

Phillie's Trilogy

A Comedy (ish)

Contact:
Doug DeVita
410 Central Park West, 16B
New York, NY 10025
917.584.2907
doug@dougdevitaplays.com

CAST / 4 W, 3 M, with doubling (see below):

Philip McDougal*	A writer coping with loss	M	49/57
Veronica McDougal*	Philip's mother; a frustrated '70s housewife	F	52/54
Barbara Quigley*	Philip's childhood friend; coping with divorce	F	49/57
Grace Bradley	Barbara's mother; coping with memory loss	F	76
Phillie McDougal	Philip as a child; precocious, mouthy, insecure	M	12/14
Barbie Bradley	Barbara as a child; smart, overweight	F	12/14
Keith Quigley*	Phillie and Barbie's friend; nice kid	M	12/14
Jude Quigley*	Barbara and Keith's son: angry, troubled	M	14
Younger Grace*	Veronica's best friend; possibly pregnant	F	39
Pete McDougal*	Phillie's father; no-nonsense ad exec	M	55
Sheila Roth*	Philip's no nonsense agent, a "broad"	F	60/68

*** Doubling:**

Philip/Pete

Veronica/Sheila

Younger Grace/Barbara

Keith/Jude

SYNOPSIS

Growing up gay in the “fabulous” '70s was no picnic for the precocious Phillie McDougal. Through nuns, priests, bullying classmates, parents – and years later the realization his best friend may not be the person he thought she was – he lived to tell the tales, with results no one bargained for. Including him.

SETTING(S)

The action takes place (mostly) in the affluent suburb of Plandome, Long Island.

ACT ONE: 1972 and 1974

Most of Act One take place in the beautifully finished basement of the McDougal's home, with one scene in their backyard.

ACT TWO: 2009, and then years later

Most of Act Two takes place on the back porch of Grace Bradley's house, next door to the McDougal's. One scene is set in Philip's apartment in New York City, and another in a Barnes and Noble in Santa Monica, California.

Ideally, the set should be on a turntable, but as that is often not a viable option, a few pieces of furniture and projections would serve the text quite well; the most important set piece being the banquettes. The play works much better if they are functional.

ACT ONE, PART ONE: CHECKING THE BASEMENT FOR LEAKS

The finished basement of the McDougal's home in Plandome, Long Island, a Thursday afternoon in late November, 1972. Two banquettes flanking a bar. A sliding glass door, slightly open. Veronica McDougal, 52, on the stairs; Grace Bradley, 39, behind the bar.

VERONICA

PHILLIE! GRACE AND I ARE GOING TO CHECK THE BASEMENT FOR LEAKS, SO STAY OUT OF HERE UNTIL WE'RE DONE!

GRACE

Scotch or Martini?

VERONICA

Scotch? God no!

GRACE

Sometimes you like Scotch, Vee.

VERONICA

Not today. Martini.

GRACE

Gin or Vodka?

VERONICA

Gin. Honest to God, Grace, I don't know what I'm going to do with that kid. Phillie used to be such an agreeable little boy, but ever since he turned 12 he's been out of control.

GRACE

(As she's mixing the drinks.)

So what happened? Why did they call you to come down to the school?

VERONICA

He hit Sister Mary Dolores John this afternoon. Clocked her right across the kisser.

GRACE

You're kidding!

VERONICA

Nope. She took his notebook and began reading it. He grabbed it, she slapped him and he slapped her right back.

GRACE

You know you're out of olives, right? Onion or Twist?

VERONICA

GODDAMMIT, PHILLIE! HAVE YOU BEEN EATING MY OLIVES AGAIN?

GRACE

I don't think he's up there – I saw him, Barbie, and Keith Quigley heading to the brook before I came over here.

VERONICA

And I'll just bet he took my olives with him.

Grace serves the drinks, Veronica lights two cigarettes.

GRACE

I like onions better with gin anyway. Phillie's got guts, I'll say that for him. Sister Mary Dolores John scares the bejesus out of me.

VERONICA

Not me. She lied, Grace. She stood there and said Phillie just walked up to her and hit her for no reason. I looked her right in the eye and said "Do you think I'm stupid, Sister? I know Philip has a temper, but I'm pretty Goddam sure he wouldn't have hit you if he hadn't been provoked." Oh yes, Grace, I said "Goddam" to a nun. You should have seen her face; I could see she was sending us both straight to hell. But without so much as a blink she said "I just asked to see his notebook and he slapped me." "And you didn't touch him?" "Oh no, Mrs. McDougal, I never touch the children."

GRACE

Well, that's just baloney. Robert always used to complain about her hitting him. Of course, Robert probably deserved it.

VERONICA

Probably. Anyway, so I'm looking at her, at Phillie, and at that new pastor, what's his name?

GRACE

Father Mondello.

VERONICA

Yeah, Mondello. So I'm looking at her, at Phillie, and that new gas-bag Mondello. "OK, Sister, if you didn't touch him, would you mind explaining to me why the side of his face is black and blue?" I had her there. "You wanna rethink your story now, Sister?" Mondello just started sputtering, actually sputtering like pea soup on the boil. "Now, Sister, I don't condone what Philip did, but Mr. McDougal and I will see to it he's punished appropriately."

GRACE

What are you going to do?

VERONICA

Nothing. I'm not even telling Pete. Phillie will apologize tomorrow morning and that will be that. So anyway, I leaned right into that smirking, sanctimonious puss of hers and said "But listen to me, Sister, and listen good: this is not the first time Philip has complained about your hitting him. It's not even the first time I've heard complaints about your "touching the children," as you call it. Ten years ago you slapped my daughter Celia because she was left-handed. You think I've forgotten that? I'm tired of your bullshit. Mr. McDougal writes big checks every year to help maintain this school; Father, if I find out that Sister Mary Dolores John or any of your faculty ever touches my son again, those checks will stop. And Sister, your sanctimonious ass, as the kids say, will be grass. I don't have seven lawyers in my family for nothing."

GRACE

Too bad your father wouldn't let you go to college. You'd've made a terrific lawyer too.

VERONICA

I know. That's why I swore I'd let my kids do whatever they want. Celia wants to be a painter, I let her be a painter. And if Phillie wants to be a writer, then I want him to be a damn good one, not some hack who dreams of glory while pushing Rice-A-Roni for a living like his father. I don't want anything standing in his way.

GRACE

Did they say anything?

VERONICA

I didn't give them a chance. I just took the notebook from her clammy little hands, gave it back to Phillie, and we left.

GRACE

Well, it's about time someone said something. I'd never have the nerve.

VERONICA

I'd have pulled him out of there this afternoon, but we've poured so much money into that school Pete would kill me.

GRACE

It *is* one of the top schools in Nassau, Vee. That's why we all moved out here, isn't it?

VERONICA

I don't know. Maybe. ... What kills me is she actually got to read some of what's in that notebook. I've been trying to get a peek into that thing for years and I can't get it away from him.

GRACE

What about when he's sleeping? That's when I go through Barbie's stuff. Mostly empty Twinkie and Ring-Ding wrappers.

VERONICA

Please, Grace, do you think I'm an idiot? He's a sneaky one. He's got a hiding place somewhere. I've torn his room apart and I'll be damned if I can find it.

GRACE

Barbie just leaves clues everywhere. It's like she wants to be fat and torture me with it.

VERONICA

Well, if you didn't buy the junk in the first place...

GRACE

Al likes Twinkies and Ring-Dings.

VERONICA

And Barbie has Al's metabolism, Grace!

GRACE

Metabo what?

VERONICA

Metabolism. It's a physiological thing. You and I have high metabolisms so we don't gain weight. Barbie and Al have low metabolisms so they have to watch what they eat.

GRACE

How do you know these things?

VERONICA

Carol Channing on Merv Griffin.

GRACE

Well, I'll be damned. Good to know. Next time Barbie goes on and on about being an actress, I can point out how thin Carol Channing is. Not that we'd ever let her go into show business anyway.

VERONICA

Why not, if that's what she wants to do?

GRACE

You've already talked me into letting her go to college if she wants, Vee. But if she does, I'd rather she study something useful, like teaching.

VERONICA

Well, you know what I think about that, but she's your kid. ... Anyway, what were we talking about? Oh yeah, Phillie and that damned nun. He's so much harder to deal with than Celia was when she was his age, and she was no picnic either.

GRACE

Boys are difficult, Vee. I've just about given up on Robert.

VERONICA

At least he's going away to college next year. I've got six more years of this with Phillie.

GRACE

I'm just praying Robert doesn't get some girl pregnant.

VERONICA

Yeah, do you really think I have to worry about that? The last McDougal is a queer.

GRACE

My daughter is fat. You know what it's like to shop at Lane Bryant for a 12 year old girl?

VERONICA

At least Barbie speaks to you. You think boys are difficult? Wait until she's 15.

GRACE

Sometimes I think I'll be stuck with Barbie forever. Do you know how hard it is to marry off a fat girl?

VERONICA

Talk to me when she meets some guy and elopes to California the day after she graduates art school, as far away from me as she can get. I haven't even met my son-in-law.

GRACE

This isn't a contest, Vee.

They start to laugh.

VERONICA

Can you believe us?

GRACE

I know. I mean, I love my kids, but sometimes I wonder if I only love them out of some sense of obligation.

VERONICA

Sometimes I wonder why I even had a kid when I was 40.

GRACE

I always assumed Phillie was an accident.

VERONICA

Oh no, I wanted him, Grace. Pete wanted me to go back to work so we could afford to move out here to Plandome; I wanted to stay in Bayside, so I got pregnant on purpose.

GRACE

On purpose?

VERONICA

I poked holes in his rubbers.

GRACE

(She thinks about that, and then looks at Veronica, shocked.)

Oh!

VERONICA

Didn't matter. Pete came up with "The San Francisco Treat" and now twelve years later I'm 52, living in a neighborhood where I don't really belong and I'm the oldest mother in St. Mary's PTA. Pour me another one of those. It's cold in here.

(She notices the open door.)

Goddammit! I keep telling Phillie to close that damn door.

Keith Quigley, 12, appears at the door.

KEITH

Hello, Mrs. McDougal.

VERONICA

Jesus! Keith Quigley! You scared the shit out of me.

KEITH

I'm sorry. I was just wondering if you've seen Phillie and Barbie? I'm "it" and I've been looking for them for half an hour.

VERONICA

I'm sorry, Keith, I'm not sure where they are. Have you tried down by the brook?

KEITH

That's where we started.

GRACE

Maybe they've gone to my house?

KEITH

I checked there. Nope. I gotta go meet my mother at work.

VERONICA

How's your cousin Candy?

KEITH

They think they got it all. We'll know better in a couple of weeks.

GRACE

What a shame about her leg.

KEITH

Yes, ma'am.

GRACE

She's in our prayers, Keith. You all are.

KEITH

Thank you, Mrs. Bradley. I really gotta go now, my mom said we have to get to the hospital before dinner. You'll let Barbie and Phillie know?

VERONICA

Go on, honey, I'll let them know.

Keith goes.

GRACE

Such an awful thing to happen to a child.

VERONICA

Almost makes me feel bad I can't stand Candy's mother.

GRACE

Veronica!

VERONICA

Oh come on, Grace. You can't stand Maureen Ruggerio either. You've said so yourself.

GRACE

But it's still awful. It's bad enough we have to worry about broken bones, chicken pox, upset stomachs, colds, science fairs... But your child losing a leg?

They both take long drags on their cigarettes.

VERONICA

What kind of God gives a kid cancer?

They sit quietly for a bit, then Grace blurts out:

GRACE

I'm pregnant, Vee.

Veronica takes one more drag on her cigarette, stubs it out, and lights another.

VERONICA

... Did you watch "Maude" last week?

GRACE

Father Mondello told us we'd be excommunicated if we watch that show!

VERONICA

Yeah, and then he goes and gives "Best Halloween Costume" to Jamie Furlong wearing Lorraine's sweater vest and a gray wig. Father Mondello can go to hell.

GRACE

VEE!

VERONICA

I'm sick of it. Phillie built a piano out of oak tag and didn't even get an honorable mention.

GRACE

He was kind of cute.

VERONICA

Cute? His costume was genius. But Phillie's a little "different" so they give the prize to some stupid trust-funded surgeon's kid parading around as a TV abortionist? They think we don't notice shit like that?

GRACE

Calm down, Vee!

VERONICA

I know, I just get so frustrated sometimes. If I'd known what having this kid was going to be like... I'm sorry, Grace, I didn't mean to go on like that. ... Does Al know?

GRACE

I haven't told anyone yet. Not even my mother.

VERONICA

How old are you now?

GRACE

I'm almost 40.

VERONICA

Think about it, Grace. Do you really want to be the oldest mother in St. Mary's PTA?

GRACE

What else am I going to do? I can't very well disappear for 9 months and then put it up for adoption, can I?

VERONICA

Come on, Grace, it's *1972*, not *1872*. You've got options. ... If Maude can have one...

GRACE

That's a mortal sin!

VERONICA

You still believe all that?

GRACE

Don't you?

VERONICA

I don't know.

GRACE

You go to mass every week, you take Communion...

VERONICA

I don't know what I believe anymore. All those kids my mother had, all the ones she buried, the priests and the nuns telling us it was God's will, and I believed it, every single word of it. And today a nun lies to me? Flat out lies, and the pastor would've let her get away with it if I hadn't said anything? *I've* played by the rules. I've done what's expected. And what have I got? A husband who's never home, a daughter who barely speaks to me, a son I don't understand and who's probably queer... It's hell, Grace. Especially since I know it doesn't have to be that way anymore. I could leave Pete. I could get a job like Brenda Quigley did when Keith's father left them. Or I could go back to school, get a degree in... something... But maybe I'm too old. And maybe, just maybe, Phillie really does need me.

GRACE

Of course he does!

VERONICA

I don't know what Pete knows or thinks, but truthfully, if the kid's queer, he's queer. I don't really care. Wouldn't be the first in the family.

(Grace gives her a quizzical look.)

Pete's nephew Glen. And my oldest sister Vivian. I think.

GRACE

I've wondered about her.

VERONICA

We all have. It's a tough, lonely life, and he'll need someone who believes in him. Or can at least fake it. Does that make me an awful Catholic? And if it does, then do I *really* want to be Catholic anymore?... I'm sorry, Grace, I'm just going on and on... So. ... What are you going to do about the baby?

GRACE

I don't know.

VERONICA

Just think about it.

GRACE

It is legal in New York now, isn't it?

VERONICA

My nephew Michael is a doctor. He's very discreet.

GRACE

I guess it wouldn't hurt just to talk to him. I'll think about it. ... Good Lord, look at the time! I've got to get dinner on the stove.

VERONICA

Jesus, me too.

They sip their drinks and smoke their cigarettes contemplatively, not making any effort to leave.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

You know, I don't feel like cooking. Let's take the kids to Scobee.

GRACE

But that's all the way in Little Neck!

VERONICA

So? I like their burgers.

(She swigs the rest of her martini.)

I'll drive.

Veronica stubs out her cigarette. Grace puts hers in the ashtray, absentmindedly leaving it still burning. They start up the stairs.

GRACE

What about Pete and Al?

VERONICA

Leave a note and let 'em nuke a Swanson's.

GRACE

You can't nuke a Swanson's, Vee. Trust me, I know.

And they're gone. A moment, then one of the banquette seats lifts up. Phillie, 12, climbs out with his notebook and a jar of olives, stubs out Grace's still burning cigarette as if it's something he does every day (which it is), and opens the other banquette.

PHILLIE

(Whispering.)

It's okay, Barbie. They're gone.

Barbie, also 12, climbs out. She's pudgy, but pretty. He writes in his notebook; she stuffs a Twinkie in her mouth. The lights fade.

ACT ONE, PART TWO: WRESTLING MATCH

SCENE ONE: A WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON IN LATE JUNE, 1974

The Basement. Veronica, now 54, cigarette in hand and reading a newspaper. Phillie, now 14, on the floor with a bookmarked copy of "The Great Gatsby," and his notebook. "Mildred Pierce" is on TV; Phillie is mouthing along.

MILDRED PIERCE

"I can't get you out of this, Veda."

VEDA PIERCE

"You've got to help me. Give me another chance. It's your fault I'm the way I am!"

The phone rings, and Veronica starts upstairs.

VERONICA

Jesus, Phillie, stop mouthing all the lines! Turn that Goddamn TV off! You've seen that movie 5,000 times anyway! If you're going to read "The Great Gatsby," then *read* "The Great Gatsby."

Phillie reluctantly turns off the TV, and reads. The phone stops ringing before Veronica is even halfway up the stairs.

VERONICA

Dammit.

She turns and comes back down.

PHILLIE

I'm freezing.

VERONICA

I don't care how cold you are, Phillie, it's hot as hell out and I'm not turning off the air.

PHILLIE

Sister Irmalita Simon said if we think it's too hot, we should "all spend at least one day a week without air conditioning to remember the suffering of St. Joan at the stake."

VERONICA

Sister Irmalita Simon has a couple of screws loose if you ask me. Go and get a sweater if you're cold.

Phillie puts the open book face down on the floor, picks up his notebook and heads upstairs.

PHILLIE

Fine.

VERONICA

Philip! That's a 1st Edition! It's worth a fortune. Your father will have a fit if you crack the spine. Use the damned bookmark I gave you.

He comes back, puts down the notebook, marks his place in "The Great Gatsby," and goes. Veronica sees the notebook on the floor at the same time he realizes he's left it. They eye each other warily as he grabs it and then stomps up the stairs.

VERONICA

(To herself.)

Dammit!

(To Phillie.)

PHILLIE! The whole damn house is shaking. Can't you go up the stairs like a normal person?

PHILLIE (OFF)

NO, I CAN'T!

VERONICA

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT INVITED TO THAT PARTY TONIGHT, DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON ME! IF YOU'RE

VERONICA

MAD, GET GLAD, DAMMIT!

PHILLIE

MAD, GET GLAD, DAMMIT!

VERONICA

WATCH YOURSELF, PHILIP!

(To herself.)

Who the hell lets their kid throw a party on a Wednesday night anyway?

(She looks at her watch.)

4:30. Oh, what the hell.

(She takes a jar of olives out of the
fridge, and mixes herself a martini.)

THANKS FOR LEAVING ME AN OLIVE!

PHILLIE

YOU'RE WELCOME!

Phillie pounds back down the stairs.

VERONICA

You want a Coke?

PHILLIE

No.

VERONICA

No, what?

PHILLIE

No, thank you.

VERONICA

Phillie, I know you're upset about that party, and I understand / why

PHILLIE

/ No, you don't.

VERONICA

Yes, I do, honey. I really do.

PHILLIE

I am telling you right now: when she dies I am not going to her funeral.

VERONICA

Candy Ruggerio is not going to die, Phillie.

PHILLIE

Of course she is, Mom, she's got cancer. Why do you think she won class president?

VERONICA

It might have had something to do with the campaign slogans you wrote for her.

PHILLIE

Nope. She's got cancer and everybody feels sorry for her and she gets everything she wants and she will until the day she dies.

VERONICA

Well, she's not going to die today.

PHILLIE

She's a bitch. And I am not going to her funeral.

VERONICA

So don't go to her funeral. But don't call her a bitch.

PHILLIE

Why not? You call Mrs. Ruggerio a bitch all the time.

VERONICA

If I talked to my mother the way you talk to me

VERONICA

I wouldn't be alive today!

PHILLIE

You wouldn't be alive today!

PHILLIE

I'm the only one in the WHOLE GODDAM CLASS SHE DIDN'T INVITE TO HER GODDAM PARTY!

VERONICA

Watch your language! And you don't like anyone anyway!

PHILLIE

THAT'S NOT THE POINT, MOM!

VERONICA

I told you, Phillie, you have two choices: you can just show up and embarrass the hell out of them, or forget it and I'll take you into the city to see whatever show or movie you want. I'll even take you to see "The Great Gatsby," although I can't stand that Robert Redford when he tries to act. He's much better in caper films, don't you think?

PHILLIE

No.

VERONICA

Well, I do. He was great in "The Hot Rock." And "The Sting."

PHILLIE

I mean no, I don't want to go to the movies. ... Unless...

VERONICA

I am not taking you to see "The Exorcist!"

PHILLIE

Then forget it. I don't want to go to the movies. I don't want to see a show. I don't want to go to that party. I just want / to

VERONICA

/ Sit home and sulk. Fine. Be that way. Honest to God, Phillie, I don't know what I'm going to do with you. Why do you let those kids get under your skin like this?

PHILLIE

They're all creeps. I am not going to graduation tomorrow either.

VERONICA

You are going even if I have to drag you there and Krazy Glue your ass to the pew.

PHILLIE

You wouldn't dare!

VERONICA

Oh no? Try me.

PHILLIE

You spent too much money on that graduation gown to ruin it with Krazy Glue.

VERONICA

What the hell is wrong with you today? You've been a pain in the ass ever since you got home from school.

PHILLIE

NOTHING!

VERONICA

Sister Mary Dolores John didn't talk to you, did she?

PHILLIE

NO! She hasn't spoken to me since last year.

VERONICA

Good. Look, honey, how can I help you if you don't tell me what's wrong?

PHILLIE
(Turning on the TV.)

It's time for Lucy.

VERONICA
(Turning off the TV.)

I am sick and tired of these reruns of reruns of shows you've seen a million times already! Now you are going to tell me what the hell is wrong / before I

PHILLIE
/ I HATE IT HERE!

VERONICA
I hate it here too, Phillie, but this is where your father wants to live, so this is what you're stuck with until you're 18.

PHILLIE
Then I am not going to St. Mary's Boys High School.

VERONICA
Oh, yes you are. Your father's put too much money into that school so / you and Celia

PHILLIE
/ It's always about money with you. It's not like we're poor.

VERONICA
Yes, Phillie, we have money, but that doesn't mean I want to waste it! You are going to St. Mary's. It's been paid for. End of discussion.

PHILLIE
Then I'm going away to college.

VERONICA
Fine.

PHILLIE
And after / that I'm going

VERONICA
/ After that you can go to Timbuktu and do whatever you Goddam please. I can't wait until we ship you off to Los Angeles next week and you're Celia's problem for the summer.

PHILLIE
You and me both, sweetheart!

VERONICA

That's it! Get out of my sight before I...

Barbie knocks at the sliding door. She's lost a lot of weight but may still have a few more curves than Grace likes. Phillie lets her in.

PHILLIE

Hey.

BARBIE

Hey. Hi, Mrs. McDougal. My Nonna Lina's here and mom wants to know if you can come over for dinner tonight? She said to call her.

VERONICA

Isn't that nice. Phillie?

PHILLIE

I don't care.

(Veronica shoots him a look.)

Yes, I think that would be nice.

VERONICA

I'm going say yes then. Damn, I keep telling your father we need an extension down here.

PHILLIE

He said to just put one in, he doesn't care.

VERONICA

He said no such thing!

PHILLIE

I heard him, he said "Do whatever you want, Veronica, it's fine with me." You just don't want to spend the money.

VERONICA

Philip Michael McDougal! I swear to God, one of these days... When did you hear him say that? Phillie?

The phone rings.

BARBIE

That's probably my mother.

VERONICA

(Stomping up the stairs just like Phillie.)

We'll talk about this later, Philip.

BARBIE

Ooh, she called you Philip Michael! You're in trouble now.

PHILLIE

Yeah, I almost blew it.

Barbie hops onto one of the banquettes.

BARBIE

She still thinks these things hide water pipes?

PHILLIE

Yup.

She lights a cigarette, offers one, he declines.

BARBIE

You'd be a lot cooler if you smoked.

PHILLIE

I don't care.

BARBIE

Up to you.

PHILLIE

I'm never going to smoke. It's not good for you.

BARBIE

I don't care. I've lost a lot of weight since I started.

PHILLIE

I don't need to lose weight. I have a high metabolism. You don't.

BARBIE

Shut up. Okay, so what the hell happened this morning? You were in with Father Mondello for more than half an hour.

PHILLIE

I didn't have anything to confess so I made something up.

BARBIE

And?

PHILLIE

And what?

BARBIE

Honestly, Phillie, you are so dense sometimes. WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?

PHILLIE

I told him I had an impure thought. I thought he'd just give me a lecture and a few Hail Mary's, but he kept asking questions.

BARBIE

Like?

PHILLIE

Have I ever seen a grown man naked? Have I ever touched another boy? Do I get excited when I see another boy or a man in a bathing suit? Really weird shit.

BARBIE

I heard Jamie Furlong went to Mondello's room last fall, and all kinds of stuff went on.

PHILLIE

Well, I'm not an altar boy. But it was still weird. I just kept making things up but he wouldn't stop. I told him about Jamie's boner in math class last week.

BARBIE

What'd he do?

PHILLIE

He started breathing heavy and then suddenly gasped. I think he was jerking off.

BARBIE

IN THE CONFESSIONAL!?! Ewwww, gross.

PHILLIE

Then he just looked at me, gave me ten rosaries and closed the window.

BARBIE

Guy's a creep. My mother likes him.

PHILLIE

Everybody likes him. He looks like Chad Everett and gives short sermons.

BARBIE

You think he's that good looking?

PHILLIE

Don't you?

BARBIE

No way. You gonna tell your parents?

PHILLIE

Nope. My mom'll blow up and my dad'll just act like it's my fault.

BARBIE

Yeah, don't tell them, it'll only make it worse.

The doorbell rings.

PHILLIE

I don't ever want to see Father Mondello again. I don't ever want to see any of them again.

BARBIE

What about tonight?

PHILLIE

I wasn't invited. You know that.

BARBIE

She said I could bring a date. I could bring you. She'd die.

PHILLIE

Poor choice of words, Barbie. No thanks, I don't want to go.

BARBIE

Yes, you do. Even with your windows closed I heard you screaming about it all afternoon.

PHILLIE

I wanted to be invited. Doesn't mean I wanted to go.

BARBIE

Oh. Well, maybe I won't go. We could go to the movies or something?

VERONICA (OFF)

PHILLIE, KEITH QUIGLEY'S HERE.

BARBIE

Oh for chrissakes, what the hell does he want?

PHILLIE

How the hell would I know?

(He shouts upstairs.)

OK. TELL HIM TO COME DOWN.

BARBIE

Are you crazy?

She bolts out, slamming the sliding doors shut
just as Keith comes downstairs.

KEITH

Hey.

PHILLIE

Hey.

KEITH

Barbie just left?

PHILLIE

Yeah.

KEITH

(Obviously disappointed.)

Oh.

PHILLIE

You like her, don't you?

KEITH

She's alright.

PHILLIE

You like her! You loooove her!

KEITH

I do not!

Keith punches Phillie and they wrestle.

VERONICA

I'M TRYING TO TALK UP HERE! KEEP IT DOWN, BOYS!

Laughing, Phillie undoes Keith's belt buckle.

KEITH

Your mom's upstairs!

PHILLIE

She's talking to Mrs. Bradley. They'll be yakking for hours!

Phillie reaches for Keith's zipper.

KEITH

No, don't.

PHILLIE

You wanna go to the pool house instead?

KEITH

No, Phillie. I... uhm... I don't want to do that anymore.

Keith re-buckles his belt.

PHILLIE

Then what the hell did you come over here for?

KEITH

Barbie's mother said she was here.

Trying to save face, Phillie grabs the martini, takes a swig, and eats the olive.

PHILLIE

Oh. Martini?

KEITH

Uhm, no thanks. You got a Coke?

PHILLIE

Sure.

Phillie gets two Cokes, picks up the cigarette, takes a puff, and chokes. He stubs it out.

KEITH

I didn't know you smoked.

PHILLIE

What? Oh, yeah, since 5th grade.

KEITH

My cousin should have invited you to her party tonight. It wasn't really her. Bitsy Ford told her not to. Bitsy doesn't like you.

PHILLIE

I don't like her either.

KEITH

My mother said you can come as our guest.

PHILLIE

No, thank you.

KEITH

Are you going to the Graduation Dance on Saturday?

PHILLIE

My parents are taking me to see OVER HERE! on Saturday night.

KEITH

What's that?

PHILLIE

A show. On Broadway. With The Andrews Sisters.

KEITH

Who?

PHILLIE

Never mind.

KEITH

I saw GREASE on Broadway. It was okay. Is Barbie going with you?

PHILLIE

Where?

KEITH

Over There.

PHILLIE
OVER HERE! No.

KEITH
So she's going to the dance?

PHILLIE
I don't know. Want me to ask her?

KEITH
I don't care. I was just wondering. ... You're not dating her, or anything?

PHILLIE
No.

KEITH
If you change your mind about the party, bring your trunks. They opened the pool today.

PHILLIE
I've got my own pool. With a slide. Remember?

KEITH
Okay. Well.

PHILLIE
See ya.

KEITH
Yeah. See ya.
(He hesitates, and then blurts out.)
Why doesn't Barbie like me anymore?

PHILLIE
I don't know. Ask her. You know where she lives.

Phillie picks up his notebook and starts writing.

KEITH
You shouldn't smoke, you know. They say it causes cancer.

PHILLIE
(Dismissively.)
Yeah. I know.

Keith goes. A moment, and then Veronica starts down the stairs. The phone rings. She turns around. Phillie continues writing for a bit.

VERONICA

... PHILLIE! CANDY RUGGERIO'S ON THE PHONE!

PHILLIE

TAKE A MESSAGE!

Veronica storms down the stairs.

VERONICA

You get your ass up there and talk to her, young man!

PHILLIE

NO!

VERONICA

MOVE IT!

PHILLIE

You really should put in that extension, or at least get an answering machine, like the Bradley's.

VERONICA

(She swats his backside.)

Go talk to Candy, and if she invites you to that party you say yes. And take a shower, you stink. We have to be next door at 5:30. And don't try and fool me with your father's Aqua Velva again. GO! NOW!

Phillie stomps up the stairs.

PHILLIE

Okay, okay, okay!

Veronica picks up her martini and sees the glass is empty.

VERONICA

GODDAMMIT, PHILLIE, STOP EATING MY OLIVES!

She lights a cigarette, and pours another drink.

SCENE TWO: THE BASEMENT. 8:30 THAT NIGHT.

In the darkness between scenes, the sounds of a party can be heard faintly in the distance. Above the music we hear a group of kids laughing and shouting “Spruce! Spruce! Spruce! The lights come up on an empty room. A moment, then we hear the sound of a door slamming.

PHILLIE

(Offstage.)

Mom?

(He races down the stairs.)

Mom? Mom?

(He opens the sliding glass doors.)

MOM!

VERONICA (OFF)

I’m over here, on Grace’s back porch, Phillie. What the hell are you doing home so early?

PHILLIE

MOM! COME HOME. PLEASE?!

Phillie starts to cry. A moment, then Veronica enters through the sliding glass door.

VERONICA

Phillie, how many times do I have to tell you to close this damn.. JESUS! You’re soaking wet! What the hell happened?

She rushes to him, leaving the door open.

PHILLIE

Oh, mom, it was awful. The only reason Candy invited me was because she hasn’t written her valedictorian speech and wants me to write it for her.

VERONICA

Goddamn it.

PHILLIE

And then York Crowley said “My, Phillie, you’re looking mighty ‘spruce’ tonight,” and before I knew it everyone was calling me ‘spruce.’ Jamie Furlong pulled me into the pool and held me under until I bit him in the balls.

VERONICA

Maureen just let them do that?

PHILLIE

Mrs. Ruggiero wasn't there. Mrs. Quigley was supposed to be watching but she was... well, you know how she gets. I got out of the pool and left. They were all laughing at me.

VERONICA

(She starts up the stairs.)

I'm going to call that bitch and give her a piece of my mind. What was she thinking, leaving Brenda in charge of a bunch of teenagers?

PHILLIE

NO! Mom, don't. You'll only make it worse!

VERONICA

I can't just let Maureen get away with that! She knows her sister's a drunk.

PHILLIE

You always interfere and you always make it worse.

VERONICA

(Coming back down the stairs.)

You are not writing that speech for Candy.

PHILLIE

No shit, Sherlock. ... And I am not going to graduation tomorrow, either. End of discussion!

VERONICA

Okay, okay, okay, you win. ... You really bit Jamie in the balls?

PHILLIE

Yeah.

VERONICA

I'd have slugged him, but good for you. That probably hurt a lot more, anyway. Go upstairs and get changed. I'll take you to Swenson's.

Barbie runs in through the open door.

BARBIE

PHILLIE?

PHILLIE

What are you doing here?

VERONICA

PHILLIE!

BARBIE

Are you okay?

VERONICA

You're a good friend, Barbie. Isn't she, Phillie?

PHILLIE

I never said she wasn't.

BARBIE

They're all a bunch of creeps. Ya wanna watch TV?

PHILLIE

We're going to Swenson's.

BARBIE

Oh. Okay.

VERONICA

Phillie, what's the matter with you? Ask her if she wants to come with us.

PHILLIE

Mrs. Bradley doesn't want her eating ice cream anymore, mom!

VERONICA

(Going up the stairs.)

Oh, I'm sure she won't mind this one time. I'm going to call her. Come on, Phillie, you need to get out of those wet things. I ought to give Lorraine Furlong the bill. 75 bucks down the drain...

And she's gone. Barbie lights a cigarette.

BARBIE

You know you don't help yourself running away like that all the time.

PHILLIE

I don't care. I hate them all. I. HATE. THEM!

BARBIE

Calm down, Phillie. You get so hysterical. They're not worth it. ... But you probably shouldn't have told Jamie you told Mondello about his boner. You know he hates you.

PHILLIE

He called me a faggot.

BARBIE

You're too sensitive. You should've just said you were going to the dance on Saturday and left it at that. No one cares you're going to see the Andrews Sisters.

PHILLIE

Keith would've known I was lying.

BARBIE

So what? He's such a dork.

VERONICA (OFF)

PHILLIE! GET YOUR ASS UP HERE AND GET CHANGED. WE'RE MEETING GRACE AND HER MOTHER IN THE DRIVEWAY IN 10 MINUTES!

BARBIE

Great. Now my mom and Nonna Lina are gonna fight over every spoonful I eat.

PHILLIE

At least Lina Lamont lets you eat ice cream.

BARBIE

Yeah, but I'm gonna hear about it all summer. And don't call my grandmother "Lina Lamont" to her face anymore. She hates that.

PHILLIE

Sorry.

BARBIE

You gonna write that speech for Candy?

PHILLIE

No way.

BARBIE

Good. I should have been valedictorian anyway.

PHILLIE

You don't have cancer.

Phillie takes Barbie's cigarette and stubs it out.
They exit, giggling.

SCENE THREE: THE BASEMENT. 2:30 IN THE MORNING.

The only illumination is from lights above the bar. Pete McDougal, 55, is reading Phillie's notebook, sipping a scotch. The door at the top of the stairs opens slowly. Pete shuts off the bar lights. Phillie moves quietly down the stairs, tiptoes over to one of the banquettes, turns on a flashlight, and sees it's open.

PHILLIE

Shit. Shit, shit, shit!

PETE

(Flicking on the lights and holding up the notebook.)

Is this what you're looking for?

PHILLIE

That's my stuff. You're reading my stuff. No one reads my stuff.

PETE

(Picking up a book.)

And this? "The Joy of Gay Sex," Philip?

PHILLIE

Oh. Shit.

PETE

... 30 years ago today I was bare-assed naked in a navel hospital in France, alive in a room full of dying men. The aftermath of D-Day. You know about D-Day, don't you?

(Phillie nods.)

Good to know all the money I'm shelling out for your education isn't going to waste. That was complete and utter hell. I took four bullets, Philip, in both my legs, my shoulder – one missed my heart by just a quarter of an inch. Not even your mother knows how close that bullet came. It was a real trip, I'm telling you.

I was in that hospital for more than 2 months, guys dying all around me, my buddies, dying, never sure whether I'd make it or not, bombs going off in the distance every day, all the time thinking "dear God, let me survive. Let me survive. Veronica is waiting for me, just let me survive."

(He opens "The Joy of Gay Sex.")

"Congratulations, Cocksucker." I didn't survive all that for this, Philip. I didn't work my ass off, get us where we are, give you everything you have, for this.

(He indicates the banquettes.)

I didn't build these places for you to hide "your stuff" so you could come down here in the middle of the night, jerk off to fairy porn, and then write about it.

PHILLIE

Barbie's brother Robert gave it to me for graduation. I was going to throw it out tomorrow.

PETE

After you rubbed a few out tonight. Stay away from him, Philip.

PHILLIE

I try to, Dad, but he's / always

PETE

/ Don't lie to me, Philip. I know you've been sucking each others cocks.

PHILLIE

WE HAVE NOT!

PETE

Lower your voice, do you want to wake your mother?

(He reads out loud from the notebook.)

"He said he didn't want to anymore. I'm so mad at him. He liked it, I know he did."

Well? What do you have to say for yourself?

PHILLIE

It wasn't Robert.

PETE

Then who was it?

(Phillie remains silent.)

Who was it, Philip? Answer me.

PHILLIE

Keith Quigley. Barbie and I go to school with him.

PETE

Is he the one whose father took a powder?

PHILLIE

Yes.

PETE

Stay away from that faggot too. I mean it.

PHILLIE

Keith Quigley isn't a faggot. He likes Barbie.

PETE

Any guy who sucks another guy's cock is a faggot, Philip.

PHILLIE

We're not going to do it anymore anyway.

PETE

Philip, have I ever hit you?

PHILLIE

No, sir.

PETE

Have I ever threatened to hit you?

PHILLIE

No, sir.

PETE

Then listen to me: no son of mine is going to be a faggot, or hang around with one. You will stay away from both Keith Quigley and Robert Bradley, or I will beat the living shit out of you. Am I clear?

PHILLIE

Yes.

PETE

Yes, what?

PHILLIE

Yes, sir.

PETE

One more thing: don't ever go to confession with Father Mondello again.

PHILLIE

YOU READ THAT, TOO!?!

PETE

Watch the tone, Philip. ... Has he ever touched you?

PHILLIE

I'm not an altar boy.

PETE

I know that, Phillie. Is that Keith kid one?

PHILLIE

Yes, sir. Please, Dad, don't say anything! PLEASE!

PETE

You're not lying to me? Father Mondello never touched *you*?

PHILLIE

No, I swear to God, Dad, he didn't.

PETE

(To himself.)

And I thought we'd be safe out here ...

(He makes a decision.)

You are not going to an all-boys high school.

PHILLIE

Do you mean it?

PETE

I'll pull a few strings, get you into Hunter.

PHILLIE

Hunter?

PETE

A college prep school in the city. Co-ed. Better for you.

PHILLIE

Mom's gonna have a fit.

PETE

Don't you worry about her, she'll be fine. So? Don't you have something to say?

PHILLIE

THANK GOD!!!

PETE

How about “Thanks, DAD! I’ll never suck another cock again as long as I live?”

PHILLIE

Thanksdadi’llneversuckanothercockagainaslongasilive.

PETE

Because if I find out you’ve brought any more boys down here – or into the pool house – I’ll haul what’s left of your ass right into military school.

PHILLIE

Yes, sir.

PETE

(Pouring a scotch for Phillie.)

Here. It’s time you learned to drink like a man.

PHILLIE

(Taking a sip.)

Yechhh.

PETE

You’ll get used to it. Goddam, it’s cold in here.

PHILLIE

Mom likes it like this. Put a sweater on.

PETE

Jesus! You sound just like her.

PHILLIE

Do not!

VERONICA (OFF)

What’s going on down there?

PETE

Philip and I are checking the basement for leaks, Vee. Go back to bed. We’ll be up soon.

The door slams shut.

PHILLIE

She's pissed.

PETE

She'd be a whole lot more pissed if she knew what goes on down here.

(He hands him "The Joy of Gay Sex.")

Burn this in the trash can. I don't want the garbage man seeing it.

PHILLIE

Now?

PETE

In the morning.

PHILLIE

Yes, sir.

PETE

And don't let your mother see you.

PHILLIE

Dad?

PETE

Yes?

PHILLIE

What are you going to do about Father Mondello?

PETE

What are *you* going to do?

PHILLIE

I'm a kid, Dad!

PETE

You slugged Sister Mary Dolores John, didn't you?

PHILLIE

Mom said she wasn't going to tell you about that!

PETE

(He picks up the notebook.)

"I got so mad I hit her right back. It felt good."

PHILLIE

YOU WANT ME TO SLUG FATHER MONDELLO!?!

PETE

Shhhhh! I didn't say that, Phillie, did I?

(He takes a box from his briefcase.)

You want to be a writer? Be a writer. Take no prisoners.

PHILLIE

What does that mean? What's this?

PETE

If you're going to write, then write. Every single day. And don't let anyone push you around. Ever.

PHILLIE

(He takes a pen from the box.)

Philip Michael McDougal. Writer. Eighth Grade Graduation, June, 1974. ... Thanks, Dad.

PETE

You're welcome.

PHILLIE

Dad? Do you like writing for advertising?

PETE

(He takes a folder and hands it to Phillie.)

You tell me.

PHILLIE

What's this?

PETE

This is a marketing brief. It tells us all about the product and how to sell it.

PHILLIE

(Reading the brief.)

Potato chips in a can? Yechhh.

PETE

By next summer I'll have that crap at every Fourth of July barbecue in America.

PHILLIE

So?

PETE

So write a commercial for me, or write a short story about Father Mondello. Your choice.

PHILLIE

If I write the commercial, I have to do what this thing tells me?

PETE

Yes.

PHILLIE

Then I'm going to write the story. I'm never going to write what other people tell me to.

PETE

Yeah, let me know how that works out. Finish your scotch and go to bed.

SCENE FOUR: THE BACKYARD. LATE AFTERNOON, THE NEXT DAY.

Phillie is writing, Barbie is slathering herself with baby oil. He tries to open a bag of Doritos, and can't. She blithely reaches over and opens it effortlessly. He offers her some, she declines.

PHILLIE

I thought you were going shopping with your mom and grandmother?

BARBIE

Like I really want to listen to them scream at each other in Italian all over B. Altman's?

PHILLIE

You're gonna have a horrible summer.

BARBIE

I know. They are so mean to each other. So anyway, you shoulda seen the look on Sister Mary Dolores John's face when your mom showed up and told her you weren't coming to graduation. Too bad you weren't there.

PHILLIE

You're gonna burn with that much baby oil.

BARBIE

It's after 4:00, I'll be fine. Anyway, Candy made a real ass out of herself, her speech was pathetic.

Didn't matter though, Sister Mary Dolores John was all over her, hugging her and crying and saying how much she was gonna miss her. Jesus, it was like she was gonna drop dead at noon! I wanted to puke.

PHILLIE

Glad I slept 'til two.

BARBIE

(She lights a cigarette.)

What'cha writing?

PHILLIE

My mom's watching!

BARBIE

(She waves at the house.)

HI, MRS. McDOUGAL! So? What'cha writing?

PHILLIE

Short story.

BARBIE

Can I read it?

PHILLIE

No.

BARBIE

Are you writing about me?

PHILLIE

No.

BARBIE

Oh. ... Why not?

PHILLIE

It's not about you.

BARBIE

Everything is about me!

PHILLIE

Not this.

BARBIE

You should write about me becoming a big star and you write all my movies.

PHILLIE

(He smirks and rolls his eyes.)

Maybe. But not today.

They're interrupted by the shouts of a few boys.

BOYS (OFF)

Spruce! Spruce! Spruce!

PHILLIE

Shit. Why can't they just LEAVE ME ALONE!?!

BARBIE

Ignore 'em.

BOY 1: YORK (OFF)

My Spruce, you were looking mighty spruce last night!

BOY 2: JAMIE (OFF)

That vest was really spruce, Sprucie!

JAMIE (OFF)

Hey Spruce, did your fat girlfriend make you feel better last night?

PHILLIE

Ignore 'em.

YORK (OFF)

Yeah, did the Barbie Doll hold your hand and suck your dick?

BARBIE

(She's had enough.)

Go to hell, York!

Veronica opens the sliding glass door and watches quietly.

BOYS (OFF)

Spruce and the Barbie Doll! Spruce and the Barbie Doll!

PHILLIE
(He's had enough.)

She's not my girlfriend!

JAMIE (OFF)
Of course she isn't! Homos don't have girlfriends! They have *girl* friends!

PHILLIE
Hey Jamie, did *you* hold Mondello's hand while he sucked *your* dick last night?

JAMIE (OFF)
You're dead meat, McDougal!

Phillie picks up a flower pot and Barbie picks up a rock from the garden. Veronica runs out.

PHILLIE
Drop dead, asshole!

VERONICA
That's enough, you two. THEY'RE LEAVING. RIGHT, BOYS?

YORK (OFF)
That's right, Sprucie, we're leaving mommy's little boy.
(Lowering his voice, trying to sound threatening and nearly succeeding.)

For now.

VERONICA
Get the hell off my property, York Crowley, before I call *your* "mommy."

JAMIE (OFF)
C'mon York, let's get outta here. She called *my* mom last night. My ass will be grass if she finds out I'm here.

YORK (OFF)
You're a wimp, Jamie.

They leave, chanting "Spruce! Spruce! Spruce!"

PHILLIE
Thanks a lot, Mom! You heard him! I'm "dead meat!" Dad told me last night never let anyone push me around.

VERONICA

He didn't mean for you to crack some asshole kid's head open. Just stay away from them. It'll be forgotten by the time school starts.

PHILLIE

I am not going back to St. Mary's!

VERONICA

Oh, don't start this again...

PHILLIE

Dad told me I don't have to.

VERONICA

(To herself.)

That double crossing son of a / bitch.

BARBIE

/ WHAT? YOU HAVE TO GO TO ST. MARY'S!

VERONICA

Please, Barbie, this is between Phillie and me. Honey, look at you, you're a mess! Why don't you go home and get cleaned up?

BARBIE

Yes, ma'am.

(Whispering to Phillie as she goes.)

Tell me everything when I get back!

Barbie looks at the gate, and then decides to jump over the stone wall instead.

VERONICA

When did your father tell you this?

PHILLIE

Last night. Was dad really part of D-Day?

VERONICA

That must've been one helluva discussion for two people who hardly ever talk to each other. And don't change the subject!

PHILLIE

I am not going. End of discussion.

VERONICA

Until I talk this over with your father, whenever the hell that will be, there is no final decision. END OF DISCUSSION!

PHILLIE
(Under his breath.)

Bitch.

VERONICA

What did you say?

PHILLIE

Nothing. Ma'am.

VERONICA

Uh huh. Clean up this mess, and don't come back inside until you're ready to apologize.

PHILLIE

Apologize!?! For what?

VERONICA

You called me a bitch.

PHILLIE

I did not!

VERONICA

Don't start, Phillie. I am not in the mood for you today.

PHILLIE

Then you should have gone shopping with Mrs. Bradley and Lina Lamont.

VERONICA

You really should call her Mrs. Pecorelli. She hates when you call her Lina Lamont.

PHILLIE

I know. And I don't care. She doesn't like me anyway. She called me a spoiled brat last night. ... What does "piccolo fanook" mean?

VERONICA

Never mind.

PHILLIE

Anyway, I hate her.

VERONICA

She's still Grace's mother, Phillie. She's had a harder life than you will ever know, and she deserves your respect, at least.

PHILLIE

Well, you certainly don't respect her. I heard you the other day when Mrs. Bradley said her mother was coming to stay with them for the summer. Your exact words: "You're going to have a horrible summer, Grace," and then she / said

VERONICA

/ That's enough, Phillie. ... How do you know what we were talking about?

PHILLIE

Uhm... I... I have 20/20 hearing.

VERONICA

You know, Lina's right, you are a spoiled brat.

PHILLIE

You mean Mrs. Pecorelli.

VERONICA

Yes. *Mrs. Pecorelli* is right: you are a spoiled brat.

PHILLIE

And who's fault is that, Mrs. Pierce?

VERONICA

Phillie... Just... Stop. ... You know, I hope you have seven kids just like you.

PHILLIE

I'm not EVER having kids!

VERONICA

Even better! I wouldn't wish even one of you on *any* mother!

She goes into the house, taking Barbie's cigarettes. He shouts back at her:

PHILLIE

And I am not going to St. Mary's Boys High School! I am going to Hunter, and then I am going to college and getting the hell away from here! I am not going to write movies for Barbie, I am going to write books, and I am going to do whatever the hell I want for the rest of my life, and no one is going to push me around. Ever!

Veronica slams the door. Barbie hops over the stone wall.

BARBIE

So what'd she say?

PHILLIE

There's a gate, you know.

BARBIE

Burns more calories if I jump. Don't you know anything?

PHILLIE

You just swam for an hour!

BARBIE

What'd your mother say?

PHILLIE

About what?

BARBIE

Don't be dense. Your father and St. Mary's!

PHILLIE

They haven't discussed it yet.

BARBIE

Why didn't you tell me?

PHILLIE

I only found out last night.

BARBIE

I've been over here all afternoon and you didn't say a word!

PHILLIE

Well, you never stopped yakking about Candy and graduation.

BARBIE

It wouldn't be so bad, would it?

PHILLIE

What?

ST. MARY'S, doofus! BARBIE

Here, help me clean this up. PHILLIE

Where are my cigarettes? BARBIE

She took 'em. PHILLIE

Bitch. BARBIE

Watch it, she's got ears like a bat. PHILLIE

So, where ya gonna go instead? BARBIE

Where what? PHILLIE

High school, moron! BARBIE

In the city. Hunter. PHILLIE

That's a college. BARBIE

They have a high school, too. My dad knows someone; he can get me in. PHILLIE

But... This just fucks up everything! BARBIE

You said the "F" word! PHILLIE
(He gasps.)

BARBIE

Oh grow up, Phillie. ... It's just... You're going to be in California with your sister all summer, now you're going to a different high school... We've been going to school together since kindergarten!

PHILLIE

You're going to the girl's school. We wouldn't be in the same classes anymore anyway. We wouldn't even be in the same building!

BARBIE

Duh! But we could walk back and forth together.

PHILLIE

You just want Keith Quigley to think I'm your boyfriend so he'll leave you alone!

BARBIE

Don't be ridiculous. I don't care what Keith Quigley thinks.

PHILLIE

He likes you. He looooooves you!

BARBIE

(Punching him.)

Shut up!

PHILLIE

(Punching her right back.)

Ow!

BARBIE

Ow.

PHILLIE

I'm sorry.

BARBIE

(Punching him again.)

Sucker!

PHILLIE

Don't call me that! Don't EVER call me that!

BARBIE

Jeez, Phillie, you're so sensitive. I didn't mean...

PHILLIE
(Punching her again.)

Sucker!

BARBIE
Asshole. ... Maybe I'll go there.

PHILLIE
Where?

BARBIE
(Seeing something in the dirt.)
Pay attention! Hunter!

PHILLIE
DON'T TOUCH THAT ROCK!

BARBIE
(Taking a book from under a rock.)
"The Joy of Gay Sex?" What the hell is this?

PHILLIE
(Grabbing the book from her.)
SHHHHH! Your brother gave it to me before he left for Europe yesterday. See?
(Reading.)
"Congratulations, Cocksucker! Use it before you're 15. It falls off if you don't."

BARBIE
(Grabbing the book back.)
Let me see that. Yeah, that's Robert's handwriting. He's such a dick. Why is it out here?

PHILLIE
I don't want my parents to see it. I was gonna burn it later.

BARBIE
Why don't you just throw it out?

PHILLIE
I don't want the garbage man to see it either.

BARBIE
Oh. Good point. I know! Let's throw it in Jamie Furlong's trash can. Serve him right.

The phone in Veronica's house rings.

PHILLIE

I think I'll just hide it here until later, and then burn it.

BARBIE

(Thumbing through the book.)

This book is gross.

PHILLIE

I'll bet Keith Quigley wants you to do *that* with him.

BARBIE

I don't want to do that with *him*.

PHILLIE

You really don't like him anymore, do you?

BARBIE

He's okay, I guess, but he's just so... boring. Oh my God, look at that!

PHILLIE

Keith is kind of good looking, isn't he? Better looking than me, anyway.

BARBIE

I don't think so. JESUS! *That* looks like it hurts!

PHILLIE

Oh, my God! That's really...

Barbie suddenly kisses him.

PHILLIE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

BARBIE

(Reaching for his crotch.)

See? They're all wrong about you.

PHILLIE

C'mon, Barbie, that's enough. It's hot as hell out here.

Veronica comes out. Phillie drops the book, sits on it, and crosses his legs.

VERONICA

Barbie, your mother's on the phone. She wants to talk to you. Phillie, you wait here.

Barbie goes into the house.

PHILLIE

I swear to God, mom, she started it! It was gross, like kissing an ashtray!

VERONICA

... Phillie, Lina had a heart attack. She's in intensive care. Barbie's going to stay with us until Mr. Bradley gets back from his business trip and they can get in touch with Robert.

PHILLIE

Is she going to die?

VERONICA

They don't know yet. But yes, it's a possibility.

PHILLIE

I don't like Mrs. Pecorelli very much, but I'd be sorry for Barbie. And Mrs. Bradley.

VERONICA

It's hard when a parent gets older and... dies, even when you don't get along with them.

PHILLIE

Like you and Grandpa Mike?

VERONICA

Yes.

PHILLIE

... Mom? ...

VERONICA

Yes?

PHILLIE

I'm sorry I said that. About not having kids. And calling you / a

VERONICA

/ I know, honey. I know.

PHILLIE

Don't smoke anymore, okay?

He hugs her tightly.

VERONICA

Okay, that's enough, Phillie, it's hot as hell out here.

(She sees and picks up the book.)

"The Joy of..." What the hell is this? Never mind, I don't want to know.

She drops the book. Barbie comes back out.

PHILLIE

I'm sorry, Barbie.

VERONICA

Are you okay, honey?

BARBIE

Yes.

VERONICA

What would you like for dinner?

PHILLIE

Steak and Rice-A-Roni.

VERONICA

What would *you* like for dinner, *Barbie*?

BARBIE

Yeah, that's fine, steak and Rice-A-Roni. And... a salad, if that's okay?

VERONICA

I'll have to go to the store then. I'll be back in 20 minutes.

(She points to the book.)

Don't ever let your father see that.

She exits. An awkward silence.

PHILLIE

She's so weird sometimes, like she gets bent out of shape about the dumbest things, and then stuff you think's gonna make her blow her top...

BARBIE

Yeah. Parents are weird. Like my mom, just now. She was just so... cold and matter of fact. "Do this, do that, don't be any trouble for Mrs. McDougal..." My Nonna Lina loves me. She loves me more than she loves my brother. She lets me eat ice cream...

Keith enters. Phillie sees him, and deliberately kisses her. Keith turns and exits. Phillie stops the kiss.

PHILLIE

Barbie?... What does “piccolo fanook” mean?

BARBIE

... Jamie Furlong.

PHILLIE

Oh.

She puts her head on his shoulder. He holds her as she cries. He stares after Keith wistfully.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO: SPRUCE & MAPLE GROW APART
SCENE ONE: EARLY EVENING ON A LATE SUMMER MONDAY, 2009

Philip's apartment on Riverside Drive. Several open moving boxes, empty take out containers, dirty dishes, and two bags of cremation ash in two open boxes. Philip, 49, paunchy, balding, in his robe, is watching TV, sipping a martini. An intercom is buzzing. He goes to the door.

CONTESTANT

I'll buy an "I," Pat.

PHILIP

Why are you buying a vowel? Spin the wheel, get the money!

CONTESTANT

I'll buy another vowel. "E?"

PHILIP

(Pushing the intercom buzzer.)

What is wrong with you? "T!" Ask for a "T!" ... Yes?

DOORMAN

Sheila is coming up.

PHILIP

Oh. Shit. ... Yeah, thanks Jimmy.

He refreshes his drink.

CONTESTANT

I'll buy another vowel. "A!"

PHILIP

Seriously? You can't get this? SOLVE THE FUCKING PUZZLE!

CONTESTANT

I'll solve the puzzle, Pat. RICE-A-RONI, THE SAN FRANCISCO BREAK!

PHILIP

THE SAN FRANCISCO TREAT, YOU IDIOT! SAN. FRANCISCO. TREAT!

(Closing one of the cremation ash boxes.)

Oh, dad, don't look.

Sheila Roth, 60, barges in.

SHEILA

Hello, I'm Sheila, your agent, remember me? The one who got Mitchell to give you that three-book deal with Schuster? Remember him? Your editor? We were supposed to have lunch with him today. Where the hell were you, Philip?

PHILIP

That was today?

SHEILA

You've played that game one too many times.

PHILIP

I overslept. "What time is it? And what day is it?"

SHEILA

Yeah, cut the Auntie Mame crap.

PHILIP

Technically, it's Vera Charles.

SHEILA

Technically, I don't give a rat's ass. It's four months to due day, that's what time it is.

PHILIP

Martini?

SHEILA

Who the hell drinks martinis in the summer?

PHILIP

They were my mother's favorite. G&T, then?

SHEILA

No. Thanks. "Wheel Of Fortune," Philip?

PHILIP

My father's favorite. After my mom died, Celia and I watched it with him every night.

SHEILA

Okay. Sorry. But Philip, honey... your parents... they're gone. You have a contract and a deadline that's not going away **WILL YOU TURN THAT THING OFF?**

(Taking a manuscript from her bag.)

I've read it.

PHILIP

And?

SHEILA

Are you going to make the December deadline?

PHILIP

Yes, I'm going to make the December deadline!

SHEILA

(Opening one of the multi-tabbed pages.)

Not if you keep writing shit like this. "If we're lucky, the people we loved stick around until we're ready for them to leave. If we're lucky, they leave before things become impossible." You're kidding me, right?

PHILIP

I told you it was a rough draft. Did you show it to "His Heinous Gayness?"

SHEILA

Mitchell hates when you call him that.

PHILIP

No, he doesn't. He LOVES it. Did you show him the draft?

SHEILA

No, I didn't. I couldn't. ... Philip, honey, as your agent, as your friend, I keep telling you: You want a best-seller in the adult market, you gotta take the gloves off. Let Spruce & Maple Grow Up.

PHILIP

Oh, God!

SHEILA

No, listen to me, I've been thinking about this.

PHILIP

I hate when you've "been thinking about this."

SHEILA

What was your favorite book as a kid?

PHILIP

"Harriet The Spy." Why?

SHEILA

Have you ever wondered what happened to Harriet after she grew up?

PHILIP

Sometimes.

SHEILA

The first "Spruce & Maple" book came out when... '85? '86?

PHILIP

'84.

SHEILA

Okay, so the first kids to read those books are all pushing 40 now.

PHILIP

Yeah, so?

SHEILA

It's a built in audience. Once marketing makes 'em realize they're dying to know what happened to Spruce & Maple after they grew up. Hmm?

PHILIP

I was afraid this was where you were going. No. No, no, no, no, no.

SHEILA

Why not?

PHILIP

Because Barbie... That one about the priest and the altar boys really upset her. ... I promised her I wouldn't write another one after that.

SHEILA

Yeah, that one was a kid lit groundbreaker and you haven't written anything even half as good since.

PHILIP

Barbie is my oldest friend, Sheila. She's ... they're almost family. One of the last connections I have / to my mother.

SHEILA

/ Oy. Old friends. Isn't that why you're moving to L.A.? To be near your sister? And would an old friend, excuse me, almost family, ask you to give up a lucrative career?

PHILIP

She didn't ask. I offered. ... Besides, I was getting tired of writing those books.

SHEILA

And I have this bridge in Brooklyn I'm selling. ... You know, Philip, I've been to at least three Christmas parties here where all your "old friend" did was snipe at you while you and your mother buried yourselves in booze. When was the last time you even saw her?

PHILIP

My mother's memorial.

SHEILA

So, February. It's almost September. Just sayin' ...

(Back to the manuscript.)

This crap has no teeth, and if those kids books had one thing going for them, they had teeth. Tiny little baby teeth, but teeth. Give 'em a full set of permanent incisors now.

PHILIP

I said no. I need to move away from those books if I want to be taken seriously.

SHEILA

Yeah, yeah, yeah, "Serious Writer Syndrome." That's all in your head, honey. You write a best-seller, you're taken seriously. Period. The end.

PHILIP

I've still got four months.

SHEILA

Look, Philip, I took you on because those books had such a "take no prisoners" 'tude I believed you could make the jump from kid lit. Eight years and two flops later you haven't delivered. I still believe in you, but honey, you haven't had a best-seller since your last "Spruce & Maple" book ten years ago. In the kid's market!

PHILIP

Don't hold back, Sheila.

SHEILA

Have I ever? The bottom line is you sell books, you make money. You make money, I make money. I love ya but I love money more, and I haven't gotten much of that kind of love back from you.

(She sees the boxes/bags of ash.)

Jesus H. Christ, is that them?

PHILIP

My parents? Yeah.

SHEILA

Creepy.

PHILIP

Celia's coming next month. We're going to scatter their ashes in Manhasset Bay, clean out the house, and put it on the market before I head out to L.A.

SHEILA

And I became a literary agent. What was I thinking? 6% on that house, this apartment and a condo on Long Boat Key? I'd be set for life.

PHILIP

Not the way you spend. Now get out of here so I can put some "teeth" into this thing.

SHEILA

Think about what I said, Philip.

(Poking his stomach.)

And lay off the Rice-A-Roni.

PHILIP

Jeez, you sound like my shrink.

SHEILA

I should make as much money from you as that broad. I just don't want to hear you bitch when you see your publicity photos. And take a shower. You stink.

PHILIP

Story of my life: bending over for strong women.

SHEILA

Yeah, you'd think that would be an interesting story. So write it. And write it better. ... Just out of curiosity, have you told Barbie you're moving out to Los Angeles?

PHILIP

She didn't take it very well.

SHEILA

You were expecting hugs and a party? ... You know, Philip, you're never going to get away from whatever it is you're trying to get away from, so you might as well just face it. And then write it.

PHILIP

That's what my shrink said.

SHEILA

Just sayin' December, Philip. This bag cost me a fortune.

Dropping the manuscript on a table, she exits.
He picks up one of his old notebooks and
thumbs through it.

PHILLIE (V.O.)

Then I'm going to write the story. I'm never going to write what other people tell me to.

PETE (V.O.)

Yeah, let me know how that works out.

BARBIE (V.O.)

Are you writing about me?

PHILLIE (V.O.)

No.

BARBIE (V.O.)

Oh. ... Why not?

PHILLIE (V.O.)

It's not about you.

BARBIE (V.O.)

Everything is about me!

PHILIP

Fuck.

He puts down the notebook, and rips open a box
of Rice-A-Roni as the lights fade.

SCENE TWO: LATE MORNING ON AN EARLY FALL SUNDAY, 2009.

Grace's back porch. Grace, 76, is asleep, a novel
in her hand. A car drives up and doors slam.

BARBARA (OFF)

Jude, calm down. I don't understand where all this anger is coming from! Really, what were you expecting? Raffi Hagopian is a junior, you're a freshman. You should be thrilled you came in second...

Jude, 14, enters in a rage. He kicks the chaise as he passes, waking Grace.

JUDE

Where the fuck were you?

GRACE

What? What? What?

He storms into the house, slamming the kitchen door. Barbara, 49, enters carrying grocery bags. She is now painfully thin, and looks harried.

BARBARA

Jude! Apologize to your grandmother!

JUDE (OFF)

Sorry.

GRACE

That kid's a brat.

BARBARA

He's upset, mom, he just lost the race. And where the hell were you? I told you I'd pick you up from church after Jude's meet!

GRACE

I didn't know where you were, so I walked home.

BARBARA

Why didn't you call me? Isn't that why I gave you a cell phone?

GRACE

I don't know how to use that thing. What's the big deal? It's a nice day, it's not that far.

BARBARA

(Putting the grocery bags on the table.)

It's more than a mile, Mom! What if it were raining? Or snowing?

GRACE

Snowing? In September? Please, Barbie doll, I'm fine! What's all this?

BARBARA

Stuff for later. Can you help me get it ready? Philip will be here in a few minutes.

GRACE

Phillie's coming? I like Phillie.

BARBARA

Yes, mom, I told you. He wants something. I can always tell.

GRACE

You never told me he was coming, Barbie.

BARBARA

I most certainly... Yes, he's coming. But he likes to be called Philip now. Remember what a big deal he made out of it last Christmas?

GRACE

(Lighting a cigarette.)

So? You don't like being called Barbie anymore. Philip. Sure.

BARBARA

MOM!

GRACE

WHAT?

BARBARA

(Taking the cigarette and stubbing it out.)

What did I tell you about smoking in the house?

GRACE

I'm on the porch. And it's still *my* house, Barbie doll.

BARBARA

I keep telling you, Jude is allergic to cigarette smoke.

GRACE

Your husband left, Barbie. You don't have to cover for his no-smoking baloney.

BARBARA

Keith is an oncologist, mom. I think he knows something about the link between smoking and cancer. He had a right to live in a smoke free environment.

GRACE

Not when he's living in my house. I've been smoking for 60 years and I'm just fine.

BARBARA

Yeah, the jury's still out on that. And my kid *is* allergic to cigarette smoke!

GRACE

Whatever you say, Barbie doll. ... Phillie was always such a nice little boy. Why you didn't marry him when he asked you I'll never know.

BARBARA

Philip never asked me to marry him. He's gay, mom, remember?

GRACE

But you two slept together, didn't you?

BARBARA

MOM!

GRACE

New Years Eve, 84? 85? Wasn't it you two, or was it Robert and that putana he got pregnant? Someone was making a lot of noise when we got home that night.

BARBARA

Oh dear God! That's enough, mom!

GRACE

No, I'm pretty sure it was you two. I mean, why would Robert be sneaking over to Veronica's house at four in the morning?

BARBARA

Just forget it, okay?

GRACE

Well, someone wanted to marry you. Who was it if it wasn't Phillie?

BARBARA

I was engaged to Thad, mom, and he broke it off!

GRACE

That's right! Thad, that guy you met at law school. Why didn't you marry him? I told you Keith was not marriage material.

BARBARA

MOM! Stop.

GRACE

You've got such a lovely figure now. Why do you have to hide it with those awful blue jeans? They do nothing for you, especially from behind. ... Phillie's coming?

BARBARA

Philip! I am never going to get used to calling him that. Yes, mom. He was stopping next door first, to "check the basement for leaks." He should've been here by now.

GRACE

(Miming knocking back a drink.)

That's code, Barbie doll.

BARBARA

Yes, mom, I know.

A crash inside the house.

JUDE (OFF)

FUCK! FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK!

BARBARA

Oh God! Jude, watch your language! What happened?

JUDE (OFF)

Nothing.

She goes inside.

GRACE

If he broke another one of my Hummels I'll beat him within an inch of his life!

(To herself.)

Little brat's been a pain in my butt since the day he was born.

Grace takes out a pack of cigarettes,
contemplates lighting another one, looks into
the house and thinks better of it.

BARBARA (OFF)

It's not your damn Hummels, mom, it's just another one of my Amethyst Waterford goblets. Jesus, I can never have anything nice. Jude, you've got to get your anger under control. We'll talk about this later, after your Uncle Philip leaves.

JUDE (OFF)

That faggot is not my uncle.

BARBARA (OFF)

JUDE! Don't you ever call him that!

JUDE (OFF)

Why not? Dad calls him a faggot all the time.

BARBARA (OFF)

That doesn't mean you should. Am I clear? Now go upstairs and take a shower. And stay in your room until I call you down. GO! NOW! ...

(She comes to the door.)

Mom, would you mind putting the snacks out while I clean up this mess? Phillie, dammit PHILIP will be here in a minute...

Barbara goes back inside. Grace starts to take the snacks out of the grocery bag one by one.

GRACE

Gluten-free Chips with No Trans-Fats? Dairy-free Tofu Onion Dip with No Trans-Fats? Extra Mild, Fat-Free Salsa? BARBIE, I TOLD YOU TO GET SOMETHING TASTY!

BARBARA (OFF)

It's better for you, mom!

Grimacing with disgust, Grace puts the stuff back in the bag. Looking to see if Barbara is watching, she lights a cigarette, takes a long drag, and exhales happily.

GRACE

Ahhhhhh!

A moment, and then:

BARBARA (OFF)

I CAN SMELL THAT, YOU KNOW!!!

GRACE

(Muttering.)

I can't smoke. I can't drink. I can't do anything in my own house anymore.

Taking one last drag, she puts the cigarette on a plate, but doesn't stub it out. She sits, picks up her book and reads. Philip enters, swigging from a water bottle.

He's wearing a pair of cargo pants, and the pockets are stuffed. He puts a cake box on the table, and stubs out Grace's still-burning cigarette.

PHILIP

Hi, Grace.

GRACE

Who are you? BARBIE?

PHILIP

It's okay, Grace, it's me, Philip. Remember me? I used to live next door, we get together at my apartment in the city every year for Christmas?

GRACE

Philip? Oh, yeah, Phillie! You got so fat! You used to be such a skinny little thing! Your mom and I used to call you "Mr. Malnutrition."

PHILIP

Yes, you did.

GRACE

Where's Veronica? I haven't seen her around. Did she go down to Florida early this year?

PHILIP

She died, Grace. Last winter.

GRACE

I knew that. Dammit, I knew that. And your father too. Right after.

PHILIP

Yes, Grace. Pete never got over her dying first.

GRACE

I miss them. We were friends for so long. And now I'm the only one left. Al went first. Did you know that? Of course you knew that. 15 years ago now. Heart attack. Dead before he hit the floor. Only 67. I miss them all.

PHILIP

I miss Al too. He was the only dad in the neighborhood who didn't seem to mind I cared more about Mickey Mouse than Mickey Mantle.

GRACE

It hurts like hell, doesn't it, Pete?

PHILIP

(Gently taking her hand.)

Pete was my father, Grace.

GRACE

Of course. You're Phillie. You look so much like him, it's as if he were sitting right in front me, like the old days. Except he kept his hair, didn't he?

PHILIP

Yes, Grace, he did. ... They're still around, Grace. They haunt me. They're in my dreams. Almost every night. Last night I dreamt we were all together, on a boat. You, Al, Celia, all of us, and we were going to scatter their ashes in the bay, but they were there. Pete and Al were knocking back scotch after scotch, my mother was mixing martinis, screaming at me to stop eating her olives. Everyone was laughing and having a good time, but Barbara kept lecturing us to "be quiet, this is a solemn occasion." My father said "They're my ashes, Barbie, I'll laugh about it if I want. Go ahead, Philip, toss 'em! You've been dying to do it for years, here's your chance!" And yet all I wanted to do was get off that boat, just get away from all the laughter and the pain. It was so real.

GRACE

I have those dreams. I think everybody does. That's what hurts the most: they're not here when you wake up, ya know?

PHILIP

Yeah, I do.

GRACE

Your mother was my closest friend. When we first moved here, I didn't know you don't set up your chairs on the front lawn and talk to neighbors as they pass, like we did in Ozone Park. But your mom, she didn't ignore me like everyone else. She just sat down and talked to me, invited me in for coffee, and we were friends from then on. Was it coffee? Or was it martinis? She liked her martinis. She was from Queens, too, and she hated it out here. Like me at first. But we got used to it. It was good for you kids... probably... I dream about the baby, too, it's terrible. I didn't want to have it. But then... It's heartbreaking to have a miscarriage, ya know?...

PHILIP

You had a miscarriage? But I always thought...

Barbara enters and quietly watches them.

GRACE

Your mother wanted me to have an abortion, she even made an appointment with your cousin, but I lost that baby before I could even see him. And then that mess when Barbara was in law school...

PHILIP

What mess?

BARBARA

Mom! That's enough, you're boring Philip.

PHILIP

Sssh, Barbara. She needs to talk. What mess at Harvard, Grace?

BARBARA

When Thad broke off our engagement. You remember how badly I took that, Philip.

GRACE

She gets so upset whenever I bring that up.

(To Philip.)

Who are you?

BARBARA

It's Philip, mom. I told you he was coming.

GRACE

That's not Phillie. Phillie is a skinny little thing.

BARBARA

How about a nice long nap?

GRACE

Don't treat me like a child, Barbie doll. I hate this. I know who you are, Phillie. I can't count on remembering everything anymore, but I know who you are.

BARBARA

C'mon, let me take you upstairs.

GRACE

(Brushing Barbara aside.)

I can go by myself, Barbie. She's like a helicopter, Phillie. She hovers and buzzes, and she won't let me smoke in my own house.

And she's gone. An awkward pause.

BARBARA

Any leaks?

PHILIP

(Taking a swig from his water bottle.)

Nah, it's fine. Dry as a bone.

BARBARA

I'll just bet it is.

Philip takes a jar of olives from his pocket. A bookmark is gotten stuck to the jar. Popping an olive in his mouth, he offers her one. She shakes her head "no."

PHILIP

(He takes a rock hard packet of Twinkies out of his pocket and offers it to her.)

Look what was still in the banquettes. They must be 35 years old.

BARBARA

No. Thank you.

(Seeing the bookmark.)

What's that?

PHILIP

The bookmark? It was still in the banquettes too. I'd almost forgotten it. My mom gave it to me for my thirteenth birthday. She said the quote meant something / to her.

BARBARA

(Seeing the grocery bags.)

/ Goddammit, I told her to take out those snacks! I'm sure she's developing Alzheimer's.

PHILIP

Of course you are.

BARBARA

I'm taking her to be tested next week. C'mere and help me with this stuff.

She starts unloading the bags. Philip tries to open a bag of chips. He still can't do it. She automatically opens it for him. He opens the salsa and scoops some onto a chip.

PHILIP

Good God, what is this crap?

BARBARA

Organic Salsa and Gluten-free Chips. They're baked, not fried.

PHILIP

Oh. Needs salt.

BARBARA

I don't keep salt in the house. I have some Lemon Pepper Mrs. Dash...

PHILIP

(Taking a salt packet out of his pocket.)

The only useful thing I learned from that unfortunate year in the Boy Scouts: be prepared.

BARBARA

Salt is very bad for you, Philip. You use far too much; you always have.

PHILIP

(Dumping the salt into the salsa.)

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BARBARA

PHILLIE!

PHILIP

PHILIP! Now it's edible. Kind of.

BARBARA

(Picking up the cake box.)

What's this?

PHILIP

I brought a cake for your mom.

BARBARA

Is it vegan?

PHILIP

It's a carrot cake. I guess so.

BARBARA

Not the same thing. Does it have gluten in it?

PHILIP

How the hell would I know? I just went to Whole Foods, pointed and said “Put it in a box.” Your mother likes carrot cake, remember?

BARBARA

I’m sorry, Philip, but Jude is allergic to gluten.

PHILIP

So? We can have some, right?

BARBARA

Don’t you get it? My mom’s a messy eater.

PHILIP

And...?

BARBARA

Crumbs! Jude could inhale them.

PHILIP

You’re kidding me.

BARBARA

Jude has some very serious food allergies and we’ve had to make a lot of adjustments to the way we eat. And, I might add, it’s helped to keep the weight off.

PHILIP

God, your mother did such a number on you.

BARBARA

And yours didn’t? So... to what do I owe the pleasure of your company today? I assume you want something from me, why else would you have come out here?

PHILIP

To torture you with Twinkies, salt, and carrot cake, obviously.

Jude enters from the house, now dressed in jeans and a T-shirt. His headphones are on, and he’s immersed in his phone. Barbara quickly hides the cake in an ice chest.

BARBARA

Very funny, Philip. ... Jude! I thought I told you to stay upstairs until I called you. Jude?

JUDE

I'M GOING TO SPENCER'S.

BARBARA

Wait a minute. I SAID WAIT A MINUTE!

Barbara yanks off his headphones.

JUDE

MOM!

BARBARA

We've got company. You haven't even said hello to your Uncle Phillie.

PHILIP

I am not his uncle!

JUDE

He's not my uncle!

*

*

PHILIP

I'm his Godfather. AND IT'S PHILIP! Barbie doll.

BARBARA

Okay, okay, okay! Jeez. But say hello to each other, at least!

PHILIP

Hello, kid.

JUDE

How's it goin'?

PHILIP

How's high school?

JUDE

Okay, I guess.

PHILIP

Cool.

JUDE

Yeah. Can I go now?

BARBARA

Jude!

PHILIP

It's alright, Barbara.

BARBARA

No, it's not alright. Jude, you knew Philip was coming over today, I told you not to make plans with Spencer.

JUDE

I told you our biology project is due tomorrow! We gotta finish it.

BARBARA

And I told the two of you to work on it yesterday!

JUDE

You won't let him come over here.

BARBARA

Jude, that's not what I said. If you want to work in the den, that's fine. But I don't want him upstairs anymore.

JUDE

Anyway, I had track practice yesterday!

BARBARA

That didn't seem to do much good now, did it?

PHILIP

Jesus, Barbara! Let him go.

BARBARA

No, Philip, you don't understand. He does this all the time. He waits until the last minute, goes into a panic, and then *I'm* up until all hours helping him get it done.

PHILIP

Oh come on, who doesn't wait until the last minute? I seem to remember you pulling a project or two out of your ass the night before.

JUDE

Oh, burn!

He and Philip do a fist bump.

BARBARA

Yeah, but I was an A student. He isn't. We've had this discussion over and over, Jude. You need to work harder to keep your grades up or I will ground you from all extra-curricular activities. I mean it. End of discussion.

PHILIP

My God, you sound like my mother!

BARBARA

Do not.

PHILIP

Do too.

BARBARA

Well, I'm not sure that's such a bad thing in this case. Honestly, Philip, he knows every single statistic about every single player of every single sport, but when it comes to his schoolwork it all goes in one ear and out the other.

PHILIP

So? I know every single score from every single Broadway musical and every single fact about every single performer. "Between October 12th, 1950, and May 3rd, 1952, Ethel Merman played 644 performances of CALL ME MADAM at the Imperial Theatre in New York. She never missed a single one, which drove her standby, Elaine Stritch, to drink."

JUDE

Wow. That's so gay.

PHILIP

Statistics, kid. It's a guy thing.

Philip starts another fist bump, but Jude just stares at him awkwardly.

JUDE

Yeah, okay, whatever... I gotta go. Spencer hates to be kept waiting!

BARBARA

You are staying here and getting reacquainted with your unc... With Philip.

JUDE

Do you want me to fail again?

BARBARA

If that's what it takes to get it through your thick skull, then yes. I'm not too crazy about that Spencer anyway. There's just something about that kid I don't trust. I knew I should've put you in St. Mary's, despite what your father said.

Philip laughs out loud. Barbara glares at him.

PHILIP

Sorry.

JUDE

Why you always gotta harsh my buzz?

BARBARA

You're not smart enough to realize Spencer is a bad influence on you.

PHILIP

Jesus, Barbara! Cut the kid some slack! Just let him go finish his project. Kid, as your Godfather, I hereby give you permission to go to Spencer's.

BARBARA

Not so fast. Thank Philip first. If it were up to me you wouldn't be going at all and have to face the consequences tomorrow morning.

JUDE

Thanks, Philip.

PHILIP

No prob, kid.

BARBARA

And give me a hug.

JUDE

Mom!

BARBARA

Give me a hug or you can't go, no matter what your "Godfather" says.

JUDE

(Giving her a perfunctory hug.)

There. Bye.

BARBARA

(Grabbing and tickling him.)

Give me a real hug. That's better. God, what am I going to do with you? You used to be such a sweet little boy, I don't know what happened. I prayed to St. Jude for years before I had you. You're my little hopeless cause. God, what are we going to do with your hair? Can't you comb it once in a while? For me?

JUDE

Mom! Stop!

PHILIP

There's nothing wrong with your hair, kid. Maybe some highlights in a year or two.

JUDE

Whatever.

BARBARA

(Glaring at Philip.)

Okay. Give me a kiss and then you can go.

JUDE

(Giving her a quick peck and bolting off.)

Bye!

BARBARA

Be home by five. We're eating at 5:00 sharp!

JUDE (OFF)

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BARBARA

And don't let Mrs. Fitzgerald give Spencer any Ring-Dings while you're there. Remember what happened last time? Stay out of their kitchen!

JUDE (FURTHER OFF)

Yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever!

PHILIP

What was that smell?

BARBARA

He thinks he doesn't have to shower if he covers himself with Axe.

PHILIP

It was something more than that ... kinda like weed.

BARBARA

Jude does not smoke joints, Philip. His father would kill him.

PHILIP

Well, if he lit a cigarette and opened a beer he'd smell like an 80s gay bar.

BARBARA

He's not gay, he's 14.

PHILIP

I never said he was!

BARBARA

Remember when you were 14? Two words: Acqua Velva.

PHILIP

But my mother never let me get away with that. ... What's wrong with Spencer?

BARBARA

I don't know, it's just a feeling I have. He's a little too... sophisticated for Jude. He's got this view of the world that's just skewed. And don't give him any more ideas, Philip.

PHILIP

Who? Spencer? I don't even know the kid.

BARBARA

Pay attention. Jude.

PHILIP

What?

BARBARA

Highlights.

PHILIP

All the kids highlight their hair now.

BARBARA

Unless I'm absolutely sure there's no gluten in the dye, I can't take the risk he'll get sick.

PHILIP

Are you crazy? Do you know for sure he has Celiac's, or is this another one of your Munchausen's-by-proxy diagnoses?

BARBARA

What's that supposed to mean?

PHILIP

That time you all went to see *The Producers* and he spent the day with me? I fed him those grilled cheese sandwiches? You decided he was "lactose intolerant" before you even got off the Triborough Bridge.

BARBARA

He was throwing up in the car all the way home!

PHILIP

That's what kids do, Barbara! God, what is up your ass today? I mean, you were cranky at the track this morning, but

BARBARA

I'm very angry with you.

PHILIP

What'd I do now?

BARBARA

You don't return my phone calls, you don't reply to my emails, you never talk to me anymore.

PHILIP

I tried talking to you this morning.

BARBARA

Really, Philip? During the middle of a race my kid was losing?

PHILIP

Really, Barbara? You think getting out here at the crack of dawn to watch a bunch of smelly boys run around in circles is why I came out here today?

BARBARA

No, you want something. But I also hoped you'd want to support the Godson you never see, as long as you deigned to grace us with your presence.

PHILIP

I did support him!

BARBARA

Screaming "You're behind, honey! Catch up, catch up" is not supporting him.

PHILIP

(He giggles.)

I thought it was kind of funny, actually.

BARBARA

It was embarrassing. Did you see the look Bitsy Ford shot us?

PHILIP

Good old Bitsy Ford. Still a nasty, raging cu / (nt)

BARBARA

/ PHILIP! You know I hate that / word

PHILIP

/ curmudgeon.

BARBARA

She's a judge now. I have to make nice with her. Honestly, Phillie, why do you have to be so ... loud all the time?

She punches him.

PHILIP

OW! Because it's my solemn duty to make sure this branch of the McDougals dies out in a blaze of loud, gay glory. And it's Philip! Get it?

He punches her right back. Hard.

BARBARA

OW! Got it.

PHILIP

Good. I still don't get why you're being such a bitch today. Especially since your mother mentioned Harvard.

BARBARA

She just reminded me I got dumped. Again. ... Keith and I.... We're getting divorced.

PHILIP

Wait. WHAT?

BARBARA

You don't even *listen* to my voicemails, do you?

PHILIP

I don't listen to anyone's voicemails. It gets too overwhelming. ... Texts. I read text messages. Sometimes. ... So that's why Keith wasn't at the track this morning.

BARBARA

He really is on call this weekend.

PHILIP

I thought it was because he's still avoiding me.

BARBARA

He's not avoiding you, Philip, he's just...

PHILIP

... still pissed I testified against Bishop Mondello.

BARBARA

If you hadn't written that damn book, you wouldn't have had to testify at all.

PHILIP

I didn't even mention Keith in "that damn" book.

BARBARA

Oh please, everyone knew who you were writing about.

PHILIP

Yeah. Mondello. The altar boy wasn't Keith. Specifically. Or even Jamie, for that matter.

BARBARA

All of those "Spruce and Maple" books... it was like you were only writing them to settle old scores.

PHILIP

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Old news, Barbara, we've been all over that a million times. It's what keeps those royalty checks coming in. Tell me what's going on with you and Keith?

BARBARA

(She tears up a little.)

I couldn't take it anymore. The drinking, the mood swings... the constant fighting... The final straw came last week. ... Keith beat the crap out of Jude after he failed his first biology exam. My mom got in the way, and he ended up hitting her too. It was an accident, but still... I threw him out right then and there.

PHILIP

I hate to say I told you so...

BARBARA

Then don't.

PHILIP

He's a deeply troubled man, Barbara. You knew that going into it.

BARBARA

He loved me so much, ever since we were kids, and I thought... well, I don't know what I thought, actually.

PHILIP

You thought "I'm racing towards 30 and I'm still single and this guy wants me." It made my head spin how fast you zoomed into him after Thad dumped... broke off your engagement.

(Lowering his voice.)

And we... you know...

BARBARA

You can say it out loud. She knows.

PHILIP

About us? AND YOU NEVER TOLD ME? I'm so embarrassed!

BARBARA

Will you be quiet? You're going to wake her. I need her sleep!

PHILIP

You're not planning to seduce me this time too, are you?

BARBARA

Oh please. I'm not making that mistake again.

PHILIP

(Scooping a chip into the "onion dip.")

You can't. You only lose your virginity once. And ya lost it to me! Score! ... God, this "onion" dip is worse than the salsa!

He pours another salt packet into the dip.

BARBARA

PHILIP, STOP THAT!

PHILIP

Will you be quiet? You're going to wake your mom. You need her sleep!

BARBARA

(Laughing.)

You can be such a bitch sometimes. ... Yeah, "bi-curious" my ass. That "phase" didn't last long. ... Oh Phillie, why did you have to be a ... uh....

PHILIP

Unavailable?

BARBARA

I meant to say: Why do we always fall in love with the wrong men?

PHILIP

Uh huh. ... You know you didn't love Keith. You just felt sorry for him.

BARBARA

I did love him. ... I really thought I did.

PHILIP

But not enough.

BARBARA

I don't know if anyone could ever love him enough. His mother never really recovered after his dad left, and having to live with an aunt and uncle who didn't really want them there, especially after Candy died... He had no one, except Father Mondello.

PHILIP

Fatherless boys were Mondello's kryptonite. Fatherless boys. Altar boys. Boys.

BARBARA

Mondello might have done some horrible things to Jamie, but he never touched you.

PHILIP

I know! The bastard!

BARBARA

How can you joke about that? ... And he never touched Keith either. Mondello treated him like a son. Which is more than his own father ever did.

PHILIP

You don't really believe that, do you?

BARBARA

I have to believe it. ... I have to.

PHILIP

Okay, Barbie, okay. Whatever happened or didn't happen, it's done. ... But Keith deserved better. ... You both did.

BARBARA

We tried. We failed. And now I'm alone for the first time in years. I have no one anymore.

PHILIP

You have your kid. You have your mother. And, I hesitate to point out, your brother.

BARBARA

God, I hate being almost 50 and having to start all over again. Do you ever look at yourself and wonder "How the hell did this happen to me?"

PHILIP

Every morning I look in the mirror, and think "Should I shave today? What's the point? I'm not leaving the apartment." And my mother's eyes are staring back at me with that piercing glare. "What the hell have you done to yourself? Look at you! You're fat, you drink too much, you eat too much. Get up off your ass and finish writing that Goddamned book!" And my lips move, but it's my dad's voice screaming "Back off, Veronica. You're dead. Stay dead." Then I make a martini, write a line, make another martini, write another line, nuke a big ol' bowl of Rice-A-Roni for breakfast, maybe write another paragraph or two, and go back to bed until 5:00. Cocktail hour. Wash. Rinse. Repeat. ... Sometimes I don't wash. Or rinse. Just repeat. The whole shit show of my life on an endless, horrifying loop.

BARBARA

Why haven't you told me this?

PHILIP

I haven't even told my shrink that. I probably should, but... She scares the crap out of me.

BARBARA

What do you need her for? You know I'm here for you. Talk to me, I'm your friend. We need each other, probably more than we ever did before. ... You do drink and eat too much, you know. Even just cutting down the salt would help.

PHILIP

Oh God, will you please just drop it? It's been a rough year, ya know? First my mom, then my dad, and the new book.

BARBARA

You're writing again?

PHILIP

I told you that.

BARBARA

You did not.

PHILIP

I did too. At my mother's memorial. I have a three book deal with Schuster. And it's not going well. Sheila's threatening to dump me if I don't have another bestseller. The pressure is killing me.

He shoves another handful of chips into his mouth. Barbara moves the bag away from him.

BARBARA

You're stress eating. Jeez, Phillie! You're one box of Rice-A-Roni away from a heart attack!

PHILIP

PHILIP!

BARBARA

Look at you! You're wound up tighter than a training bra on Dolly Parton. ... Why don't you stay next door for a while? Give yourself peace and quiet at home before running away to the west coast?

PHILIP

This isn't home, Barbara. It's just where I grew up. ... Look, I know this probably isn't the best time, but I do have to ask you a huge favor.

BARBARA

You do want something. I knew it!

The faint sound of kids having an argument can be heard a few blocks away.

PHILIP

... What would you think of a new Spruce and Maple book, / this time from

BARBARA

/ No.

PHILIP

Let me finish. This time from an adult perspective? No priests, no altar boys, no Keith, I promise.

BARBARA

No.

PHILIP

You know, Barbara, I gave up a lot when I stopped writing those books for you.

The sounds escalate into a fight.

BARBARA

I never asked you to give them up. That was your decision.

PHILIP

You didn't stop me, either.

BARBARA

I just don't understand why you have to write about Spruce and Maple again. What can you possibly say that you haven't already said?

Grace enters.

GRACE

Pete? Pete McDougal? What are you doing here? Is Veronica with you?

BARBARA

Oh great, now she's awake. It's Philip, Mom. Pete and Veronica are / dead

GRACE

/ I KNOW, BARBIE! I just forgot for a minute. I'm sorry, Phillie.

PHILIP

It's okay, Grace. Dreams. Remember?

GRACE

Yeah. Dreams. ... I'm hungry.

BARBARA

We're eating at five. Have some chips and salsa.

GRACE

That fat-free stuff? No thanks. Just because you have to watch your weight doesn't mean I have to eat that garbage. Can't you buy anything tasty? Can't you buy some salt, at least?

BARBARA

I told you, mom, it's better for you. You'll live longer.

The fight gets louder, then abruptly stops.

GRACE

I'm 76 years old, Barbie. How much longer do you expect me to live?

BARBARA

There's no reason why you can't live well into your 90s.

GRACE

I'd rather kick the bucket right now if I have to eat this tasteless shit for the next 20 years.

Philip palms a few salt packets into her hand.

BARBARA

I saw that.

GRACE

Why Barbara broke off your engagement, I'll never know, Phillie.

BARBARA

We were never engaged, mom! How many times do I have to tell you? See, Philip, I told you: she's starting to show signs of Alzheimer's.

GRACE

I don't have Alzheimer's, Barbie Doll, I'm old. I forget things! You like Tofu, Phillie? 'Cause that's what she's making for dinner. Tofu burgers. Yum. See, I remembered that.

Philip takes a swig from his bottle. It's empty.

PHILIP

Jesus, I need a drink. How about I make us some martinis?

GRACE

You may look like your father, but you think like your mother.

PHILIP

(To Barbara.)

You got any gin?

BARBARA

No.

GRACE

I do.

She goes into the house.

BARBARA

I give up. Make 'em weak, at least.

PHILIP

No such thing. ... I need to know about the book.

BARBARA

You know, you're right. This is not a good time to talk about this.

PHILIP

I have a due date and I'm running out of time.

BARBARA

Phillip. I told you I don't want to talk about this. When are you going to grow up and realize not everything is always about what you want.

PHILIP

What the hell do you mean by that?

BARBARA

You've had everything handed to you your whole life. I've never gotten anything I really wanted, and meanwhile you just go merrily on your / way...

PHILIP

/ This isn't about you, Barbara, this is about me. For once.

BARBARA

Oh please, it's always about you. Always has been.

The phone rings.

PHILIP

Look, Barbara, I know you're hurting. I know your life is pretty messed up right now. My life is pretty messed up, too. I need to have something succeed again. I need to write.

BARBARA

It was that agent of yours who pushed you into this, wasn't it? I don't like her. She's too bossy. I mean it Philip: no more Maple. Find someone else to write about.

Philip picks up his jacket.

GRACE (OFF)

Barbie? It's Suzanne Hagopian!

BARBARA

Oh, Jesus! What the hell does she want?

(To Philip, as if to a dog.)

Stay there. We're not done yet. And don't get my mother too drunk.

She heads into the house, nearly knocking over
Grace and her a tray of cocktail necessities.

GRACE

BARBIE! Be careful! Who is Suzanne Hagopian?

BARBARA

Not now, mom.

GRACE

What's the matter with her?

PHILIP

I know, right? She's a real pain in the ass today.

GRACE

I think it's all that rabbit food she eats.

(Noticing he's put on his jacket.)

You're not leaving already, are you?

PHILIP

I think I'm going to head back into the city, Grace. ... Beat the Sunday afternoon traffic
on the L.I.E.

GRACE

Please Phillie, don't go. ... You're the closest thing to the old days I've got left. ... Please?

PHILIP

... One drink.

GRACE

Good. Sorry Phillie, I don't have olives. I like onions with my gin.

PHILIP

(Pulling the olives out of his pocket.)

No worries, I've got some. You got any ice?

GRACE

Yeah.

BARBARA (OFF)

Of course we're insured!

GRACE

(Opens the ice chest and sees the cake.)

Uh oh. That doesn't sound good. What's this?

PHILIP

It's a carrot cake. I didn't know about Jude's allergy.

GRACE

(Taking the cake and ice from the chest.)

Oh, that. Pffft. There's no reason we can't have some!

PHILIP

(Making the drinks.)

That's what I said! Rocks, or straight up?

GRACE

Straight up.

BARBARA (OFF)

Take Raffi to Northshore, and have my husband paged. He'll make sure he gets seen quickly.

GRACE

Your mom and I used to do this every afternoon after you kids went out to play. We told you we were "checking the basement for leaks" and then we'd talk for hours.

BARBARA (OFF)

Dr. Quigley, please. ... His wife. It's an emergency.

Philip serves the drinks, Grace serves the cake.

GRACE

She was so smart, Phillie, she always knew just what to do. After Al died she took me to Florida with her for the winter, you knew that, right? She was always there for me. Always. I miss her so much. ... And that mess at Harvard...

I thought Barbie was never going to get over it, but your mother... Oh, I'm not supposed to talk about that. It reminds her. She doesn't like that, she'll yell at me.

PHILIP

Don't worry, Grace, I know all about it. I won't let her yell at you.

GRACE

You know about the baby?

PHILIP

Baby?

GRACE

The baby she was going to have with that Thad guy.

PHILIP

Thad? Are you telling me *Thad* got her pregnant? / But she...

BARBARA (OFF)

/ I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR PATIENTS, KEITH, WE'RE BEING SUED! GET YOUR ASS OVER TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM AND MAKE SURE RAFFI HAGOPIAN GETS TAKEN CARE OF IMMEDIATELY!

GRACE

What has he done now? That brat takes after his uncle Robert. Trouble from day one.

PHILIP

What happened to the baby, Grace?

GRACE

Oh, Phillie! Father Mondello said I was risking the fires of hell.

PHILIP

Father Mondello fucked little boys. I wouldn't give much credence to anything he said about the fires of hell.

GRACE

I believe in hell, and being punished for your sins. I'm not like your mother that way.

PHILIP

My mother?

GRACE

Barbie asked her to call your cousin.

Barbara enters, in a rage.

BARBARA

I'm gonna kill him. Jude and that Spencer just beat the crap out of the kid who won the race this morning. I have to go find him and then meet Keith and Suzanne at the hospital...

(She sees the cake crumbs everywhere.)

FUCK! FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK! Goddam it, Philip, I knew this would happen! CRUMBS! CRUMBS! LOOK AT THEM! CRUMBS EVERYWHERE! GODDAMMIT, LOOK AT HER! SHE'S A MESS, THE PORCH IS A MESS, EVERYTHING IS A GODDAM FUCKING CRUMMY MESS!

GRACE

Calm down, Barbie doll, it's only cake. I'll clean it up.

BARBARA

YOU'D BOTH BETTER GET THIS PORCH SPOTLESS BEFORE I GET BACK. I AM NOT GOING TO HAVE JUDE INHALING ALL THAT GLUTEN AND GETTING SICK ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE!

PHILIP

(Very quietly.)

You had an abortion, Barbara?

BARBARA

What?

PHILIP

My cousin Michael aborted Thad's baby?

BARBARA

MOM!

GRACE

I'm sorry, Barbie. He said he knew. I messed up.

PHILIP

But you never slept with Thad. Isn't that what you told me?

(Barbara stays silent.)

You didn't sleep with him, did you?

(She still says nothing.)

You didn't. ... So then: whose baby was it?

GRACE

Oh, my God.

PHILIP

It was mine, wasn't it, Barbara? ... Wasn't it?

BARBARA

... Yes.

PHILIP

And you never told me?

BARBARA

No.

PHILIP

And you knew about this, Grace?

GRACE

I didn't know the baby was yours, Phillie.

PHILIP

You knew we'd slept together. It never crossed your mind it might have been mine?
(To Barbara.)

Why didn't you say anything?

BARBARA

I wanted to tell you, but... I was so mixed up... I was so overwhelmed with the bar exam, you were on that book tour, and after... it just never seemed like a good time... and... What were you going to do? Strap a screaming baby on your back while you toured the country signing your kiddie books? Neither of us were in a position to be a good parent.

PHILIP

But why didn't you just tell me? Why have you been lying to me all these years?

BARBARA

I never lied! I just... omitted some information.

PHILIP

Oh, please Barbara, don't go all lawyer on me. It's still a lie! Do you think I would have tried to stop you?

BARBARA

I don't know.

PHILIP

Seriously? ... I've never wanted kids. I just don't understand why you didn't let me know, why you didn't let me be a part of the decision.

BARBARA

Why? You had nothing to do with it.

PHILIP

Really?

BARBARA

I mean it was my body, my decision.

PHILIP

Oh don't give me that crap. I did have something to do with it. That baby was half ... mine... Oh. ... No... Oh my God. ... I get it. You didn't want to have *my* child.

Barbara waits a long time before speaking.

BARBARA

Do you understand what *your* mother went through with you? Do you know how hard it was for *me* to watch while everyone picked on you? Made fun of you? Beat you up? I didn't want that for my child. No mother wants that for their child.

PHILIP

(Surprisingly calm.)

Fuck you, Barbara.

BARBARA

Calm down, Philip.

PHILIP

(He remains calm and deliberate.)

I'm perfectly calm. I just want to hear you say it: You didn't want to have my child.

BARBARA

Please, Philip, you don't understand!

PHILIP

Say it, Barbara. You didn't want to have a faggot's child.

Barbara's cell phone rings. She answers.

BARBARA

I can't talk right now, Keith. Philip is flipping out. ... I'll get there as / soon

PHILIP

(Taking the phone from Barbara.)

/ She'll call you back, Keith.

BARBARA

Philip!

PHILIP

Let your Goddamned husband take care of things for a change. This time it *is* about me!

BARBARA

I can't talk to you when you get hysterical like this.

PHILIP

(Calmly handing back her phone.)

I'm not hysterical. I'm angry. You've never understood the difference. ... I just want you to say it: You didn't want to have a faggot's child.

BARBARA

Philip, you know I love you. You know I don't care if you're gay, straight, or whatever. Do you think I'd let you near Jude if I did?

Philip stands up. He speaks with a measured,
but growing intensity.

PHILIP

You did not want to have my child. For Christ's sake, Barbara, just admit it. You did not want to have a faggot's child!

BARBARA

Alright! No! I didn't want to have your child!

GRACE

Barbara, please, you don't mean that!

PHILIP

And you both let my mother arrange the abortion. ... Did she know whose baby it was?

BARBARA

... Yes.

He says nothing for a long while, then quietly gets up to leave.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

That's, right, Philip! Run away. Like you always do.

He stops and turns to her.

PHILIP

(He takes the bookmark from his pocket.)

That afternoon when were hiding from Keith in the banquettes? All these years, we thought my mother talked your mother into having an abortion.

BARBARA

I don't remember.

PHILIP

Of course you do. I mean, why else would you have gone to my mother for help?

BARBARA

Philip, please, don't.

PHILIP

You're not a very good actress, Barbara. It's probably better you went into law.

GRACE

But I didn't have an abortion. I lost that baby.

PHILIP

I know that now, Grace. But you never told us? Why should you? You didn't know we'd heard you. But we did.

(To Barbara.)

And I, at least, have never forgotten what we heard. Unlike, apparently, you. ... My mom was talking about me, about me being "queer," and I remember her saying "He'll need someone who believes in him. Or can at least fake it." Those words have stayed with me for 37 years. "He'll need someone who believes in him. Or can at least fake it." And then a few months later, she gave me this.

(Reading the bookmark.)

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. Henry David Thoreau." ... And all this time I thought "she's not faking it. She does believe in me."

GRACE

Your mother loved you very much, Phillie.

Jude enters and watches, unseen by the others.
He's eating a Ring-Ding.

PHILIP

She knew me, better than I knew myself ... And now that I know what she knew, and *omitted* telling me... in her own twisted way, she thought she was supporting me, I guess. Did she believe in me? Was she faking it? I'll never know for sure now, but at least I can sort of understand her motives. "Don't be like your father. Don't let anything stand in the way of you getting what you want." If she said that once, she said it a thousand times. ... But I will never understand why none of you ever told me. I feel like such a fool. ... And I don't know if I can ever forgive your hypocrisy.

BARBARA

My hypocrisy?

PHILIP

"Philip, you know I love you. You know I don't care if you're gay, straight, or whatever." Please. You couldn't stand anyone knowing you'd had a faggot's child. ...

(Softly, almost tenderly.)

But you did. You did have a faggot's child, Barbie.

BARBARA

Keith isn't gay, Philip, no matter how much you want him to be. You think I don't know you're still in love with him?

PHILIP

Oh, Barbie... I'm not still in love with him. I feel sorry for him. And for you. All the lies you both told yourselves for so long. ... You knew we sucked each others cocks when we were 14.

BARBARA

You never told / me that

PHILIP

/ I told you before you married him.

BARBARA

I would have remembered something / like that

PHILIP

/ You were drunk and just laughed it off. "Just boys fooling around once or twice, it didn't mean anything."

BARBARA

Shut up.

PHILIP

It was Keith's idea.

BARBARA

That's not true.

PHILIP

He "seduced" me one afternoon in my pool. We both had erections, probably from the friction going down that slide. Or maybe, as Father Mondello suggested that day in the confessional, our bathing suits excited us. Whatever. Before I even knew what was happening, Keith took me into the pool house, pulled down my trunks and went down on me. I liked it. He liked it. We "fooled around" for nearly a year after that, until he noticed you'd lost all that weight, and I "didn't mean anything" to him anymore.

BARBARA

You're lying!

PHILIP

I'm just rectifying information I omitted telling you.

BARBARA

Stop saying that, you son of a bitch.

PHILIP

He was a good little cock sucker. Mondello taught him well. He liked getting sucked off, too. You should have seen the look on his face the first time he jizzed in my mouth.

GRACE

Oh, Phillie!

PHILIP

And as my father said: "Any guy who sucks another guy's cock is a faggot." Funny thing is, my father assumed I'd started it too. Everyone made assumptions about me before I even knew myself. My mother, my father, Mondello, your grandmother, you...

BARBARA

Stop it, Philip.

PHILIP

(Indicating his parent's house.)

This morning, when I went over there to "check the basement for leaks," I noticed the pool house had been broken into. It smelled like butt and weed. Huh. How 'bout that? ... Instead of freaking out over Jude stuffing Ring-Dings in his mouth, I'd pay more attention to what those Leopold and Loeb's are doing when they're not beating the crap out of some kid who won a race.

BARBARA

I mean it, Philip. Shut up!

PHILIP

Is it just “boys fooling around” when it’s your son? Or am I guilty of making an assumption myself?

BARBARA

I SAID SHUT UP! My son is not gay. My husband is not gay.

PHILIP

Keep telling yourself that. Jury’s still out on those kids; they might only be sociopathic potheads. But deep down, you know Keith is gay, and it’s killing you.

BARBARA

I will not let you talk to me this way! Get out of here, you Goddamned faggot!

PHILIP

You’ve finally said it; you’ve been dying to for years. ... I guess I did get what I came for.... Thank you, Barbara. I’ll dedicate the books to you, Keith and Jude.

BARBARA

Philip! Don’t you dare write about this. I will sue you!

PHILIP

I’m quaking. Goodbye, Maple. Go to hell.

GRACE

Phillie, I really didn’t know the baby was yours!

PHILIP

I know you believe you didn’t. Goodbye, Grace.

(He kisses the top of her head. He sees
Jude, and pushes him into the cake.)

Here, kid. Breathe some cake.

Philip exits.

BARBARA

OH MY GOD, JUDE! YOU’RE IN THE CRUMB ZONE! DON’T BREATHE!

GRACE

Oh, Barbara... just... stop it.

JUDE

Wow. You’re all fucked up.

SCENE THREE: EARLY EVENING ON A LATE SPRING TUESDAY, YEARS LATER.

A Barnes & Noble in Santa Monica. Philip at a podium, reading from the book. Sheila is standing to the side.

EVENT COORDINATOR (V.O.)

Barnes & Noble Santa Monica EVENTS is pleased to present Newbery Award Winning author Philip McDougal, reading from his third and final installment of the “Spruce & Maple Grow Up” trilogy: “Spruce and Maple Grow Apart,” winner of this year’s National Book Award. Starting now on the second floor.

PHILIP

“And in that one instant, the last few years of doubt were confirmed, the past he wanted to remember was shattered, the children he and Maple had been were gone forever. No matter how hard Maple tried to make amends, no matter how many times she tried to apologize, they were just Bruce and Mabel now, indistinguishable from any other middle aged childhood friends who’d stayed too long at the party.”

Philip continues reading, unaware Barbara has entered. She has gained a little weight, and is now an attractive, healthy looking woman.

SHEILA

I don’t think you should be here.

BARBARA

I have to see him.

SHEILA

You lost your lawsuit, so unless you’re going to buy Philip’s books – which I doubt – you have no reason to be here. Don’t mess with him, Barbara.

PHILIP

“Torn between honoring memories and promises made as a child, and the betrayals he never saw coming, betrayals which were fierce to him at least, and which ensured an end that needn’t have been but were nonetheless inevitable... The road ahead was his and his alone. Because he was alone, he was certain of this now. And while he was haunted by the memories, this knowledge led him to a certain kind of peace unlike any he was prepared for, but within the parameters of this new world, he could, he would move on. Move on and, yes, even flourish.”

He closes the book to applause.

EVENT COORDINATOR (V.O.)

Mr. McDougal will now sign all three of the books in the “Spruce & Maple Grow Up” series. You may purchase your copies at the register across the aisle to your left.

BARBARA

Phillie?

PHILIP

Oh my God. ... What the hell are you doing out here?

BARBARA

Jude is living in Toluca Lake. ... Can we talk? Please? It's been so long...

SHEILA

BARBARA! Everyone is waiting for Philip.

BARBARA

I hoped you'd come home for my mom's funeral.

PHILIP

Grace never did learn how to put out a cigarette, did she?

SHEILA

C'mon, Philip.

Barbara takes a jar of olives and a Twinkie from her purse, and holds them out to Philip.

PHILIP

... I can't.

We hear Veronica's voice, dim and ghostly.

VERONICA (V.O.)

Now Phillie, you be nice to that little girl who just moved in next door. She doesn't know anybody here. She's five years old, like you, and she needs a friend. Remember how you feel when the other kids say mean things and won't play with you? You go next door, apologize for what you said, and invite her to come and watch “Lucy” with you. Her name is Barbie. I'll make lunch for both of you.

Barbara continues to hold out the olives and Twinkies. She and Philip stare at each other as the lights fade.

END OF PLAY