

MALIBU LOST & FOUND

An original stage play by

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Malibu Lost & Found

CLIFFORD

Close to 70. A research scientist. Has had a number of jobs. Generally functioned as a consultant. With Agnes, spent a few years in India as a missionary for the Presbyterian church. Now back in the home he has owned in Pasadena for 40 years. Big guy. Awkward but good with tools.

AGNES

Clifford's wife. A few years younger. They married after college, but have never had children. Not clear why. Probably some medical problem. After so many years of each other's annoying habits they've ceased to notice them. Going to India fit with the yearning for adventure both shared. They lived opulently there in a villa with a number of servants. Their life style has modified considerably since their return.

SCOTT

19 years old. Medium height, thin. Might have been directionless a year ago, but his character and sense of self have firmed up considerably since he started his job as an inmate labor supervisor in a nearby prison.

ULYSSES

A black guy in his twenties wearing a prison issued orange jumpsuit. He is not a character in the central action. He appears in a solitary confinement prison cell up stage. It has a square opening in the bars so his face is in the clear when he stands. The cell should be on rollers and only be on stage for his speeches.

CLOTHING SALESMAN

Nattily dressed with flare.

REV. CLAUDE

45 distinguished, pastor of a black church in a black neighborhood in Pasadena.

(MORE)

REV. CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Black himself, he was educated in schools that are predominately white and is used to accepting racial slights and unintended discrimination. Not that he likes it.

THIS PLAY TAKES PLACE IN PASADENA CA IN THE MID 1960'S. THE PRIMARY SETTING IS THE HOME OF CLIFFORD AND AGNES DE WITT. BECAUSE THE 11 SCENES MOVE TO DIFFERENT LOCATIONS I SUGGEST THAT EACH BE IDENTIFIED BY A FEW FURNITURE PIECES AND A LARGE SINGLE DROP PLACARD UPSTAGE, BEHIND THE PLAYING AREA WHICH REPRESENTS THE LOCATION OF THE SCENE.

SCENE 1 -- "THE ARRIVAL"

THE DE WITT LIVING ROOM. A SMALL COUCH UC, AN UPHOLSTERED CHAIR, A COFFEE TABLE. THERE IS A LARGE PHOTO OF THE HOUSE EXTERIOR ON THE PLACARD UP STAGE BEHIND THE FURNITURE.

Saturday morning. Agnes is standing with a broom and a long handled dust pan center stage. She looks anxiously into the wings stage right. Haphazardly she sweeps and collects dirt into the dust pan. Then her attention returns to looking off stage right. Clifford enters from Stage Right. He is wearing a somewhat grimey mechanic's overalls and holds a dirty mechanic's rag with which he is wiping his hands.

AGNES

What now?

CLIFFORD

The mix is still too rich. Causes the carburetor to flood. However, I think I've got it adjusted. Should be able to run a couple of hours before stalling out again.

AGNES

That the best you can do --I don't want to call the tow truck from the road again.

CLIFFORD

Won't know for a bit.

AGNES

Why not?

CLIFFORD

Have to wait for everything to settle down. Then I can crank it again.

AGNES

I need to go to the store. You remember, that boy, Scott is coming to visit.

CLIFFORD

Boy? Didn't you say he was 19?

AGNES

Not sure. I think that's right. He's the son of my cousin Mary.

CLIFFORD

Honestly dear, did you think I didn't know that? What's that make you? His aunt?

AGNES

Absolutely not. The letter I got from her was the first I've heard from anyone on that side of the family in years. I've ceased to consider those people blood relations.

CLIFFORD

Oh for Christ's sake. You still got a grudge about Uncle Charlie's will. Mary was 14 when Charlie died. She didn't write the will, had nothing to do with its provisions.

AGNES

It was so unfair. Mary got half, a full half of all Charlie's money. The rest of us had to split the other half 5 ways. We were adults with financial needs. Mary was just a spoiled rich girl, everything handed to her on a silver platter.

CLIFFORD

It was 30 years ago. Water, like so totally under the bridge.

AGNES

Honestly, I've tried to forget the meanness, the total unfairness. But it still riles me. All that money - she had absolutely no right to it.

CLIFFORD

You need to try harder.

AGNES

You're acting like there's a problem when there isn't one. If Mary thought it was an issue, she would never have written me.

CLIFFORD

That must have been some scene after Charlie's funeral when the five of you sisters ganged up on Mary and demanded she give you the money.

AGNES

We merely tried to reason with her. Explained it was only fair. The will was clearly written in error.

CLIFFORD

There she was, terrified, convulsed in tears. Luckily Charlie's lawyer showed up and told you to bug off.

AGNES

He did not say "bug off." He knew perfectly well how unfair the will was.

CLIFFORD

He did, however, tell you Mary's money was left in trust. There was no legal way to give it to you, even if she wanted to.

AGNES

Outrageous then. Outrageous now.

CLIFFORD

If you had a nickel for every time you've been a right about Charlie's will, you know how much money you'd have?

(holds up hand with a thumb and index finger to form an "O".)

That's right, zero.

AGNES

Your opinion on this subject, like your opinions on most other subjects, is not only worthless but annoying.

CLIFFORD

I forget, remind me again what Mary said in the letter about, what's his name, Scott is it?

AGNES

You are such a pain in the patoozie.

CLIFFORD

You brought it up when I was thinking about something else. That makes it your fault, not mine.

AGNES

Clifford, I've told you about that letter at least five times. If the subject isn't carburetors you just don't pay attention.

CLIFFORD

Not true. Also not fair. But I will allow that I do find carburetors more interesting than hurt feelings and girlie squabbles.

AGNES

You should wear those greasy overalls all the time. That way your outward appearance would be an accurate reflection of your inner sensitivity.

CLIFFORD

If you think that observation hurts my feelings, you'd be woefully in error.

AGNES

Okay fine, but please pay attention. This is absolutely the last time I'm going to tell about the letter.

CLIFFORD

I'm all ears, but please don't stretch it out too much.

AGNES

So Scott, Mary's 19 year old son lives in Malibu. Mary is still back in Pennsylvania. She wrote asking us to invite him over for a visit.

(Clifford raises his hand)

No, don't ask me. I don't know why.

CLIFFORD

Nevertheless, there must be a reason.

AGNES

You always say no embellishment. Fine, I'm not going to speculate.

CLIFFORD

Come on. You know you have a sense of what's behind this. So tell me.

AGNES

Mary said he was depressed and lonely.

CLIFFORD

What? So we're supposed to cheer up a depressed 19 year old? What if he notices we're geezers over 60? You think that might compromise his willingness to tap dance through the living room?

AGNES

He'll be here soon, we have to make the best of things.

CLIFFORD

Malibu's kind of pricey. How's he manage to live there?

AGNES

Mary said, I know unbelievable, he lives in a prison.

CLIFFORD

Prison? What's this visit, "work release?"

AGNES

No, No, No. He's employed there.

CLIFFORD

Guard?

AGNES

Not like that. The convicts do manual labor. He supervises work gangs.

CLIFFORD

So, a juvenile facility?

AGNES

No, they're all adult males.

CLIFFORD

Convicted of crimes?

AGNES

It's a jail. One would assume so.

CLIFFORD

Sentenced by a judge to do time?

AGNES

Goodness Clifford. I think that's how people end up in jail, isn't it?

CLIFFORD

Yup. That's the drill. So how'd it happen?

AGNES

What?

CLIFFORD

That a prison would hire a teenager to supervise men convicted of violent crimes.

AGNES

Well, I think it's good he found a job.

CLIFFORD

What about safety. They're not people you can trust. That's why they're in jail.

AGNES

You think he carries a gun?

CLIFFORD

He can't bring that in here.

AGNES

Mary said he was a really nice boy. Just, ah, having some trouble.

CLIFFORD

Uh oh, trouble, what's that mean?

AGNES

Oh, can't figure things out, or something. Started college back east. Hated it, dropped out, or flunked out, or I don't really know.

CLIFFORD

Then what?

AGNES

Not sure. I think he hitch hiked out here. It's all a little fuzzy. I don't think his mother actually knows what happened either.

CLIFFORD

Maybe he'll tell us.

AGNES

I hope so.

CLIFFORD

What's the alternative? He sits on the couch in a catatonic state, unable to talk or move. The chance of my getting through the weekend if that happens is zero.

AGNES

Oh no. He's not like that. Mary said he's very lively. She was sure we'd like him.

CLIFFORD

I haven't known any 19 year olds since I was 19 myself.

AGNES

You know what the young people say, "Go with the flow."

CLIFFORD

You think you're "groovy" enough to do that?

AGNES

Probably not, but Mary was sure we could cheer him up.

CLIFFORD

And you agreed?

AGNES

I wrote her back, "Of course, we'd love to meet him." Leaving aside Charlie's will, we still have I guess, a connection to Mary. So that goes for Scott as well.

CLIFFORD

Charlie's will is absolutely a *leave aside*. So, no bringing it up. Anyway I don't think his age matters. If he's supervising convicts, he's definitely past boyhood.

AGNES

I am not concerning myself with his age right now. I have to think about dinner.

CLIFFORD

What's to think about?

AGNES

Food, you know that stuff people eat when they have dinner, and we don't have anything suitable? That's why I have to go to the store. In that infernal car.

CLIFFORD

If I can just get that fussy carburetor to adjust to gas pressure changes automatically, it's going to be worth a lot of money.

AGNES

You take the only car we have. A ten year old Pontiac, worth what, maybe \$500. And you ... you sink into it what? I'm guessing \$10,000 -- to what end?

CLIFFORD

Develop a combustion engine that burns natural gas instead of gasoline.

AGNES

So now the car is worth, well to be charitable, no where near the \$500. Value it had before you started.

CLIFFORD

I'm not selling it.

AGNES

Good because I'd say it's current market value is zero. Nothing. Nada. No dollars whatsoever.

CLIFFORD

Ridiculous. Once I get the kinks out, this invention could change energy use world wide... forever.

AGNES

You've been working on that thing forever.

CLIFFORD

I am a scientist. I try to discover new things, new concepts, new ways of doing things.

AGNES

Well your scientific experiment is the only way I can get to the store,
(MORE)

AGNES (CONT'D)

so I hope you not only get it started,
but do the driving, the parking, the
waiting in the car, and then the
driving home.

CLIFFORD

Okay. I'm ready to go. So is the
car.

AGNES

Five miles?

CLIFFORD

Absolutely.

AGNES

And five miles back?

DOOR BELL RINGS. PAUSE. CLIFFORD GOES TO THE DOOR. SCOTT
COMES IN.

SCOTT

Am I at the right place?

AGNES

Are you Scott?

SCOTT

Yup.

CLIFFORD

Well, you made it. And more or less
on time.

SCOTT

Was there a time?

AGNES

No, no, no. That's just Cliff. He
a scientist, so he tries to turn
everything into an experiment. When
you phoned we agreed sometime Saturday
afternoon.

SCOTT

I started out from the hills behind
Malibu. I had no idea how long it
would take.

AGNES

Give it no thought. Far as I'm
concerned, you arrived at the perfect
time.

CLIFFORD

Did you come down the 105 to the Hollywood, then take the Pasadena?

SCOTT

Yup.

CLIFFORD

How'd that go?

SCOTT

Uh, Well I'm riding a Honda 150 c.c. Plenty okay for the back roads up in Malibu, but on the freeway? Fear stalks the the miles.

AGNES

Fear? What can that mean?

SCOTT

Everybody on the freeway goes like 75 or 80.

CLIFFORD

If there are no traffic jams.

SCOTT

I like the jams. They slow things down. Normal high speeds are when it's scary.

AGNES

It is?

SCOTT

I guess you don't know too much about motorcycles. Of course, neither did I when I bought one. See, a 150 c.c. is kind of a dink. Maxes out, maybe 60 mph. As Ulysses says, that is not fast enough.

AGNES

Ulysses? You mean the ancient Greek hero of the Odyssey?

SCOTT

Oh no, sorry. Ulysses is this guy I know. Well actually he's an inmate up at the joint.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(Ulysses in his cell
rolls on, upstage
left)

But I think of him as more of a
friend, not just as another one of
the prisoners.

ULYSSES

Me and my boys, The Galloping Geese,
Riverside Branch, always ride brigade --
that's 25 big, fast bikes all bunched
together. As for a single, one
motorcycle alone - nobody notices,
regardless of horse power. For damn
sure they ain't going to pay no
attention to a punk on a putt-putt
going 20 mph too slow. Watch out
pip-squeak. Here it comes, a big
station wagon barreling down the
road, 80 miles per hour, bout to
blow your ass right the hell off the
highway. You think the guy driving
it gives a crap? Your only chance
for survival - Total awareness at
all times. What's in front ... behind
... beside ... coming at you. Ready?
Split second evasive action.

(pantomimes it)

Last minute defensive move.

(pantomimes it)

Phew. Made it this time. Next time?
Who knows?

AGNES

Goodness, why did you buy this
dangerous machine?

SCOTT

I had to get transportation. Stuck
up there in the prison 24-7, it was
creepy. Especially the weekends,
nothing going on, nothing to do.
For the cons, that's what it is.
They're convicted criminals, doing
time. But for me, not right. I
should be out having some fun.
Instead, what am I doing?

CLIFFORD

Okay, what do you do?

SCOTT

Maybe hike out in the scrub beyond the walls. See if there was anything interesting.

AGNES

Was there?

SCOTT

Sometimes I'd find a deer track and try to follow it. Never got close enough to see one.

AGNES

Still nature is wonderful. So amazing. The birds, the colors, the clouds, the trees.

SCOTT

Make sure you don't get lost in that nature stuff. Got to know where you are, where you came from, how to get back.

AGNES

How do you mean?

SCOTT

Out there everything looks the same. It's really easy to lose your way. Then what? There are no landmarks, no other hikers out there to ask, especially after dark.

AGNES

Is it dangerous?

SCOTT

Rattle snakes laying up under a lot of the rocks. Got to keep an eye out.

ULYSSES

(In his cell)

Rattle snakes? Nobody but a total pussy gonna get nailed by one of them slugs. Danger? There's only one serious one: brush fires. That's when the bulls pile all the convicts into pickup trucks and drive them out into the middle of it. Then drop us off. We're there to cut the fire breaks. Smoke so thick you can't breath. 140° heat.

(MORE)

ULYSSES (CONT'D)

Flame 25 feet high, 25 feet away and racing right at you. And us, the convict crew supposed to stop it? With shovels? Give me a break. One thing's for sure, them wild animals don't have no confidence in us. They're terrified. Running every which way, panicked, trying to get out. On one fire last year this wild cat come roaring up the hillside. A big con from our crew steps into the trail to catch it. Thinks it would be fun. The cat, he just tears up the dude's front, over his head, down his back, L\like he was a tree trunk. The dude, totally ripped to shit. Had to take him to the hospital. Damn near killed. Lucky he only lost an eye

CLIFFORD

I'm glad you acquired transportation. You need a way out of there. You're not a prisoner, shouldn't get treated like one.

SCOTT

Yeah, the Honda was something I could afford and the sales guy convinced me the bike was pretty cool. That lasted until I got back to the prison.

CLIFFORD

Then what?

SCOTT

Ulysses, he usually tries to help me out, give me advice, tell me how to do things. Not this time.

AGNES

How do you mean help you, help you with what?

SCOTT

In the joint you gotta to deal with a lot of situations. What to say, how to say it. Prison isn't like other places. You get something wrong, or worse, cross another convict, there's no fix, no get-away. Trouble is on its way, absolutely guaranteed.

AGNES

Goodness gracious.

SCOTT

Ulysses is a good guy, literally saved my butt, more than a couple of times. Like the time I was driving one of the big eight-ton dump trucks. It was filled with rubble from where the steam shovel was excavating the side of a hill. I had to drive it about half a mile to dump it off the side of a cliff where the grade was getting built up. There were two cons back there, one on each side to let me know when I'd backed far enough and could lift the bed and dump the load. Only thing, those cons kept guiding me to keep coming back -- I was within a couple feet of going over. A drop of 100 feet, maybe more. Ulysses raced in at the last minute: "STOP!" Those guys tried to kill me. After I dumped the load I looked in the sideview mirrors, both of the cons back there were laughing.

AGNES

Why were men like that given responsibility.

SCOTT

I don't know. But I knew raising a stink would be a mistake.

CLIFFORD

Sounds like something from "On the Waterfront"

SCOTT

Yeah, I saw that movie. There was another one, "The Wild One", about an outlaw motorcycle gang, just like The Galloping Geese, Ulysses' gang in Riverside. Brando was in that one too. In fact, it was Ulysses who convinced me to buy a motorcycle.

AGNES

Should you be taking advice from an individual like that?

SCOTT

Maybe not.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

He sure tried to make me feel like an idiot when I first got back to the prison. He took one look at my brand new Honda, and just started laughing.

ULYSSES

"Cool, that what the sales dude said, your new put-put was? Cool? A piss-ant 150? Not even close.

SCOTT

I tried to defend it. "Hey, it's brand new, you don't need to kick start it like a Harley. Look, got a battery, push button start."

ULYSSES

"Dude, that's a bird beater. You got to be gay to ride a piece of crap like that."

AGNES

Shouldn't the inmates speak to you with more respect.

SCOTT

Out at the Grade, the inmates have to do what I tell them, but on a personal level, what I get is pretty much total contempt.

CLIFFORD

What's the Grade?

SCOTT

That's what they call the section of road we're building.

AGNES

This doesn't sound right. You are the authority. They should answer you with respect.

SCOTT

I don't think those guys would go for that. Besides, Motorcycle-wise they're right. When they were on the street, they all rode Harley Davidson, 750 c.c.'s. People don't intimidate a guy riding a hog.

AGNES

A hog?

*

SCOTT

Basically it's the same as the Harleys used by the Highway Patrol. The appearance, of course, is different.

AGNES

Ulysses. Isn't that an unusual name for a motorcycle hoodlum.

SCOTT

You know what, he himself didn't know Ulysses was his name.

CLIFFORD

What?

SCOTT

My first day there I was trying learn about the crew so I asked for names. When it came to him he said, "I don't know. It's on the wrist band," I looked at the band. "Ulysses." He said, "Say it again." So I did. "Ulysses." He said "I never knew how it was said." "How come?" I asked. He said his mom saw it in a book when he was born. She never knew how to say it either.

ULYSSES

Ulysses. Ulysses. I'm going to remember that.

CLIFFORD

Good God. No wonder those men end up in jail.

SCOTT

Yeah. For sure most of those guys are from poverty and haven't had much in the way of opportunity.

AGNES

If we could do something about the social situation. About their neighborhoods, their educations, the way they are brought up.

SCOTT

Maybe. But there are a lot of people from the same exact background who aren't criminals, These guys are.

AGNES

What do you mean?

SCOTT

The stuff they do, hitting an old lady over the head with a baseball bat, blowing guys away with a shotgun, stores broken into, cars robbed, children molested. Unfortunately, the slammer is the right place for such people and it's a good thing for the rest of us they're up there.

AGNES

But once they get out, surely they don't want to get in any more trouble.

SCOTT

A lot of time they're still the same. Predatory, out to rip you off any way they can.

AGNES

What about rehabilitation?

SCOTT

Maybe, but some of them actually prefer prison life. No stress, no decisions, nothing to worry about. A couple of weeks after their release they rob a 7-11 just so they can get back to taking it easy in the joint.

AGNES

What exactly is your job?

SCOTT

I watch them work. Any malingering or getting into disputes I have to step in immediately. Got to do it in a friendly way of course. Antagonizing those guys would be a big mistake.

CLIFFORD

This prison is in Malibu?

SCOTT

Yup.

CLIFFORD

What's it doing there?

SCOTT

That's where they needed the roads.

CLIFFORD

Malibu?

SCOTT

You're thinking of Malibu the beach town, movie stars in big houses. But if you turn towards the hills, the rich guy stuff disappears in about a half a mile. After that, Malibu stretches back for miles in canyons, steep hills, arroyos, scrub forests.

CLIFFORD

And the roads back there are all convict built? Never knew that.

SCOTT

When they put the prison up there in the 1920's, pick and shovel was it for equipment, that's why the roads always follow the topography - twists and turns, ups and downs. Don't go over 20 miles per hour, unless you want to ski jump off a the side of a mountain.

AGNES

How about inside the prison? What's it like?

SCOTT

A stream runs through the middle. The sheriff's office and convict barracks are on one side. The road department is on the other side.

AGNES

That's where you live?

SCOTT

I'm the only one. In the old days, all the road department guys lived in the barracks over there. Nobody owned a car. Nowadays everybody drives home. I'm the only one still there.

CLIFFORD

What do you do at night?

SCOTT

Some nights I visit the sheriff's office. They have a TV. But mainly I get to watch the cops play gin rummy for money. A lot of money.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

When they settle up at the end of the month, a cop can owe \$600. or more. Of course I don't play. I'd get my ass kicked.

AGNES

Scott, please.

SCOTT

Whoops, you're right. Sorry Aunt Agnes, sorry.

AGNES

And I am not your Aunt Agnes. You may call me Mrs. DeWitt.

SCOTT

Oh sure. I didn't know. Sorry, Mrs. DeWitt, that right?

CLIFFORD

That's okay. Don't worry about it. It doesn't matter.

AGNES

No, it certainly does matter. Scott is concerned about proper language use. He should worry about it.

CLIFFORD

Okay Scott, now you have what's called a second opinion.

AGNES

There's no second opinion. Your opinion is wrong and therefore it doesn't count.

(pause)

SCOTT

I also go over there to eat in the dining hall. I get to sit with the cops at the head table. We eat a lot better than the convicts do.

ULYSSES

Take a look at the up front table, that's where the bulls sit. Steak, fried chicken, lamb chops. The brothers - we get to walk with our trays past the feast to the tables in back.

(MORE)

ULYSSES (CONT'D)

Our food -- take eight pounds of ground pork, mix it with 50 pounds of corn meal and 30 pounds of crisco - you got enough pork balls to feed 120 inmates. We kick ass, bust rock, chop brush, dig ditches. The bulls - they sit in a truck, listening to cracker music on the radio.

CLIFFORD

Sounds like that could cause some tension.

SCOTT

You got that right.

CLIFFORD

What do you say when they complain?

SCOTT

You guys are criminals. Busted for illegal activities. Result: grease balls for dinner. They're just part of the pay back you owe society. The sizzling T-bones at the front table -- they tell you point blank, crime doesn't pay. So maybe you should think about that the next time you decide to knock over a liquor store.

AGNES

Goodness, you talk like that to those dangerous men?

SCOTT

Fortunately they laughed. Last thing I ever want to do is get them angry.

AGNES

How about after you bought the motorcycle? Did life improve.

SCOTT

I guess so. I mean I could ride down to Thousand Oaks, the town about 15 miles east. Nice to just park the bike and walk around, see people who aren't convicts.

CLIFFORD

Well no wonder you wanted to visit us.

SCOTT

The stories those guys tell can get to seeming kind of the same. Some enemy or other said they broke into someone's house, or sold drugs, or mugged someone for cash. Of course the evidence was manufactured by the cops and everyone else is lying, but the judge was an idiot, he agrees with the accusers.

AGNES

That's the defense? That everybody is lying?

SCOTT

That or they were railroaded by racial prejudice, crooked cops or negligent lawyers. Regardless, being in jail is in every case a miscarriage of justice. Just ask any one of them.

ULYSSES

The cons. They always getting riled up, some guy got off easier than them --

(impersonates a
different inmate)

We both robbed a gas station. How come he got 18 months, I'm doing 30?
(back to himself)

Ain't it a shame how fool some people can be. The main thing about the joint, you do your own time. The next guy, he does his. The two -- nothing to do with each other. Life is unfair. Who should know that better than a convict?

AGNES

How do you answer these complaints?

SCOTT

I don't. My boss gives us a work detail to complete on a given day. We get it done or we'd be holding up progress on the road. Not good. We got deadlines to meet. So I make sure it gets done. Miscarriages of justice, or why they're doing time for crimes they didn't commit is not my concern.

CLIFFORD

What is?

SCOTT

Busting rock, moving dirt, leveling the grade.

AGNES

Well, all I can say is this is an unusual occupation for someone from our family.

SCOTT

No question. My mom thinks so too.

AGNES

Nevertheless, it is a real job and that is something she's never had to do.

SCOTT

What do you mean?

AGNES

Jobs are how people earn a living. It enables them to pay for shelter, food, and all the other things they need.

SCOTT

She has a job. She's a child psychologist.

AGNES

Pshaw, she doesn't need a job. With the moeny she inherited she could afford any thing her heart desires without lifting a finger.

CLIFFORD

The implication that anybody with money they didn't earn from a job came by it through deceit and dishonesty is not accurate.

AGNES

In some cases deceit and dishonesty are at the center of it.

SCOTT

Are you against people inheriting money?

AGNES

Not at all. Only against people inheriting money that should have gone to others.

SCOTT

Does this have something to do with an ancestor named Uncle Charlie? A guy I know nothing about.

CLIFFORD

His will way back when. Some people question its fairness. But you are in no way involved. And look, here you've taken a job and bought a motorcycle. Not with money that rightfully should have gone to someone else, but your own money. You earned it.

AGNES

Clifford is right. I'm sorry I brought it up. It was very painful at the time, but no one could hold it against you.

SCOTT

Maybe. On the other hand, people still hold Germans responsible for Hitler, even though Germans today had nothing to do with him.

AGNES

How about slavery? It ended a century ago, but it's ugly, demeaning legacy is part of the reason all those black men are serving time in your prison.

CLIFFORD

That's history and history is past. Scott is here and now and I think he's doing great. The Malibu prison is quite an experience. One you'll remember for the rest of your life.

AGNES

You're different. Most young men your age are going to class, studying chemistry or French history or some other major academic discipline.

SCOTT

Yup. Those are the courses they registered for. Then showed up to class, did the reading, wrote the papers, took the exams. For sure that's not me.

CLIFFORD

In what way?

SCOTT

I didn't decide on what I'm doing.
It just happened. I don't know why.
I'm not even sure if I know how?

CLIFFORD

Maybe you just got lucky.

SCOTT

That would be a pretty loose
definition of luck.

AGNES

Well ... we generally have dinner at
7:30 or 8:00. Cocktails begin at
6:30. I have to go to the store
now. Clifford will do the driving
because the car is a little sensitive
today.

SCOTT

Oh, I forgot, Ulysses found an unusual
manzanita out at the grade. He cut
off the branches. Brought it back
to the joint. Then got the bark
off, shaped, sanded and finished it.
He asked me if I wanted it. I said
okay, but only if I pay for it.
Anyway here it is.

(takes manzanita
sculpture out of his
bag)

For you I guess. Maybe you can do
something with it.

CLIFFORD

Nice. Know what, I bet I can turn
it into a lamp.

AGNES

Lovely and you didn't buy it in a
store. The things people make are
always the best gifts.

SCOTT

I never have much reason to go to
stores. How about chores? Anything
you'd like me to do while you're
gone?

AGNES

No, you're our guest. Maybe you'd
like to get a little rest or take a
shower or something.

(MORE)

AGNES (CONT'D)

Your bedroom is upstairs at the end of the hall, your bathroom is the next door over.

SCOTT

You sure about this? Leaving me here alone?

CLIFFORD

Scott, are you concerned we wouldn't trust you?

SCOTT

Well, yeah, I mean, I don't know.

CLIFFORD

You may live with convicts, supervise them. But don't get confused. You are not one of them. You are one of us.

SCENE II -- "COCKTAILS"

SETTING IS THE SAME AS SCENE I, EXCEPT A ROLL-IN BAR HAS BEEN ADDED UP STAGE LEFT.

Agnes is in her chair and Clifford is behind the bar mixing drinks. After a moment or two Scott enters from the left.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

So Scott, there you are. Well, you're over 18, entitled to a highball. That's what Agnes and I always have.

Clifford finishes making drink and handing them out

SCOTT

(Finds the drink very strong.)

So, um, what do you do around here.

(pause)

For fun?

AGNES

Fun? We don't think of things we do as fun.

(pause)

SCOTT

Oh okay, I give up. So what do you do that's not fun?

CLIFFORD

We're pretty near 70. Just taking care of things around the place is a lot.

AGNES

Clifford and I do things, but they're not very interesting.

SCOTT

They are to me. I don't know anything about what anybody does. The people I live with, the convicts, try to do nothing whatsoever and that's the way they like it.

CLIFFORD

Well, they work on your road gang, right?

SCOTT

Oh yeah. But that's it, nothing else. This is important. Seeing other people do things might be upsetting.

CLIFFORD

Does the prison provide any kind of recreation?

SCOTT

Actually a few of the guys form Doo-Wop groups and practice singing, and every couple of weeks or so they show a movie in the dining hall. It's old and they run it on one of those old projectors that always burn holes in the celluloid, but ...

CLIFFORD

Then you wait half an hour while the guy re-threads the film into the projector.

SCOTT

With the rest of the convicts yelling and jeering at him to hurry the hell up.

ULYSSES

One show I remember. A shoot 'em up, cowboys against outlaws.

(MORE)

ULYSSES (CONT'D)

Looked like the bad guys were gonna win for a change, and all the convicts were cheering, but then the hero, he organizes the Texas Rangers and the bad dudes get smoked. That got the convicts booing, of course. When the flick is just about over the hero is there with his girl friend. After a quick smooch he pushes her off and says, "No, not now. I got to go shoot some more outlaws." As he's riding off into the sunset, one of the brothers yells out: "That's Texans for you. They'd rather fight than fuck."

AGNES

So what do they do in their free time?

SCOTT

Lie on their bunks and look at the ceiling.

AGNES

That doesn't sound constructive.

SCOTT

They don't want constructive. They don't want hassle. They'd rather be left alone.

CLIFFORD

What about your friend Ulysses?

SCOTT

He's different. Ulysses thinks he's an artist, untrained of course, but he's painting whenever he has free time. I think he's pretty good.

ULYSSES

Rembrandt and those other hot shots, sure enough, great I guess, but my idea of a great painter is different. Remember that guy doing life over at Soledad, they wouldn't let him have paint so he made his own by soaking M&M in those little plastic jelly tubs. He got a show in a gallery on the outside and everything sold.

(MORE)

ULYSSES (CONT'D)

The fact that he donated all sales to the kids of prisoners didn't matter. Prisoners aren't allowed to make money so the warden decided he needed a lesson in discipline. They took away his M&M privileges, then they threw him in solitary for a month. Well done, consider it lesson learned.

AGNES

Can we see Ulysses' paintings?

SCOTT

He sold a bunch of them to a black church here in Pasadena, but, um, there's a problem.

AGNES

What problem?

SCOTT

Well, they're not hanging on the walls.

AGNES

Why not?

SCOTT

He got arrested for um, child sexual abuse. That's why he's in. The eleven year old daughter of his girl friend. Ulysses says the girl friend got pissed when she found out he was seeing another woman. For payback she decided to bust him.

CLIFFORD

Are you saying she made the story up, because she was mad?

SCOTT

Who knows? When I called the pastor to ask about seeing the art work. He got testy. See the girl friend was in the choir, her 11 year old daughter was in the Sunday school. As for the paintings, the pastor said he isn't showing them to anybody.

AGNES

But it sounds like you think Ulysses is innocent.

SCOTT

Yup, I actually believe him. Not sure why. You listen to those guys, they're all innocent, just ask them. But Ulysses is different.

ULYSSES

That eleven year old daughter, the supposed victim. First, the little bitch lied. Then the cop, wrote up her statement on he wrong form. The clerk filed it in the wrong place. And none of the evidence was proven. Plus my lawyer -- negligent doesn't begin -- actually fell asleep during the trial. All these mess ups and the judge still gave me three to five. Did I do it? Did I do it? You actually asking me that? Of course I didn't do it, but what the hell has that got to do with it. What matters, I got railroaded. That's the system. That's why the cops love child sex abuse. Lots of publicity, hearsay evidence is proof, and a conviction is guaranteed. Case closed.

AGNES

I have read that a number of these sex crimes are bogus. People make up stories to get revenge, and the jury believes them.

CLIFFORD

It's the feminists. The authorities are afraid they'll create a ruckus.

AGNES

My grandfather was a judge. Over the years he tried over 65 cases of rape. In each and every case he said it was the woman's fault. Her behavior, or appearance or clothing or whatever provoked the man. The rape was entirely her fault. The rapist was always innocent. Not one single conviction. 65 cases tried. It's an outrage. Feminists at fault, my foot.

SCOTT

(pause)

I already made plans to come here to visit you. It's okay. We don't have to see the paintings.

AGNES

Nonsense. We don't accept Ulysses guilt and we want to see the art. Undoubtedly the minister locked them in a closet somewhere. Now we're going to go over there to see them.

SCOTT

You saying I've got to call him again?

AGNES

Oh no, that's not the way to handle this. We're just going to show up. Once we're there he can't possibly deny us. He wouldn't have the nerve.

CLIFFORD

There's a second opinion on that. I say he might.

AGNES

One thing I learned in India, you have to be firm with these kind of people. Unwavering, otherwise they think they can roll over you.

CLIFFORD

What do you mean "these kind of people?"

AGNES

I'm not a racist. It's just the culture. In certain societies people always try to take advantage of you. It's in their DNA.

CLIFFORD

Well to me that actually does sound a little bit racist.

AGNES

Nonsense. You remember Indians. Unless you make them they're incapable of treating you fairly and honestly.

CLIFFORD

Being right and making other people do what you think is right may not be the same thing.

AGNES

Having convictions and standing up for them are the building blocks of character.

CLIFFORD

Want to know my conviction? Enough. I've had all I can take of your ideas.

AGNES

Okay, suit yourself. Now, how about a plan for tomorrow?

SCOTT

Like what?

AGNES

Right here in Pasadena there are lots of things. Would you like to see the Rose Bowl, you know, where they play football.

SCOTT

Is there a game?

CLIFFORD

No it's just a giant blob. Really it's just a big so what.

AGNES

Well how about the Huntington Art Museum. It's world famous,

SCOTT

I don't know anything about art, so probably not.

AGNES

Scott, not knowing anything about a subject should make you curious, interested.

SCOTT

In other words you think I should be enthusiastic about art I've never seen or heard of, that it?

AGNES

That's right.

SCOTT

The book I'm trying to read, "The Great Gatsby", I heard it was really good.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

So I was enthusiastic before I bought it. I started in, but I don't get what it's about, so I've lost my enthusiasm.

CLIFFORD

That the one by Scott Fitzgerald?

SCOTT

Yup.

CLIFFORD

That man was a total shit.

AGNES

Clifford!

CLIFFORD

Sorry, only one word for him.

SCOTT

Why are you saying that?

CLIFFORD

At Princeton he was one of my roommates freshman year. Like I said, a total shit.

AGNES

Clifford, that is just not an acceptable way to speak.

SCOTT

What do you mean?

CLIFFORD

Drunk most nights. Come back to the room. Puke on the floor, pass out, disgusting.

SCOTT

How about when he wasn't drunk?

CLIFFORD

Don't know. Didn't talk to him.

AGNES

Cliff, you roomed with him for a year. He is now considered one of America's finest authors, and you have nothing to say about him.

CLIFFORD

That's all I know.

AGNES

Okay, we heard that, we believe you, but what else. Surely you must have had a conversation with him once or twice. Or, I don't know, noticed other things.

CLIFFORD

Things?

AGNES

How he shined his shoes, combed his hair, made the bed. I don't know ... things he did.

CLIFFORD

I am a scientist. I am only interested in "things" that are interesting.

AGNES

Right here is a boy who is reading "The Great Gatsby." He is two generations younger than us. We have an obligation to pass on the knowledge we've accumulated over the course of a lifetime.

CLIFFORD

I could tell him about carburetors. They're interesting.

AGNES

The sum total of what you have to say about Scott Fitzgerald. "Pukes on the floor." Unacceptable!

CLIFFORD

I can't think of anything else.

AGNES

Ugh.

CLIFFORD

Okay, okay. Give me a day. Maybe if I work on it.

AGNES

We'll both be disappointed if you don't.

CLIFFORD

Meantime, the roast is still in the oven, how about another drink?

SCENE 3 BREAKFAST

HANGING PLAQUE: EGG BEATER, TOASTER, FRY PAN. FURNITURE: A KITCHEN TABLE AND THREE CHAIRS. AGNES IS SETTING THE TABLE. SCOTT ENTERS STAGE LEFT

AGNES

Goodness. You're wearing the same clothes you were wearing yesterday.

SCOTT

That's the clothes I've got.

AGNES

That's it. You don't have a change?

SCOTT

Up at the prison I wear a uniform.

AGNES

But Scott. What you have on, they're not even nice clothes. We can't go to the Huntington with you looking like that.

(pause)

SCOTT

Maybe I should just go back to the prison. That might be best for everyone.

AGNES

No no no. I'll hear of no such thing. There's a nice men's store and it's close. We'll go there and get you some new clothes.

SCOTT

Ugh...

AGNES

I know, you're worried about the money. Don't be. It's on me.

SCOTT

But you shouldn't ...

AGNES

Now don't make me explain why, because I can't. That's because there is no explanation. Now have some breakfast, then we'll get Cliff to drive us over there.

SCOTT
(pours cereal and
milk into a bowl)
You really don't have to do this.

AGNES
Actually I do. Two reasons. First
it will give me a chance to put what
you are wearing through the wash.

SCOTT
(moans)

AGNES
No comment from you. They really
need cleaning. Second I'll make
Cliff come in with us. He hasn't
bought anything new in, well I don't
know, maybe years.

SCOTT
You going to tell him he needs new
clothes.

AGNES
Absolutely. Time for him to stop
looking so shabby.

SCOTT
You sure. Won't that be embarrassing?

AGNES
Nobody, no matter who, should ever
be allowed to embarrass you. You
can only do that to yourself. Have
confidence, self-assurance, then you
will never be embarrassed.

SCOTT
Maybe. But if you act like an idiot
it might be a good idea to know what
people think, that way you don't do
it again.

AGNES
Not the way people in our family
think.

SCOTT
Our family? My mom told me about
the time your mother took seven
children into a restaurant with a
picnic basket. You sat at the largest
table, she ordered a cup of tea.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Then she opened the picnic basket and passed out sandwiches. When you finished lunch, the kids went back to the car. She left a nickel on the table. You know, to pay for the tea.

AGNES

What's wrong with that? She ordered the tea, they brought it to her, she paid for it.

SCOTT

I know you were just a little kid, but didn't you find it kind of embarrassing?

AGNES

Not in the least.

SCOTT

But nobody does stuff like that.

AGNES

What difference does that make?

SCOTT

Would you do it?

AGNES

Me? I couldn't do that. If I tried the restaurant would probably throw me out.

SCOTT

Right.

AGNES

Another thing she always did in restaurants was give the manager a quarter and demand he pull the plug on the juke box. If customers can get 9 minutes of trash music for a quarter, she was entitled to 9 minutes of silence for a quarter.

SCOTT

That worked?

AGNES

Of course.

SCOTT

Getting away with something doesn't make it right.

AGNES

Mother never "got away" with anything. When she did things, she thought she was right. Never considered any other possibility.

SCOTT

She sure wouldn't have liked me.

AGNES

Why not?

SCOTT

I never think I'm right. I try, but whatever I'm doing just doesn't work. When I'm done, forget it. Crappy is the only description. Well, at least I tried.

AGNES

That's ridiculous. You have to think positive. Chin up, stiff upper lip. Stand your ground. Give no quarter.

SCOTT

You know I never considered that. Positive! Never wrong! Always right! Wow, thanks. From this point forward I am a changed man.

AGNES

You're making a joke of it. And that's unfortunate. The advice I'm giving you is sound. Follow it and you will be a more effective human being. Now, hurry up, eat your breakfast.

SCOTT

Okay. Okay. I'm sorry. Okay?

AGNES

Clifford, breakfast, come on down. We have to go somewhere. We need to get moving if we're going to the art museum today.

CLIFF ENTERS DURING AGNES' LINE.

CLIFFORD

Art. God how I hate it. What's the point?

AGNES

It's beautiful. It shows us people, how they really are, who they are, what it was like to live at a certain time and place in history.

CLIFFORD

You talking about Blue Boy?

AGNES

Why not? I think that is the most beautiful painting at the Huntington.

CLIFFORD

A useless young fop got up in a velvet outfit. What does show me about anything?

AGNES

We appreciate him for how beautiful he is. AND! How beautifully Gainsborough painted him.

CLIFFORD

Well there you go. Beautiful, that's the last thing in the world I find him. If I had to sit next to him on an airplane I'd ask the stewardess to find me another seat.

AGNES

Why?

CLIFFORD

I'd be afraid someone might think we were together. A fruitcake like that. And there he is, sitting next to me, my companion. Yikes!

SCOTT

Well I'd like to know what art is, what people think it is. It communicates something right? Something I'm supposed to feel or understand? It can't be just a goof like you say.

AGNES

Of course. Don't listen to Cliff.

(MORE)

AGNES (CONT'D)

If it doesn't have a carburetor, he doesn't understand it. Worse, he doesn't want to understand it.

SCOTT

Speaking of understanding, This carburetor you're inventing, what's the idea?

CLIFFORD

Burns natural gas instead of gasoline. It's a lot cheaper, more abundant and far less polluting.

SCOTT

Wow, what could be wrong with that?

CLIFFORD

Nothing. If I can figure out how to make it power an automobile it will save people hundreds, and make me millions.

SCOTT

What's the hold up?

CLIFFORD

Natural gas has to be liquified or compressed and then pumped into the tank in the trunk of my car. Liquified is the most efficient but it means the tank must be maintained at 260° below zero. Not practical in the Pontiac. So I am working with compressed natural gas

SCOTT

How compressed?

CLIFFORD

Pressurized to 3000 PSI. The issue is how to maintain that PSI. See as the car burns fuel there's less of it which means the pressure in the tank is continuously dissipated.

SCOTT

What happens if someone rear ends your car with that tank in there.

CLIFFORD

Would be okay up to a point. That's a pretty heavy duty tank.

(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

But if the accident managed to rupture the tank ...

SCOTT

Yeah?

CLIFFORD

Could be bad. An explosion.

SCOTT

Well, the way you drive, and even more the way your wife drives, not likely to happen.

AGNES

Are you criticizing the way I drive?

SCOTT

When it comes to the daredevil recklessness that causes accidents, I'd have to say no, there are no concerns.

AGNES

Being in that car at any speed is daredevil recklessness.

SCOTT

How come you like carburetors so much?

CLIFFORD

Got interested after college. I had this old Model T, the carburetor was so inefficient. Wasted about 20% of the gas in the tank. I thought I could do better.

SCOTT

Did you?

CLIFFORD

Absolutely. In fact I have two patents on my carburetor designs from back then.

SCOTT

Anybody buy them.

CLIFFORD

Well, not Henry Ford or General Motors, but surprisingly, this was a few years later, someone on Amelia
(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Earhart mechanical team got in touch. She was doing all that long distance flying, trying to break records, so they wanted everything on the plane to be as efficient as possible. They asked me to look at the issue of carburetion.

SCOTT

How did you make out?

CLIFFORD

I designed and fabricated the carburetor she flew with.

SCOTT

That's pretty amazing.

CLIFFORD

I guess so. I'm not sure how much it helped. She was a good pilot, but she wasn't attentive to details. At least not as obsessively as she should have been.

SCOTT

Like how?

CLIFFORD

I wasn't up there, but the slap dash way she acted on pre-flight inspections. Like everything looks okay, why get nitsy bitsy? I don't want to insult her memory. Flying was really dangerous back then. For navigation all you had was an unreliable sextant, a compass and dead reckoning. Lot of pilots went down.

SCOTT

Still must have been really sad to lose her.

CLIFFORD

Hard to get over. She really was a great girl. Noticed what people did. Really appreciated it. A joy to be around.

SCOTT

You think her going down had something to do with the carburetor?

CLIFFORD

Why would you say that? They never found her plane, so what would make you think that?

AGNES

Oh Cliff, Scott doesn't know what he's talking about. She flew thousands of miles with that carburetor. No problems. So why would it suddenly conk out over the Pacific. Makes no sense. Couldn't have been the carburetor. Just couldn't have been.

CLIFFORD

Yes, but what if it was.
(He emotionally loses control)

AGNES

What happened was terrible, whatever the reason, terrible. And remembering it really hurts, I know that Clifford. However, there is nothing we can do about it now, so we are done talking about it.

SCOTT

Sorry. I didn't know what I was saying.

AGNES

Good because the reliability of aircraft carburetors is not the next order of business.

SCOTT

What is?

AGNES

Improving the look of things. First step: the Men's store.

SCENE 4: LOOKING GOOD

THE MEN'S STORE. STAGE RIGHT, A ROLLING RACK HANGING WITH NEW CLOTHES. THE PLAQUE UP STAGE LOOKS LIKE AN AD. HEADLINE: "GUIDO ROKAGIONE! YOU COME IN WANTING, YOU GO OUT WANTED!"

Agnes, Clifford & Scott enter stage left.

SALESMAN

Welcome to Guido's. "You come in wanting, you go out wanted"

AGNES

That's your slogan.

SALESMAN

That's it.

AGNES

And Guido, is he your owner? Did he think that up?

SALESMAN

These days Italian style is what's happening, so we made up the name Guido Rokagione when we opened the store. There's actually no such person.

AGNES

A pretend Guido, who made up that "wanted" slogan, this whole enterprise seems trashier by the minute. However, we're not here for Guido's style or, God forbid, the hope of leaving "wanted," we're here for clothing, we'll try to focus on that.

SALESMAN

Phew. That's a cool handkerchief pressed a damp brow. So, what can I show you?

AGNES

How about pants?

SALESMAN

Okay, young man, what do you have in mind?

SCOTT

Uh, I'm not sure? Something different from what I'm wearing for sure. I'm told these pants are unacceptable.

SALESMAN

That's what someone told you?

SCOTT

Correct.

SALESMAN

If making a good impression is the goal, that person was right. 100% right.

SCOTT

A good impression on who?

SALESMAN

I don't know. How about me? If you wanted to impress me, you'd need a better pair of pants.

SCOTT

Okay. But "Pussy Gonzolez hits the Riviera", is for sure not the look for me.

SALESMAN

So there are dress pants, sport slacks, chinos, khakis, etc. All the way down to jeans which, of course, we don't sell here.

SCOTT

This whole thing is my uh, her plan. I think she should make the decisions.

AGNES

How about corduroy?

SALESMAN

No question, college men look great in corduroy. What colors?

AGNES

It's important that young men look like they have respect. I think green or orange are nice.

CLIFFORD

At the art museum you gotta look sensitive.

AGNES

Young people these days have no respect. Instead they're all about being as offensive possible.

CLIFFORD

On the other hand a young guy who dresses for country club approval generally has his lips planted on some dowager's fat butt. Too close to center, his nose comes out brown.

AGNES

That will suffice Clifford.

SALESMAN

Okay, Green or orange corduroys.
Can I also show you matching shirts?

AGNES

Makes sense.

SALESMAN

Fine any color preference or would
you like me to pick out some things
that coordinate?

AGNES

Once again, green and orange are
favorites. And while you're finding
clothes for Scott, get some corduroys
and a shirt for Cliff.

SALESMAN

Color?

AGNES

The same. Like they say, sauce for
the goose, sauce for the gander.

SCENE 5: THE ART MUSEUM

THERE'S A BENCH DOWN STAGE. GIANT PLAQUE OF GAINSBOROUGH'S
"BLUE BOY" HANGS CENTER.

Cliff and Scott stand side by side stage left. They are
dressed exactly alike: green pants, orange shirt. Agnes is
stage right looking at an off stage painting. During the
scene Agnes, Clifford and Scott appear to be looking off
stage at different paintings, one after another. They move
around exchanging places to look at a new painting. They
never look at each other.

SCOTT

Ok we're here so I could pick up an
understanding of art. Be great if I
could talk about it to Ulysses and
not sound like an idiot.

AGNES

Does Ulysses know a lot about art?

SCOTT

I'm not sure. He Paints what he
calls abstract art. And his stuff
looks good. But I don't get it.
Still, I bought a painting - \$20.

CLIFFORD

How about that. You're a collector.
Just like Huntington himself.

AGNES

Clifford, it is not of value to
subject everything to ridicule and
abuse.

CLIFFORD

Ulysses, he's also the guy who
couldn't pronounce his own name,
right?

AGNES

When did he start painting?

SCOTT

I think another con gave him some
pointers when he was up at the Q.

AGNES

The Q?

SCOTT

Sorry, San Quentin Penitentiary,
that's what all the inmates call it.

CLIFFORD

What did he do to get incarcerated
up there?

SCOTT

Not a damn thing. Leastwise that's
what he says. But he was riding
with that motorcycle gang, all known
outlaws.

CLIFFORD

Just riding a motorcycle can't be
against the law, can it?

SCOTT

Depends on who you ask. The cops
might not have the same opinion as
you. Of course you can't trust the
cops. And if you can't, certainly
no black person can.

AGNES

There's nothing we can do about that,
but what about his art? Where exactly
is this church?

SCOTT
It's over in the black neighborhood.

AGNES
So is the pastor black?

SCOTT
Well, yeah.

CLIFFORD
You think a white minister in Pasadena
would buy work from a black artist?

AGNES
In the first place, there aren't
that many black people in Pasadena.
As for black artists -- maybe none.
In which case the opportunity is not
likely to arise.

SCOTT
Not the situation in prisons. Black
guys are six times as likely to get
locked up as white guys. Makes the
high percentage of Black guys in the
joint inevitable.

CLIFFORD
Outrageous. How can we call this a
balanced system of justice?

SCOTT
I agree. On the other hand, guys in
jail are generally there for stuff
they actually did.

AGNES
Well, there certainly are a lot of
social problems.

From here to the end of the scene the players look at each
other rather than paintings.

CLIFFORD
(Whispers)
Speaking of which I've been feeling
there are a lot of social problems
right here in the museum.

SCOTT
What do you mean?

CLIFFORD
You haven't noticed?
(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Just about everyone here. Like they're starrin' at us, some seem to be laughing.

SCOTT

At us? At, you mean you and me? Why?

CLIFFORD

What do you think? Anything about us that people might notice?

SCOTT

We dressed up to come here.

CLIFFORD

You're getting warm. Anything, um, special about these clothes?

AGNES

I think you look nice.

CLIFFORD

Our outfits are getting more attention than Blue Boy's blue velvets.

AGNES

Nonsense.

CLIFFORD

The people here think we look weirder than him.

AGNES

You're being self-conscious for no reason. No reason whatsoever.

CLIFFORD

How much more of this do we have to take. Absolutely everyone is gawking at us.

AGNES

Pay them no mind. Let's go look at Lawrence's painting of Pinkie.

CLIFFORD

You think she'd look back at us? I mean if she was here.

SCOTT

I'd need a brown paper bag.

AGNES

What for?

SCOTT

To put over my head.

AGNES

What are you talking about?

SCOTT

I don't want to take a chance on someone like Pinkie recognizing me.

AGNES

Why?

SCOTT

You were never a teenager riding in you dad's car? Bad situation. Especially if someone from school notices you and the dad's car is a hunk-of-junk.

AGNES

And then what?

SCOTT

Your reputation. Could destruct like a pin stuck in a balloon

AGNES

No one here at the Huntington recognizes you.

CLIFFORD

They don't have to, One look and they'll know everything they ever want to know. Which is as little as possible.

AGNES

Falderal.

CLIFFORD

Okay Agnes, you explain to me exactly why a 60 year old man and a 19 year old kid would go to the museum in matching outfits?

AGNES

Time for the Dutch landscapes.

SCENE 6: SUNDAY AFTERNOON

THE DRIVE WAY IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE. THE HANGING PLAQUE SHOWS AN EARLY 50'S PONTIAC. A SECTION OF PICKET FENCE IS DOWN STAGE WITH MAYBE A TRASH CAN.

Clifford and Agnes stand together stage left. Clifford is holding a shopping bag. Scott is center, one hand on the picket fence.

SCOTT

Okay. Guess I better get going.

AGNES

We had a really nice weekend. We are so glad you came. That we got to meet you and know you.

SCOTT

You kidding? The thanks are all me to you. New outfit, washed clothes, nice dinners.

CLIFFORD

You don't seem to have a helmet. I think you should.

SCOTT

The law doesn't require it, and they're pretty expensive.

CLIFFORD

(GETS HELMET OUT OF BAG)

They gave me one when I was a consultant at Lockheed. Never flew, so never wore it. Not likely to need it any time soon. You take it.

SCOTT

Wow. You sure? This is really nice.

CLIFFORD

I hope you'll use it whenever you ride. They make a big difference if something goes wrong.

SCOTT

Can't wait to show it to Ulysses. He'll for sure call me out as every kind of wimp in the book.

ULYSSES

(CELL UPSTAGE)

You put on one of them things to ride a piss ant bike, you look like a gorilla having sex with a tricycle.

CLIFFORD

You tell him the choice is safety or danger. You pick safety. That may be why he is in prison and you aren't.

SCOTT

Not a good idea to say things like that to Ulysses.

AGNES

It was great for Cliff and me to hear all about your life in Malibu. Things don't change around here much, and you visiting, well it was different, a breath of fresh air.

CLIFFORD

We hope you'll come again.

SCOTT

Really?

AGNES

Of course, whenever you like.

SCOTT

My mom said there might be a problem. That you might still be mad about that Uncle Charlie will.

AGNES

Oh please. So long ago. No need to worry about it. Tell her we got along just fine.

SCOTT

Okay, will do. Well thanks again, uh, Mrs. De Witt.

AGNES

I've thought it over.

SCOTT

Thought what over?

AGNES

I've decided to change my mind. You are family after all and I want you to call me Aunt Agnes.

ULYSSES

Family. Not like I don't have one. Most of us do. Well, relationships, anyway.

(MORE)

ULYSSES (CONT'D)

And, sure, they let these relationships visit us. Every Sunday. They come with the kids, bring fried chicken, potato salad, and everybody sits at the picnic tables. By the way, these are the very same women that busted us in the first place. But guess what, they like visiting us in the joint. Guess why, being in jail means you ain't out doing the nasty with some other chick. Even my woman, yeah, she's one of them, and brings the child I supposedly molested with her. I know, unbelievable.

SCOTT

Okay Aunt Agnes. Hey, I'll give you a call.

AGNES

Or we could call you.

SCOTT

No, no, that wouldn't work. The only phone is over at the sheriff's office. They don't like it used for non-police calls, but I can sneak in a call if it's short.

CLIFFORD

Well then, we'll look forward to hearing from you.

SCOTT

You will, for sure.

CLIFFORD

Good. Don't forget us.

Scott exits right. We hear his Honda start and take off down the road.

AGNES

I don't remember seeing that helmet.

CLIFFORD

You wouldn't have. I snuck out and bought it after we got back from the museum.

AGNES

Why'd you do that?

CLIFFORD

Riding a motorcycle without a helmet is just not safe. I don't want him to get hurt.

AGNES

Well, you are right there. Come to think about it, I feel the same way. Although ...

CLIFFORD

Although what?

AGNES

I wouldn't have thought of the helmet. What did it cost?

CLIFFORD

A lot, Aunt Agnes, a lot. But slightly less than what your fair share of the will should have been.

SCENE 7: SCOTT RE-VISITS

ONE WEEK LATER. RETURN TO THE LIVING ROOM FURNITURE PROP. A LAMP MADE FROM THE MANZANITA IS ON AN END TABLE. ONCE AGAIN THE HOUSE PHOTO IS ON THE PLACARD.

Agnes is on stage fussing about, Clifford comes in stage right in his dirty mechanic's onesie.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Trouble with that damn thing. Got to be a more precise way to coordinate the spark with the rotation of the cam shaft.

AGNES

Why don't you make it regular car, you know, the way it started out?

CLIFFORD

Hell, regular carburetor, just turn the set screw till it sounds right. Done. Consider the car tuned up. My natural gas carburetor is more sensitive.

AGNES

Sounds like we could consider it "The Blue Boy" of combustion engine science.

CLIFFORD

The fine tuned alignment between gear ratios and RPMs is a sensitivity issue, you're right. Hurt feelings, however are not considered a concept in engineering.

AGNES

Male chauvinist baloney. Hope you're not going to talk this kind of nonsense when Scott gets here.

CLIFFORD

What do you mean?

AGNES

He's a impressionable young man. No reason to have his thinking compromised by myopic, retrograde stupidity.

Knock on the door.

AGNES (CONT'D)

That must be him, he's here.

CLIFFORD

Here?

AGNES

Don't you remember? He called up Wednesday evening, said he was coming.

CLIFFORD

Whoops, guess I completely forgot.

AGNES

I may have to send you to the home. Well, open the door.

Clifford opens the door. Scott enters with helmet under his arm.

CLIFFORD

Well Scott. You're here. Been wondering when you'd get here. Looking forward to seeing you.

SCOTT

Bought a map. Found a route that didn't use the freeway. Phew, less stressful big time.

AGNES

So safer. Glad to hear that. Plus you were wearing your new helmet.

SCOTT

Only thing, those 18 wheelers coming the other way on narrow, two lane roads can make it pretty hairy.

AGNES

Hairy?

SCOTT

See if they're barreling down on you at high speeds one lane over, you hit something that feels like a wall right after they pass. Could knock you off the road.

AGNES

That doesn't sound good.

SCOTT

Especially if it catches you by surprise and the bike wobbles close to out of control.

CLIFFORD

Those trucks, lot of mass, especially with the huge trailers. As they push through, they compact the air in front and create a vacuum behind.

AGNES

Does that make sense, or is it just me?

CLIFFORD

At speed they suck all the air out behind them. That's the space where daredevil skate-boarders like to slip stream. They can get sucked right along at 60 - 70 miles per hour. Coming the other way, of course, the back of the vacuum feels like what Scott said, as if you hit a wall.

SCOTT

That's it.

CLIFFORD

Decelerate when you see a truck coming. Slow enough you'll barely feel it.

AGNES

Enough of sucking vacuums or whatever you were talking about. You know your room. Why don't you take your stuff up.

SCOTT

Oh hey, Is that the manzanita I got from Ulysses?

CLIFFORD

Yup.

(turns the lamp on)

Making it into a lamp wasn't hard. Looks great, don't you think?

SCOTT

You bet. I'm impressed. By the way, I asked Ulysses about visiting that church, you know with his paintings. I told him the preacher told us not to come. He agreed, said it would be a bad idea.

ULYSSES

Pastor Claude is a good man. When I first got out of the Q, he really helped me get readjusted. Even got me a job as a house painter, the boss was a parishioner in his church. Next thing you know I was painting pictures. The pastor liked my work. Started buying my work for the church. They weren't religious, didn't matter, long as they were what he called "real". However, after the uphill sure enough comes the downhill. The minute things started to go good, my girl friend dined me out to the police. The people of the church naturally believed the eleven year old daughter. Plus I was a repeat offender. The parishioners who came to court when I got sentenced clapped. I think Pastor Claude knows I'm not guilty. But he can't say that. He'd lose his congregation. He figures the best he can do is to try to make the whole situation disappear. But guess what, I'm right here. Take a look, I didn't disappear.

AGNES

Like I said, we'll make it a surprise visit.

SCOTT

Ulysses said don't go. So did the minister. Is this going to be like ordering a cup of tea and having lunch from the picnic basket?

AGNES

When people make up their minds, well, sometimes they're wrong. That's why you have to sure you're right, because when you are, it's easy to correct their thinking.

SCOTT

Okay, okay. I guess let's give it a try. Hey, might be another excuse for me and Uncle Clifford to wear our matching outfits.

CLIFFORD

You're not serious.

SCOTT

Bet the people there would love it. Honkies finally dressing like what they are, complete idiots.

CLIFFORD

I am not going. As for when will I look at art again? Never. As for when am I going to put on that outfit again? More emphatically, never. Should you decide to make me wear it, you'll be putting it on me in my coffin. I'll count on my expression to let people know how I feel about it.

SCENE 8: CHURCH SERVICES

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH IN PASADENA WHERE ULYSSES ART IS LOCATED. THE DROP SHOWS A MODERN ART STAINED GLASS WINDOW. (MAKE IT FROM GELS SO IT CAN BE BACK LIT). THE FURNITURE IS A SINGLE CHURCH PEW STAGE LEFT, AND A SIMPLE ALTAR WITH CRUCIFIX STAGE LEFT.

Scott & Agnes enter stage right.

SCOTT

Well this is obviously it.

AGNES

You sure?

SCOTT

That window. Got to be Ulysses work.
 Couldn't be anyone else.

AGNES

Sunday afternoon, The Lord's Day.
 How come nobody's here? This is
 when people should be in the church.

SCOTT

Maybe the service is on Sunday
 morning.

AGNES

But the door was unlocked.

SCOTT

Got to mean the building is in use.
 Stay here. I'll take a look around.

Scott exits right. Agnes starts exploring, ends up at the altar. She is not satisfied with looking, she has to touch and run her hands over everything. Rev. Claude enters from left.

REV. CLAUDE

Pardon me. Can I help you?

AGNES

Who are you?

REV. CLAUDE

I am the Reverend Claude Jennings.
 I am the pastor of this church.

AGNES

Good. You are just the person we
 want to see. We're here to look at
 paintings. My, nephew, uh, god-son,
 well anyway, he knows the artist.

REV. CLAUDE

Who is your nephew, uh, god-son?

AGNES

He should be back in a minute. No
 one was here when we arrived, so he
 went to look for someone. We would
 like a tour.

REV. CLAUDE

Tour? Did someone tell you we give
 tours?

AGNES

We came all the way from the other side of town. A considerable distance, we're here for a tour.

REV. CLAUDE

Unfortunately, we are pretty busy right now. The parishioners are having a meeting about police brutality. They want to organize a protest at City Hall. They're here to plan it. I should be there.

AGNES

A protest at City Hall is no concern of ours. We aren't interested in rabble rousing. We came to see an artist's work.

REV. CLAUDE

What is the artist's name?

AGNES

How should I know? You are the minister here. His art is in this building. It's your job to know his name. It's also your job to give us a tour.

REV. CLAUDE

Madam, I wish to be helpful, but you ...

AGNES

I don't want you to be helpful. I want you to do your job. We drove all the way over here to a part of town where nobody goes.

REV. CLAUDE

I beg your pardon Madam, what people are you referring to. The people who come to this church, they live in this part of town. They come here all the time.

SCOTT ENTERS

SCOTT

Oh Hi, ran into a bunch of people in the basement having a meeting. They said I'd find Reverend Claude upstairs.

REV. CLAUDE

Yes, that's me.

SCOTT

Oh great. Well, I know Ulysses Sims. He told me he did most of the art in this church.

REV. CLAUDE

Who?

SCOTT

Ulysses Sims. He's incarcerated in the prison up in Malibu.

REV. CLAUDE

Oh, you must mean Popeye. That's the name he went by here. His actual name is Ulysses? I never knew that.

SCOTT

He didn't tell people because he didn't know how to pronounce it, he was embarrassed. When you're in prison, however, you have to go with the name on your birth certificate. No other option.

REV. CLAUDE

Not knowing how to say your own name. Obviously upsetting. Like not knowing your birthday or who your father was.

ULYSSES

(In his cell upstage)

I knew who my father was. When I was a little kid we went on welfare. The case worker tracked him down. Knocked on his door at 6:00 a.m. Had to make sure she got him at home. He was told he owed child support. My father said he couldn't do it right now. Why not? See, he had started a new band, they wanted to work the local clubs. So first thing, all his funds would be required to get his wardrobe in order -- see, in the music biz you got to look the part.

AGNES

Well, at least he knew where his art was. Right here in this church.

(MORE)

AGNES (CONT'D)

We however don't know this church from a hole in the wall, no idea of where things are. We need a tour.

REV. CLAUDE

As I said Madam, I am about to lead a discussion downstairs. All those people got here on time and now I am late.

AGNES

A quick tour is all we need. They'll be all right for 20 minutes. They're used to waiting.

REV. CLAUDE

They're not used to waiting for me. When I schedule something it is important that it start on time. Otherwise people feel disrespected. They have enough of that in their daily lives. Thank you for visiting us. You are free to walk around. I have to take my leave now.

AGNES

Goodness. I've never been so insulted in my entire life

REV. CLAUDE

If my leaving you for a meeting I scheduled last week is your idea of an insult, you have indeed led a charmed life. God bless you. Goodbye.

Exit Rev. Claude

AGNES

Can you imagine. The effrontery. In India a person like that would be caned.

SCOTT

You know what Aunt Agnes, this is not a good place for us to be right now. We should leave.

AGNES

We haven't seen the art.

SCOTT

And we're not going to. We have to leave. Now.

AGNES

Are you allowing these people, this Reverend whatever Claude, to push you around?

SCOTT

Yup. You know why?

AGNES

Why?

SCOTT

Turns out these people are in fact, actually people.

AGNES

I don't know what you're talking about. We came all the way out here to see this prisoner's art, and now we're leaving without seeing it. Ugh. I'm not wasting any more time in this place; I'll go sit in the car.

SCOTT

Good, I'll see you out there in a couple of minutes. I need to see the pastor.

AGNES

Why? He's at a meeting.

SCOTT

I hope I can figure out some way to apologize.

AGNES

Apologize? What for?

Agnes exits. Seconds later Reverend Claude enters.

REV. CLAUDE

Oh good. I told the folks I needed a couple minutes. There are a lot of people in the parish who've had bad experiences with the police. I asked them to tell their stories. Gives us a couple of minutes. I'm glad I caught you before you left.

SCOTT

Oh God, I am so sorry.

REV. CLAUDE

I know. No need to mention it. Not your fault. Old people. Some of them anyway, not changing. Ever.

SCOTT

She is my aunt, it is really embarrassing.

REV. CLAUDE

It's not you, I know that. But now you know how all kinds of otherwise okay people are about some very troubling issues.

SCOTT

Yes. Really caught me by surprise.

REV. CLAUDE

The important thing is you're not like that. All you can do is be yourself and hope it encourages them to change.

SCOTT

Be myself? Who the hell is that? Whoops. Wrong word. When I get nervous I slip up.

REV. CLAUDE

Control of language, very important. Uncontrolled language, you're right. To be avoided. Steers the ship into uncharted waters.

SCOTT

So what's controlled language?

REV. CLAUDE

Read the Bible, Jesus had perfect control of everything he said. Doctor Martin also thought about everything he said. Before it passed through his lips it stood up to the test of worthiness in his mind.

SCOTT

Is that the standard for the rest of us?

REV. CLAUDE

A standard is aspirational. Obviously you should try to measure up to it.

SCOTT

Kind of high bar.

REV. CLAUDE

A young man like you -- the bar for everything you try should be high.

(pause)

Will you see Popeye? I mean Ulysses?

SCOTT

Of course. Everyday. Remember, I called you about a week ago. I work at the prison.

REV. CLAUDE

That's right, now I remember. Be sure to talk to him. Tell him you saw me. That I am holding him in the light.

(pause)

How are things going for him?

SCOTT

Okay, I guess.

REV. CLAUDE

Popeye is a person with anger management issues. He seems steady and calm and then some little thing sets him off like a fuse on a bomb. You be careful around him. Never make the mistake of trusting him.

ULYSSES

(in his cell upstage)

We was riding up the 101, few years back. 24 maybe 25 of us. This old white broad up ahead is going too slow. We decided to help her out. The whole gang drops to 45 mph and surrounds her. Nine in front, two on each side, a dozen out back. Of course, she gets scared, swerves right, hits one of the guys. He crashes into side rail. She stops, but it's too late. The motherfucker is on the pavement, skull broke open. He lies there quivering for a bit, then he's dead. Is she sorry? Oh sure, but one of the brothers thinks only a crow bar to the head will make her sorry enough. I'm quick.

(MORE)

ULYSSES (CONT'D)

At the very last second I am able to grab the crow bar out of the brother's hand. The old bitch is spared. Just goes to show, there are worse human beings in the world than me.

SCOTT

A lot of the guys up there are like that.

REV. CLAUDE

Believe me, he's worse. Just keep your eye on him. Must be a challenge to be in charge of those guys. I would imagine most of the inmates are older than you.

SCOTT

All of them.

REV. CLAUDE

Oh my God. I'm going to hold you in the light as well. Hate to rush, but that's it for time. Thank you for visiting. Come see us again sometime. God bless you and keep you. Good bye.

SCENE 9: CARBURETORS AT SUNSET

DRIVEWAY AT THE DEWITT HOUSE. SAME SET AS SCENE 6

Scott and Clifford are on stage.

SCOTT

I should get going in a little while. Otherwise I'll end up driving after dark.

CLIFFORD

Understandable. Safety: First, it's what the other guy does. Second, it's what you do. Speaking of getting nitsy natsy, sounds like there was a, um, misunderstanding over at the church.

SCOTT

Yeah, I guess you could say that. Well, like I said, I really should get going.

CLIFFORD

So did you at least get to see the paintings?

SCOTT

Impossible. Not even close.

CLIFFORD

Ugh. What happened?

SCOTT

I don't want to talk about it. I'm trying really hard to forget the whole thing.

CLIFFORD

Scott, I'm sorry, but since it obviously involves Agnes, it obviously involves me. I don't want to talk about it either, but I don't have a choice. So just tell me, warts and all.

SCOTT

All right, but this has to be quick. I've got to get on the road. So yeah, there was the minister, Reverend Claude. He came out to meet us. Amiable, friendly, welcoming. And oh yeah, black, of course. Aunt Agnes starts, well, giving him orders. In his own church. His own church!

CLIFFORD

How do you mean orders?

SCOTT

Like "Gone With The Wind", but as if the Civil War never happened. Slaves follow orders, when you want them, how you want them, where you want them. No questions, no comments, no backtalk. The reason: Simple, you're white; they're black.

CLIFFORD

I know what you're talking about. That's the way it was in India.

SCOTT

In India?

CLIFFORD

I guess we haven't talked about it much. We spent a bunch of years over there as missionaries. The Presbyterian Church rented us a big house, filled with servants, all of them ready to do our bidding at the drop of a hat. I guess Agnes got used to it.

SCOTT

Is that like a 9 to 5 job? I mean what's a missionary do all day?

CLIFFORD

Convert people to Christianity.

SCOTT

Were you successful?

CLIFFORD

I'd say our effort was essentially meaningless. Not that we didn't try hard and preach the Gospel. That part went okay. And people actually seemed to accept Christianity, you know the Truth of Jesus and his ministry here on earth.

SCOTT

Truth? What's the truth?

CLIFFORD

What it says in the New Testament. Jesus was the son of God. Born of virgin birth, Healed the sick, caused the blind to see, turned water into wine. And after His crucifixion, He rose from the dead. The basics.

SCOTT

And you got people to believe.

CLIFFORD

Sure, no problem, Christianity made perfect sense to them. In India here have been holy men down through the centuries, but the world can always use another - so it's good to have Jesus Christ, he's another. Not, let's say, the Presbyterian view of Christianity.

SCOTT

I guess they see things differently in India.

CLIFFORD

That's it. Of course they found us Americans as incomprehensible as we found them.

SCOTT

How do you mean?

CLIFFORD

Here's an example. The first year we're there Agnes decided to make me a birthday cake. She starts by separating the eggs, duck eggs. We didn't have an egg beater so she had to whip the whites with a fork. The phone rang. Some official business down at city hall had to be taken care of. She asked one of the servants to continue beating the egg whites, she would be back soon. "Soon" is not a time concept in India. She was at City Hall for eight hours. While there someone told her duck eggs aren't like chicken eggs, they can't be whipped. When she finally returned home the servant was sitting on the floor still rotating the duck whites with a fork. No foam, totally flat, no air, no cake. What to do? She asked the servant if he'd like to eat them. Incomprehensibility, as I said, went both ways.

SCOTT

What did he do?.

CLIFFORD

Haven't a clue. But they would do whatever we asked them, we were waited on hand and foot. I know it's not right, but you do get used to it.

SCOTT

Maybe now that she is back here, she should get unused to it.

CLIFFORD

I hope you will believe me when I say that Agnes is actually a very good person.

(MORE)

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

Not so much prejudiced as socially out of touch. If black or brown people moved next door, or wanted to join our church, she would be the first to welcome them.

SCOTT

If you say so. Anyway, I'm off.

CLIFFORD

So Scott I know this visit to the church was unfortunate, but don't let it change things. We want you to come again next week, just like always.

SCOTT

I could say I'll think about it, but I've already thought about it. I'm not coming back. It's too uncomfortable. I appreciate everything you've done, but with what happened at that church...

CLIFFORD

Scott, please.

SCOTT

I can't talk about it any more. I'm gone. That's it.

Scott exits. We hear the motorcycle start and take off

SCENE 10: A RETURN FROM MALIBU.

PASADENA COCKTAILS. SAME SET AND PLACARD AS BEFORE.

Clifford and Agnes sit still, holding iced highballs, looking out blankly, not looking at each other.

AGNES

When you drove off last Wednesday, where'd you go?

(pause)

No, don't tell me. I know. You went to the prison, right? You didn't tell me you were going to the prison.

CLIFFORD

I thought you'd want to come along.

AGNES

Well, why not?

CLIFFORD

I figured I might be able to calm things down, redress the grievances better, if I was alone, by myself.

AGNES

I know I was overbearing with Reverend Claude. I did my best to try and fix things. Did you tell Scott that I went over there to apologize.

CLIFFORD

Yes I told him.

AGNES

How about that I went to our church and got our pastor to invite Reverend Claude to preach on a Sunday next month.

CLIFFORD

Yes I told him.

AGNES

And?

CLIFFORD

And no. He's not giving it any thought. He's decided to quit his job, he doesn't want to do any more grunt work. He wants to go back to that college he attended back east. He contacted the Dean and they're willing to re-admit him, but on probation.

AGNES

That means he has to go to Pennsylvania.

CLIFFORD

It does, and that's what he's doing.

AGNES

How?

CLIFFORD

On that motorcycle. I know, unbelievable.

AGNES

When?

CLIFFORD

He resigned his position as of the end of this week. He starts the trip back on Saturday.

AGNES

But that means we won't see him anymore.

CLIFFORD

He's a young man. 19 years old. He's got to figure out how to make his way in this world. By himself.

AGNES

But?

CLIFFORD

There are no buts. Life these days is harder than it used to be. Young people can't just sit back, take it easy, and assume things will work out for the best.

AGNES

What in heavens name are you talking about?

CLIFFORD

Scott. If he wants a professional career, he has to get serious. Work hard. Get prepared. Be committed. There are 100 candidates for every entry level job. The competition is fierce.

AGNES

What career?

CLIFFORD

No idea. The one thing he knows for sure, it's not going to be in prisons.

AGNES

Well I guess that's a start. Why doesn't he think of something he could learn right here in California. We could probably help him.

CLIFFORD

No, he said he wants to go back and correct things where he had problems. That's where he wants to succeed.

AGNES

But we won't see him.

CLIFFORD

That's right.

AGNES

I've gotten kind of used to him.
You know his coming over. Our having
a nice dinner. I've looked forward
to seeing him.

CLIFFORD

You're going to miss him, is that
what you're saying?

AGNES

Yes. You are too. So he's just
leaving. Gone like an autumn leaf
blown off by the wind?

CLIFFORD

That's what he said.

AGNES

He isn't even going to stop by to
say good bye?

CLIFFORD

He said no, he's got a long way to
go, he wants to get moving.

AGNES IS TAKEN BY GRIEF.

CLIFFORD (CONT'D)

I told him he had to come by for a
few minutes. If he didn't it would
break your heart.

AGNES

That sounds embarrassing.

CLIFFORD

It took some doing, begging really,
but finally he said okay. He'll be
here Saturday around 11:00.

AGNES

I'll make a nice lunch.

CLIFFORD

I don't think he wants that.

AGNES

Sure he does. I'll pack him some sandwiches for the trip.

CLIFFORD

Okay, okay. Have it your way.

SCENE 11. HEADING EAST

DRIVEWAY AT THE HOUSE. SAME SET AS SCENE 6.

Clifford is standing, Agnes is seated in a lawn chair. both are anxiously looking off-stage right. Clifford looks at his watch.

AGNES

What time did he say?

CLIFFORD

11:00.

AGNES

So he's late. Or do you think he changed his mind, not going to come.

CLIFFORD

No, no, no. He'll be here. Take it easy. Stop worrying

SOUND OF A CAR APPROACHING STAGE-RIGHT AND STOPPING. CAR DOOR OPENS.

AGNES

Who is that.

CLIFFORD

It's Reverend Claude. I thought he might like to see Scott, get a chance to say goodbye.

Reverend Claude enters from right.

REV. CLAUDE

Hello folks. I guess I'm on time. Unless he already came and went.

CLIFFORD

No we're still waiting. He should be along pretty soon.

REV. CLAUDE

I wanted to see him before he left. All this interest in Ulysses Sims has been troubling me.

(MORE)

REV. CLAUDE (CONT'D)

I was never comfortable with what the girl said happened, but the congregation was outraged, so I had to go along.

AGNES

You changed your mind?

REV. CLAUDE

Not completely. But parts of the girl's story just didn't add up. Like she said it happened when he would have been at work. Well, no need to re-try the case right here.

CLIFFORD

Did you talk to the girl again?

REV. CLAUDE

Yes I did, this week. I think Ulysses may have gone over the line. You know, an over-friendly squeeze on the behind here and there, like that. But not the rape she claimed, or anything like that. Didn't happen.

AGNES

What can you do?

REV. CLAUDE

I asked one of the lawyers in our congregation to look into it. But he couldn't even locate Ulysses whereabouts.

MOTORCYCLE ARRIVES STAGE RIGHT.

Scott enters.

SCOTT

Good news. Just got out of prison and I wasn't even in prison.

CLIFFORD

Congratulations, I guess.

SCOTT

In the nick of time, as it turns out.

REV. CLAUDE

Something happen up there we need to know about?

SCOTT

Oh Hi Reverend. Yes, there was a problem. And yes, it concerned Ulysses.

REV. CLAUDE

I figured as much when our lawyer called to ask about him. Of course the prison won't provide any information about inmates except to say they're either there or they aren't.

AGNES

So he's no longer at Malibu. What happened to Ulysses?

SCOTT

Not good. Last Thursday, we were working way out in front of the grade. It was flagged where the roadway was to go, but nothing else. So Virgin countryside. Right there in the middle was a huge live oak tree. These are rare. There are no other big trees out there. Didn't matter, we had orders: take it down. That's right, kill this magnificent living thing. For what? To lay another stupid road? Naturally, the crew was outraged, me too. But so what. No point in any protest. Time to get to work. I got out the saws and axes. Our best climber went to the top of the tree to start taking out branches. He cut a big one. When it fell a nest of tree squirrels popped out. All these baby squirrels running in every direction. Ulysses was on the side, knocking off the lower branches with an ax. He looked at the little squirrels and said, "Screw it. I ain't cutting this tree. That's it." I said, "I don't want it cut down either, but that's the job. If we don't get it done, it's my ass. There's no option-out here. Ulysses, get back to work, now." He walked towards me with his ax held high above his head. "Mother-fucker, I'm taking you out." Me? Do battle with a guy swinging an ax? I don't think so. I took off sprinting.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Maybe 5 seconds later I felt something whizz by my head. It was Ulysses ax. It was at least 3 miles back to the grade where the main road crew was working. I think I ran the whole way. Once there I told the police officer there what happened. He said they'd go out to our work site and roll Ulysses up. I should give him a half hour, then I could go back and finish getting the tree cut down.

REV. CLAUDE

So where is Ulysses now?

SCOTT

When they roll guys up they take them to Chino State Prison. One of the worst hell holes around. A lot of the cons have done time there. It's sort of intake for the whole system and seriously over-crowded. Like 90 guys in a cell block built for 20. The inmates completely run the place. All the guards do is make sure everybody is locked up. Violence and sex abuse are rampant. Since a roll-up is for disciplinary reasons they would have put Ulysses in "stir", ah solitary confinement, for 30 days first thing.

ULYSSES

(in his cell upstage)

Stir, this is it. The cell is 6 feet by 9 feet. There is no window. No contact with anyone else, ever. The food? Three times a day they send in a kind of muffin they make out of beans and other crap. Totally horrible, but keeps you alive. Once a day they open a trap at the bottom of the door to shove in two buckets, one full of water, one empty. Then you put yesterday's buckets up there and they remove them. For the next 30 days, that's it. But if you're thinking it makes me look forward to getting out and joining the general population, you don't know Chino.

REV. CLAUDE

It's almost impossible to get cases like this reviewed after a conviction. Nobody cares. Especially now that there's a disciplinary issue. He'll just have to complete his sentence.

AGNES

Still to go through life as a registered sex offender when he isn't one.

SCOTT

I don't have kind thoughts when it comes to Ulysses.

CLIFFORD

Got to be hard to care a whole lot about a guy who just threw an ax at you.

SCOTT

Hard is right. Ulysses is a bad human being. Even if he didn't do what they busted him for, you know that eleven year old girl. Jail is the right place for him.

AGNES

Oh dear, here you are about to go, about to leave our lives, and we spend our goodbye time talking about violence and mayhem. No. This time should be about finding the good in others, encouraging it. Finding the good in ourselves, nurturing it.

SCOTT

Okay. What do you want me to say, will do? Okay, will do. One thing's for sure. I can leave here knowing the three of you will be okay.

CLIFFORD

Right you are. There's no point in getting all worried about people. Doesn't do them any good. Doesn't do you any good either.

SCOTT

Okay. Still I want you to know how much I appreciate everything.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You may not have saved any Indians when you were missionaries, but you actually kind of saved me. So be sure to take good care of yourselves. Reverend.

(shakes hands)

Uncle Clifford.

(shakes hands)

Aunt Agnes

(light embrace)

LIGHTS FADE ON THE DRIVE WAY. LIGHTS UP ON ULYSSES IN HIS CELL.

ULYSSES

Stir is all about time. A lot of guys can't take it, they go stir crazy. Not me, I got it beat. See there's two lawyers working for me. Their names: night and day. And they are with me at all times. I am also with them. We are one and the same. Time isn't outside me, something I measure myself against. Like when is this going to happen? Or when am I going to get to do that? No time and me are one in the same. It happens, I happen. It's tick, I'm tock.

LIGHTS FADE. ULYSSES CELL ROLLS OFF RIGHT. DRIVEWAY SCENE GOES OFF STAGE. LIGHTS COME UP WITH SCOTT ALONE ON CENTER STAGE. THE MANZANITA LAMP IS ON THE FLOOR WITH THE LIGHT TURNED ON.

SCOTT

So yeah. I got back east. You likely guessed as much. Went back to college. Didn't go great, didn't do terrible. Again, you likely guessed as much. But of interest here might be Ulysses or Pastor Claude. What happened to them? No help there. Never heard of either of them again. About Aunt Agnes and Uncle Clifford. Yeah, well, that was different. I did hear from them. In fact they wrote me at least three or four times a year, always asking me to write back. Told me how meaningful it had been to know me, how much they cherished the lamp made from the manzanita Ulysses finished, but

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(pause)

I didn't write back. Then they sent me the lamp. They said they thought I'd want it after they were gone. Still, I didn't write them back. Don't know why. I was still a kid I guess, didn't see any reason to. As in didn't feel like it, so why do it. They were people I knew for a while, but not now. So why do they keep bugging me? Of course, now that I am older, I feel really terrible about it. They took me in, looked out for me, really cared about me. But as for me, I treated them like crap. No question, they got me back on track when I was kind of lost, and I am truly grateful for that. Also for the lamp. But I can't be grateful to them for any of it. Not any more. See it's a long time ago. By now they'd for sure have to be dead.

LIGHTS FADE. LAMP IS LEFT ON. THEN IT FADES. CURTAIN