

# IN KINGS AND FOOLS

a full length drama  
Kevin Daly

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Cast of Characters*8 total (5m, 3f)*

SAM ALMAN (*m, sixties*).....Retired, hard nosed New Englander

MARY ELLEN ALMAN (*f, sixties*).....Sam's wife, mother of two.

ALLAN ALMAN: (*m, thirties*).....Sam's oldest son and next-door neighbor.

RACHEL ALMAN (*f, late twenties*).....Allan's wife, a nurse.

DAVID ALMAN (*m, late twenties*).....Sam's youngest son, recently divorced.

CARMEN: (*f, late twenties*).....David's new girlfriend

GEORGE (*m, late fifties*).....long time resident of the neighborhood.

BORIS (*m, forties*).....relatively new to the neighborhood.

Place

Backyard of the Alman home. Labor Day weekend and one week later.

Time

Late summer.

Development History

The Manhattan Theatre Club (*Reading*) 2009

The Cell Theatre (*Reading*) 2010

Fifth Letter Productions (*Reading*) 2012

Pannodra Productions (*Reading*) 2016

Pannodra Productions (*Production*) 2017

Awards, Honors, Recognition

National Playwrights Conference at the O'Neill (*semi-finalist*) 2010

Woodward/Newman Drama Award (*finalist*) 2011-2012

Pannodra's Box New Works Festival (*winner*) 2016

## SCENE ONE

*(The backyard of the Alman home. Labor Day weekend. Sunday morning. SAM ALMAN is putting up a fence. When finished, which it nearly is, it will enclose the entire yard. It will enclose the entire yard for the first time in the thirty years Sam and his wife have lived in this house. It's a nice day. Quiet. Some birds. Enter ALLAN ALMAN, Sam's stage left neighbor and oldest son. He enters through a fence opening, acknowledges his father,)*

ALLAN

Pop.

*(Then continues into Sam's home. Enter RACHEL, Allan's wife, from the same hole in the fence. She acknowledges Sam,)*

RACHEL

Sam.

*(Then continues into Sam's home. SAM is visibly tired and it's not from the work. He looks back at the house. Sighs. Then,)*

RACHEL'S VOICE

Don't you walk away from me, Allan. Don't you walk away when I'm talking to you.

*(SAM returns to work.)*

RACHEL'S VOICE (CONT.)

Why don't you look at me? Why can't you look at me right now?

*(MARY ELLEN, Sam's wife, appears from the house. She leans out the back door,)*

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MARY ELLEN

Sam.

*(Then exits back into the kitchen.  
SAM continues to work.)*

RACHEL'S VOICE

I'm sick of this, Allan. I am sick of this!

*(MARY ELLEN returns.)*

MARY ELLEN

Sam, could you come in here please.

RACHEL'S VOICE

You've got no respect. Look at me. No respect, Allan!

MARY ELLEN

Sam!

*(He stops work. Turns.)*

You need to say something to him.

*(MARY ELLEN exits into the house.)*

RACHEL'S VOICE

The whole neighborhood's talking. You could have killed somebody!

*(Enter BORIS, Sam's stage right  
neighbor. He leans over the fence.)*

RACHEL'S VOICE

Don't look at her! Look at me! Tell me why? Tell me why you do this!

BORIS

Sam.

RACHEL'S VOICE

You don't care. That's why. You don't care what you do.

*(SAM stops his work and turns to BORIS.)*

ALLAN'S VOICE

Stop screaming.

RACHEL'S VOICE

What? You think they don't already know? The whole neighborhood knows, Allan!

BORIS

Sam. I have children.

RACHEL'S VOICE

There's something wrong with you. There's something wrong in your head.

ALLAN'S VOICE

I'll talk to the neighbors! I told you I will talk to the god damn neighbors!

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

Stop this! Stop this now! Sam, come in here!

RACHEL'S VOICE

You're gonna talk to the neighbors? What are you gonna say?

BORIS

Did you see my front yard, Sam?

ALLAN'S VOICE

It was an accident!

RACHEL'S VOICE

You could have killed someone!

BORIS

He destroyed my mailbox.

ALLAN'S VOICE

Get off me!

*(A coffee pot smashes. BORIS and SAM look to the back door. Silence.)*

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

Go home, Allan. I'll clean it up. Sam, get in here.

*(ALLAN exits the house with a cup of coffee. He notices BORIS.)*

BORIS

*(To Allan)*

I have young children who can hear you screaming.

ALLAN

*(To Boris)*

Get off that fence.

SAM

Allan.

BORIS

You destroyed my mailbox. Do you know it?

ALLAN

It was an accident.

SAM

Allan, come over here.

BORIS

One more time and I'll call the police.

*(BORIS exits. ALLAN makes to exit  
into his own yard.)*

SAM

*(To Allan)*

Where are you going?

ALLAN

I've gotta work today.

SAM

I thought you were taking the day off. Your mother's got her barbecue this afternoon.

ALLAN

Why would I wanna hang out with all your friends?

SAM

Because your brother's coming in.

ALLAN

So what? I gotta rearrange my schedule just 'cause Davie's coming to town?

SAM

You don't have to rearrange your schedule. I just thought you'd want to be here.

*(SAM returns to his fence.)*

ALLAN

You want me to get someone to cover? It's Labor Day weekend.

SAM

Do what you want, Allan.

ALLAN

*(Pause, conceding)*

I'll see if anyone wants the shift.

*(MARY ELLEN enters from the house. She's covered in coffee. She looks at Allan the way mothers look at their sons when they feel they've failed them. He exits.)*

MARY ELLEN

Did you say something to him? Sam. I'm talking to you. She's gonna leave him and you're not doing anything about it. What'd he say to you?

SAM

What's he gonna say?

MARY ELLEN

Stop working and look at me.

*(He does.)*

He got drunk and drove all over everyone's lawns last night.

*(Closes the door behind her)*

She's crying in there.

SAM

*(Returning to work)*

They're adults. Let them handle this.

MARY ELLEN

She's crying in your house.

SAM

For Christ sakes, Mary. What do you want me to say?

MARY ELLEN

I don't want you to say anything. I just want you to talk to him.

*(Beat)*

I'll cut up some fruit. You can have a little snack before the guests arrive.

SAM

I'll take a ham steak.

MARY ELLEN

I'm not cooking you a ham steak.

SAM

Why not?

MARY ELLEN

It'll ruin your appetite.

SAM

I didn't have breakfast.

MARY ELLEN

Sliced fruit. You want it or not?

SAM

I'll eat when everyone gets here.

MARY ELLEN

When are you going to get a chance to fix the sink?

SAM

Soon as I'm done with this.

MARY ELLEN

You don't have to do it today. But, it is dripping. Water bill's going to run up.

*(Beat.)*

Davie's coming home today. He wants me to meet his new girlfriend.



SAM

Hopefully I'll have this done by the time he gets here.

*(Beat.)*

MARY ELLEN

I'll cut up some fruit. You have to eat something.

*(She exits into the house.)*

SAM

I'm not hungry.

*(SAM continues with his fence. A few moments later GEORGE, who lives down the street, enters from the house.)*

GEORGE

Sammy! I'm going for my morning walk and I'm thinking, "Wonder what Sammy's up to?" Cross over to your backyard and I walk into a fence. I think, "Am I in the wrong place?"

*(Examines the fence.)*

What? You don't want me just walking up no more? I gotta go through the front door? I gotta take my shoes off. Put 'em back on. You know this is quite an inconvenience. Thought it was time though? Put up the old fence? Little privacy for you and the Mrs.? I understand. I understand. Look, Sammy, you want some help? I'm here. What I gotta do?

*(He stands a segment of fence.)*

Hold this up? You want me to hold this up? Beautiful fence. Really is.

SAM

If you just hold that there, George, I can screw it in.

GEORGE

You know I could get the boys over here. Paint this thing up nice and good for you. Give 'em something to do, you know? They need their hands on something or they're getting in trouble every time you turn around. God bless 'em though. Pretty soon its gonna be the girls. Next thing you know they're gonna be out of the house. I don't know what my wife's gonna do. I tell you, I don't know. Davie's out in the city aint he? Imagine that. Little Davie in the big city. He's doing great though I'm sure. We all knew all around the neighborhood Davie would be something. What ever he wanted to do he would be successful. (MORE.)

GEORGE (CONT.)

You done good with him, Sammy. Real good. Mary Ellen must be proud. Boy was good at anything he ever did. Had it written on his forehead.

SAM

He's coming home today.

GEORGE

That right? No kidding. Feel like I haven't seen the kid in forever. How's he been? What's he been up to?

SAM

He's got a new girlfriend.

GEORGE

Oh yeah? Go Davie. Dating already, huh?

SAM

Guess so.

GEORGE

I always said it was terrible what happened with those two. I mean they made such a nice couple. What was her name? What was her name, his wife?

SAM

Karen.

GEORGE

Karen. Yeah, Karen. She was a sweet kid. That was too bad with those two. Too bad. I liked her, Sammy. I really did. Divorce at such a young age. You know it makes you think. Maybe they put a little more time. Give a little more care. Who knows? Maybe they see it a little further through... But, you know what? What do I know? I'll tell you what, Sammy. Sometimes I think I know nothing no more. I mean think about it. We used to know everybody on this block. Now you've got that crazy Russian living next door. God knows where he's been or what he's up to. But you know people are talking out there, Sammy. I said I'd come over and have a word with you. With us being so close and all, I know you'd understand. Allan really tore up the neighborhood last night. Couple mail boxes, getting up on the lawns. Dug out my front lawn real good. I ain't saying nothing. You know that Sammy. The lawn it don't mean nothing to me. It's the kid. Everybody's talking. We're worried about him. Those of us from the old neighborhood we know he's a good kid but It's starting to become a regular occurrence.

*(RACHEL enters from the house.)*

Hey there, Rachel. How ya been?

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*(She makes no attempt to hide her distaste for nose George)*

GEORGE (CONT.)

Look I gotta get going. You let me know about that fence, Sammy. I'll send the boys over.

*(GEORGE exits through the house.  
RACHEL sits down on the back steps with a cup of tea.)*

RACHEL

Nosey prick.

*(Sam laughs. Beat.)*

You catch the Yanks last night?

SAM

That pitcher should be dragged out and shot.

RACHEL

It was a bad call.

SAM

How could it be a bad call? Whose gotta better look at the ball then the ump? He was calling it tight the whole game.

*(Beat.)*

You ok?

RACHEL

Yeah.

*(MARY ELLEN re-enters from the house with a plate of sliced fruit.  
She sits next to RACHEL.)*

MARY ELLEN

I just got off the phone with Davie. He called me from the train.

SAM

When's he getting in?

MARY ELLEN

He says his girlfriend's a vegetarian.

SAM

Oh boy.

MARY ELLEN

So I say to him, it's not a problem. There's plenty of food. I say, you know I always make my big salad. And do you know what the boy says to me? He says she's a special type of vegetarian!

RACHEL

She's vegan?

MARY ELLEN

He tells me she can't eat my big salad because it has eggs.

SAM

Ok, don't use eggs.

MARY ELLEN

Where you been? The food's been prepared since yesterday.

RACHEL

So what'd he say?

MARY ELLEN

So then he tells me not to worry. As if I could just not worry that there was going to be a person at my house who couldn't eat any of the food I've prepared. He says, she's bringing her own food! That she knows it's hard to accommodate for her type of people and she doesn't want to cause any trouble.

SAM

Sounds thoughtful.

MARY ELLEN

Sam! She's bringing her own food to my house!

SAM

Ok, so more for us. There's nothing we can do about it now.

MARY ELLEN

So what am I gonna do with all this pork roast?

SAM

I'd like a crack at it.

MARY ELLEN

No! That's what I say to him. "What am I going to do with all this pork roast?" And he says, "Oh ma, I can't eat pork."

SAM

He loves pork.

MARY ELLEN

No, *he's* Jewish!

RACHEL

*(Laughing)*

What?

MARY ELLEN

The boy is Jewish, Sam.

SAM

Says who?

MARY ELLEN

Says him! He says, "What's the big deal, ma?  
It makes her parents happy so I'm going to convert."

SAM

So he's not yet?

MARY ELLEN

He's already given up pork!

RACHEL

He's trying to impress her. It'll pass.

MARY ELLEN

You're damn right it'll pass.

SAM

So when's his train getting in?

MARY ELLEN

I don't know. I hung up the phone. He'll call back. He changes his whole religion to make her parents happy. But does he even consider his own mother? Doesn't care about me. Why should he? (MORE.)

MARY ELLEN (CONT.)

After twenty-seven years of doing everything that boy ever needed he just picks up and leaves for New York. Doesn't have time to call his mother. But he has time to be Jewish.

*(SAM returns to his fence.)*

SAM

Rachel's right. It'll pass.

RACHEL

*(To Mary Ellen)*

What still needs to be done?

MARY ELLEN

Oh, not much. Thank you dear. You need to rest.

SAM

Who's coming?

MARY ELLEN

The usual. I invited everyone on the block. Sam, come eat with us. You can take a break.

SAM

You got no meat. I'm not vegan.

MARY ELLEN

You. You could be vegan. Doctor says you got a heart made of bacon.

*(RACHEL laughs.)*

SAM

*(In good humor, to Rachel)*

That funny to you?

RACHEL

A lot of people with heart problems. I see 'em at the hospital all the time.

MARY ELLEN

And some don't make it, Sam. Go on tell him, Rachel. He needs to hear this. Tell him what you told me. Some don't make it, Sam!

RACHEL

And the sad thing is it's one of those things we know how to prevent.

SAM

Prevent what? A heart attack? You kidding me? Jimmy Stanton used to live two blocks over in that brown house. You remember him, Mary Ellen? He used to jog by here every morning. He was thin. He was healthy. He ate right. Even when he'd come over here. You remember? He wouldn't even eat nothing greasy. Was always watching his figure. Poor guy keeled over and died at forty-nine. You remember that, Mary Ellen? Died of a heart attack, Rachel. Nobody knew what happened. He was perfectly healthy. If I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die. Might as well have a steak while I can.

MARY ELLEN

*(To Rachel)*

He wasn't faithful to his wife.

SAM

Stop that.

MARY ELLEN

He wasn't. The whole neighborhood knew.

SAM

And so that's why he had a heart attack?

MARY ELLEN

Maybe.

*(To Rachel.)*

By the end he didn't even try to hide it. Used to bring the girls right to the house.

SAM

You saw that? You saw that with your own eyes?

MARY ELLEN

No. But, Francine—

SAM

Francine! That's your source? Let me tell you something about that woman. She's lonely and she's a liar.

MARY ELLEN

Give me a break, Sam. She's eighty-four years old. What reason does she have to lie?

SAM

I just told you. She likes the attention and the only time you ladies give her a lick of attention is when she's got something juicy to tell.

MARY ELLEN

Well, she didn't make this one up anyways. She was just telling me something she'd heard.

SAM

Even better!

MARY ELLEN

*(To Rachel)*

Apparently, Claire's boys were over pulling weeds at Jimmy's house. And when they came home early Claire started scolding them. Lord knows those boys are as lazy as their father.

SAM

Mary!

MARY ELLEN

So she goes out to do some investigating herself. And just as she's stepping out her front door she sees Jimmy pulling the curtains shut and then she notices a new car in the driveway. AND, his wife's car isn't there.

SAM

Give me a break.

MARRY ELLEN

And sure enough not half an hour later out the front door comes some twenty-year-old floozy. She gets in her car so embarrassed she won't even look up at Claire. Three months later Jimmy drops dead. Heart attack. The guilt got to him.

SAM

She was probably one of his students.

MARY ELLEN

I bet she was.

SAM

And they were probably doing school stuff.

MARY ELLEN

What business does he have doing school stuff at his home? And if they weren't doing anything wrong why would he close the blinds?

SAM

Maybe there was a glare.



MARY ELLEN

You're telling me that if you had a daughter you would be totally fine with her walking out of a professor's home with her hair all messed up and her blouse unbuttoned?

SAM

Now you're just making things up.

*(The phone rings)*

I bet that's Davie.

*(Goes for the phone. Stops. Turns back,)*

I knew Jimmie. He was a good man. He didn't cheat on his wife.

*(SAM exits into the house.)*

MARY ELLEN

*(To Rachel)*

There's nothing worse than a cheater and there's a special place in hell reserved for men who cheat on their wives. We got lucky, Rachel. We got in good with good men. Lord knows it could be worse and I should know I volunteered with the church down at the shelter.

*(SAM returns from the house.)*

SAM

It was Davie. I'm gonna run over and pick him up. You need anything from the store?

MARY ELLEN

Maybe you want to stop and pick up some beer?

SAM

If they want beer they can bring their own. I'll be right back.

*(SAM exits.)*

MARY ELLEN

*(To Rachel)*

Allan's been working a lot of nights lately?

RACHEL

He's been taking a couple extra shifts for the overtime.

MARY ELLEN

He works hard that Allan. Always has. Just like his father. Davie, not so much. He's a sweet boy but he doesn't have it like those two. (MORE.)

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*(ALLAN steps out of his house and starts walking over.)*

MARY ELLEN (CONT.)

And you know you can always come talk to me.

RACHEL

I know.

MARY ELLEN

Allan, you want something to eat?

ALLAN

No thanks, ma.

MARY ELLEN

I need to get moving. The guests will be arriving soon.

RACHEL

What can I help with?

MARY ELLEN

No, sit. Sit. I've got everything under control. You sure you don't want anything right now, Allan? Ok. I'll be inside.

*(MARY ELLEN exits. Silence. ALLAN sits down next to RACHEL. She gets up and moves away.)*

RACHEL

*(Annoyed)*

Allan.

*(BORIS enters his yard and starts laying down grass seed. ALLAN notices him and a portion of his attention remains with Boris through the scene.)*

ALLAN

Where's pop?

RACHEL

Went to grab Davie from the train.

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ALLAN

It's down the street. He couldn't walk?

RACHEL

He's got his new girlfriend with him.

ALLAN

Oh yeah? He's dating again?

RACHEL

I guess.

ALLAN

What? You don't think it's good for him?

RACHEL

When's the last time you even talked to your brother?

*(BORIS stops seeding. Looks into Sam's yard. Then goes back to work.)*

ALLAN

I told you, I call the kid all the time. He doesn't return my calls.

RACHEL

Why not?

ALLAN

How should I know? He's just busy.

RACHEL

No, he's not. He's mad at you.

ALLAN

For what? What did I do?

RACHEL

You gave him a hard time about his divorce.

ALLAN

What'd you want me to do? The kid just packed up and left town without telling anybody.

RACHEL

You should have followed him.

ALLAN

And done what? Dragged him back by his ears?

RACHEL

I'm not joking.

ALLAN

Rach, you don't understand. Some things a guy's just gotta deal with on his own.

RACHEL

*(Pause.)*

You should use this weekend to fix things with him.

*(BORIS again stops seeding.)*

ALLAN

*(To Boris)*

What're you looking at?

RACHEL

Allan.

ALLAN

You want me to come over there?

RACHEL

Allan, take it easy.

ALLAN

*(Approaching the fence)*

What are you looking at? Yeah, I'm talking to you, Boris.

RACHEL

Allan!

ALLAN

One phone call. You hear me? One phone call they'll have you on the next plane back to Uzbekistan or wherever it is you come from.

BORIS  
I'm an American citizen.

RACHEL  
*(Pulling him away)*  
Leave him alone.

BORIS  
I'm an American citizen and I'll call the police if you come onto my property.

ALLAN  
*(Breaking free)*  
Are you threatening me?

RACHEL  
Allan!

ALLAN  
Listen to me you dumb Russian.  
*(Slams the fence)*  
I know what you did. You hear me? And if you give me one more reason I will embarrass you in front of your son.

*(SAM enters from his back door.)*

SAM  
Allan!  
*(ALLAN exits to his own house.)*  
Where are you going? Your brother's home.  
*(He's gone.)*

BORIS  
Sam. I won't accept this again.

*(SAM nods. BORIS exits. Long silence.  
DAVID pokes his head out the back door.)*

DAVID  
Is this where everybody is?

SAM  
Davie, come give me a hand here.

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*(DAVID enters the backyard with a cooler of ice and soda.)*

DAVID

Hey Rach.

RACHEL

Hey Davie.

*(They embrace.)*

It's good to see you. You don't come home any more.

DAVID

Been busy at work. Real busy.

SAM

Come on, Davie. I want to get this done before everyone gets here.

DAVID

What are you putting up a fence for?

SAM

Your mother wanted a fence. So I built a fence.

RACHEL

Davie, I thought you were bringing your girlfriend?

DAVID

Ma grabbed her up. Come on I'll introduce you.

RACHEL

No, you stay and help your father. I'll find her.

DAVID

Don't let ma scare her away.

RACHEL

She'll be fine. What's her name?

DAVID

Carmen.

*(RACHEL exits into the house.)*

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SAM

*(Working on the fence)*

So you're Jewish now?

DAVID

*(Laughing)*

Ma making a big deal of it?

SAM

It is a big deal. You shouldn't have to change your religion.

DAVID

It's not for her. It's her parents. They won't let her see me if I'm not Jewish.

SAM

That doesn't sound too smart.

*(Of the final fence link)*

Hold this straight for me.

*(Beat.)*

DAVID

*(Holding the final link in place)*

So what do you think?

SAM

About what?

DAVID

About what! About Carmen. She's amazing isn't she?

SAM

I don't understand why someone should have to change who they are.

DAVID

I'm not changing who I am. It's not a big deal.

SAM

You've got to hold it straight, Davie.

DAVID

You know pop nobody calls me Davie anymore.

SAM  
What do they call you?

DAVID  
David.

SAM  
Does that sound more Jewish?

DAVID  
*(Laughing.)*  
It doesn't change anything about me.

SAM  
Your mother said you got a new job.

DAVID  
Well, it's not really a new job. I still work for the same company but it's a new office. It's small but they chose me to head all projects so it's pretty exciting.

SAM  
How many people working for you?

DAVID  
Well, you don't look at it that way. You look at it by clients.

SAM  
You said you manage an office?

DAVID  
Right, but it's a branch off the larger company. Nobody really works for me. We all work for Jefferson Financial.

SAM  
Then let me ask you this, how many people in the office?

DAVID  
People do different things maybe fifteen in total?

SAM  
What do you mean maybe?



DAVID

Fifteen. There's fifteen pop.

SAM

You gotta hold it straight, Davie.

DAVID

Where're you gonna put the gate?

SAM

No gate.

DAVID

*(A joke at first)*

What are you trying to keep Allan out?

*(Beat.)*

SAM

*(Of the fence piece)*

Hold it right there.

DAVID

You and ma should come down sometime. We could catch a game or something.

SAM

I don't like the city. Too busy.

DAVID

Sure. But once in awhile it can't be that bad. Besides I want you to see the new office. You can see the whole city from it.

SAM

If you're gonna be in charge of other people's lives you have to take it seriously.

DAVID

Pop, I'm not in charge of anybody's lives. I manage an office.

SAM

You don't even know who's in the office.

DAVID

Fifteen. There's fifteen people in the office.

SAM

That's a big responsibility.

DAVID

I understand that. That's why they hired me.

SAM

Louie Civerella was my boss at the yard for thirty-four years. Thirty-four years. He hired me in when I was fourteen. He knew my parents. He was there when each of you were born. He knew when you had birthdays. He helped me build this house. He was a good man. Not just to me but to any man who ever worked for him. He knew that our jobs were our livelihoods. He knew we had families to support and he always stepped up to bat for us. That's what a good boss does.

DAVID

Pop, don't get me wrong but I think managing an office for Jefferson Financial is a little different than being a pit boss down at the shipping yard.

SAM

You're still young, Davie. You're responsible for all of those people in your office and the families they support. You need to take it seriously.

DAVID

I do take it seriously. I take it very seriously. I misunderstood your question that's all.

SAM

You're not listening to me...

DAVID

No, you're absolutely right. Because it would only make sense that forty-three years at the shipping yard has adequately prepared you as a freelance managerial consultant for multi-million dollar corporations.

SAM

Hold it straight please.

*(SAM puts in the last few screws in silence. MARY ELLEN leans out the back door.)*

MARY ELLEN

Sam? When you finish up can you boys pull out the chairs and table so I can start putting some of the food out?

SAM

Just about done.

MARY ELLEN

I'm so happy you're home, Davie.

*(She kisses him too many times on the face.)*

DAVID

Ma!

*(She exits back into the house.)*

DAVID

I'll start bringing them out.

*(RACHEL opens the door as DAVID exits into the house. She sits down on the steps with a bowl of pasta salad.)*

SAM

What you got there?

RACHEL

Pasta salad.

SAM

Of everything on that counter you chose pasta salad?

RACHEL

Mary Ellen said leave the cookies for last.

SAM

Why?

RACHEL

Because you'd eat 'em all.

SAM

I thought you were on my side.

RACHEL

I'm always on your side, Sammy.

SAM

Carmen hasn't run for the door yet has she?

RACHEL

I thought she might when Mary Ellen started pulling eggs from the big salad. But she's doing alright in there. Nice girl.

SAM

Seemed it.

*(Of the fence)*

So what do you think? Nice huh? I'll paint it up this week.

RACHEL

Looks good. Can you put one in my bedroom?

*(DAVID appears behind the fence at the side of the house.)*

DAVID

Pop, I'm gonna hand it over to you.

*(They exchange a plastic table over the fence. DAVID exits. SAM sets the table in the yard. MARY ELLEN enters with CARMEN from the house. CARMEN carries a pitcher of lemonade with some paper cups. MARY ELLEN carries a big salad, without eggs.)*

MARY ELLEN

*(Placing the salad on the table, to Carmen)*

You can just put that down right here. Thank you very much.

CARMEN

No problem.

*(RACHEL puts the pasta down as well.)*

RACHEL

I'll go get the plates and silverware.

---

*(She exits.)*

MARY ELLEN

I'll leave some room on the table here, Carmen. So you can put out your food.

CARMEN

Oh, that's alright, Mrs. Alman. It's really not...

MARY ELLEN

No. No, go ahead. I insist. Maybe someone will like your food? Sam, you know Carmen doesn't even eat fish?

SAM

Well, that's alright. I'm sure we can find something for you.

MARY ELLEN

Sam! I told you. It's fine. She brought her own food.

*(To Carmen)*

Don't listen to him, Carmen. You eat what you want. And I also want you to know that you being Jewish is fine with us.

SAM

Mary Ellen.

MARY ELLEN

What, Sam? I want her to be comfortable. I want you to be comfortable, Carmen.

CARMEN

I am. Thank you.

MARY ELLEN

Good. You let us know if we should change anything. I've got a pork roast. But, I'll keep it covered when people aren't eating.

*(MARY ELLEN exits into the house.)*

SAM

If you can make it through today, Carmen, you can make it through any day with this family.

CARMEN

Thanks. And thanks for picking us up at the train station.

SAM

Ah, no problem. If it was just Davie I'd have made him walk.

CARMEN

Knowing David he probably would've called a cab.

SAM

Lazy Davie.

CARMEN

Tell me about it. I practically had to beg him to come today.

*(Silence. SAM stops working.)*

CARMEN (CONT.)

I mean he was going to come but he was just taking forever to get ready.

*(DAVID appears at the fence with plastic chairs.)*

DAVID

Here ya go, pop.

*(He hands them over and exits.)*

SAM

*(To Carmen)*

How'd you two meet up?

CARMEN

David probably wouldn't tell you this but we met at a cooking class in the city.

SAM

A cooking class?

CARMEN

Now we take all types of classes together. Last week I got him to start a pottery class with me.

*(MARY ELLEN returns with a bowl of chips and dip. RACHEL follows with some plastic plates and bowls.)*

MARY ELLEN

Ok, all that's left, Sam, is the grill but I figure we wait until people start getting here. Boy, this heat is something, huh?

RACHEL

What time is everyone coming over?

MARY ELLEN

I had said noon. But, I left it casual. What time is it?

CARMEN

Almost twelve thirty.

MARY ELLEN

So they should be arriving any time now.

*(DAVID returns with more chairs.)*

DAVID

Only a couple more, pop.

SAM

Bring 'em up. We'll need 'em.

*(DAVID hands over the chairs and makes to exit.)*

SAM (CONT.)

And Davie do me a favor, grab the flag from the basement. I forgot to put it up this morning.

MARY ELLEN

What do you need the flag for?

SAM

What do you mean what for? I put it up every year.

MARY ELLEN

No, it blocks up the doorway.

SAM

It doesn't block the doorway.

MARY ELLEN

It's too big, Sam. Davie, leave it where it is.

(DAVID *exits.*)

SAM

It's Labor Day weekend Mary Ellen I always put the flag...

MARY ELLEN

It's tacky to hang up flags, Sam. Just drop it you're embarrassing me.

RACHEL

It's this heat. Slowing everybody down.

SAM

No it's not. It's the humidity.

MARY ELLEN

It's the heat. It's the humidity. It's everything.

SAM

They're not the same. It's the humidity makes everything miserable.

MARY ELLEN

(*To Carmen*)

This is typical of our friends. It takes them forever to get here but once they do they don't want to leave.

CARMEN

Do you guys do this every year?

SAM

Unfortunately.

RACHEL

Oh come on, once your friends get here you have a good time.

SAM

We'll see.

MARY ELLEN

No, let him complain. That's what he's good at. I throw parties, he complains.

(MORE.)



MARY ELLEN (CONT.)

Now, if I didn't go through the trouble it would be, "Mary Ellen how come we're not having people over this year? Why didn't you invite the neighbors over?"

SAM

Because I know how you live for these parties.

*(DAVID enters from the house with  
GEORGE.)*

DAVID

Look who I found begging for money in the street!

MARY ELLEN

Well, it's about time you guys got here.

GEORGE

You believe this kid, Sammy? Look at him. He thinks he's a man now!

*(Makes a box at David)*

Look at this guy!

*(Noticing Carmen.)*

And you must be Carmen. Heard a lot about you. George Steiner. Pleasure to meet you.

CARMEN

Hello.

GEORGE

Gee, Davie. She's not as ugly as you said she was.

MARY ELLEN

George, tell Claire to get out of the kitchen. I have everything under control in there.

*(Beat.)*

GEORGE

She's over at Barbara's house.

MARY ELLEN

What's she doing over there?

GEORGE

I thought you girls decided they were gonna have the party this year.

MARY ELLEN

That's just ridiculous. I have the party every year.

SAM

What's going on, George?

GEORGE

I got no idea. I thought this was discussed.

MARY ELLEN

I sent out invitations.

SAM

*(To George)*

You didn't get an invitation?

GEORGE

Sammy, I'm telling ya I know what you know. I thought the girls talked.

RACHEL

I didn't hear anything about a change.

MARY ELLEN

I saw Barbara on Wednesday. I told her I was making the pork roast.

GEORGE

I bet she figured you were bringing it to her house.

MARY ELLEN

No one said anything to me.

GEORGE

I thought you knew, Mary Ellen. Honest to god I thought you knew.

MARY ELLEN

Well, I didn't, George. I didn't know anything. I spent the whole weekend cooking for this party.

DAVID

Alright, ma it's not a big deal.

MARY ELLEN

It is a big deal! Nobody told me anything about it being at Barbara's house.

*(Silence.)*

GEORGE

Sam. I thought you guys knew.

RACHEL

I'm sure you did.

GEORGE

Rach.

RACHEL

Thought you'd just pop in to say hello?

GEORGE

Hold on a minute.

RACHEL

Don't point your finger at me.

GEORGE

Sam, it's a misunderstanding.

RACHEL

Like you didn't know. Like they haven't been planning this for weeks.

GEORGE

Look at it from where I'm standing.

SAM

So you're not staying then, George.

GEORGE

*(pause)*

Good seeing you, Davie. Carmen. Mary, I'm sorry 'bout all this. I really am. Rachel.

*(GEORGE exits. Silence.)*

MARY ELLEN

Carmen, I am so embarrassed.

SAM

You got nothing to be embarrassed about.

MARY ELLEN

I invited you to a party.

SAM

Who says we're not gonna party? Davie, let's fire up the grill.

MARY ELLEN

I've got a kitchen full of food, Sam.

SAM

And we're gonna eat it.

RACHEL

*(kindly)*

They do it to everyone. Not just you.

SAM

They're ugly people, Mary. I've been telling you this for years.

DAVID

George says Allan dug up his lawn last night.

SAM

What are you doing?

DAVID

You can't blame people for not wanting to come over here.

SAM

Do me a favor, go start the grill.

MARY ELLEN

He's right, Sam. Rachel, let's see what we can fit in the freezer.

CARMEN

I'll help too.

SAM

What are you doing that for? We can still have the barbecue.

MARY ELLEN

*(aside)*

Maybe if you had spoken to the neighbors.

SAM

I spoke to the neighbors.

MARY ELLEN

What language did you speak?

SAM

I spoke English, Mary Ellen.

MARY ELLEN

Can you put this all away or do I have to do this too?

*(Sam nods. The three women exit into the house.)*

SAM

*(to David)*

You had to say something?

*(ALLAN enters from his house and leans over the fence.)*

ALLAN

Hey Davie.

DAVID

Allan.

ALLAN

Where the hell is everybody? I thought we were having a party.

*(End scene.)*

## SCENE TWO

*(Later that evening. DAVID is picking up some of the toys Mary Ellen left out for the kids. BORIS enters from his house and claps dried mud off a pair of his son's sneakers.)*

DAVID

Hey Boris. How are you?

BORIS

Hello, David.

*(BORIS makes to exit.)*

DAVID

*(Holding up a pogo stick)*

Boris, you want this? I don't know why my mother keeps it lying around. Maybe Sergey'll use it?

BORIS

Oh. It's OK. Thank you.

*(DAVID hands it over the fence.)*

DAVID

No, really. Take it. It's just gonna go to waste.

BORIS

*(Taking it)*

Maybe Sergey is too old for this?

DAVID

You kidding me? I'd jump around on that thing if I had time.

BORIS

OK. Thank you, David.

DAVID

Hey, what grade's he in now anyway?

BORIS

He's in the first year of high school.

DAVID

No.

BORIS

You know he's playing football now?

DAVID

Yeah? Does he like it?

BORIS

Yes. He is enjoying.

DAVID

I'm gonna have to catch a game this year.

BORIS

David, this would make him very happy.

DAVID

I'll try and get out there.

BORIS

OK. It was good speaking with you, David.

DAVID

Yeah, you too. Good talking to you. And tell Sergey to keep his head up, you know. Keep his head up and his feet moving.

BORIS

OK, OK head up and feet moving. I am not so good with the football. Sergey is laughing at me. But, I will impress him with this knowledge, yes? OK, David. Good talking with you.

DAVID

Take it easy, Boris.

*(Before BORIS can exit ALLAN enters the backyard from Sam's house with a six-pack. There is a tense silence as the two men stare at each other until BORIS retreats.)*

ALLAN

*(To David)*

Beer?

DAVID

We'll go out for beers tonight. With everyone else.

ALLAN

That's with everyone else. How 'bout right now?

---

DAVID

You know how pop feels about that stuff.

ALLAN

You're twenty-eight.

DAVID

I'm twenty-nine.

ALLAN

You're twenty-nine.

DAVID

It's outta respect.

ALLAN

What? So I don't respect him?

DAVID

I don't know. You respect anyone, Allan?

ALLAN

What's that supposed to mean?

DAVID

He doesn't keep it in his house.

ALLAN

He doesn't care.

DAVID

Just give me the damn thing.

ALLAN

Atta boy.

*(ALLAN tosses him one.)*

ALLAN (CONT.)

I didn't have any Manichewitz.

DAVID

Very funny.



Rachel told me. ALLAN

Yeah? DAVID

Yeah. That Carmen... seems nice. ALLAN

You get a chance to talk to her? DAVID

Yeah. Yeah, I talked to her. ALLAN

Smart, huh? DAVID

Oh yeah, she's smart. ALLAN

What? DAVID

What? ALLAN

You don't like her? DAVID

What'd I say? ALLAN

You're acting like it. DAVID

Like what? ALLAN

Like you don't like her. DAVID

ALLAN

I like her fine.

DAVID

What'd she say something? She do something you didn't like?

ALLAN

I said she was smart. What do you want from me?

DAVID

You got a problem with her just say it.

ALLAN

*(Pause)*

It felt like she looked down on us a little bit, that's all.

DAVID

You kidding me?

ALLAN

It's not even that, Davie. It's the way she was talking to you.

DAVID

The way she was talking to me?

ALLAN

Like she was doing you some kinda favor being here.

DAVID

You're something else. You know that?

ALLAN

She's probably perfect for you.

DAVID

You misunderstood her.

ALLAN

I'm sure I did.

*(ALLAN shifts his attention to Boris' yard.)*

DAVID

She can be a little abrasive but maybe that's what I like about her. She's honest.

ALLAN

*(Of Boris)*

You believe this guy?

DAVID

What?

ALLAN

With his flag hanging out back.

DAVID

What's the big deal? We used to have a flag back here.

*(DAVID indicates an empty flag holder attached to the back of the house.)*

ALLAN

He thinks it makes him American.

DAVID

He is American.

ALLAN

I got no problem with foreigners. This guy. You know what this guy did? He nearly got me fired from my job.

DAVID

How'd he do that?

ALLAN

He called my boss and told him I was using the ambulance to pick up the fence links for pop.

DAVID

Were you?

ALLAN

Everybody does it.

DAVID

So you knock over his mailbox and drive up on his lawn?

ALLAN

That was an accident. I'm gonna fix the mailbox.

DAVID

You should.

*(They drink their beers.)*

ALLAN

I worked a call last night over on Maple. I get there this guy's meeting me in the drive. He tells me something's wrong with his wife. Sure enough, I go in, she's barely breathing. She's having an allergic reaction to something. So I tell him I gotta get her to a hospital. And you know what he says to me? He says, "We don't have insurance. Can you find out how much the ambulance ride is gonna cost me." So now I tell him "get out of the way—I don't have time for you". But he stops me again. He says he's gonna sue me if I put a finger on her. So those are the magic words right? I step back. I mean what'd ya say to that? You're talking about a guy who just doesn't have his priorities right. By this point it don't matter anyway. She's dead on the kitchen floor.

DAVID

*(A remote hint of empathy for his brother)*

No kidding...

ALLAN

I'll tell ya, Davie I stopped off for a drink-- I don't even know how I got home.

*(They drink their beer.)*

Rach really wants to catch a ball game. Maybe we could go the four of us sometime.

DAVID

It's September. They're sold out.

ALLAN

We could scalp 'em.

DAVID

It'd be too expensive.

ALLAN

Then maybe we just meet for lunch.

I get busy in the fall.

DAVID

Too busy for lunch?

ALLAN

What'd you want from me?

DAVID

I don't know? Maybe you return a phone call once in a while. Maybe you come home on Ma's birthday this year.

ALLAN

I was working.

DAVID

Yeah, you're always working. You got a problem with me just say it. Don't take it out on everybody else.

ALLAN

Let it go, Allan.

DAVID

No. Be a man for once. You got a problem, deal with it.

ALLAN

You want *me* to be a man, Allan?

DAVID

*(SAM enters from the house. Fresh out of the shower he wears a collared shirt and tie. He is delighted with the large slice of cake he stole from the kitchen. Beat, he notices the boys.)*

What? What's going on out here?

SAM

Pop, if Ma comes home she'll kill you.

DAVID

---

SAM

If I don't get cake. You don't get cake.

*(ALLAN makes to exit.)*

Where you going?

ALLAN

I gotta work, pop.

SAM

I thought you were gonna switch the shift?

ALLAN

I couldn't get someone to take it.

SAM

Allan, this is important to your mother.

ALLAN

Nothing I could do. I'll see you later.

*(ALLAN exits into the house.)*

SAM

What's going on with you two?

DAVID

Nothing.

SAM

You're drinking a beer? We're going out to dinner.

DAVID

It's just a beer, pop.

SAM

You don't need beer to have a good time.

DAVID

What happened in the game last night?

SAM

You know I tell you all the time. I don't want you drinking beer in my yard. If you're gonna drink beer why don't you—

Fine, pop!

DAVID

*(DAVID throws the bottle into the fence.  
Immediately he regrets doing so.)*

Who do you think you are?

SAM

I'll clean it up.

DAVID

SAM

My brother drank beer, Davie. You wanna be like him? You wanna be a bum?

DAVID

I don't drink that much.

SAM

What's gotten into you?

DAVID

Nothing's gotten into me.

SAM

You don't come home. You don't call your mother any more.

DAVID

You could call too, you know.

SAM

She does. She calls you all the time.

DAVID

And we talk, pop. We talk all the time.

SAM

You missed your mother's birthday, Davie.

DAVID

I had to work.

SAM

You had time for pottery class.

DAVID

*(Beat)*

That's one night a week.

SAM

She was really upset about that, you know. A son should always come home for his mother's birthday.

DAVID

Yeah, I know. It's a new job. I wanted to make a good impression.

SAM

I'm sure you did. I'm sure you made a great impression. But these things you gotta prioritize in life. You nearly killed your mother. You know that?

DAVID

Come on! I called home. I sent a gift. I invited you guys to the city. Give me a break, pop. Give me a fuckin break!

SAM

You've got no call to take that language with me.

DAVID

Well, don't you think you're pushing it just a little too far? Don't you think you're exaggerating just a little bit, pop?

SAM

I think you better change your tone. And I'm talking about something different now.

DAVID

What are you talking about?

SAM

I may not have some big fancy degree but I know how to raise a family. And I know something's going on with you. I don't know if it's the alcohol. I don't know if maybe it's drugs...

DAVID

Drugs, Pop? Come on.



SAM

I don't know what it is. But, something's gotten into you and you're not making good decisions. Now, every time I go into that bank they ask about you.

DAVID

You gotta be kidding me.

SAM

Hear me out, Davie.

DAVID

David. I told you to call me, David. You can't even get my name right but you try to run my life.

SAM

I can't get the name right? I gave you the damn name.

DAVID

I got a fine job in the city. I'm not going back to the bank.

SAM

What's that guy's name? The guy with the big ears. Always says hi to me and your mother. Nice guy.

DAVID

You're not listening to me, pop.

SAM

He always asks about you. Your mother mentioned that you might be interested in moving back.

DAVID

What?

SAM

He says he'd give you a raise. Sounded like a sweet deal.

DAVID

You negotiating for me?

SAM

I took a drive the other day. A few streets over. I saw a house. A very nice house. Reasonably priced.

DAVID

Pop.

SAM

I could help you out with the payments. It would make your mother very happy.

DAVID

I'm not leaving the city.

SAM

Just give it some thought. This is your home. This is where your family is.

DAVID

You could come to the city too, you know.

SAM

It's your mother, David. Me? I could care less what you do. You're an adult now. You do what you want. I tell you this 'cause you're hurting your mother. You're her youngest son. She doesn't understand why you don't come home. She wants you close. She wants to see you. She wants to cook for you. She cried when you didn't come home for her birthday.

DAVID

*(Pause)*

I'll try to come home more often.

SAM

She still talks to your wife you know.

DAVID

She's not my wife anymore.

SAM

Ok, but she's still part of this family. She asks about you. You should give her a call.

DAVID

I'm not gonna call her.

SAM

Why not? You can't give her a call? You can't see how she's doing. It's the right thing to do to make sure she's ok.

---

DAVID

I'm sure she's fine.

SAM

She's not fine. Your mother tells me.

DAVID

Ma exaggerates.

SAM

Think about this for a second. You didn't even give it a chance.

DAVID

I gave it a chance.

SAM

What chance? You get in one fight. You walk out the door and never come back. What did I do wrong in raising you that you got it in you to just walk out like that.

DAVID

It's not about you. It just didn't work.

SAM

You make a commitment. You get married. It's a commitment to see things through.

DAVID

I tried, pop. I really did.

SAM

Nobody's saying you didn't try. We're just saying maybe you try a little harder, you know? Your grandfather used to say, among men, there are kings and there are fools. It takes a lifetime to be a king. But just one poor choice to be a fool. Which are you, David? Are you the king or the fool?

*(Beat)*

DAVID

I don't know. What do you think?

SAM

It doesn't matter what I think. It just seems like you didn't make the right choice.

DAVID

You know, pop. Maybe you don't know everything.

*(Silence.)*

SAM

Listen, your mother's putting together a dinner in October and I want you to plan on being there. Her brother and his family are coming in.

DAVID

I'll see what I can do.

SAM

She's putting a lot of effort into this. I'm telling you in advance. I want you to make arrangements.

DAVID

October's a tough month for me.

SAM

You make the time. It's important to her.

*(MARY ELLEN calls from inside.)*

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

Sam! Did you eat this cake?

SAM

No!

*(Hands it over. Calling back)*

David was hungry.

*(MARY ELLEN pops out of the doorway.)*

MARY ELLEN

You're hungry, Davie? Come inside I'll warm up some leftovers.

DAVID

I'll be fine, ma. We're going to eat soon.

MARY ELLEN

I'll fix you something.

*(MORE.)*

MARY ELLEN (CONT.)

*(To Sam)*

You had to wear that shirt?

SAM

What? I like this shirt?

MARY ELLEN

It's older than Davie that shirt.

SAM

Yeah, it's good fabric.

MARY ELLEN

Go change your shirt. We can see your nipples.

SAM

What, see my nipples? Davie, you see my nipples?

MARY ELLEN

Tell him, Davie. Tell him you see his nipples through his shirt.

DAVID

Ma!

MARY ELLEN

I'll warm you a plate.

*(MARY ELLEN exits back into the house.  
SAM stares down at his chest.)*

SAM

She's crazy your mother.

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

I'm not going anywhere till you change your shirt!

SAM

*(Whisper to David)*

Give it back.

*(SAM takes the cake back as  
RACHEL and CARMEN enter from*

*the house.)*

DAVID

How was the walk?

CARMEN

It's a nice neighborhood.

SAM

Isn't it?

RACHEL

Your mother took Carmen to the school.

CARMEN

She showed me your picture on the wall.

RACHEL

She loves talking about you, Davie.

SAM

You ladies ready to go?

RACHEL

I've got to run back and change real quick.

SAM

Go! Go. We have reservations.

RACHEL

Where's Allan?

SAM

He went to work.

RACHEL

He doesn't have to work tonight. He took it off.

*(SAM looks to David.)*

SAM

What did you say to him?

I'll go find him.

RACHEL

*(RACHEL exits into the house.)*

*(To David)*  
He tell you he had to work?

SAM

He didn't say.

DAVID

What were you two arguing about when I came out here?

SAM

We weren't arguing.

DAVID

*(MARY ELLEN exits the house with  
a paper plate of food in one hand  
and a freshly ironed shirt in the  
other.)*

DAVID  
I'm not hungry.

SAM  
I don't like that shirt.

MARY ELLEN  
You eat. My son's not going to go hungry at my house.  
*(To Sam while taking his cake)*  
And you! You want a heart attack? You have a heart attack. But you change your shirt first. It's embarrassing.

SAM  
That shirt itches.

MARY ELLEN  
You do what you want, Sam! I don't have time for this.

*(MARY ELLEN makes to go back into the  
house.)*

SAM  
Give it to me.

*(SAM takes the shirt and exits into the house.)*

SAM

If you want me to change the shirt just say you want me to change the shirt.

MARY ELLEN

*(Following him in)*

I want you to change the shirt.

SAM

I'll change the shirt.

*(Both exit. Silence. CARMEN moves to the fence adjacent to Boris' yard and gazes down the line of houses.)*

CARMEN

David, your mother took me for a walk. I swear if we got separated I wouldn't find my way back. It's absurd. I mean every house is exactly the same.

DAVID

They're not all the same. There's different colors. Some have porches.

CARMEN

Your mother asked me if I liked to eat lunch at my professors' houses.

DAVID

So what?

CARMEN

I don't know what that means?

DAVID

It means she likes you. She's just trying to get to know you.

CARMEN

I felt like I was being interrogated. God knows what about. It's like they speak a completely different language.

DAVID

They? That's my mother you're talking about.



CARMEN

Not just her. Everybody. When we went to your school everyone was looking at me funny.

DAVID

It just felt that way.

CARMEN

No, I can tell. It's like they'd never seen somebody from outside this neighborhood before.

DAVID

See, you'd fit right in 'cause you exaggerate like my mother.

CARMEN

There was an old lady who sat outside in a lawn chair ...

DAVID

Francine? Don't listen to her. Nobody does.

CARMEN

She kept calling me Karen. She kept calling me your ex-wife's name.

DAVID

Carmen, she's old. She's senile.

CARMEN

She knew what she was doing, David. I told her my name. I told her over and over again.

DAVID

You should've just walked away.

CARMEN

Every time we met someone new your mother would swoop in and announce that I didn't eat *normal* food.

DAVID

She was trying to help.

CARMEN

*(Careful not to be heard from within the house)*

She was trying to sabotage me!

DAVID

Carmen.

CARMEN

Deep down your mother wishes you were still with Karen.

DAVID

You're reading too much into this.

CARMEN

She took me to your house.

DAVID

What?

CARMEN

The house you and Karen were going to move into.

DAVID

That's just how she is. She likes to explain things. It doesn't mean what you think it means.

CARMEN

I just want to go home, David. Let's go out to dinner and then catch the late train.

DAVID

I told them we were staying over.

CARMEN

I can't stay here any longer. This place is like a vacuum. It's trying to suck you back in while spitting me out.

DAVID

Is that what you think? You think I'm just gonna put you on the train and stay here with them.

CARMEN

You left Karen that way didn't you?

*(Pause.)*

DAVID

No. No, I did not.

CARMEN

Well, apparently you have a job at the bank if you want to come back.

DAVID

I don't.

*(Beat.)*

CARMEN

You don't?

DAVID

No. Not at all. Why do you think I left?

CARMEN

Your mother says you left because you got in fight with Karen.

DAVID

My mother doesn't know why I left. I left because I couldn't breathe. I left because I didn't want to be like Francine. I didn't wanna find myself sitting in a lawn chair calling some kid by the wrong name just so she'd keep talking to me. I left because I had no reason to stay. I left because I hoped to find something better. And I did. I found you. This place is my home. Your home is your home. You can't change that. And these people, they're my family. They're in my life because they have to be. But, you. You're in my life because I want you there. Let's go out to dinner. I'll get a call from work. We'll catch the late train home and I'll buy you a cheesecake.

*(They kiss.)*

CARMEN

David, we can stay if you want. I made you stay at my parents' house.

DAVID

Let's go after dinner. I'm about ready to leave myself.

CARMEN

Your mother's going to be upset.

DAVID

My mother's always upset.

CARMEN

Do you ever think she might be right? Maybe if you tried a little harder with Karen you could have worked things out?

DAVID

She said that to you?

CARMEN

That's how she introduced me to people.

DAVID

No she didn't.

CARMEN

"This is Carmen, Davie's new girlfriend. If he tried a little harder with Karen it might have worked out. But this Carmen."

DAVID

You'd fit right in with your stories.

CARMEN

She was thinking it.

DAVID

How do you know what she's thinking?

CARMEN

I don't care what she's thinking. I care what you think. Don't you ever wish it worked out with you and Karen?

DAVID

Yeah, of course I do. Carmen, she was my wife. I made vows. Nobody wants a failed marriage.

CARMEN

Then why didn't you try harder? Why'd you just walk out on her like that?

DAVID

I didn't just walk out the door.

CARMEN

Your mother said you didn't tell anybody.

DAVID

My mother doesn't know what she's talking about.

CARMEN

Is that all it takes? One fight and you leave?

DAVID

It was more than a fight.

CARMEN

You just bought a house. You had a good job.

DAVID

Yeah, I know. I was there.

CARMEN

It just doesn't make any sense. Why don't you call her? Your mother talks to her on the phone.

DAVID

Because it didn't work out.

CARMEN

You keep saying that. I don't know what that means. Why? Why didn't it work out?

DAVID

Because she wasn't faithful.

*(Silence.)*

CARMEN

David, I'm sorry.

DAVID

Don't be.

CARMEN

What happened? Did you walk in on her?

DAVID

No. Carmen, she just told me. She felt guilty and she told me.

CARMEN

That's it?

DAVID

Maybe some people get past that stuff. I guess I couldn't.

CARMEN

*(Beat)*

There's got to be something else.

DAVID

What does it matter?

CARMEN

There's got to be more. It doesn't make sense. You just pack up and leave that night. You don't call your father? You don't call your brother? You're leaving something out.

DAVID

I'm not on trial.

CARMEN

You felt like you couldn't trust her? You felt like it could happen again...?

DAVID

Carmen.

CARMEN

Did it seem like she was lying? Like there was more to the story?

DAVID

It just didn't work out, alright?

CARMEN

I understand that but why cut your family...

DAVID

Because it was my brother, ok? Because he was married at the time. Are you happy now? You got your answers? Why do you have to pry into things?

CARMEN

You need to talk to him.

DAVID

No. Are you kidding me? What am I gonna say?

He's your brother.

CARMEN

I've got nothing to say to him.

DAVID

Does he know?

CARMEN

I don't care! Now, that's it. I don't want to talk about it anymore. I swear to you if my mother found out it would kill her.

DAVID

CARMEN

*(Pause)*

But don't you think it would make things easier for you if you just explained to your parents...

DAVID

Carmen, look at me. They're my family. I shouldn't have to give 'em a reason to support me. As far as I'm concerned after we leave tonight I'm not coming back here.

CARMEN

David.

*(MARY ELLEN enters from the house.)*

MARY ELLEN

Is everyone ready to go?

DAVID

*(Making for the house.)*

I've gotta change my shirt and make a phone call.

MARY ELLEN

Davie, we've got reservations.

*(DAVID exits. Pause.)*

MARY ELLEN (CONT.)

*(To Carmen)*

Is everything all right?

CARMEN  
He got a call from work.

MARY ELLEN  
On a Sunday?

CARMEN  
They like to keep him busy.

*(Beat.)*

MARY ELLEN  
Well at least we got a whole day out of him this time.

*(Pause. CARMEN immediately regrets her lie.)*

CARMEN  
I should go wash up.

*(CARMEN exits into the house.  
MARY ELLEN leans up against the fence adjacent to ALLAN's yard. She gazes down the row of houses. SAM returns from the house.)*

SAM  
Where is everybody?

MARY ELLEN  
*(Without turning from the fence)*  
The kids went to change.

SAM  
But, we got reservations!

MARY ELLEN  
It's alright I'll call and tell them we're going to be a little late.

SAM  
You can't call and tell them we'll be late. That's the whole point of reservations! We said we'd be there at a certain time.



MARY ELLEN

Did you talk to Davie?

SAM

What talk to Davie? It goes in one ear and out the other. The kid's got a skull of cement.

MARY ELLEN

Did you tell him about your birthday party in October?

SAM

I told him your brother was coming in. He said he'd see what he can do. But, the kid's gotta work. He's got to make money if he wants to live in the city.

MARY ELLEN

Ok, but did you tell him how important it was to you?

SAM

Yeah, I told him. I practically begged the kid.

MARY ELLEN

Good. Because he's still your kid, Sam. He needs to know. He needs to know the things you tell me.

*(GEORGE enters by leaning over the upstage fence adjacent to the house.)*

GEORGE

Hey Sammy! I thought you guys were going out to dinner?

SAM

We are. We are. The kids are changing.

GEORGE

I thought you had reservations? Hey Mary Ellen!

MARY ELLEN

Hi, George.

GEORGE

Come on out front. We got fireworks. The boys are gonna set off fireworks!

*(GEORGE exits back to the street. SAM makes to exit.)*

(MARY ELLEN *doesn't move.*)

SAM

You don't wanna see some fireworks?

MARY ELLEN

Davie's not staying tonight.

SAM

What do you mean? I just talked to him. He didn't say anything.

MARY ELLEN

He doesn't want to be here, Sam. My own son doesn't want to be at my house.

SAM

*(Softly)*

Did he say that to you?

MARY ELLEN

He didn't say anything. He's got his girlfriend making excuses for him.

SAM

It's not you, Mary Ellen. That kid, he just can't get his priorities right.

MARY ELLEN

I asked you to talk to him.

SAM

I did.

MARY ELLEN

Then why's he leaving?

SAM

What do you want me to do? You want me to tie him to the house?

MARY ELLEN

Why don't you build another fence, Sam.

SAM

*(Pause)*

You said you wanted a fence.

MARY ELLEN

I said I was worried about Allan. Where in that you heard me ask for a fence I don't know. But I think I'm starting to see the problem here.

*(GEORGE leans over the fence.)*

GEORGE

Sam, come on we're all waiting for ya.

MARY ELLEN

Oh, Go fuck yourself, George!

*(MARY ELLEN exits into the house.)*

GEORGE

She's still upset about the barbecue. Understandable. Completely understandable.

SAM

That wasn't about you.

*(SAM exits into the house. GEORGE exits. A moment later RACHEL enters from the house. She looks beautiful in her dress for the evening. She walks over to the fence adjacent to Boris' yard and leans over gazing at the row of houses. Sighs.)*

SAM'S VOICE

What are you crazy, George! Don't let him point that thing at my house!

GEORGE'S VOICE

Brian! Brian, point the damn thing up! Before you light it. Before you light it!

*(Enter DAVID from the house. He's combed his hair and changed his shirt.)*

DAVID

Hey, Rach. You look incredible.

RACHEL

Thanks, Davie.

Everything, Ok?

DAVID

Yeah.

RACHEL

Where's Allan?

DAVID

He's uhh... not coming.

RACHEL

*(Pause.)*

That's too bad.

DAVID

Come here.

RACHEL

*(Fixes his collar, which was uneven.)*

You look nice.

*(A SMALL FIREWORK POPS OFF. The people in the front cheer.)*

SAM'S VOICE

Too close to the house, George! Too close.

GEORGE'S VOICE

Brian! Brian, back up. Before you light it. Before you light it!

DAVID

Somebody's gonna get hurt out there.

RACHEL

I'm gonna leave him, Davie.

*(ANOTHER FIRECRACKER. A little louder. Some cheers.)*

GEORGE'S VOICE

Alright, Brian. Get the big ones. Get the big ones. The Almans got reservations.

*(Silence.)*

RACHEL

I shouldn't say things like that to you.

DAVID

He's my brother.

RACHEL

Right now he's over there watching TV. He knows how important tonight is to your mother and he's watching TV.

DAVID

That's how he is.

RACHEL

*(Beat)*

Maybe you could talk to him.

DAVID

About what?

RACHEL

Tell him what he's going to lose.

DAVID

It's not my place.

RACHEL

He'll listen to you.

DAVID

He's a grown man.

RACHEL

It has to come from you.

DAVID

Why?

RACHEL

Because he thinks it's his fault. Somehow he's found a way to blame himself for you leaving. That's why he's so miserable. That's why he's so god damn hard to live with. Because he blames himself.

(A LARGE FIREWORK SHOOTS OFF INTO THE SKY. *The crowd cheers.*)

SAM'S VOICE

There ya go, Georgie! Now, that's a firework!

GEORGE'S VOICE

Get the finale, Brian. Get the finale!

DAVID

I don't think I can talk to him when he's like this.

RACHEL

Think about it, Davie. You're his best friend. One night you just pack up and leave. You don't call him or say anything. You never come home. He thinks he's done something wrong. And it's killing him. Look, I don't blame you. What happened with you and Karen-- that's between you and Karen. You want to cut her out of your life? You cut her out of your life. But don't cut us out like that. Don't cut your brother out.

DAVID

I'm not cutting anybody out.

RACHEL

Did he do something wrong? Did he do something to deserve this?

DAVID

Deserve what?

RACHEL

He called you three times last month.

DAVID

I've been busy.

RACHEL

You're always busy.

DAVID

I gotta have a life too, you know?

RACHEL

Have your life but don't ruin my marriage for it.

*(Silence.)*

RACHEL (CONT.)

This isn't your fault. I just... I need a drink of water.

DAVID

Rach.

RACHEL

Just tell me, Davie. Tell me why I should stay when his own brother wants nothing to do with him.

*(THE FIRST SET OF GEORGE'S  
FIREWORK FINALE GOES OFF. A  
moment later ALLAN enters from the  
house. He carries the pogo stick David  
gave to Boris. Silence.)*

ALLAN

I look out my window you know what I see? I see that kid next door bouncing around on Ma's pogo stick. Must have stole it right out of the yard.

DAVID

I gave it to him, Allan.

ALLAN

What're you giving Ma's stuff away for?

DAVID

We don't use it.

ALLAN

How do you know? You're never here.

DAVID

You use the pogo stick, Allan?

ALLAN

I don't want that kid messing around with Ma's stuff.

*(Noticing Rachel is upset)*

What's going on out here?

*(RACHEL looks to David. Beat. She then exits into the house with out looking at Allan. Silence.)*

ALLAN

What'd you say to her?

*(Beat)*

Look at me right now. What did you just say to her?

DAVID

What am I gonna say, Allan?

ALLAN

I don't know? Maybe you're trying to ruin my marriage like you did yours.

DAVID

I ruined my marriage? *I ruined my marriage, Allan?*

ALLAN

What's that supposed to mean? I didn't walk out on nobody.

*(CARMEN enters from the house.)*

CARMEN

David are you...? I'll wait for you inside.

DAVID

No, Carmen, you can stay. We're done here.

ALLAN

Carmen, give us a minute I wanna talk to my brother.

DAVID

Carmen, don't go anywhere.

*(To Allan)*

You got something to say to me you can say it in front of her.



ALLAN  
Why? Does she know?

DAVID  
Know what, Allan?

ALLAN  
It was six years ago!

DAVID  
You were married six years ago.

ALLAN  
Shut the fuck up!

*(MARY ELLEN enters from the house.)*

MARY ELLEN  
You boys ready to...? What's going on out here? Sam!

DAVID  
Why don't you tell her, Allan. Why don't you tell her what's going on out here.

ALLAN  
You're something else, Davie. You know that?

MARY ELLEN  
Sam! Sam, get out here!

*(MARY ELLEN exits into the house.)*

ALLAN  
What did you say to Rachel?

DAVID  
Nothing she didn't already know.

ALLAN  
I swear if you told her. I'll pound you in to the fuckin' dirt!

DAVID  
Told her what, Allan? *Told her what?*

CARMEN

David, maybe you should come inside.

DAVID

Allan wants to talk about this so we should talk about this.

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

Sam get in here now!

DAVID

You wanna know why I don't come home any more? I don't come home 'cause I can't stand the look of your face.

ALLAN

Did you tell her?

DAVID

Is that all you care about?

ALLAN

Did you tell my wife?

*(MARY ELLEN returns from the house.)*

MARY ELLEN

Allan! You go home. You go home right now.

DAVID

You did this, Allan. You did this. *Not me!*

*(ALLAN advances on DAVID who stands his ground.)*

ALLAN

You know what? Fuck you!

MARY ELLEN

Allan!

ALLAN

I made a mistake!

CARMEN

David we should leave.

DAVID

I looked up to you!

ALLAN

You got a problem with me? Be a man! Come to me!

*(With two open palms ALLAN hits DAVID square on the chest. DAVID is knocked back but regains his ground.)*

MARY ELLEN

Allan! Stop this! Stop this now!

*(MARY ELLEN runs and grabs ALLAN.)*

DAVID

Come to you? *Come to you!* How could I possibly come to you!

ALLAN

Because I'm your brother!

MARY ELLEN

Allan, leave! Sam! Sam get out here!

ALLAN

Did you tell her?

*(To Mary Ellen as he breaks free)*

Let go of me!

*(To David)*

Be a man!

*(He hits David again)*

Look me in the eyes!

MARY ELLEN

*(Grabbing Allan again)*

Allan! Stop this!

ALLAN

Did you tell my wife!

DAVID

Yeah, I told her! I told her everything!

(A BARRAGE OF FIREWORKS FLY INTO THE AIR FOR A SPECTACULAR FINALE.)

(ALLAN and DAVID lock into each other. MARY ELLEN tries to break them up. Enter SAM from the house. MARY ELLEN grabs David. DAVID tries to shake her off but ends up throwing her to the ground. She screams and grabs onto her hip as.)

SAM

HEY! THIS IS MY HOUSE!

(The fireworks stop. Silence. SAM helps MARY ELLEN up.)

DAVID

Ma, I'm sorry.

SAM

David. I think you should leave.

MARY ELLEN

I'm OK, Sam. It was an accident.

SAM

Get your things, David. George will take you to the train.

(Silence. DAVID stares at his father then exits past CARMEN into the house. She follows him in.)

MARY ELLEN

Sam, go talk to him before he leaves. I don't want him going home like this.

SAM

(To Allan)

What the hell's the matter with you?

MARY ELLEN

Sam, go tell him not to leave. Sam? Go tell... Fine!

*(MARY ELLEN runs into the house.  
SAM and ALLAN stand silent a  
moment.)*

ALLAN

Pop, I...

*(SAM turns away. Beat. ALLAN exits  
into the house. SAM stands alone a  
moment. MARY ELLEN returns in the  
doorway.)*

MARY ELLEN

Sam, get in here. Sam! He's getting his things together. You've got to say something to him, Sam. He won't listen to me. He's really going to go. Sam, he's your son. Don't let him go like this!

*(She exits back into the house. Silence.  
GEORGE leans over the upstage fence.)*

GEORGE

You see 'em, Sammy? Some fireworks, huh?

*(End scene.)*

### SCENE THREE

*(Tuesday morning. One week later. SAM  
has nearly finished a second coat of  
paint on his fence. It's quiet. Some birds.  
MARY ELLEN enters from the house.  
She watches SAM take a few long broad  
strokes. Then,)*

MARY ELLEN

Why don't you take a break and come in for some breakfast?

*(SAM takes a step back and observes  
the fence.)*

SAM

Maybe it still needs another coat.

MARY ELLEN

How many coats of paint can you put on a fence?

SAM

As many as it needs.

MARY ELLEN

You've been painting all week.

SAM

One more coat.

*(Beat, SAM continues painting his fence.)*

MARY ELLEN

It's a nice day out.

SAM

It'll rain by the afternoon.

MARY ELLEN

Says who?

SAM

Says me.

*(Beat.)*

MARY ELLEN

I was thinking I'd give your sister a call and we could meet her in the city.

SAM

I'm not going to the city.

MARY ELLEN

Why not?

SAM

Too crowded.

---

MARY ELLEN

It's not too crowded. It's a city, Sam. That's how it's supposed to be.

SAM

Why doesn't she come here?

MARY ELLEN

She doesn't have a car.

SAM

So I'll pick her up.

MARY ELLEN

She wants to do some shopping.

SAM

She can't shop here? We got a mall. What's she wanna shop in the city for? She can't afford that. When'd you talk to her? Put her on the phone. I'll talk to her.

MARY ELLEN

Sam, you're going to drive back and forth to Jersey today?

SAM

If she wants to come out I'll pick her up.

MARY ELLEN

She wants to go to the city!

SAM

Fine. You wanna go to the city. I'll bring you to the city. What do you want from me?

MARY ELLEN

We could take the train.

SAM

You're not taking the train.

MARY ELLEN

It's a nice day. Why not take the train?

SAM

Cause you're gonna take the wrong one. You'll end up in Boston.

MARY ELLEN

You're not coming with me?

SAM

If I'm not driving what am I coming for? You're going shopping.

MARY ELLEN

I thought you'd go see Davie. Then we could all go out to lunch.

SAM

*(Pause)*

I got things to do. I'm not going to the city.

*(Silence. SAM resumes painting his fence.)*

MARY ELLEN

It's been over a week.

*(SAM makes no response and continues with the fence. Beat)*

Watch what you're doing. You're getting it all over yourself.

SAM

You want the fence painted or not?

MARY ELLEN

Paint the fence. Not your shirt.

SAM

I'm not getting paint on my shirt.

MARY ELLEN

You are. You're putting too much on your brush.

SAM

I have to put it on the brush. What do you want me to do? You want me to use my hand?

MARY ELLEN

You're doing a second coat.

SAM

It needs a thick coat.

MARY ELLEN

It looks terrible!



SAM

You want it to last? Or you want it to fall apart after the first winter?

MARY ELLEN

What last? Like your grass?

SAM

You need water to grow grass! You don't let me use the sprinkler. You get no grass.

MARY ELLEN

Why do you need the sprinkler? According to you it rains every day.

SAM

I tell you this all the time. If you want grass in this area you gotta water on a schedule.

MARY ELLEN

Schedule! You and your schedule. When does my sink fall into your schedule?

SAM

When I get to it.

MARY ELLEN

Three weeks. Three weeks I've been asking you to fix that sink!

SAM

You want me to fix the sink?

MARY ELLEN

I don't want you to do anything, Sam!

SAM

Let me stop everything so I can fix your sink!

MARY ELLEN

Don't do me any favors!

*(BORIS enters his yard. SAM notices him first then MARY ELLEN. She forces a cheerful wave.)*

SAM

Let me finish up here and I'll be right in.

---

MARY ELLEN

You do what you want, Sam.

*(MARY ELLEN exits into the house.  
BORIS pours some water on a few  
plants and makes to exit back into his  
home.)*

SAM

Boris, you got a minute?

*(They meet at the fence.)*

SAM (CONT.)

Listen, I spoke with Allan. He's gonna come over and fix that mailbox for you.

BORIS

I fixed it. It's not a problem.

SAM

How much did it cost you? I want to make sure he compensates you for that.

BORIS

Let's just forget about it.

SAM

You sure?

BORIS

Yes.

SAM

Did you eat any of that pie Mary Ellen brought over?

BORIS

Yes. It was very nice of her. Thanks to you both.

SAM

She just felt so terrible about the whole thing, you know?

BORIS

Sam, It's OK.

SAM

He's not a bad kid he just... Well, you got one of your own. You know how it is.

BORIS

Yes. Sergey is becoming that age. That age of trouble.

SAM

I saw him with his cleats the other day.

BORIS

He's playing football now.

SAM

How's he like it?

BORIS

He likes it. But. There is one boy on the bigger team who is giving him problems.

SAM

What's he doing?

BORIS

He is pushing him. He is giving him boxing on the ear. He is trying very hard to make Sergey uncomfortable.

SAM

So what do you tell him?

BORIS

I tell him if he wants he can stop playing. But, he says, "No, I will continue."

SAM

No kidding. Good for him.

BORIS

I'm very proud of Sergey for this.

SAM

Well listen, you tell him to keep his head up out there. Keep his head up and his feet moving. He'll do just fine.

BORIS

Yes. The head up. And the feet moving. David is saying the same thing. So, now I know it must be good advice.

SAM

My David?

BORIS

Last weekend.

SAM

No kidding...

BORIS

Now, Sergey believes that I'm an expert in American football.

SAM

That right? Tell you what, Boris. Let me know when they're playing again. Maybe I'll come out and catch a game.

BORIS

Sure.

SAM

I could give you a few pointers you could hand down to your son.

BORIS

Ok, this would be good.

SAM

Alright, great. Great. Listen, you take it easy, Boris.

BORIS

You too, Sam.

*(As he exits)*

The head is up. And the feet is moving.

SAM

You got it.

BORIS

Touchdown!

*(BORIS exits into his house. SAM stands a moment and grins. The moment doesn't last long as GEORGE enters from the house.)*

GEORGE

What's the point of building a fence when you're gonna leave your front door unlocked?

SAM

Hey, George.

*(SAM goes back to painting his fence.)*

GEORGE

So I'm going for my morning walk and I'm thinking, gee, maybe I done something wrong by Sammy the other day. 'Cause I want you to know it wasn't my idea to have the party at Barbara's last week.

SAM

*(Without stopping his work)*

I told you, George, it's no big deal.

GEORGE

Yeah, I know you did, Sam. I know you did. It's just, you know, I thought you'd said you were gonna ask the boys to paint the fence. And when you didn't I thought maybe I'd crossed a line or something, somewhere. God forbid, Sam. You know I consider you a close friend. But, good. Good. There's no problem. You paint it yourself. And I'll tell ya it looks good. It does. I'm not just steamin' your pipes. It does. You know, I said something about Allan too and I'd thought maybe I was a little out of line. I want you to know I think the world of the kid. He's a hard worker. He's got a good heart. And I respect the way you raised him. I want you to know that, Sam. I really do. But, you know what? You wanted to paint the fence yourself. Nothing wrong with that. Nothing wrong with that at all. You know, Sam, on closer look I can see it's coming out a little blotchy. Maybe you put a little less on your brush it comes off cleaner. But, I don't know. What do I know? I've only painted a couple fences before. You know what you're doing. You put another coat. A little thinner. You'll be fine.

*(Beat, George wanders over to the fence adjacent to Boris' yard.)*

You know this guy's got a kid on the football team?

SAM

*(Still painting)*

Yeah. Yeah, seen him with his pads.

GEORGE

Probably forced the kid to play. Thinks it makes him American.

SAM

He is American, George.

GEORGE

Eh, American, what? Hanging a flag in your backyard does not make you American. Listen, Sammy, before I forget. Everything work out with you and Davie? And I 'aint trying to say nothing one way or the other. I just...you know, the kid was real upset when I brought him over the train station. What happened there anyways? You finally talk to him about his divorce or what was that all about?

*(Slight beat, enough to know Sam has no response)*

You know what? It happens all the time. I'll tell ya, I nearly blew a gasket the other day my oldest tried to sneak in some beers through the basement. I'm surprised you didn't hear me. But you worked it out with him? You and Davie? You fixed things up? You gave him a call? Good, good. Everybody round the neighborhood they're concerned, you know? Genuine concern. We care about you, Sammy. You're one of the good guys.

SAM

Well, I appreciate that, George.

*(ALLAN enters from his house and makes his way over to the fence. He wears his EMT uniform.)*

GEORGE

Hey there, Allan! How you doing?

ALLAN

George.

GEORGE

Heading off to work are ya?

ALLAN

Yeah, just about.

SAM

Don't lean up on that, Allan. Still wet.

GEORGE

I better finish up this walk before my wife starts to wonder.

SAM

Alright, George.

GEORGE

You guys take care.

*(GEORGE exits through the house.)*

ALLAN

Nosey prick.

SAM

Do me a favor, Allan. Leave your back door unlocked. I'm gonna come around and do the other side of the fence. I might need to use your sink.

ALLAN

It's unlocked but Rach's in there anyways.

SAM

She's not working?

ALLAN

Not till later. She's watching the news. I guess there's a big fire or something going on in the city.

SAM

Oh yeah?

ALLAN

Yeah. She wants to know if Ma talked to Davie this morning.

SAM

I don't think so. Why? Is it in his area?

ALLAN

She says it's in lower Manhattan. Isn't that where he works?

SAM

Your mother knows. Why don't you go on in and ask her to call him.

ALLAN

I can't, pop. I gotta get to work. Listen, just let Rachel know when you get in touch with Davie, alright? You know how it is. They get worried over these things.

SAM

I'll have your mother give him a call. I'm sure it's nothing.

ALLAN

Alright. Take it easy, pop.

*(ALLAN exits upstage through his yard.  
SAM continues to paint a few strokes.  
Then stops. Looks back at the house.  
Reconsiders. Then returns to painting. A  
few more strokes. Stops. Silence. Then.)*

SAM

*(Calling)*

Mary Ellen!

*(Beat)*

Hey! Mary Ellen!

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

What?

SAM

Hey, come out her a minute.

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

What do you want, Sam?

SAM

I want you to come out here a minute.

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

For what? I'm cooking!

SAM

Come out here a second. I gotta ask you something.

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

What, Sam? I can't hear you!

SAM

Never mind.



---

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

What?

SAM

Never mind! I said never mind!

*(SAM returns to painting. MARY ELLEN appears in the doorway.)*

MARY ELLEN

What did you say?

SAM

You got the news on?

MARY ELLEN

No. Why?

*(Beat)*

SAM

Allan just stopped by. He said there's a fire in the city.

MARY ELLEN

Oh my god. Where?

SAM

He said lower Manhattan.

MARY ELLEN

That's where Davie's new office is.

SAM

Turn on the news see what's going on.

MARY ELLEN

I better call and make sure he's ok.

*(She exits back into the house.)*

SAM

*(Calling)*

Turn on the news, Mary Ellen. Just turn on the news and see what's going on.

*(SAM paints a few more strokes then stops. Beat. He moves to the door and tries to listen. When he hears MARY ELLEN returning he hurries back to his painting before she can tell he was there. MARY ELLEN re-enters from the house.)*

MARY ELLEN

He's not picking up his phone.

*(Beat)*

SAM

Ok, he's probably at work. It's just a fire. Fires happen all the time. They make a big deal of it when it's in the city. If you're worried call him on his office phone. You got the number don't you?

MARY ELLEN

I've got it written down somewhere.

SAM

So give him a call. Put your mind to rest. And while you're at it call my sister. Tell her I'm leaving as soon as I finish this fence. No. You know what? Tell her I'm leaving now. That way she'll be ready when I get there.

MARY ELLEN

Alright, I'll go look for his number.

SAM

OK.

*(SAM goes back to painting. MARY ELLEN makes to exit but stops. Beat.)*

MARY ELLEN

Sam?

*(Sam stops painting and turns to her)*

If I get him on the phone you want to say a quick hello?

*(Beat)*

SAM

You know what? I don't wanna bother him at work. Plus I got paint all over me. I don't wanna track it in and out of the house. You can talk to him. That's fine.

*(SAM returns to painting.)*

MARY ELLEN

Alright, I'll let you know when I get a hold of him.

SAM

Sounds good.

*(SAM paints a few strokes. Stops. Looks back at the house. Then, moves closer to listen in. RACHEL enters from her back door and approaches the fence. SAM returns to work.)*

RACHEL

You guys get a hold of Davie?

SAM

Mary Ellen's on the phone with him now.

RACHEL

*(Deeply relieved)*

Oh, good. Where is he? Is he on his way here?

SAM

I don't know. She's just calling him now. Why? Why would he be on his way here?

RACHEL

Haven't you seen the news?

SAM

I've been out here all morning.

RACHEL

It's all over the TV. Every channel.

SAM

The fire? How big is it?

RACHEL

It's not a fire, Sam. Two planes crashed in the city and they don't think it was an accident.

SAM

What do you mean they don't think it was an accident?

RACHEL

Another plane just crashed in Washington. They're telling everybody to stay at home.

SAM

What are you kidding me?

RACHEL

The first two were in Manhattan. Isn't that where Davie works?

SAM

Yeah.

*(MARY ELLEN calls from the house.)*

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

Sam, I can't find the number!

SAM

What do you mean you can't find the number?

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

I mean I can't find the number. He didn't give it to me. I only have the old number. He's in the new office now.

SAM

Did you call the old office?

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

I'll call them now.

RACHEL

I'm coming over.

*(RACHEL exits. Silence. Instinctively  
SAM returns to painting the fence.  
Though, his mind is clearly elsewhere*

*and his strokes are insignificant. MARY ELLEN calls back from the house.)*

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

They're not picking up!

SAM

Turn on the news, Mary Ellen.

RACHEL'S VOICE

I got it, Sam.

SAM

Try his cell phone again.

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

I tried. I keep trying. He's not picking up.

SAM

What about his girlfriend? You got her number?

RACHEL'S VOICE

They're shutting down the city.

SAM

What's that?

RACHEL'S VOICE

They're closing all bridges in and out of the city!

*(MARY ELLEN enters from the house.)*

MARY ELLEN

This is much more than a fire.

SAM

*(To Mary Ellen)*

How 'bout his girlfriend?

MARY ELLEN

I don't have her number.

They think we're under attack!

RACHEL'S VOICE

By who?

SAM

They don't know.

RACHEL'S VOICE

*(Mary Ellen)*  
You can't find his work number?

SAM

I thought I wrote the new number down. I can't find it anywhere.

MARY ELLEN

It's OK. Try his cell phone again. Just keep trying over and over again. You'll get a hold of him. I know you will.

SAM

Wouldn't he have called us?

MARY ELLEN

Maybe he's been trying. We should keep the phone clear.

SAM

It's been clear. I haven't been on it that long. Sam, why wouldn't he have called us?

MARY ELLEN

*(Slight beat of silence. Then, a shrill scream from RACHEL in the house.)*

*(Rushing to the door)*  
What happened?

SAM

*(Quiet, disbelief)*  
Oh my god...

RACHEL'S VOICE

*(Harsh, through the door)*  
Rachel.

SAM

RACHEL'S VOICE

The world trade center just fell to the ground.

*(Slight beat of shock. Silence. Then,  
MARY ELLEN starts to cry.)*

SAM

Mary Ellen...

*(She exits into the house. Long silence.)*

SAM

*(Calling into the house)*

Rachel, go grab your cordless phone. I don't want anybody using the house phone in case Davie tries to call. Mary Ellen, keep looking for that damn number.

MARY ELLEN'S VOICE

I can't find it, Sam!

SAM

Well, keep looking!

*(MARY ELLEN returns to the doorway.)*

MARY ELLEN

Where am I going to look? I've looked everywhere. You look for it.

SAM

Did you look in the address book?

MARY ELLEN

I didn't put it in the address book.

SAM

Why didn't you put it in the address book? You put everything in that book.

MARY ELLEN

Because he never gave it to me.

SAM

Why didn't you take his number down?

MARY ELLEN

How could I take his number down? You kicked him out, Sam.

SAM

I didn't kick him out.

MARY ELLEN

You told your son to leave this house and—

*(MARY ELLEN stops herself when she notices RACHEL entering from her house with a cordless phone. RACHEL approaches the fence. Silence. SAM walks over to her.)*

SAM

Thanks, Rachel. Come back over and keep an eye on the TV.

RACHEL

You hit speed dial 5. That's Davie's apartment. Speed dial 6. That's his cell phone.

SAM

OK.

MARY ELLEN

You get your son on that phone. Or I swear I'll never speak to you again.

*(MARY ELLEN exits into the house. Beat. SAM looks to RACHEL.)*

RACHEL

I'm coming around.

*(RACHEL exits. SAM hits speed dial 5. It rings four times. SAM listens to the answering machine then speaks.)*

SAM

Davie, this is your father. You call us at the house as soon as you get this message. Your mother is worried sick. You call us as soon as you hear this. Understand me? As soon as you get this.

*(He hangs up. Beat. Speed dial 6. Rings)*



---

*five times. Then, voicemail.)*

SAM

Davie, this is your father. I don't know why you're not picking up your phone. But you call us back as soon as you get this. You got your mother sick worrying about you. Call us on the house phone. As soon as you get this.

*(He hangs up. Silence. Then, the house phone rings. SAM hurries to the door. The ringing stops as someone picks up. He waits for what seems like an eternity but is most likely thirty to forty seconds. MARY ELLEN returns to the doorway. Beat.)*

MARY ELLEN

That was George. He wanted to know if we'd got in touch with Davie. Any luck with the phone?

SAM

I'll keep trying.

*(She exits. Beat. RACHEL calls from within.)*

RACHEL'S VOICE

Sam! Another plane crashed in Pennsylvania.

*(Beat.)*

Sam? Sam, did you hear me?

SAM

*(Snapping back)*

I heard you, Rach. Just give me a minute I'm trying to get a hold of Davie.

*(SAM presses speed dial 6. As the phone rings BORIS exits his home listening very closely to a cordless phone. Without noticing SAM he hangs up with great frustration and dials again. SAM hears David's voice mail and hangs up. BORIS notices SAM as he too hears a voice mail message. He hangs up and acknowledges Sam. They both nod to*

*each other and proceed to dial again.  
BORIS hangs up the phone and  
approaches the fence. He waits for Sam  
to hang up before speaking.)*

BORIS

Is David OK?

SAM

I don't know yet.

*(Beat)*

I'm sure he's fine. We just can't seem to connect. You got family in the city?

BORIS

My brother is working in the world trade center.

SAM

*(Pause)*

Have you talked to him?

BORIS

No.

SAM

I'm sure it's the same thing. I'm sure they're both gonna call.

BORIS

Yes, I am hope.

*(Silence.)*

BORIS

Please let me know when you are speaking with David.

SAM

Yeah, of course. And your brother as well.

*(BORIS exits into his house. SAM presses  
speed dial 6. He listens to the rings.)*

SAM

Please pick up. Come on, Davie. Pick up the damn phone.

*(Voicemail picks up. There is major let down in SAM.)*

SAM

Davie... David, this is your father. Please call us back as soon as you get this.

*(A breath. He has more to say. But reconsiders and hangs up the phone. Silence. Then, the phone rings inside. Sam hurries to the door. The ringing stops. He waits patiently through a similar thirty-second eternity. RACHEL appears in the doorway.)*

RACHEL

It was Allan.

SAM

What'd he say?

RACHEL

I guess he's doing first aid at the train station. Mary Ellen spoke to him.

SAM

Where is she?

RACHEL

She went upstairs to pray.

*(Pause.)*

I can't watch anymore. Can I stay out here with you?

SAM

Yeah. Yeah, come on out. Watching that's only gonna make things worse. I'm sure he's fine. Just can't get to a phone. We just gotta be patient that's all.

*(Begins painting)*

*(Stops painting, turns to Rachel)*

I know what he's doing, Rachel. He's sitting somewhere checking his voicemails.

*(Pause)*

He is. I know this boy. He's waiting for me to say I was wrong. And I won't do it. Because *this* is wrong. You don't put your mother through this. If you got a problem you deal with it like a man. But that's Davie. That's who he's been since the day he was born. And I'll tell you something else. The second I see that kid I'm gonna wring his neck. Because you don't do this to people. You don't do this to your family.

RACHEL

He's not checking his voicemails, Sam.

*(The phone rings inside. SAM and RACHEL freeze for another thirty-second eternity until MARY ELLEN appears in the doorway.)*

MARY ELLEN

*(Holding back wells of tears)*

You're painting the fence? For Christ-sakes, Sam, you're painting the fence?

SAM

Who was on the phone?

MARY ELLEN

That was Carmen.

RACHEL

What'd she say?

MARY ELLEN

She can't get a hold of Davie. She thought maybe we'd heard from him.

SAM

Where's his office?

MARY ELLEN

Same block as the trade center. He has meetings there sometimes. She said it's possible. She said it's possible, Sam.

SAM

Where is she?

MARY ELLEN

Her parents' home. In Jersey. You keep painting that fence, Sam. You keep painting that damn fence.

*(She exits back into the house. RACHEL follows her in. Silence. SAM throws his paint brush at the fence. In a continuous motion he kicks it square. Then again. In a rage he grabs hold of a picket. With his bare hands he knocks and tears. And knocks and tears. Until a whole plank comes loose. He uses that plank to continue bashing the fence until his hands are sore. He then throws the plank and kicks and shoves until he tears a hole in the brand new fence. He loses his strength. With a few feeble strikes he falls to the ground. It's then that David appears at the hole in the fence. He wears a business suit without the jacket. His tie is undone. His shirt is un-tucked. He looks like hell.)*

SAM

Davie?

DAVID

I'm sorry, pop. I lost my phone. It was in my briefcase. Everyone was running everywhere. It got knocked out of my hand...

*(SAM nearly knocks his son over as he takes him in his arms. He kisses his face and weeps.)*

SAM

My son... my son...

DAVID

I didn't know where to go. I just got on the train. I just wanted to come home.

SAM

Good. Good. You did good, Davie. You did real good.

*(Screaming)*

Mary Ellen! Mary Ellen! Get out here now! He's come home!

*(MARY ELLEN returns to the doorway and brings her hands to her face.)*

RACHEL *follows right behind.*)

MARY ELLEN

My God. Davie. Come here! Come here!

*(MARY ELLEN embraces her son.  
ALLAN appears in the hole of the  
fence.)*

SAM

*(To ALLAN)*

Did you find him?

ALLAN

He was on the train. I saw him through the window. But I gotta get back.

SAM

Right now?

DAVID

*(Breaking from his mother)*

Allan, you're leaving?

ALLAN

They're gonna need us at the station all day.

*(DAVID goes to him.)*

DAVID

Yeah. Yeah, ok. Listen, thanks for giving me a ride.

ALLAN

No problem. I wouldn't want you to walk the ten feet.

*(DAVID grabs his brother's face and  
pulls it close to his. He whispers  
something in his ear and then embraces  
him--hard.)*

DAVID

I'm gonna clean up. I gotta get my bearings straight. Make a few phone calls. Then I'm gonna come down to the train and help you guys out.

ALLAN

That'd be great.

MARY ELLEN

Allan, maybe you should eat something first?

ALLAN

I'll be fine, ma.

MARY ELLEN

I'll make some sandwiches. You must be starving, Davie.

DAVID

I gotta call Carmen.

RACHEL

She's in Jersey.

*(SAM hands David the phone and uses the move as an excuse to put his hands back on his son.)*

SAM

*(Escorting David in)*

Here, call her inside.

*(They exit into the house.)*

MARY ELLEN

*(Following Sam and David)*

Rachel, Allan? You coming?

ALLAN

I gotta get back.

MARY ELLEN

Allan, please just come in with us for a few minutes.

ALLAN

Ma, I can't.

MARY ELLEN

You call us. You call us all day.

---

*(He nods. MARY ELLEN exits. Silence.)*

ALLAN

I should go.

RACHEL

Your mother's been through enough today. We'll tell her tomorrow.

*(ALLAN nods and exits. Silence. SAM returns with an old dusty box.)*

SAM

Rachel, go inside. Get some food.

*(Beat.)*

You ok?

*(RACHEL forces a smile and nods.)*

SAM

We're all together now. That's what's important.

RACHEL

Right.

*(She kisses him and exits into the house. BORIS re-enters from his home closely listening to his cordless phone. Sam watches BORIS hang up the phone in frustration.)*

SAM

Still can't get a hold of him?

BORIS

No. Have you found touch with David?

SAM

He's home.

BORIS

*(Deeply relieved)*

Oh, thanks god. Thanks god, Sam.



SAM

Why don't you come over? Bring your family. We got some sandwiches inside.

BORIS

I should stay.

SAM

Alright then I'm gonna bring some food over.

BORIS

OK.

SAM

He's gonna call, Boris.

BORIS

I am sure.

SAM

It's gonna work out.

BORIS

Yes. I am keep the head up. And the feet moving.

SAM

Yeah.

BORIS

Ok Sam.

*(BORIS exits into his house. SAM watches him go. GEORGE appears at the hole in the fence.)*

GEORGE

Sam! Any word from Davie? Please tell me you heard from Davie.

SAM

He just came home.

GEORGE

Oh, thank god! Sammy, the whole neighborhood's praying for him. Barbara's kid too.

---

(MARY ELLEN *returns from the house.*)

MARY ELLEN

They haven't gotten in touch with her yet?

GEORGE

No. But, thank god for Davie. I better go tell everybody. They're worried sick.

MARY ELLEN

George, come on in here. Why don't you take some food over to Barbara's house. I'm sure they haven't eaten anything.

SAM

And Boris, he's got a brother working at the Trade Center. I'm sure him and his family could use the neighborhood's support as well.

GEORGE

Of course. I'll let everyone know.

MARY ELLEN

It's all on the counter.

GEORGE

Thanks, Mary Ellen. I'm sure they'll appreciate it.

(GEORGE *exits into the house.*)

MARY ELLEN

Are you coming in, Sam?

SAM

I'll be right there.

(MARY ELLEN *exits. SAM returns to his box. He takes great care in opening it and withdraws an American Flag. He places it in the flag holder attached to the house and tightens it into place. He takes a moment to observe the flag, the yard, the fence, and then exits into the house.*)

(*End of play.*)