The phone continues to ring.

TATTOOED MAN

You have a very strong grip. The result of many mindless workouts, no doubt, but I'm Death and I have a gun so back off.

Will steps back. Tattooed Man turns to Megan

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

Give me the phone.

Megan takes her second phone from her rear pocket.

MEGAN

It's okay. I'll throw it out the window.

Megan tries to pull away and get to the window. Tattooed Man grabs it from her.

TATTOOED MAN

Got something to hide, sweetie?

(Politely answers the call)

Hello... This is her assistant. Who may I say is calling?... Adam Turner...?

Will looks questioningly to Megan who looks distraught. Megan tries to get the phone from Tattooed Man. He holds her off with no effort.

MEGAN

Please, just throw it.

WILL

The same Adam Turner from my softball league?

TATTOOED MAN

(picking up on this)

Oh, that's interesting. *Don't you play softball with uh...*

Tattooed Man looks to Will for help.

WILL

Will.

TATTOOED MAN

...with Will? I thought so.... Oh, that's great. Yeah, he's a good guy. So what's the deal you been banging his girl?

(reacting to phone)

He hung up. Kids today got no manners.

Tattooed Man crosses to the window and tosses the phone. Will looks destroyed.

MEGAN

Will, please, it's nothing. Everything is okay.

WILL

"It's not 'okay'. You shouldn't say it's 'okay' when you know it's not." Weren't those your words?

TATTOOED MAN

So many different ways to die.

WILL

Why, Megan?

MEGAN

I was confused. I made a mistake. Please, it's finished.

WILL

Yeah, it's definitely finished.

Will walks away from her.

MEGAN

Will...?

Megan crumbles to the floor, miserable. There is a silence in the room. Tattooed Man returns to his sandwich.

ALFRED

William.

TATTOOED MAN

Not my name.

ALFRED

My reason... William.

JAMES

Today is August eleven. It's William's birthday.

TATTOOED MAN

Continue. I'm intrigued.

ALFRED

Our child.

(Pause)

He drowned.

TATTOOED MAN

When?

ALFRED

Weren't you there?

TATTOOED MAN

Hey, I don't remember every death. Do you remember every bridge and road you built?

ALFRED

Yes.

TATTOOED MAN

Jesus, you are a boring man. When did your kid die?

ALFRED

Are the details important? You asked my reason and that's my reason.

TATTOOED MAN

Yeah, details are important. How do I know you're not making up some bullshit reason just so I'll accommodate your wishes?

Alfred takes a long time to come to the decision to tell his story. He looks up and delivers the story directly to the Tattooed Man.

ALFRED

When he was three. We were on vacation down in the Ozarks. The boys and I were fishing. James was rough housing with William. William must have lost his balance. He fell out of the boat. It was a deep lake. I went in to save him, but ... but the water was too dark. I couldn't find him. It was two days before his body was recovered.

MEGAN

Oh my God...

An uncomfortable silence hangs over the room for a moment, then...

TATTOOED MAN

And it was so traumatic that you waited a hundred years to take your own life?

JAMES

(jumping up)

You're an asshole.

Tattooed Man pushes James to the floor.

TATTOOED MAN

Not only am I not an "asshole." I don't even have one. This...

(Indicates his body)

...is just an image for your pleasure and enjoyment.

ALFRED

Are we going to do this tonight or not?

TATTOOED MAN

You know, usually when I show up the subject is crying... "Not me" "Why me?" "Please, let me live." So forgive me if I fuck with you for a while.

MAUDE

He's nervous. He always gets cranky when he's nervous.

CATHERINE

Please, don't do this, Alfred...Maude.

MAUDE

It's okay, Catherine. We've been thinking about this for some time, but we weren't really ready. Now we are.

WILL

Mom's right, Gramma. We don't want you to do this.

ALFRED

It's decided.

CATHERINE

James...?

JAMES

What am I supposed to say? Don't do it. When has he ever listened to me?

TATTOOED MAN

Who knew you had such a sensitive side?

The sound of sirens passing is heard. Tattooed Man crosses to the window to check the scene outside. We can tell by his head movement that he is watching the police cars pass by.

JAMES

Mom, you don't have to do this just because he wants to.

MAUDE

Your father and I have been together most of our lives. Why would I want to desert him now?

JAMES

Because he's a bitter, angry, old man.

MAUDE

James, please. You know it's been difficult.

JAMES

Yes, I know that William's death was a horrible thing. We all suffered as a result of it, but that was forty something years ago. You've lived through that time and all those years since, so why now?

MAUDE

Because during all those years, we never forgot and every day, we woke up knowing that we would never, ever see William again - in this life.

WILL

But, grandma, that's all a long time ago. You should be over it by now.

MAUDE

You're young, Will, and can't understand, but the loss of a child is a very deep wound. It becomes a part of who you are. You eventually find a way to go on, to continue, but... I start every day thinking of William and he is my last thought before I go to sleep at night. The pain of losing him is as powerful now as it was that day forty years ago. I have missed your brother and always will miss him. But I know... I believe that I will see him again in the afterlife. Today's his birthday. I'd like to finally give him his present.

WILL

Gramma, that's all just hocus-pocus. You won't see him again. There is no such thing as the 'afterlife.'

Tattooed Man returns to the group.

MAUDE

(indicating Tattooed Man)

Then where did he come from?

JAMES

You can't truly believe that this punk is really "Death" incarnate? He's just some sort of criminal taking advantage of the situation.

MAUDE

Do you remember the Christmas when you were four? You were at the church at boys' choir practice. When I came to pick you up, you came running up to me and you told me, "Mom, baby Jesus smiled at me." I tried to convince you that baby Jesus was just a statue in the crèche but you refused to accept that. I asked you why baby Jesus was smiling at you and you said, 'He liked my singing.' You believed what you believed because it made you happy.

JAMES

I was four.

MAUDE

And I'm eighty-four and I believe what I believe because it gives me peace. So yes, Will, I am going to see my son in the after life and yes James I do believe this gentleman is Death.

CATHERINE

But, Maude...

MAUDE

Isn't there some saying about 'mysterious ways'?

JAMES

(getting to his feet)

Fine. If you want to do this, do it, but I won't sit here and watch.

James starts to the door, but the Tattooed Man blocks his path.

TATTOOED MAN

Hold on, Jimbo, the circus isn't over yet.

JAMES

What are you going to do shoot me, Mr. Death? Go right ahead. You'd be doing me a favor.

Tattooed Man crosses to Catherine.

TATTOOED MAN

How about instead, I shoot her.

Tattooed Man grabs Catherine by the hair and points the gun at her. James hesitates then returns to his place.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

Well, how about that. Jimmy-boy cares about somebody besides himself.

Megan takes advantage of the distraction to rush to the table and grab the pills. She moves around behind the chairs as she wrestles with the childproof cap. Will starts after her, but the Tattooed Man blocks his way.

Sit down.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

Tattooed Man goes after Megan who dodges around the chairs as she tries to open the pills.

Give me the pills.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

No.

MEGAN

Those are my pills.

ALFRED

As Megan comes around the chairs, Will grabs her and fights with her for control of the pills.

Stop it.

TATTOOED MAN
(raising his gun)

Will gets the pills from her.

Give me my pills.

ALFRED

Alfred starts towards Will, but the Tattooed Man pushes him back into his chair.

What are you doing?

WILL

I want to die.

MEGAN

Those are my pills.

ALFRED

Alfred again goes after the pills but it is Will who has control of the pills and holds them high.

Megan pounds on his chest trying to get the pills back.

Alfred tries to reach them as well but is winded and has to return to his chair.

WILL

If anybody has a reason to die it's me. You cheated on me.

MEGAN

Will... You have to understand. It was a mistake. I was confused about us.

WILL

Yeah? Well, I asked you to marry me.

MEGAN

When?

WILL

I texted you just before...

(indicates Tattooed Man)

...he came in.

MEGAN

Oh my God... I didn't see it.

Megan starts sobbing. Alfred stealthily rises and moves towards Will.

Alfred makes an awkward lunge towards Will trying to get hold of the pills.

ALFRED

Give me my pills!

Will pulls the pills out of Alfred's reach. Catherine grabs the pills away from Will.

CATHERINE

Nobody is going to die, damn it!

ALFRED

Language.

CATHERINE

Oh shut up, you self-centered old bastard. I've tried to be kind to you, to be understanding because of the tragedy you all lived through, but the truth is you're a miserable son of a bitch who has used that tragedy to damage everybody around you with your holier than thou, more wretched than thou attitude.

TATTOOED MAN

Feisty...

MAUDE

Catherine, that's not fair.

CATHERINE

It's more than fair, Maude. It's true. James has gone through life an emotional zombie because of some secret between him and Alfred. Will is a wishy-washy immature child who never had a father to teach him how to be a man. And the worst crime of all is how he has convinced you that this suicide is all for William.

MAUDE

It is, Catherine. It is.

JAMES

No it's not, mom. There is something else.

ALFRED

Don't listen to him.

MAUDE

What do you mean, James? What else...?

JAMES

I don't know, but it began that day when William died. It's my fault that William fell into the lake. We weren't roughhousing. We weren't playing around. I pushed him. I pushed him because we were fighting and I was angry with him.

MAUDE

But it was an accident.

JAMES

No, it wasn't. I wanted him to fall in the lake. But I didn't want him to die.

MAUDE

Of course you didn't.

JAMES

But there was something else. When dad dove into the lake after William, he was only in the water a very short time, then he climbed back into the boat. I asked him, "Where's William?" And he said, "There's nothing we can do."

MAUDE

Alfred...?

Alfred says nothing.

MAUDE (CONT)

Alfred, talk to me. What happened?

ALFRED

It was a long time ago and there's no sense in revisiting it now.

JAMES

That's been your answer to me for forty years. But I won't accept it anymore. What really happened?

ALFRED

It doesn't matter. It won't change anything.

JAMES

It'll change one thing.

James takes the pills from Catherine.

JAMES (CONT)

If you want to die, go right ahead. But you're not taking mom with you and you're not dying until we know the truth.

ALFRED

This is my home and you do not tell me what to do. None of this would have ever happened if you hadn't been such a rotten kid.

MAUDE

Alfred, don't...

JAMES

I know that. I know that and I will live with it the rest of my life. But whatever you know, you clearly cannot live with.

MAUDE

What happened, Alfred?

It is apparent that Alfred is struggling with some deep corner of his soul. Maude recognizes that something serious is bothering Alfred.

MAUDE (CONT)

What is it, Alfred?

JAMES

You owe me the truth. You owe us all the truth.

ALFRED

You don't want the truth. You never wanted to know what happened because you couldn't face your guilt. Because you hoped if you didn't know that it would all just go away.

MAUDE

Alfred, don't...

JAMES

You're right. I didn't want to know. I was afraid because of what I did, because I pushed William in the lake. And what has that gotten me? What has that gotten either of us? I think it's time for the truth.

ALFRED

Why can't you just let me die? That's what you want anyway, isn't it?

MAUDE

Alfred?

Alfred remains silent but it is obvious that he is in pain.

MAUDE (CONT)

Is James right? Did something happen?

Alfred still remains silent.

MAUDE (CONT)

You have to tell me, Alfred. I'm going to die with you. I deserve to know. What happened that day?

Clearly in anguish, Alfred collapses into his chair and takes a breath then...

MAUDE (CONT)

Alfred... what happened at that lake?

JAMES

Tell us, damn it!

There is a very long pause as Alfred considers whether he can tell the truth. Finally softly...

ALFRED

I saw William.

MAUDE

What? What do you mean?

ALFRED

I saw William... in the lake.

MAUDE

O dear God...

JAMES

You said the water was too dark to see.

ALFRED

His body was tangled in weeds or something.

JAMES

You said there was nothing we could do.

ALFRED

I saw William. I saw his right arm waving back and forth as if to signal me. I tried to swim deeper but the current was too strong. I was afraid. For a moment, in the darkness, I lost sight of him. I thought -- he's gone. He's escaped. He's back at the boat. But he wasn't. A beam of sunlight cut through the water and... and... and I saw him again, his arm... still waving... his face... looking at me. I thought -- he's not waving. It's only the current. He's not waving...

MAUDE

And...?

ALFRED

It's only the current. He's not waving...

MAUDE
(more insistent)

And...?

ALFRED
(Pause)

I left him.

A shocked pause.

MAUDE
(afraid to ask)

Was he alive?

There is no answer from Alfred. She turns to
Tattooed Man.

MAUDE (CONT)

Was he alive?

TATTOOED MAN

Alfred?

Alfred can't answer. He looks like his world has
ended. James grabs him by the shoulders.

JAMES

Was he alive?

A long pause. Alfred looks up and for the first
time in forty years, looks directly into James'
eyes. With an empty soul...

ALFRED

I don't know.

CATHERINE

Oh, God...

James looks as if he might be sick.

Maude goes to the Tattooed Man and demands
insistently.

MAUDE

Was William alive?

The Tattooed Man regards each of them. The pain in their expressions is profound. He hesitates...

TATTOOED MAN

I can't answer that question, Maude.

MAUDE

But you were there.

(insistent)

Was William alive?

TATTOOED MAN

I can't answer the question.

Maude stares at the Tattooed Man for a moment hoping he will change his mind. But he stands firm and holds her eye contact. She slumps a little from the weight of the pain.

MAUDE

(to no one)

My William. My beautiful William.

Alfred breaks down and sobs.

MAUDE (CONT)

And all these years you kept this terrible thing a secret?

Alfred continues to sob.

MAUDE (CONT)

And you never told James what you saw?

ALFRED

No. Never. I didn't want him to know what I saw in that lake.

MAUDE

Why?

ALFRED

I was protecting him.

TATTOOED MAN

Sounds to me like you were 'protecting' you. So - truth is you lost both sons that day.
Major screw up, Al.

CATHERINE

(to Tattooed Man)

Please...

MAUDE

Why didn't you try?

ALFRED

I was afraid.

MAUDE

He was my baby.

ALFRED

I was a coward, Maude. And everyday since then I've known that I was a coward.

MAUDE

And you let James live all these years blaming himself.

ALFRED

I didn't know how to tell him.

MAUDE

(firmly)

And why didn't you tell me?

Maude waits for an answer but there is none to give. After a moment, she crosses to James and takes the pills from him. She places them on the table near Alfred.

MAUDE (CONT)

I won't die with you, Alfred. I don't even know that I can live with you.

Catherine goes to James and holds him.

CATHERINE

Are you all right?

JAMES

I always thought he hated me because of what happened to William, because I survived. But it wasn't me he hated.

Tattooed Man takes the vial of pills off the table. Alfred grabs his wrist to stop him. Tattooed Man pulls his arm from Alfred's grasp.

TATTOOED MAN

Give it up, Alfred, game's over.

ALFRED

Please, let me die.

TATTOOED MAN

Still think that's what you want? Okay. No pills. Let's go big.

Tattooed Man takes the gun from his belt and places it against Alfred's temple. Everyone reacts in horror.

MAUDE

Please, don't...

Tattooed Man pulls the trigger. There is no shot. The gun is empty.

TATTOOED MAN

Whoops... Guess it's not your time.

Alfred looks defeated.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

The truth is... It's harder to live with ghosts than to be one.

Tattooed Man crosses up to the window and checks the street. He then crosses back to James.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

Death isn't always what you think it is, Jimbo. Remember that when your time comes.

Tattooed Man crosses to the door. He opens it and checks the hallway. Satisfied, he turns back to the family.

TATTOOED MAN (CONT)

I'd say goodbye, but really it's -- see you later. You just won't know when.

Tattooed Man exits.

CATHERINE

So... what now?

JAMES

I don't think I can answer that yet. But I feel like I can finally breathe.

After a moment, Megan moves towards the door.

WILL

Where are you going?

MEGAN

I don't know. I'll call you to get my clothes and things.

She starts to leave.

WILL

Aren't you even going to say you're sorry?

MEGAN

Would it change anything?

WILL

No.

Megan leaves closing the door behind her.

JAMES

Will, are you all right?

WILL

Yeah, I'm okay.

JAMES

Sorry about Megan...

WILL

Yeah, me, too. But that's... I don't know...

(indicating Alfred)

...this... How does it happen?

Will starts to go. He stops and looks at Alfred.

WILL (CONT)

(more sad than angry)

I don't get it, grandpa. All that time and you said nothing? I thought family was about trust. What happened to that? Why was it only about you? How could you do that to grandma... to dad...? I mean... everybody's got secrets but you've got to share them with somebody, don't you? Otherwise... otherwise it only gets worse. Then what do you do? What do you do? I don't get it. I just don't get it.

Will turns and leaves the apartment.

JAMES

What do you want to do, Mom?

MAUDE

I don't know what I want to do, James. I thought today would be the end of sorrow, but... maybe sorrow never truly ends.

JAMES

You can't stay here.

MAUDE

This is where I live. For such a long time, these walls have held my life together. All my memories -- good and bad -- are gathered here. I can't just walk away from them.

JAMES

You can't forgive and forget.

MAUDE

I'll never forget, James. But it took forty years of grief and misery before I learned the truth of what happened that day -- forty years... I'd like to understand why it happened. I don't think there is an answer. At least not one I want to hear, but I owe it to William to try.

JAMES

Then maybe he needs to go.

MAUDE

Maybe...

Maude regards Alfred for a moment as she reflects on what almost occurred. She turns away from him.

MAUDE (CONT)

I woke this morning prepared to lie down next to your father and die. I believed we shared the same anguish for forty years... but we didn't. I believed we were doing a good thing... going to William.

(turns to Alfred)

But that was not what you were doing, was it, Alfred. You were not going "to" anything. You were running away. Running away from a horrible situation that you created.

(beat)

Throughout those terrible years, I wanted to believe that we were always there for each other. I wanted to believe that... Isn't that the very heart of a marriage? But you couldn't even tell me the truth about my son... our son.

(beat)

Everything changed on that day forty years ago. I just didn't know how much.

(beat)

Why, Alfred... why didn't you respect me enough to tell me the truth?

Alfred neither responds nor reacts.

MAUDE (CONT)

Maybe some day, you'll explain.

CATHERINE

Maude, we are not going to leave you here like this.

MAUDE

You have to. I need time to understand. For now, all I feel is hate. I don't want to die feeling hate.

JAMES

Mom...

MAUDE

Please, go... I'll be all right... maybe not all right, but I'll manage. I always have.

CATHERINE

Maude, we are not leaving you.

JAMES

You're coming with us, Mom. We'll try and figure out the rest tomorrow. But tonight... we need to be together.

A long pause as Maude considers this.

MAUDE

You're right. Thank you, James.

(to Alfred)

All we needed was the truth. But that wasn't in you. Who are you, Alfred? Who are you?

JAMES

Mom...?

MAUDE

I'm ready.

James and Maude start to go then he turns back to Catherine.

JAMES

Do you need a ride?

CATHERINE

Thank you. Yes.

Maude, James and Catherine start to go.

MAUDE

Wait...

Maude crosses towards Alfred. For a moment, we think she is about to soften towards him. She regards him, shakes her head at the mystery of it all, then picks up the birthday present. She crosses up to the desk and gets the photograph of James and William. She shows it to James.

MAUDE (CONT)

My handsome boys.

James takes the photograph from her and looks at it finally with love.

JAMES

So much lost.

(sighs)

Let's go home, William.

Taking the photo with him, James smiles as he, Catherine and Maude exit. Alfred sits, an empty shell of a man.

LIGHTS FADE
SLOWLY TO BLACK

THE END