

# ***THE AUTUMN LEAVES***

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Characters:

Wisewoman, an ancient priestess.

Lucille Cohen, the mother.

Lou Cohen, the father.

David, their oldest child.

Wendy, their daughter.

Aaron, the youngest.

Two FBI agents.

Diana, an aunt, Lucille's sister-in-law.

Tyrone, the babysitter.

Ricky Thompson, David's best friend.

Three schoolgirls.

The curtains are closed. As the house lights go down, an elderly woman, Wisewoman, enters. She has a long cloak and an air of magic, witchery, and spiritualism. She walks to the center of the stage. She has a hood that resembles an owl. Slowly looking over the audience she speaks with a deep resonant voice, as if casting a spell.

Wisewoman: Friends, like the owl, I too have looked out with great staring ever-alert eyes upon the predators and prey, the slayers and the slaughtered, upon the children wandering lost in the forest of the night. As I looked out into the shadowed darkness, I saw a light, shining through the branches and thickets, brightening the brambles of confusion and despair. I spread my arms, my feathered wings, to embrace this light, to hold in the eternal circle of my soul the children of my heart, the children who shall inherit the terrors and triumphs, the wonders and the woes, of the people's journey through the wilderness. For the people are a story that never ends, and their story is told in a voice as clear as the eye of a child.

## ACT 1

### Scene 1

The family is getting ready for dinner in a Midwestern house. The mother, Lucille, a small, lively woman, is placing some meat and vegetables on the table. The three children, David, Wendy, and Aaron, are sitting down, exchanging a few mildly rivalrous remarks. The father, Lou, is pacing up and down, and Lucille is urging him to sit down. The decor is spacious, with some wood paneling, but not at all ornate; the furniture second-hand and functional with a somewhat higher-quality sideboard, a stone fireplace. There are paintings on the wall -- the Kathe Kollwitz portrait of a mother and child, an original oil by Lucille of the same subject, and a watercolor of some workers standing in an unemployment line. There are numerous bookcases, filled with books. A front door is on stage right.

Lucille: C'mon you three, settle down for dinner.

Aaron: She got more meat than I did!

Wendy: No I didn't. I want some gravy!

Lucille: Hold your horses. Lou sit down. Stop pacing!

Lou: (pacing, distracted) Oh...oh yeah, sure. (sits down) I'd better run out and get a paper after dinner.

David: What's going on Pa?

Lou: Maybe nothing, not sure old man. I'll let ya know if and when the proverbial shit hits the fan!

David, Wendy, Aaron: (all laugh)

Aaron: He said shit!

Lucille: Ya know, Lou, what we all agreed about vulgarity at the table.

Lou: Just a figure of speech Lucy my dear.

(loud knock sounds at the door)

David: I'll get it.

Lou: (puts his hand on David's shoulder) Hold it sport. Let me check this one out. (goes to door, looks through glass, shouts) Who's there!

Voice 1: Is that Lou Cohen!

Lou: Who wants to know!

Voice 2: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mr. Cohen. We'd just like to ask you a few questions.

Lou: I've got nothing to say to you.

(back at table)

Wendy (to David): It's the FBI!

David: (finger to lips) Shh....

Voice 1: Mr. Cohen, if you'd just open the door for a few minutes I'm sure we can clear up any difficulty.

Lou: Do you have a search warrant?

Voice 2: We came here hoping for a little cooperation, Mr. Cohen. We hardly think you'd want to appear unpatriotic in front of your wife and children.

Lou: I repeat, I have nothing to say to you. You may take your vicious smears, threats, and innuendoes and get the hell out of here!

Voice 1: You'll regret this Mr. Cohen.

Lou: (walks back to table, muttering under his breath) The hell I will.

Lucille: Those rotten scum!

Lou: They're just tryin' to intimidate the movement, they can't make anything stick.

Lucille: But Lou, that Grand Jury is meeting...and my father said...

Lou: Your father! Listen, baby, I appreciate your old man's willingness to help,

but this ain't exactly his area of legal expertise.

Lucille: Still, he says it could go either way...and if you're indicted...

David: Indicted...what does indicted mean? Will you have to go to jail?

Lou: (turning to three kids) Listen, kids, no one's takin' your papa to jail, ya got that? (jumps up from table) I'd better make a few phone calls.

Lucille: (shaking her head, worried, talks to kids, serious but calm) There is a chance that your father will have to go to jail, but we hope it won't happen.

Wendy & Aaron: Why?

Lucille: Well, I'll try to explain. You see it's not because he did anything wrong. There are some bad people in this country who try to put people in jail for wanting to change things, for wanting to make things better. Remember when I told you that your father and I, like your aunt and uncle, believe that everyone should be free and equal and that there doesn't have to be just a few very rich people and so many poor ones?

David: Yeah, you said we were "progressive." I used to think we were the only two families in the world who were progressive.

Lucille: But now you know that there are many people who feel the same way. Millions of people around the world.

Wendy: But if there are millions of people who think like us, how come the police want to put papa in jail?

Lucille: Well, the FBI says that your father and a friend of his helped a woman friend leave this state on a train.

David: What's her name?

Lucille: You know her -- Claudia, remember? Claudia Hughes.

Wendy: I remember! I went to her house once with papa and had strawberry shortcake!

David: She's the one who gave me that book about Harriet Tubman.

Lucille: That's right, that's a wonderful book isn't it?

David: So what's wrong with helping her take a train? (turns to his sister and brother, in a hushed, conspiratorial tone) Maybe it was the Underground Railroad...

Aaron: Yeah!

Lucille: (chuckles) In a way maybe you could say that. Lou, did you hear what your son just said...

Lou: (striding in again) Something brilliant I bet!

Lucille: He thinks maybe you put Yvonne on the Underground Railroad!

Wendy: I think so too. And I bet you did it with Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass!

Aaron: And you probably helped Big Joe, the slave, find his way to Freedomland!

Lou (putting arm around Lucille): What a great bunch of kids we got here!

Lucille: What did Ben have to say?

Lou: We're gonna get together later. We didn't want to say much over the phone.

Lucille: But I've got that proofreading job tonight. Who's gonna take care of the kids?

Lou: Goddamn it, I forgot about that! Why don't you give Tyrone a call, maybe he can babysit.

Lucille: And where do we get the money to pay him?

Lou: The Lord will provide!

Lucille: You're impossible. (Lucille exits)

Aaron: Papa -- are you really gonna have to go to jail?

Scene 2

Later the same night. The three children are in the bedroom that they share. The bedroom has three beds and two old dressers. There are children's drawings taped on the wall and scribbling on the walls as well. They are supposed to be asleep, but they are up talking and worrying.

Wendy: Davey, when are mama and papa coming home?

David: I'm not sure, Wendy, but you know Tyrone is downstairs, so we don't have to be afraid.

Aaron: Do you think it's true that he used to wrestle lions in the circus?

Wendy: (eagerly) It was bears! He told me all about it. Ya see, he ran away from home when he was 16 and he was so strong, with so many muscles, that he got a job wrestling bears in a circus.

David: I guess we don't have to worry about robbers or even the FBI when Tyrone is taking care of us.

Aaron: But what if papa has to go to jail?

Wendy: What if both Mama and Papa go to jail -- just like the Rosenbergs.

David: That would be terrible, but I don't think anything like that is going to happen.

Aaron: What happened to the Rosenbergs?

Wendy: Rosen-bergs Aaron, not Rosen-birds.

David: They were killed in the electric chair. Remember how mama and papa went all around getting people to sign a paper to save their lives? But they were killed anyway, in the electric chair.

Aaron: What's the e-lectric chair?

Wendy: You sit in it and you get a big shock that kills you.

David: Then their two little boys had to go live with another family.

Wendy: What if that happens to us?

David: (reassuringly) I don't think it will. I think we should try to stop worrying and go to sleep. We can ask mama about it in the morning.

Aaron: (crying, very upset) I don't want mama and papa to be killed in the e-clectic chair!

Tyrone: (opening door and coming in) Hey now you kids, what's going on? You're supposed to be asleep. What's all this carryin on? Aaron, you OK?

Aaron: They said maybe mama and papa might get killed like the Rosenbirds.

David: We didn't say that. But we know Papa might have to go to jail.

Wendy: And what if the FBI comes to the house and breaks down the door?

Tyrone: Now you know nothin's gonna happen to you three kids while old Ty is here, don't you? You listen here. Your father knows how to take care of himself. You know that your mama's working tonight, proofreading at the newspaper, and your father went to a meeting, but they'll both be back home later on and until then, Tyrone has got the situation under control, you can bet on that!

Wendy: (pointing to David) He's got his bathing suit on under his pajamas!

Tyrone: That true, old man?

David: (shyly) Yeh, it's true, so I can practice swimming before I go to sleep.

Wendy: I know how to swim already. And I climbed all the way up the butternut tree today.

Tyrone: Yeah, you're a good climber, you're a smart and you're a beautiful little lady, too. Wendy, baby, you're gonna break some hearts in your time, I'll tell ya that. But meanwhile how about some sleep?

Aaron: Tyrone, will you tell us about how you wrestled bears in the circus?

Tyrone: Aaron, you little trouper, I've told you about that so many times. How about a song instead...

Aaron: (disappointed) OK.

Tyrone: (starts singing) Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for me to carry me home. I looked over Jordan, and what did I see, comin' for to carry me home, a band of angels comin' after me, comin' for to carry me home...(kisses kids goodnight, starts to exit, turns to audience, says quietly) It sure is true what Lucille always says, if they let the children run the world it would be a whole lot better place. (exits)

### Scene 3

David is standing on a street corner near his elementary school with one of his friends, Ricky Thompson. They are tossing a ball back and forth and talking about baseball. A small group of girls is standing nearby. Alternately, voices could come from offstage.

David: I think those Dodgers are gonna win the pennant this year.

Ricky: Naah—not in a million years. And even if they do, the Yankees will beat them in the World Series.

David: How much ya wanna bet? That Johnny Podres is the best pitcher there is.

Ricky: We'll see how great he is when he comes up against Mickey Mantle.

David: He'll strike him out! (catches the ball) Nice throw!

Girls: (laughing and giggling) That's him! That's him!

Ricky: Davey, can you practice after school today?

David: Yeh. I think so. (notices the girls, acts embarrassed)

Girl 1: I'm sure that's him--that's David Cohen!

Girl 2: His father's a Communist!

Girl 3: My mother told me to stay away from him!

Girls: (together pointing, laughing) His father's a Communist! His father's a Red! A dirty Commie! (exit)

Ricky: Hey, David, is that true?

David: I don't know.

Ricky: Well, my father says your father is on the side of the North Koreans!

David: I know that both my mother and father want there to be peace in Korea. They don't think we should be fighting there.

Ricky: My father says people who talk like that really want the Russians to win. And he says your father helped someone to lie and run away -- she said she wasn't a Comm-u-nist and my father says she was!

David: How do you know! I know my father and mother really want there to be peace and want to help people live better lives.

Ricky: Well, my father's a policeman and he should know what's right and wrong!

David: Yeh, did he know what's right and wrong the time you told me about when you got whipped with a belt for hitting that little kid in the head with a golf club when you didn't do it at all!

Ricky: That's not the same thing!

David: Maybe not. And I don't know everything about Korea and Communism and all that, but you better stop talking about my family so mean or I won't be your best friend anymore.

Ricky: (pushes against David) My father says your father's on the side of the North Koreans -- and that makes your father a traitor!

David: (crying, angry) I'll never be your friend again! (exit)

#### Scene 4

Late at night, about a month after the previous scenes, in the Cohen's kitchen. Lucille is finishing up the dishes, sponging off the table, as Lou enters in a huge burst of energy as usual. Gives her a kiss, throws off his jacket and slings in on a chair, opens the refrigerator.

Lucille: Where have you been? I was expecting you earlier. The kids were asking.

Lou: Ahh..after the meeting Sam wanted to play a couple hands of pinochle. (throws money on the table). Here's a couple hundred.

Lucille: So you won this time, is that supposed to make it OK?

Lou: I usually win!

Lucille: (sarcastically) Yeh, the great mathematical genius, knows every card in everybody's hand. Or else it's the bowling team, and always meetings. meetings, meetings. Lou, I knew you were a wild restless spirit when we got married, my red-headed comet, but I want to see you, the kids want to hear your stories, want to rough-house with you.

Lou: Aw baby, what can I say? We got this house with the Veteran's, but I keep getting laid off one job after another, and you've gotta work nights. I know you hate takin' more money from your old man, and I do too. Times are tough. Times are tough.

Lucille: So what's the latest? Does it look like the indictment's finally gonna blow over?

Lou: Yeh, a lotta headlines, Lou Cohen, dangerous Red, harbors Negro communist, a few days in the can, then no trial, no conviction, they do their damage that way. FBI visits every place I manage to get a job.

Lucille: The kids really liked that bakery truck driver job you had. David still talks about the day he got to take off school and go with you.

Lou: Yeh, the storekeepers liked him too!

Lucille: Lou, ya have a way with people, with ordinary people, and you're a great teacher. Isn't there a way out of this?

Lou: Socialist revolution!

Lucille: Lou--Lou--poet and revolutionary! You know where I stand -- but it seems like it's the men who wind up going to all the meetings, making most of the speeches, and the women are with the kids, cleaning house, not getting recognized for the work they do.

Lou: That old bugaboo -- male chauvinism, male supremacy!

Lucille: Lou, I want our children to make some steps forward. I want Wendy to be able to be what she wants to be -- a doctor, a lawyer, a great artist! I want David and little Aaron to be different than the men they see around them. So many Party men pay lip service to equality, but, well you remember that last regional conference where the subject was women's rights and the district secretary actually got up and said his wife would have really wanted to be there but she had to be home doing housework?

Lou: (hugs her a bit, she only partly yields) I know baby, they all quote Marxist classics on the liberation of women...but they're bullshitters, huh? (somewhat false penitently) And I'm no better than the rest...

Lucille: Meanwhile, Lou what are we gonna do? The kids need shoes, you need a job, and as far as I can see, there's not too much sign the times are about to change. I think the kids have been ridiculed at school...

Lou: Good for their character! Naah...damn, it's a shame. I don't know. We could think about going somewhere else. The West Coast -- we had some good times out there. Maybe I'd have better luck getting a job than here where I'm so well known.

Lucille: Give up this house? The kids with all their friends? Our friends?

Lou: (getting more angry) Well, maybe so! Maybe it's time for a change!

Lucille: A break you mean? A separation from me and the kids?

Lou: I don't know what I mean. It can't go on like this.

Lucille: Listen, Lou. I want things to work out, I really do. But you can't just uproot the four of us all of a sudden on some mad whim of adventure or change.

Lou: Mad whim? What's a matter with mad whim? (half sings) The difficult we'll do right now, the impossible will take a little while...

Lucille: Lou, Lou, will I ever be able to get through to you?

Lou: You do, you do. You always do. C'mon. let's hit the sack.

Lucille: (resignedly) Oh, well, tomorrow is another day. (turns out light)

Lou: (embraces her, waltzes her off, mock singing) In time the Rockies may tumble, Gibraltar may crumble, they're only made of clay....but...oh, my dear, our love is here to stay. (Billie Holiday music up)

## Scene 6

Lucille and Diana are in the kitchen, having tea or coffee. Lucille could occasionally get up to do some domestic task. Diana is younger than Lucille, but worldly-wise. comes from an unorthodox, radical background, and is rebellious herself. She is married to Lucille's younger brother Maury, but it is a very stormy relationship.

Lucille: Diana, what am I gonna do about Lou?

Diana: If I were you Lucille, I'd take him up on charges!

Lucille: What do you mean?

Diana: Before the Party, that's what I mean...charges of male chauvinism, irresponsibility....

Lucille: (sighs) Ah, Diana, I admire your boldness...your toughness...and maybe I should, maybe I should....but deep down I don't know...he's definitely got his endearing side...

Diana: (laughing) and sexy side too, if what you say is true...

Lucille: (laughs too) All too true, my dear, all too true. If he wasn't so damn charming in such a maddening way, and if it weren't for the kids....maybe...

Diana: I told you what I think...and I wanted to ask you, before I forget, if you have any ideas about what I should make for Dawn's birthday. You always seem to have a sixth sense or something about her likes and dislikes...

Lucille: Just like you always seem to focus in on Wendy's inclinations... Seems to me that Dawn really likes small, intricate things...do you think she's too young for an embroidery hoop or something like that?

Diana: Great idea! She'll love it. So how's Aaron doing these days?

Lucille: Having so much trouble--I just don't know where all those tantrums -- we call them "booms" come from...

Diana: Maybe he's picking up on the stuff between you and Lou...

Lucille: Maybe...or I guess it's hard being the youngest...he seems to know all our weak points, and not hesitate to go for the jugular...

Diana: He's lucky he's got such a patient mother...You know what he said the other day...the kids and your mother were playing cards around the kitchen table...then they started playing some kind of 20 questions game...seems like a question arose as to what was the longest river in the world. Well Aaron said it was the Nile, and everyone else said it was the Mississippi... Your mother (you know how she hates conflict of any kind) got more and more upset as the argument raged. She suggested a vote -- "OK this is a democracy, we'll have a vote." So over Aaron's shouts they have a vote. They all vote for the Mississippi and he votes for the Nile. By this time he is practically turning red with anger, sputtering, about to have a tantrum. Your mother says something like, "Now Aaron dear, don't get upset. The majority decided, and the majority's always right." At this he jumps up from his chair and stomps out of the room screaming, "was the majority right when they crucified Christ?"

Lucille & Diana (laugh heartily)

Lucille: My mother, who can't even bring herself to say bathroom and must always ask, "would you like to go to the powder-room dear? What a difference between our mothers...."

Diana: Yes, but you know Lucille, sometimes I envy your sense of family connection -- not that my family isn't amazing and close and creative and revolutionary and all of that -- but then again you didn't grow up being a non-verbal sort of mystical person in a highly intellectual, constantly political and aesthetic cauldron of non-conformity.

Lucille: Sounds good to me. I mean daddy was a good father to us in many ways, I could always take a problem to him and he would really listen. But he was so busy practicing law. And you know my mother, your mother-in-law.. always ailing....

Diana: if you ask me, that Pasha, that Persian patriarch who you call daddy has ah....shall we say...hardly confined his sexual activities to his wife's bed...

Lucille: You think so?

Diana: Like father, like son...

Lucille: I gather that you and Maury are on the rocks again...

Diana: Times like this I feel it just isn't gonna work out...

Lucille: I know the feeling...what is it...are men an entirely different species or something?

Diana: Or just throwbacks... he can't seem to really hear what I say, is it because he doesn't want to hear....I don't know...

Lucille: Half the time I think Lou would just rather be left to his own devices, a wild spirit untrammelled by family responsibilities...

Diana: Wouldn't you -- or part of you want that feeling too?

Lucille: Not really, I guess for me I feel the children are so overwhelming, so dear, such treasures....

Diana: Yes, yes, but there are limits... why can't Lou stay home more often with the kids and you be the one to go to the meetings, or you have some time to work on a painting...

Lucille: (sighs) I do so little painting these days.

Diana: (glances at watch) I've got to go pick up Dawn from school... thanks for the embroidery hoop idea... (they hug) and for the talk... I say bring him up on charges.

Lucille: Give Dawn and Maury my love... hope things go better... thanks for dropping by...

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## Scene 7

Wendy and Aaron are in the children's bedroom with Lucille, who's been getting them ready for bed. David enters midway through the scene. Lou has left for the West Coast some months before.

Wendy: Mama, will you read us the story of The Lovely Garden before we go to bed?

Lucille: Oh Wendy, I've got so much more to do...

Aaron: Please....mama...please....

Lucille: Well, maybe an abridged version...it is a beautiful story... (they settle in around her) Not so very long ago, on the island of Can-be-Done, the Queen had a lovely garden-the loveliest garden in the world, full of rare flowers and fruits. And this is how the loveliest of all gardens came to be...

Wendy: Her name used to be Princess Yolande and she was always happy and smiling... then when she was 18, her parents made her marry the new king, named King Basil...

Lucille: That's right...and this King Basil was selfish and vainglorious--the people feared him...he had a terrible temper...

Aaron: Yeh, he was always having "booms." And he made people bow down to him and if they didn't he put them in jail.

Lucille: Well, naturally, the prospect of marrying this mean King made Yolande very sad, but she decided to stop crying about it and instead go for a walk in the woods, for she loved life and nature very much. And deep in the forest she found a magical stone tablet that said: " To the Princess Yolande --

Wendy & Aaron (with Lucille):

Happiness will not be late;  
You will walk a certain way,  
Then upon a sunlit day,  
You will find a garden gate  
Opened by the hand of Fate."

David: (entering) You will find a garden gate, opened by the hand of Fate -- and then, when the Princess tried to pick up the tiny stone tablet, it crumbled into fine clay dust in her hand.

Lucille: Carrying these words with her, the Princess did marry mean King Basil. But the people became more and more dissatisfied with the King. Then one day Yolande put on a plain coat and went out among the people to find out what their problems were. The King tried to forbid her from going, but she told him calmly, "I ask no permission. I go because it is right for me to go, and no one can tell me not to do what I feel to be right."

Wendy: At first, everyone was amazed that the Queen would walk like one of

them, instead of ride in the royal carriage. And they were even more amazed when she visited schools and hospitals and asked about the needs of poor people.

Aaron: And she helped an old gardener who could hardly walk. She helped his wife get better. And the gardener was so grateful he planted a garden for her...

Lucille: Yes, a lovely garden, where he said only the rarest and most beautiful flowers and fruits may grow. The Queen kept arguing with her husband -- the people grew to love the Queen but despise her husband. Then the gardener made a gate to his garden...

Wendy: And the Queen was reminded of the stone tablet - happiness will not be late, you will find a garden gate...

David: Then when the Queen went to see the gate a few days later, it opened like magic for her and she saw the most beautiful flower...but then she heard a loud hammering...she hid behind a bush, realizing it was her husband the king with a big sledgehammer, because the gate had swung shut when he came and would not let him in.

Lucille: The king bellowed and screamed, but the gate would not open. The old gardener told him he did not know the password. He told Yolande she had lived the password.

Wendy: Later that night Queen Yolande told the King that she was in the garden, and she wanted to let him in, but she couldn't. The king sent for the gardener, but the messenger came back saying that the gardener and his wife had sailed away. A little scrap of paper was left in their house.

Lucille: From the paper the king read these words, "In my garden I plant seeds, of loving thoughts and kindly deeds." There was something in the way King Basil read it that made Yolande realize he was beginning to understand and he would change how he treated people. Not long afterward, the garden gate began to swing open for the king as well...

Aaron: And they taught their children the password...

Lucille: In my garden I plant seeds, of loving thoughts and kindly deeds... And that's the story of The Lovely Garden...

David: Mama, when is Papa coming back?

Lucille: I don't know David, maybe we'll go to California...

David: Can I mail that poem I wrote him tomorrow?

Wendy: And the picture I made of him?

Lucille: Yes, yes, we can do that tomorrow...but now it's time for you rare and beautiful flowers to close the gate of sleep on your lovely garden...sleep well (kisses them goodnight) ...in my garden I plant seeds of loving thoughts and kindly deeds....

END OF ACT ONE

## ACT 2

Act 2 begins about five years later in San Francisco. The Cohen family has moved out West, with Lou coming out first and the family following about a year later. They find a large flat in the Fillmore District. In the first scene, the family is gathered in the living room.

### Scene 1

Lucille: So, what's in store for your faithful audience tonight...

Aaron: Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce myself, I am your master of ceremonies for this evening, and it gives me a great pleasure to introduce -- at the violin, the fabulous marvelous Wendy-Bendy, and on trumpet, "Hot Air" Cohen -- that's right the one with the shit-eating grin!

Lou: (laughs uproariously)

Lucille: (mock scolding) Aaron!

Aaron:(at the piano) OK...die Heimat ist weit, doch wir sind bereit, wir kämpfen und siegen für dich --- Freiheit!

Wendy: Which means...(sings) Far off is our land, yet ready we stand, we're fighting and winning for you -- Freeedom!

David: A song from the Spanish Civil War...

Aaron: But slipping into something a lot more cool daddy-o

Aaron & David: sh-da, shooby-doo, sh-da, shooby-doo (and throughout the song, underneath as in the original song)

Wendy: (falsetto) In the still, of the night, I held you, held you tight, 'cuz I love, love you so, promise I'll never let you go

All: In the still of the night....

Lou: Ah, it can't compare to "The Way You Look Tonight..." (mock croons, off-key but with great feeling, gesturing toward Lucille) Lovely, never never change - keep that breathless charm - won't you please arrange it...

Aaron: (interrupting) Spare us! Spare us!

Lou: A great song if not a great singer!

Lucille: So does that complete our evening concert or do you three have any more mad musical medleys up your sleeve?

Aaron: How about Union Maid?

Lou: (spoken) Oh, ya can't scare me...I'm stickin' to the union...

Aaron: (at piano): There once was a union maid (others join)  
Who never was afraid  
Of goons and ginks and company finks  
And the deputy sheriffs who made the raids  
She went to the union hall  
When a meeting it was called  
And when the company boys came round  
She always stood her ground  
Oh, you can't scare me  
I'm stickin' to the union, I'm stickin' to the union  
I'm stickin' to the union  
Oh, you can't scare me, I'm stickin' to the union  
I'm stickin' to the union  
Till the day I die....

This union maid was wise  
To the tricks of company spies  
She couldn't be fooled by a company stool  
She'd always organize the guys...

(lights down, scene ends in midstream, as if one of many such times)

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Scene 2

Lucille: Kids, I want to remind you about strangers coming to the door. Remember don't ever open the door without looking, remember that you don't have to say anything to the FBI...you see there's a chance your father may be subpoenaed.

Aaron: subpeeee-need....(laughs)

Lucille: My sweet comedian! But remember what I said... OK

David: But I'm scared! What should we do?

Wendy: (shifting into acting out) Let's say...there's a knock on the door...

Aaron: Knock, knock!

David: It's the FBI, all we want is just to talk with you.

Wendy: (to Lucille) What should I say again?

Lucille: Don't open the door and say, "who is it?"

Wendy: Who is it? Who's there?

David: The Federal Bureau of Investigation. Is your father or mother at home?

Wendy: (to Lucille) I know, I know.... (to David)... I don't have to open the door or answer any of your questions!

David: It'll only take a minute.

Wendy: I don't have to answer any your questions. Goodbye!

Lucille: Just right, Wendy, just stick to that. Be firm. It galls me how they can strike fear into so many people. Just remember, you have every right to tell them to go away. You are not required to answer their questions.

Aaron: Is papa gonna get arrested again?

Lucille: Well, not arrested, but called to testify before the House Unamerican Activities Committee, HUAC

Aaron: HUAC? Like Quack Quack?

Lucille: Some pretty vicious ducks...more like vultures....it's the letters of House Unamerican Activities Committee.

Wendy: What is it?

Lucille: It's a government investigating committee.

David: Why are they after Pa?

Lucille: (sighs) They're attacking the whole trade union movement. They know there's been a bit of an upsurge in activity out here lately, and they come after Lou and a lot of others who've been organizing. You know, they try to redbait the whole movement, claiming that there's Communists behind it all... they call people before them, accuse them of subversive activities with no witnesses against them, then maybe the people lose their jobs or reputations...

David: (bitterly) The same old shit.

Lucille: I suppose you could put it that way.

Aaron: He said "shit" in the house. I get to choose the punishment.

Wendy: How juvenile!

David: We did make a deal....

Lucille: May I plead on his behalf?

Aaron: Oh, all right, the court grants this right.....for the moment ...

Lucille: Oh thank you your honor.... your honor as you well know I have been the first to raise this issue of vulgarity in the household...it was due to my imprecations....(kids react to word) that your, ah, deal was...hatched. Yet in this case, and in connection with this.....ah....blankety-blank blank committee, may I plead for leniency? It is the same old shit.

Aaron: (pointing) OOOOoooooh....

Lucille: At any rate, darlings, it's possible they may fail to subpoena Lou, but he's not going into hiding or anything. The main thing is if you happen to be here when the FBI knocks on the door, you know what to do.

David: Hey remember that song -- that investigator one....

Aaron: Yeh....

David & Aaron: Who's gonna investigate

The man who investigates  
The man who investigates me...

David: I don't doubt my loyalty...

Aaron: But what about what his may be?

David & Aaron: Who'll check the record on  
The guy who checks the record on  
The guy who checks the record on me  
Seems to me there's gonna be  
An awfully long line....

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### Scene 3

It's late at night, Lucille is cleaning up the living room. Lou enters, gives her a kiss, and sprawls out on the chaise lounge. She sits down on couch with a huge sigh.

Lucille: Another day has vanished from this vale of sordid sorrow...

Lou: You said it. I've got some bad news, honey -- they subpoenaed me at work.

Lucille: Damnation!

Lou: We've be meeting to discuss our strategy. It looks like everyone is ready to take the fifth and defy this gang of horse's asses.

Lucille: (sighs) How long is this Inquisition going to last? When will people wake up?

Lou: There's some signs, some signs. A bunch of students from U.C. Berkeley have been organizing against the hearings, trying to call public attention to what's happening.

Lucille: We'd better let the kids know right away.

Lou: Yeh, I'm thinking of taking them down there and letting them see this for themselves.

Lucille: You don't think it'll be too dangerous?

Lou: They'll be OK, and it'll be a real eye-opener. They're old enough now to understand.

Lucille: There'll be a lot of publicity, I suppose.

Lou: One way or the other I guess so. Not sure what it means at fuckin' Fosdick Manufacturing or even with the union big shots for that matter.

Lucille: That's all we need right now, for you to lose your job, miserable as it is.

Lou: I'll say it's miserable, les miserable, and lately this out and out fascist has been threatening me. I feel like writing something about it, a little essay on the inevitability of war whenever fascism rears its ugly head.

Lucille: Lou, Lou, isn't there a way for you to be teaching, to be doing something else...

Lou: Teach? Maybe in some small town for a while before they catch up with me, but naaah it just ain't in the cards Lucy...besides, we've really built something in the trade union movement here, a militancy that's not happening in most other parts of the country.

Lucille: In fact that the national wants you to tone down, from what I've gathered.

Lou: Why can't they see that there's a shift, a change in the wind? Beats me how they can pay lip service to union organizing, then get cold feet when some actual advances, however small, are made.

Lucille: My comrades in the Fillmore section feel some of the same way, because they perceive a real reluctance of the leadership to respond to the militancy sweeping the South and spreading here. The lunch counter sit-ins, the freedom riders, the Woolworth's boycott.

Lou: Maybe David would like to go down South? There's a youth group getting organized for another batch of Freedom Rides...

Lucille: Oh, Lou, don't you think he's a little young?

Lou: There's others his age, but it's up to him of course.

Lucille: So much courage, and determination. That Montgomery bus boycott with the woman..Rosa Parks... who refused to go to the back of the bus and

every Negro in town refusing to ride, that's the masses in motion. And she's been active for a long time - secretary of the NdoubleACP, I'm told..

Lou: Masses in motion, masses in motion--Mississippis of masses in motion... maybe I'll use that somewhere.

Lucille: I sense a poem in utero.

Lou: Maybe, maybe. Did I tell you we're having a labor solidarity rally in support of the Woolworth's boycott. I'm supposed to draft a leaflet.

Lucille: Now that's the direction I'd like to see things take.

Lou: So maybe these hearings might help the national see that we're being effective, on the labor front and civil rights. Not just narrow self-interest, some real class consciousness. That's why these cracker Congressmen are bringing their star chamber proceedings to this town. It's like Mao tse-Tung says in one of those essays I've been reading, "to be attacked by the enemy is not a bad thing."

Lucille: That's one way to look at it I suppose, but ya coulda fooled me. So when do they start?

Lou: A couple weeks from now, the end of May.....I don't know when I'll be called. A bunch of us are meeting with the lawyers tomorrow night. Then we might meet here afterward.

Lucille: Meetings, meetings, meetings.

Lou: There's some unrepentant individualists among us, not all from the labor movement, but even they're coming around.

Lucille: Your most esteemed self not included I suppose.

Lou: Touché! Well I guess I'd better try to make a little progress on that leaflet. (gets up)

Lucille: Couldn't you use some sleep?

Lou: No rest for the wicked!

Lucille: Hells bells, Lou, I'm weary. I feel it way down in my bones. My cold cold bones. Maybe a nice hot bath. Don't stay up till all hours. (they both exit)

opposite sides).

#### Scene 4

David: (talking to a friend on the telephone, in phony accent), Aaron hovering behind him, laughing) OK then you place zee bombs under zee Golden Gate Bridge and...

Lou: (bursting in) Goddamnit, I told you kids not to play games on the phone like that--you may think that the fact that the fuckin' FBI taps the phone is funny, but it's serious, you understand? So no more of that, do I make myself clear?

David: Yeah, Pop, we were just kiddin' around.

Aaron: (mocking) Do I make myself clear?

Lou: No kiddin' around like that...got the message?

David: Yeah.

Lou: Anyway you guys, there's a meeting here tonight and you should probably be considerin' hittin' the sack in the not too distant...

Aaron: I don't wanta hit the sack. I won't "disturb" the meeting, I promise.

Lou: Aha - a no disturbance promise from the Lord High shit disturber himself!

Aaron: Shut up!

Lou: (jokingly) How dare you address your father in that tone of voice...ya know what I'm gonna do to you...

David & Aaron ( playing along) No...what are you gonna do?

Lou: (very melodramatically) I'm gonna .....flush you down the toilet!

(David and Aaron laugh)

Lou: I'm gonna....throw you out the window

(David and Aaron shrug their shoulders, feign indifference)

Lou: OK then....I'm gonna feed ya to the timberwolves!

David & Aaron: Oh No, not the timberwolves! (laugh and run out of room together, exit)

(Lucille enters as Lou is thumbing through papers on his desk...)

Lucille: Speaking of being fed to the timberwolves, what's the latest?

Lou: (absorbed) Shit! Wonder what I did with that draft of that statement!

Lucille: If one might be so bold as to suggest that if you brought even a modicum of organization to this veritable pigsty...

Lou: Pigsty! They are the smartest barnyard animals you know.

Lucille: Right, they can weasel their way out of anything.

Lou: You're mixing metaphors or is it merely anthropomorphism.

Lucille: Full of piss and vinegar tonight I see.

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## ACT TWO SCENE FIVE

(scene with guard at door, aaron, lou)

Aaron: Mama, mama it was amazing!

Lucille: Tell me all about, Aaron, but take a few deep breaths first!

Aaron: Well, we were inside the hearing room, see, and there's all these songs and...

Wendy: Chants...

Aaron: Yeah, chants coming up from the demonstrators...

Lou: Really good turnout -- those Berkeley students really came through...

Aaron: And the judge was getting really upset...

Lou: Technically, a Congressman, but....

Aaron: And then people got up in the courtroom, Pa got up, and they started shouting against the committee for the beatings that people were getting out in the streets....and people started chanting Sieg Heil Sieg Heil...and a lot of people were kicked out of the hearing room

Lucille: (to Aaron) And where were you all this time, young man?

Aaron: Next to Pa....

Lou: (clapping him on the back) He was right there...

Wendy: And I was outside. The cops turned firehoses on people.

David: They knocked people down the stairs with the hoses. It was real bloody. A whole lot of people got taken away in paddywagons.

Lucille: And all of you are OK? The demonstration's been all over the news. I'm so glad you're all here in one piece safe and sound.

David: Floyd and Steven got arrested.

Wendy: Mama, there was this woman, she was pregnant, and they pushed her down the stairs with the hoses.

Lucille: That's an abomination. Police brutality...

Lou: The kids were great, Luce, and the students held their ground....

Wendy: And we were all singing...

Wendy and David: Just like a tree, that's standin' by the water...  
We shall not be moved....

Lou: (beaming) So how'd everybody like to go to a drive-in, to celebrate!

Lucille: Well, I was planning some dinner...

Aaron: C'mon, Mama, let's go to a drive in (to Lou) I want some french fries, a chocolate shake...

Lucille: Ah, well, what the hell....

Wendy: Yay!!!! Let's get ready....can we get ice cream after????

Lou: You mean, double-dipped ice cream cones? (acts reluctant) Well, I don't know.... (pause for effect)... sure you can!

Wendy, Aaron, David: Let's go!

(as they bustle around, getting ready)

Lucille: There's been a million phonecalls -- some hate calls.

Lou: Goddamn assholes.

Lucille: I take it you didn't get called to the stand...

Lou: Looks like tomorrow...they had some stoolpigeons up there today. They tried to pack the hearing room, but enough of our people got inside to harass the hell out of em...

Lucille: They deserve every bit of hell they get...

Lou: (as they leave) I tell ya Luce, this is the death knell of this goddamn Committee...I can sense it. We've got 'em on the ropes. Their days are numbered...There's something new in the air... they'll be nothing but a laughingstock after this...

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## ACT TWO SCENE SIX

Lucille and Diana are at the Cohen's house, having just returned from taking the kids to Ocean Beach in San Francisco. They're talking in the kitchen as children come in and out.

Lucille: OK, folks, go out on the back porch and empty all the sand out of your tennis shoes..(turns to Diana) Thanks for suggesting the picnic -- the kids has a great time...

Diana: So did I! How about you?

Lucille: It was just what the doctor ordered -- I needed a break like that what will all this tumult and shouting...I love the ocean...

Diana: So how are things between you and Lou?

Lucille: (sighs) One migraine after another...I don't know... I'm proud of him, proud of the role he played with the Committee...not only on the stand but behind the scenes...

Diana: They did great...I think it'll be a long time, if ever, before they bring their dogs back to San Francisco again...

Lucille: But meanwhile it looks like the union's anti-Communist executive board is gonna expel him, and if that happens his job is in jeopardy, and you know Fosdick Manufacturing's been looking for a chance to get rid of him... maybe he should look for some kind of accounting job or something. With his math background...

Diana: But what about you? Any more thoughts about quitting proofreading those damn lawbooks and teaching reading? You're so good at it. Especially reaching the difficult kids. It's so needed.

Lucille: And I love it! I love that flash of comprehension that lights up in the eyes of these kids who no one has ever really taken the time to teach... But you know yourself that Cherry Hill School can only afford to pay me part-time to tutor...and part-time won't pay the bills.

Diana: Maybe you could offer your services at a number of schools. You've got a lot more education than I do, and I've got a whole kindergarten on my hands...

Lucille: You've done great! And the projects are so creative and original. I just don't know if I could...

Diana: You could be doing the same and more. And the need for people who can reach and teach disadvantaged kids how to read is growing all the time...

Lucille: I know, I know...if I only could see my way clear. (laughs) I cling to proofreading like Aaron used to cling to his blanket. (tone shifts, confides) You know Diana, since that last abortion I just have never seemed to recover my energy...and there's a pain in my chest that never seems to go away.

Diana: You should get a check up. That guy you went to doesn't have the greatest reputation.

Lucille: It galls me, to put it mildly, that they make it so bloody difficult, not to mention expensive. If men got pregnant, need I wonder how legal and available

abortion would be? A rhetorical question of course.

Diana: I wonder if the day will ever come when women will win the right to decide and abortions will be legal. Speaking of which, listen, Lucille, I really don't think I'm pregnant, but there's a slim chance, and I wonder, well, in case it's necessary, do you think you could take Dawn and Joey for a few days...

Lucille: You know I will, you don't even have to ask. (Wendy and Dawn enter)

Wendy: Mama, can Dawn stay overnight?

Lucille: It's fine with me...

Diana: Do you want to stay Dawn?

Dawn: Yeah, and maybe David can help me with my homework.

Wendy: Could we go out to the grocery store and get some "polly seeds?"

Lucille: OK, but be back by five... what are your brothers up to?

Wendy: Listening to records...

Dawn: They've got a record that Uncle Lou is on! I heard it!

Lucille: How are doing with that mystery I lent you Dawn?

Dawn: I'm almost finished. I think I know who did it. Is it the mailman? Or maybe the nighttime nurse?

Lucille: Far be it for me to destroy the suspense...I'm glad you like it.

Wendy: Let's go. (they exit)

Lucille: (sighs again) And it won't be many years before our two beautiful daughters are faced with the same crosses to bear. You know Diana, Dawn has really blossomed since she switched schools. Even though I'm a firm believer in public schools, Cherry Hill's been just right for her.

Diana: I thought about it a lot. But the proof is in the pudding, and she's so much more confident and open. Thanks for encouraging her reading.

Lucille: They're both such joys, practically like sisters, without all the rivalry. Wherever we wind up, they'll always have that bond, that connection.

Diana: It's great. And I really enjoyed our picnic. We should go out to the ocean more often.

Lucille: I do love it. It touches something in me, I don't know, the steady rhythm of life. What's that line in *Dover Beach* about the waves -- something like, "begin and cease, and then again begin, with tremendous cadence slow."

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## ACT TWO SCENE SIX

The three children are sitting around a record player, listening to a recently-released record of a KPFA-radio documentary on the HUAC hearings. As the narrator gives a blow-by-blow account of the demonstrations and police attacks on them outside, voices of the trade unionists, intellectuals, and cultural workers called to testify announce their defiance of the committee as they take the Fifth Amendment while invoking the First Amendment and the entire Bill of Rights in standing up for their social convictions, defending the right to freedom of speech and political association. The racist Southern Congressmen dominating the Committee drone on, endlessly intoning the cold war litany of anti-Communism, yet in the streets youth will be served, and inside the hearing room, voices like those of Lou Cohen and many others, are letting freedom ring.

Aaron: I like this part, where the guy says...

David: If you think I will cooperate with this gang of.....this....committee in any way, you are insane.

Wendy: Shhh....I think Pa's next...

Aaron: (clears throat, mimics Lou) But there is an additional reason....I

Wendy: C'mon Aaron....

Lou's voice is heard, they listen: But there is an additional reason why I will not cooperate with this committee. This is the Constitutional amendment, I believe it's the sixth, which gives a person who is accused the right to confront their accusers. Since I have not had that opportunity, and judging from the past experience of this committee, am not about to get that opportunity, I refuse to cooperate with this committee in any way.

David: Remember that phone call we got right after?

Wendy: That creepy guy...

Aaron: Hey, kids, why don't you tell your father to go back to Russia where he belongs, so they can shoot his dirty Communist ass up in Sputnik! (they all laugh)

David: Here's the part where Malvina sings her song....

Wendy & Aaron:

Did they wash you down the stairs, Billy Boy, Billy Boy  
Did they wash you down the stairs charming Billy...

(Lucille enters)

Lucille: Listening to that record again? Homework under control?

David: Under control, always under control....

Wendy: Ma, do you think you could help me make some designs for my report on Mexico?

Lucille: And when is this report due?

Wendy: Not for a while, but I want the picture on the cover to be just right. And there's some maps, and charts...and...

Lucille: You know I'd be more than happy to help you Wendy, if I can somehow manage to scrunch out the time on this treadmill....

Wendy: I'm pretty good at faces, but I have a hard time with bodies and hands especially...

Lucille: I have some books, some anatomy books, and some drawing books that I had when I was in art school....one of them may even be only about drawing hands...

Wendy: Where are they?

Lucille: On one of the shelves...where the really big books are, I'd say, definitely findable...although seems to me that right now you folks should be seriously considering sweet repose....

Aaron: It's too early! I'm not tired at all!

Lucille: Not tired...and tomorrow the dress rehearsal for Auntie Mame...are you excited?

Aaron: I know my lines!

Lucille: And everyone else's too!

David: The old pro....

Wendy: Can we go see the dress rehearsal?

Lucille: I'm afraid not Wendy...but I promise we'll all see opening night. Aaron does a great job!

Aaron: (recites one of his lines)

Lucille: OK, everybody, teeth brushed, pj's on, it's off to the land of sweet dreams....

Aaron: Oh ma tell us that story about the time grandpa got you an alligator!

Lucille: Well, that was not long after poor TR passed on...

Wendy: TR was your dog, right...and TR stood for...

Aaron: Teddy Roosevelt....

Lucille: Who was....

David: President of the United States...

Aaron: Why'd you name your dog after the President?

Lucille: Oh, I guess, he was a terrier....TR... and I guess despite the fact that daddy was pretty conservative, there was always a certain amount of healthy irreverence for elected officials...

David to Aaron: Meaning they liked to make fun of Presidents sometimes... (then to Lucille) You remember what Aunt Ruthie always used to say about Harry Truman...

Lucille: No, I don't remember...

David: She'd say, "Harry S. Truman.. and you know what the 'S' stands for..."

Lucille: (as kids get it and laugh) Oh, David, you would remember that...

Aaron: Meanwhile, what about the alligator?

Lucille: Is that Izzy you're referring to?

Wendy: Izzy? Why did you name him Izzy?

Lucille: Simple. We named him after our Uncle Isadore...

David: I remember him.

Wendy: Didn't he play the flute -- like me!

Lucille: He did, and very well, he was a fine musician. He played in the Duluth symphony and lots of others.

David: So whatever happened to Uncle Isadore?

Lucille: You remember that story, don't you?

David: No, what story?

Lucille: The greatest love story of the century!

Wendy & Aaron: Tell it mama, tell it to us!

Lucille: Well it seems that up there in Duluth, Uncle Isadore fell in love with a young woman named Rebecca and she was just as much in love with him. But her parents forbid the marriage...

Wendy: How come?

Lucille: Well, they said Uncle Isadore was a musician and could not be trusted and would never make much money...(parenthetically) Maybe that's where my three darlings get their musical talent....

Wendy: But couldn't Rebecca marry him anyways?

Lucille: I think at first she was under 18 and had to have their permission and, well, also in the old days, especially for women, things weren't as free as they are now. She probably felt she had to do what was expected by her parents... anyway, a few years later she married someone else, and so did he...

David: Not much of a love story!

Lucille: Just hold your horses Mr. Smarty pants!

Wendy: Yeah!

Lucille: So they both had children and time passed. They moved to different places...I think Isadore moved to Southern California...maybe San Diego. Anyway, much later, Isadore's wife had died, and so had Rebecca's husband. (triumphantly) In their 80s they happened to run into each other at some gathering or other -- and they discovered they were both still wildly in love with each other -- and lo and behold -- at last they got married!

Wendy: That's a neat story...

Aaron: But meanwhile, what about the alligator?

Lucille: So tell me, when I am an old lady, when I am in my eighties, in my old rocking chair, will you still love me?

Aaron: (tenderly) Yes, mama, even when you're an old lady in a black dress, I'll still love you!

Lucille (to others) Isn't that great! An old lady in a black dress....(they laugh)

David: But getting back to the alligator....

Lucille: Ah yes, Izzy the alligator, who went to show that your grandfather was a real child-person, who would get us anything we wanted....seems one your grandpa's clients sent him the alligator in a package from Florida...it was some kind of fad back in those days, and he lived in the basement....

Aaron: Did he bite?

Lucille: Well, when we had him he was still pretty little...

Aaron: What happened to him?

Lucille: It's a little sad...I think we decided that the fumes from the furnace killed Izzy.... actually we called him Izzy, but your Grandpa took one look at his jaw and called him Bonehead Alley.

David: (enjoying it) Bonehead alley....

Lucille: Now it really is way past your bedtime...but before we go to sleep, tell me again... just one more time...when...

Aaron: (catching on quickly) When you are an old lady in a black dress, we'll all still love you!

(She exits, they begin bed preparations. Wendy also exits, Aaron and David are sitting on their beds....

Aaron: So how big is the Universe?

David: It's infinite....

Aaron: But what does that mean?

David: It just goes on and on and on...

Aaron: And on and on and on and on....BUT

David: But what?

Aaron: But it can't just go on and on....

David: Why not?

Aaron: It's got to end....

David: Then what comes after that?

Aaron: Nothing!

David: But nothing is something!

Aaron: It's got to end...

David: Ask Pa, maybe he can explain it...

Aaron: David, do you think Ma knows that we rub?

David: Well, I suppose she does....I mean...

Aaron: Are you gonna rub tonight?

David: (looks down) I hadn't given it much thought, but now that you mention it...

Aaron & David: (both laugh)

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## ACT THREE

### Scene 1

Lucille is standing in the kitchen, next to the stove, or going to pantry for ingredients, as David saunters in.

David: (carrying some pants) Ah, I don't suppose you could iron these for me...

Lucille: Don't even think it...we agreed that from now on you....

David: (resigned) well It's gotta have a crease right here....

Lucille: I'm sure you can handle the challenge. That's quite a walk you've got there...

David: Yeh, ya know what we call it?

Lucille: Uhhh...let's see...putting on the dog?

David: Naaaah....(pause for effect) We call it.....PIMPIN'!

Lucille: (reacts negatively so quickly anyone but one of her children might miss it, then returns to her usual equanimity and non-judgmentalness, sighs) Oh, Lord...I take it you know what a pimp is?

David: (on the edge of boastful macho) Yeah, I do.

Lucille: Well, listen, I guess I understand how boys becoming men could want to imitate the physical self-confidence of (distastefully) pimps, but you know what I think about pimps?

David: I gather you don't like them.

Lucille: Oh ya do, huh? In a way I'd have to say that a pimp is my nomination for one of the worst kinds of men on earth, a man who virtually enslaves and abuses women, who offers female sexual performance to the highest bidder, and who, no matter what the extenuating circumstances, is to be an object of contempt.

David: (silent for a moment, hears it) Ahh...Ma, you know it's just like, you know...the language...

Lucille: I know, I know....but the language reflects a way of viewing women in a derogatory fashion...

David: (sighs, continues ironing, music starts from other room, Billie Holiday, "I'll Be Seeing You...")

Lucille: Though I have to admit you do seem to have the choreography down to a T.

David: Thanks! (Aaron comes running in from living room...)

Aaron: (slips into the walk more smoothly and exhibitionist-style than David) Hey man -- guess who's singin'?

Lucille: That game again?

David: (insulted) How can you ask? Billie of course.

Aaron: Ya know what I saw written the listening room wall down at Boss Records? "Billie isn't gone -- she's just on holiday!"

David: (very sincerely) Hey man that's great...Billie isn't gone, she's just on holiday...I like that...I really do.

Aaron: (eagerly, high on the praise) Mama, who's your favorite singer?

Lucille: You know how much I dislike those kinds of questions...it's impossible to name just one.... How can you compare? To even begin to discuss say Billie Holiday and....let's say...Paul Robeson....for only two examples....

Aaron: I know, I know... don't compare, don't compare. Just like when we ask you who do you love most and you say you love each of us in a special way... don't compare...but...(more insistent) but who's your favorite singer?

Lucille: (giving in) I guess I'd have to say that Nat King Cole is my favorite. There's just something so sweet and gentle in his tone, so tender.

David: The evening breeze caressed the trees so tenderly...

Lucille: That one, and Autumn Leaves, and September Song, and even the Christmas one...

Aaron: Chipmunks roasting on an open flame...

Lucille: (slight reproach) Aaron, now where did you hear that?

Aaron: Aw, somebody at school. (exits, saying) See if ya can guess this next singer...

Lucille: (to David) Speaking of school, how's Patrick Henry coming? I will be able to take off a few hours from work...so I'll be there to see you orate. Looks like your father won't be able to though. He's so sorry, he really wanted to see you, but he can't miss another day at the salt mines.

David: (spreading arms in performance mode) The next gale that sweeps from the North will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms. Our brethren are already in the field, why stand we here idle? What is it that the gentlemen wish, what would they have? Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it Almighty God...I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me Liberty or give me Death! (pimps off stage)

Lucille: Bravo!

Aaron: (re-enters, early Aretha playing, Ain't No Way or other) Who's this? Who's this?

Lucille: I haven't any idea -- Mahalia Jackson?

Aaron: (condescendingly) Not a bad guess. It's Aretha Franklin, and she is amazing...just listen...wait a minute....wait a minute (high note hit) Isn't that fantastic -- the high priestess of soul!

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Scene 2

Wendy: David, if I tell you something, will you promise not to let ma and pa know?

David: Depends...depends...

Wendy: No I mean, really, this is really important.

David: What is it?

Wendy: Well, you know Juan, Juan Garcia?

David: Sure...Juan Garcia...one of your vast legion of male admirers...

Wendy: C'mon..stop teasing..I really like him a lot, and well, I don't know if you knew but he got shipped off to juvenile detention at Log Cabin a couple of months ago.

David: Log cabin! Jesus, what'd he do?

Wendy: Oh, his family life is real hard. His mother died a few years ago and his father beats him up, so he's supposed to live with his aunt but he can't stand her. She's real strict and mean. So he runs away and she reports him to the police and there's been a lot of warnings and this last time they sent him to Log Cabin for a year.

David: I'm really sorry to hear that.

Wendy: (lowers her tone) Only he's not there now -- he escaped!

David: He escaped from Log Cabin! I never heard of anyone doing that!

Wendy: People do. But listen! Here's what happened. It was mother's birthday and he asked permission to be able to go and place flowers on his mother's grave. I mean he really loved her and this was his way of honoring her memory you know, in a way he's religious you know part of his culture...anyway they denied him permission. He got so mad he escaped and went and put flowers on her grave.

David: Where is he now? Did they catch him?

Wendy (whispering): He's downstairs, hiding in the basement...I've been bringing him food...

David: Downstairs...how long has he been there?

Wendy: Three days. Pretty soon one of his friends will find him another place to stay...so you promise you won't tell?

David: Not a word...my lips are sealed. He can have some of my food too. (shakes head) And all he wanted to do was place some flowers on his mother's grave.

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Scene 3 (this scene will be longer)

Lucille: (holding mail from table) Another ticket? How much is this one gonna be?

Lou: Aw, shit, I got screwed on that one...I should challenge it.

Lucille: (looks at it) But will you? By the way, this isn't a new one, it's an old one unpaid, and now there's a penalty....I thought you said you'd paid all your tickets...

Lou: Guess one musta slipped through the cracks...

Lucille: The same way the library fines did? How many times do we have to talk about these damn 7-day books you keep getting, mysteries and science fiction, that never get returned on time.

Lou: Aw, cmon, Lucy, give me a break...

Lucille: A break --- a break he wants -- I'll give you a break all right.

Lou: (tries to take the papers, Lucille holds on) I'll take care of it...

Lucille: The hell you say. Now that you're laid off from Fosdick and only getting unemployment, I'll thank you to park your car legally, no matter how late you are or how goddamn important any meeting supposedly is...and I'll try to figure out how to pay these.

Lou: (impatiently) OK, OK. I was thinking of zooming down to the library for a few minutes.

Lucille: (sarcastic) To take out more books that'll be overdue. That's great.

Lou: Aw, c'mon, you said your piece, let's get on with things.

Lucille: Right, get on with things....one thing to another, with never a stop between...I swear sometimes it feels like I'm dealing with a rebellious three year old.

Lou: Oh yeah? Well if you didn't spend all your time worrying about money and having headaches...I mean Christ-O-Mighty Lucy, the goddamn world is going to hell in a hand basket, the Chinese are criticizing the Soviets, we got an important party congress coming up and you're upset about some parking tickets...

Lucille: How dare you intimate that I spend all my time worrying about little things, when I'm the one who goes to work every day, not to mention cooking and taking care of the kids...it's no wonder I have headaches...and you're a swine for belittling them. Migraines are considered one of the most severe forms of pain there are. Just because you're lucky enough to be spared doesn't give you the right to be so goddamn callous.

Lou: Aw, screw this....(leaves and slams door) See ya later.

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SCENE 4 (this scene also longer)

Aaron: (sings, upbeat and excitedly ) Cadillac, freedom's comin', Cadillac, freedom's comin', Cadillac, freedom's comin' and I don't wanna be left behind...

Wendy (enters clapping, joins in) Tell the world, freedom's comin, tell the world, freedom's comin, tell the world, freedom's comin, and I don't want to be left behind...

David: Shout it out (all join in) freedom's comin, shout it out, freedom's comin' shout it out freedom's comin' and I don't want to be left behind...] (they all

laugh)

David: That was incredible when we all pushed into those auto showrooms.

Wendy: You know Roy, well he pretended to be applying for a job and Tracy, she sat behind a desk and pretended to be the boss. And he said, "please boss, can I please have a job." And she said, "well boy I do need some help, but I can't hire you boy. And he said, "why not Boss, why not?" And she said, "because, boy, you are a Nee-grow, and we don't hire none of them." Then Roy stands up and says, "well I've got news for you, times are changing, and you better move on over, or we'll move on over you."

Aaron: (singing) Come gather round people wherever you roam, and admit that the waters around you have grown, and accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone -- if your time to you is worth savin' (others join in)

All: Then you better start singin' or you'll sink like a stone, for the times they are a-changin'.

Dawn: When my mom and dad were young, they helped to integrate a big dance hall in Minneapolis...they were both on this picket line...and that's how they met!

David: Really? That's great! I never knew that.

Wendy: Did they win?

Dawn: I think so.

Aaron:(singing again) Cadillac, freedom's comin', Cadillac, freedom's comin', Cadillac, freedom's comin' and I don't wanna be left behind.

Note to reader: this scene goes on, describing several incidents in the civil rights struggle-- sheraton palace, auto row demonstrations...also either rich garcia is there or they refer to him...then there's a knock on the door. It's the police looking for him, David goes to the door, says not here, etc...they go away reluctantly...they then walk through the house...and find him poised with a baseball bat behind the back porch door.. aaron sings a bit of aint gonna let nobody turn me round. david and wendy tell story of black cop with tears streaming down his face while arresting demonstrators, then finally he starts to sing we shall overcome. by this time Lucille has entered scene and says, "when a movement touches the hearts of the people like that...there's no stopping it.. scene ends with song "we are soldiers, in the army, we got to fight, although we

got to die, we got to hold up that freedom banner, we got to hold it up until we die/My mother was a soldier, she had her hand on the freedom plow, till she got old and couldn't fight anymore, but she stood there and she fought anyhow... yeah yeah yeah....

SCENE FIVE (somewhat longer, with Lou in it)

Lucille: We need to talk to you about something.

Wendy: What about Mama?

David: About you being sick?

Lucille: Yes, David, about that. You know that pain in my chest that won't go away? They did a lot of blood tests and things and finally I went to the doctor's office last Friday and he told me they're pretty sure it's something called multiple myeloma -- a kind of bone cancer.

David & Wendy: Cancer !

Wendy: Are you going to get better?

Lucille: Well, they don't have a cure for this cancer. When the doctor told me he said he was amazed I stayed so calm and reasonable. I told him I guess that's the way I am.

David: I remember that time you were talking to Aunt Diana on the phone and saw those huge flames right at the window when the mattress factory caught fire and you said, "well I guess I have to go now. I think the house is on fire."

Wendy: Then we all went out in the street and watched the firetrucks and Aunt Diana came right over--she couldn't believe how calm you were on the phone.

Lucille: I suppose I do have a calm exterior, but it's not that way inside. (starts to cry) This is so hard for me, and the hardest part of it all is having to leave you children, so wonderful, so smart, growing up to be such good people.

David: Maybe they'll find a cure!

Lucille: Maybe they will. Lou's already started to write letters to medical organizations in the Soviet Union and China, and started to read journals to see what the latest thinking is on this disease.

Wendy: Mama mama, I don't want you to die, I don't want you to die!

Lucille: (embracing her) I don't want to die either. I don't want to leave my three wonderful children, who mean the whole world to me. It breaks my heart to think of being torn away from you. (to herself) "She whom the Gods would destroy they would first make happy... "

David: What's that mean, mama?

Lucille: Oh...what? Oh, just a line from a poem I read somewhere...I just want you and Wendy and (crying again) little Aaron to know how happy you've made me...and Lou too, despite all our ups and downs, for me my wonderful family has made me truly happy.

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David: But mama, how can I go away at a time like this?

Lucille: David, my sweet David, I want you to go, I want you to have the opportunity to fulfill your hopes and dreams. I want to know you're on your way before...the inevitable.

David: Don't say that ma...

Lucille: (musing, not hearing him) My three wonderful children. I know you'll be all right David, and Wendy too, (starts to cry) she's got so much energy and determination, it will be very hard I know, but I like to think that you two will make it through...(starts to cry more) it's Aaron I'm most worried about...so sensitive and intense....David please promise me you'll always try to help him... will you promise me that!

David: Sure I will mama, of course I will. But you want me to go off to college with all this?

Lucille: (very firmly) Yes, I do. It sounds like a wonderful chance. I'm very proud of you. You know what they say -- opportunity knocks but once! You'll be able to come home during vacations...I don't want my being sick to prevent you from achieving all you are destined to...(reacts to pain) Oh, Christ, this is becoming unbearable again...David could you get me another pain pill please, over there on the dresser, and a glass of water....

David: (doing so).....Sure ma...here it is...

Lucille: Thank you David...(takes pill) Maybe I'll catnap for a while...

David: (kisses her) OK mama...and I'll tiptoe out on little cat feet that sit looking over the harbor and then move on....(she laughs quietly)

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Lucille: You know what I wish!

Aaron: What?

Lucille: I wish that just once before I die I could stand by the ocean and hold a little baby in my arms....

Wendy: Why don't you do it mama?!

Lucille: Oh, I don't know...I don't think we know anyone with a teensy baby right now...

Wendy: We could find someone...

Lou: Well, hell, there's no reason why you and me can't take a few days and go down the coast a little ways and stay at say, some motel right on the ocean...how about Half Moon Bay?

Lucille: Oh, really Lou, that would be wonderful. (to children) I can't explain it completely, but I feel drawn to the ocean now more than ever...

Wendy: What about the little baby?

Lucille: (philosophically) Ah well...it's just a feeling I had...and meanwhile here are my little babies, arrayed in front of me....

Aaron: Oh mama, we're not your little babies anymore...

Lucille: Of course you're not...but for me a part of you will always be that, and I'll be able to hold your sweet preciousness in my heart as I gaze out over the vast and foreboding depths... (she hugs them)

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Lucille: Lou, I don't want things to be like this between us. I know there's a lot of water under the bridge on both of our parts. You can be the most aggravating, stubborn, horse's ass in existence, but for better or for worse, well, I wrote a poem.....

Lou: A poem -- I'm honored --

Lucille: You don't have to lay it on so thick...

Lou: But it's true...you don't write very many, but compared to all my verbiage and bluster...

Lucille: Just let me read it to you. It's called "The Argument."

Like craggy peaks  
Or lightning bolt  
Jagged against the sky  
Our bitter words collide  
In angry frustration  
Seeming to signify that  
Never shall our spirits  
Once more find heights  
Lofty enough  
To overcome such obstacles  
To soar above  
Yet just then love  
Comes serene as  
Sweet air after storm  
To bridge the gaps  
To heal the wounds  
Comes love to keep us warm.

Lou: That's beautiful baby. And I'm sorry I got so out of control. I guess when you wrap up all my frustrations into one ball, I just go off the deep end sometimes.

Lucille: You're doing what you can, and I appreciate how much you and the kids are doing, I just feel, you know, that all of you are just waiting for me to die, it's such a horrible burden, many's the time I feel like easing the pain for everyone and making my not so graceful exit.

Lou: (holding her) Lucy, don't talk like that. Never say die! Hold the fort!

Lucille: I know the slogans, Lou, but if another bone breaks, I just don't know if I can stand the pain. If that time comes, will you promise that you'll help me?

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Lucille: Sometimes I think it all has to do with pain, that life itself is pain, pain, pain, if you know what I mean, psychological and physical pain. I ask myself over and over what is the inner conflict that sows the seeds of this bone-shattering disease, the unyielding, unremitting, agony. Perhaps my very reasonableness, that calm accepting passivity in me, set the stage for my migraines, all my other aches and pains, then this...I don't know. Maybe that botched-up mastoid surgery I had in my teens that got infected had traumatized my bones -- or that heavy increase in strontium-90 in the milk and dairy supply in Minnesota and other states after nuclear testing in the 1950s had something to do with it...but what it comes down to is pain, and maybe I've never been that good at standing pain...or maybe I've been too good at standing it, but this is like no pain I've ever experienced before.. (mood shift to anger)...And the injustice of it--the raging mad unfairness of it all -- to deprive me of the chance to see these three truly wonderful children of mine blossom and flower -- I can't bear it...(rings bell) Wendy, Wendy, please, could you get me a fresh glass of water, I think I need another pill....

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Lucille: I always loved that passage in Jack London's *The Star Rover*, one of my favorite books, where the man on San Quentin's Death Row is being led down the long hall to the gas chamber. As reporters cluster around trying to ask him questions, he maintains his dignity and sense of humor to the last, telling them, "I hope to live to see the day when capital punishment is abolished!"

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Lucille: (standing on the front porch, waving) I suppose if I could somehow manage to summon up all my resources and try to state my message in the clearest possible way I would have to say it has to do with children, the children of the world. I am one of those fortunate mortals who comes alive when in the presence of babies and small children, whose eyes light up and sparkle back to children in some way they seem to recognize. I am for the children.

I am for the vast riches and resources of the world being devoted to the needs of people -- education, health care, housing for all. And as a woman, I recognize my sisters here and across the distant seas, and I begin to detect an awakening in the air...a resurgence. Barring a miracle, I will not live to see it, to experience the future. In my mortal form at least I will not live to see the children of the world survive and thrive, as they must--they must--if the world is not be plunged

will be time for the children, time for there to be, as Ethel Rosenberg put it, many monuments built to hope and joy. So if there is one overwhelming energy, one heart beating within me, it is for the children...in them may my spirit live on! To my own very beloved children I bequeath... all of myself that is in them.

Series of Tableaus:

Aaron:( comes to center of stage, is silhouetted, turns, speaks, then to side) Pa came to me that morning and said, "Your mother died last night."

Wendy: (same movements, speaks, then to another side) I knew the moment I saw Pa's face. They had tricked me, by sending me off to babysit somewhere else -- I cried, " I didn't get a chance to say goodbye," then asked about Aaron,

Aaron: and heard Pa say, "he's in his room, he's a good little soldier..."

David: (same movements) He called me, I was away at school, and told me. I was to come home immediately. I walked around and around in the snow, crying, remembering our last time together, thinking "I should have known that that was her goodbye..."

The three silhouetted as several others, including Lou, join them, standing at the grave...

David: And I remember that Lou said:

Lou: "Because she had so much courage, let's all of us have a little bit."

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(Return to original, ritual setting, Wisewoman parts the curtains, enters gracefully, carrying a candle. Nat King Cole, Autumn Leaves begins then fades).

Wisewoman: Yet and still...I see her face...  
She left us, yet she left us light.

David: This wrenching tragedy  
Bequeathed its bitter legacy  
Shattering my oldest child psyche  
In ways too personal and painful to describe  
Let it suffice to say that whenever I hear  
Autumn Leaves, my eyes fill with tears  
Since she went away, the days grow long  
And soon I'll hear old winter's song...  
Salty tears, like the ocean she loved,  
She was a wonderful caring nurturing mother  
And deep in my heart I do believe she and my father  
With their companions in struggle  
Were among the greatest human beings  
Of their generation and it is to be  
Hoped, of many more to come  
Provided nuclear winter never casts its blight  
Ma, Lucille, the shining light  
I miss her and I always will  
I long for her to be here playing, drawing  
With her grandchildren,  
Children who she can never know  
Who I must gently firmly father  
Showing them pictures of "Grandma Lucille."  
I visit her grave, feel my fears, seek to be wise  
I can't forget the light shining from her eyes...

Wendy: I really wish that our father, close family and friends  
Had known more about family therapy and the grieving process  
When Ma died....I was left with being the child-woman  
The one who had to iron and fold away her clothes  
I came to physical womanhood just weeks after her death  
Maybe David might have helped, but most of the time  
He was away at school...we moved next door to Aunt Diana  
And Uncle Maury, they were still together then,  
Diana gave us love and support as best she could  
Not just then, but in all the years since she has been there.  
Still, the intervening years robbed me of my freedom, my adolescence  
Soon, in addition to most of the household chores,  
I was working part-time as a secretary while going to high school

Every morning when he drove me to school  
Pa would say, "ya know what Wendy?" and I would always say,  
"No Pa, what," and he'd sigh and say, "Life is hard."  
Life is hard and it was hard for ma  
From migraines to male chauvinism to martyrdom  
I've had more than my share of heartbreak and depression  
Yet and still, I did become an artist, and I have grown  
As a woman and activist in a time of women's liberation  
I trust the light of true understanding  
In my mother's eyes shines out from my paintings  
And that the cause of peace and justice Ma and Pa pursued  
Is strengthened by my individual and collective work  
Ray Charles sings, "understanding is the best thing in the world,"  
Understanding, compassion, and love -  
A fierce caring for the children flowers yet to be  
Along with her art - Ma passed that on to me

Aaron: I have two confessions to make

First, I have to confess that I never believed  
That Ma was buried in that hole in the ground we stood around  
Sure we saw her at the funeral home, but somehow  
I distrusted the unctuous undertaker who accompanied us  
I hated him and I hated the whole funeral experience  
I just never believed she was in there  
Just like the story she told me about dogs being stolen  
For medical research, I thought she'd been stolen too  
And I cursed myself for not being brave enough  
To jump into the hole, open the casket, and find out.

The second confession is that just after Ma died  
I raided her medicine supply and took some morphine, as I  
Had seen her do so often to ease the bone-breaking pain  
That act of mine began nearly 30 years of drug addiction  
Only ended when I struggled through to the 12-step program  
With the help of my lover and family, friends, and  
The work of myself I have at last been able to liberate  
Myself and my feelings from the bondage imposed  
By drugs and alcohol, now I help others do the same.  
She is always with me, we were very close,  
She never became that little old lady in a black dress  
All I really can say is how much I love her  
And how very hard it is for me to grieve the loss.

(Autumn Leaves up)

Wisewoman: And so she left us, and yet she left us light  
Brightening the brambles of confusion and despair  
I spread my arms, my feathered wings  
(others join her in circle)  
To embrace this light in the eternal circle of my soul  
To shelter these children  
And all the children of the world  
In everlasting love

Friends, our gratitude to each of you  
For shining out your special light  
And with that we bid you fond goodnight.

(Music Up and Out)

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