

IN COLD BLOOD

By

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(Based on the non-fiction novel by Truman Capote)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Perry Smith,	Bobby Rupp
Dick Hickcock	Fred Harris, Insurance Salesman
Herb Clutter	Floyd Wells
Bonnie Clutter	Tex Smith
Nancy Clutter	Flo Smith
Kenyon Clutter	Barbara Smith
Al Dewey	Joe Bell, Traveling Salesman
Harold Nye	Lola, Dirty Blonde
Under-Sheriff Wendell Meier	Gas Station Attendant
Josie Meier	Evil Nun with flashlight
Myrtle Clare	Jolene Crumbsetter
Sadie Truitt	Judge Tate
Larry Hartman	Prosecutor
Walter Hickcock	Various townspeople, store clerks,
Eunice Hickcock	whores, tourists, newsmen, Clutter clan,
Sue Kidwell	Judges, lawyers

The play is a mosaic of scenes and memories and fantasies that leap in and around each other, taking us backwards and forwards in time, in place, in fantasy and in reality. One might argue that the entire play takes place within the fluid confines of Perry Smith's jail cell, which opens up as the play takes over.

ACT ONE, SC. 1: BLOODY SUNDAY

A bright, clear Sunday morning in Holcomb, Kansas. November 15, 1959.

Trees rustle in the light breeze. A small yellow bird chirps on a branch.

SUE KIDWELL, 17, pretty, dressed for church in a crisp yellow dress and white gloves, looks at the Clutter house. She is a cheerful girl with a ponytail bobbing behind her and the rest of her life bobbing in front of her. She carries a basket of muffins.

MARY JANE SKALSKI, a pert brunette with rosy cheeks and a simple white dress and matching jacket, walks beside Sue. She carries a covered bundt cake.

SUE

I don't understand. It's so quiet.

MARY JANE

Maybe she's sleeping?

SUE

Well, I guess let's wake her up, I guess.

MARY JANE

What if they're all asleep?

SUE

Right. You go first.

They stand at the side door. They look at the house.

On the surface, it looks like everyday; fine shrubbery, well-kept, neat. But something is not right. The lively house sits unnaturally quiet.

Sue looks around. Calls out tentatively.

SUE

Nan?

MARY JANE

Nancy?

SUE

Yoo hoooo--

Sue tries the door. To her surprise, it opens. The girls look at each other. Giggle.

MARY JANE

I love her new haircut, isn't it just the cutest?

SUE

Come on, let's surprise her.

On a burst of giggles, the girls disappear into the house.

The breeze wraps around the barren trees. The early sun shines on the house. The bird chirps.

The door slams open. Mary Jane is sobbing, shaking. Sue staggers out the door. White as a sheet and heading towards green.

She heaves, vomiting into her pretty white gloves. Mary Jane frantically rubs Sue's back.

SUE

Nancy—oh my God--

MARY JANE

Her eyes—the wall—Jesus—so much blood-

SUE

Nosebleed—all the time, she –

MARY JANE

Did you see the wall? Her hair—

SUE

Just a nosebleed—

MARYJANE

Sue, her face—she has no face, the blood on the walls, her hair—

Unable to speak further, Sue shrieks out a terrible scream, cutting the morning to shreds.

Mary Jane joins her. The two girls slump to their knees screaming.

The bird continues to chirp as the lights fade on the girls' screams.

ACT ONE, SC. 2: PERRY'S CELL, 6 PM.

The sound of the girls' screams amplifies in the darkness, and morphs into the frantic cries of an angry mob.

The sound of the mob filters in from the back of the house, gaining momentum and size as it rolls over the audience to the stage.

Lights up on JOSIE MEIER, a strong, sizeable woman, cooking in her simple but clean kitchen. Josie is the wife of Wendell Meier, Under-Sheriff of the town.

The room looks like any other modest kitchen in Holcomb, with the addition of a jail cell in the corner. This is the Women's Detention Cell, big enough for one occupant at a time.

Josie hums to herself as she cooks.

The wave of angry voices builds and finally crashes into the kitchen. Josie keeps cooking as the door bursts open.

Under-Sheriff WENDELL MEIER and SEVERAL POLICEMEN suddenly fill the room, crowded around an unseen man in the center of the cloudburst. As the men head for the empty cell off the kitchen, voices pop out of the tumult:

TOM

Hang him today, that's what I say—

WENDELL

Due process, Tom. Due process.

Now in the privacy of the kitchen/cell, Tom, a thick necked policeman, lunges across the men for the prisoner. Wendell protects the captive.

WENDELL

Tom, stop—

JC

Kill him!

WENDELL

I said goddamn due process!

TOM

Did Herb get due process before this bastard shot his face off?

JOSIE

(not looking up) Language.

Wendell pushes Tom back.

WENDELL

Just control yourself now! Remember, you're a professional!

JC

Sonofabitch, I was there, I saw the bodies!

JOSIE

I said, language please--

TOM

Lying on the floor like that—

JC

Cut open ear to ear—

TOM

The kids, all that blood—

WENDELL

Well, we got him now, he'll get what's coming, trust in God.

JC

Goddamn animal is what he is—

TOM

Motherfucking bastard—

Tom lunges for the prisoner. Wendell blocks him. Amid all the struggle, Josie slams the counter.

JOSIE

(roaring) Language, please.

The men calm down instantly.

TOM

Sorry Josie.

JOSIE

Oh, don't mind me.

WENDELL

Don't be fooled by his pretty little face, Jose, his swish voice. This little girl is a monster, that's all there is to it.

JC

What he did to them Clutters, if you'd have seen—

WENDELL

He'll get his due, JC. They both will.

TOM

I hope it hurts. I hope he suffers as much as poor old Herb suffered.

The men deposit PERRY SMITH into the women's cell, slam the door shut hard.

Perry is hardly the picture of the killer they have been talking about. His dark, handsome face, part Cherokee/part Irish, sits atop a massively developed upper body; his legs, however, seem fit to the wrong size man. They are much shorter than they should be, which makes Perry much shorter than he should be.

He huddles in the corner, looking at his now silent captors. The men spit on him. Then they peel off, leaving Wendell, Perry and Josie alone. Josie continues her cooking, humming to herself.

WENDELL

Remember what I told you, Josie. Pay no never mind to this sick bastard. Not one word, understand me? I find out you been yakking it up with him, there's gonna be trouble. And that's a warning.

Wendell storms out of the kitchen.

Perry looks out the window to the street below. The voices of an angry mob send him back to the bars of the cage. He slumps to the floor, crying and whimpering like a lost little boy.

Josie looks at the little boy sobbing in her kitchen. She takes a step towards him. Her heart opens but she doesn't know how to help him. Then she has an idea.

She takes a pan of cookies out of the oven. Walks to the cell. Smiles.

JOSIE

We usually only get the women in this cell. That's why I don't mind it in my kitchen. Could use the company. Get's quiet up here all day every day. Try to give them a little privacy, so's I put up the yellow curtains, make it pretty for the gals. Everybody needs a little pretty now and then, especially when you fall from the Path. Pretty yellow curtains and a good hot muffin.

Perry huddles over, rubbing his legs in pain.

PERRY

(in a surprisingly soft voice) Can I please have some more aspirin, M'am? My legs are killing me.

JOSIE

Why, I don't see why not.

She gets a fresh bottle. Hands him the aspirin through the bars. Shaking with pain, he rips open the bottle, sucks down about five aspirin. Chomps them dry.

JOSIE

Lordy, boy, give yourself an ulcer, suck down aspirin like that.

PERRY

Got four pins holding my legs together. Aspirin seems to be about the only thing that helps.

JOSIE

Don't you want no water?

Perry just smiles at her as he chomps the mouthful of aspirin.

Josie watches him chomp on the dry aspirin. Suddenly, she smiles. Holds out the tray of cookies.

JOSIE

Cookie?

Before Perry can respond, NANCY CLUTTER appears and takes the pan of cookies from Josie. A pretty 17-year-old high school girl, Nancy walks to the stove, as a light transforms Josie's kitchen into the Clutter kitchen.

ACT ONE, SC. 3: CLUTTER KITCHEN, SATURDAY, NOV. 14, 1964. THE DAY OF THE MURDER.

Kitchen. 8 AM

Nancy walks in, holding the tray of cookies. Blows on them to cool them. Places them on the counter.

She is an attractive, vivacious and highly competent 17-year old girl. Her threshold for managing many different tasks at the same time is very high, and she walks through the world with the generous confidence of someone who is always at the center of things.

Her brother, KENYON, 15, a tall, lanky loner with glasses and a crew cut, is at the "awkward" age: too old for toys and too young for girls. He is happiest when he can spend hours tinkering on a new invention. He looks up from his newest project, an electric frying pan.

He reaches for a cookie. Nancy slaps his hand away.

NANCY

I told you these are for tomorrow. Now eat your breakfast.

KENYON

It's just a cookie, what's the big deal.

NANCY

They're for the church bake sale tomorrow. Now don't argue with me, Kenyon.

KENYON

You're not my mother.

NANCY

Dad?

HERB CLUTTER sits in the corner, calmly cutting up an apple. A strong, direct rancher in his late 40's, Herb is a fair, God-fearing man who has made a good life for himself through long hours and hard work. He shoots from the hip at all times, and deals squarely with anyone he meets.

HERB

Listen to your sister, Kenyon. Those are for church.

NANCY

Oh, Dad, I was going to ask if I could get out of the 4H meeting today, I'm so busy.

KENYON

I'll go with you Pop. Seeing as how Nancy has such a big life going on, now that she's a star.

NANCY

Oh knock it off, twerp. It was just the school play.

KENYON

Someday they're going to talk about me, too, you know.

NANCY

You and Thomas Edison.

HERB

Your sister learned all those lines perfect. Like a real Hollywood actress. You were so pretty up there last night, Nancy, I wish your mother could have seen you.

KENYON

Did you bring Mom her pills yet?

NANCY

Just about to. Here, eat your cereal.

HERB

You sure you can't make the meeting today? Everybody's going to want to tell you what a good Becky Thatcher you were.

NANCY

Well, I don't care much about that Daddy. And besides, I have Jolene Crumbsetter coming over for a cherry pie lesson, then after that, I have to work on the bridesmaids dresses for Beverly's wedding next month, and then at 3 I have to help the Flatley boy with his trumpet solo for the Christmas concert.

KENYON

And then what, Miss Busypants?

NANCY

(giving her brother the "DeathRay") Uhm, nothing. You know.

HERB

Is he coming over here again tonight?

NANCY

It's Saturday night, Daddy. We're just going to watch some TV.

HERB

I told you I don't want you seeing so much of that Bobby Rupp. There's no future in it.

NANCY

I know, but he's nice.

HERB

You've never gone out with anyone else, Nancy. I want you to meet other boys before it's too late.

NANCY

I'll meet plenty of boys in college, Daddy.

From off-stage, the voice of BONNIE CLUTTER cuts into the conversation.

BONNIE

(off-stage) Nancy?

At the sound of Bonnie's voice, Herb, Nancy and Kenyon share an awkward look.

NANCY

(calling up to her mother) I'll bring it up in a second, Mom.

BONNIE

Can you bring up my medicine, dear?

NANCY

I said I'll bring it up in a second, Mom.

BONNIE

When you come up, can you bring my medicine?

NANCY

Okay, Mom.

A light comes up on BONNIE CLUTTER, mid 40's, gaunt as a stick woman, dressed in her nightclothes. Suffering from depression for years, she rarely leaves the safety of her bedroom, a Spartan space with a single bed. She and Herb sleep in separate rooms.

She paces restlessly in front of the window.

HERB

She would have been real proud of you last night, honey.

NANCY

Yeah, I know, Dad.

KENYON

(flicks a switch on the electric fry pan) Hey, I think it works.

Herb and Nancy gather around the fry pan. Suddenly, sparks shoot out of it. Kenyon quickly unplugs the device.

KENYON

Ooops.

NANCY

The boy genius.

HERB

Never mind your sister, Kenyon, remember, it took Thomas Edison 3,000 light bulbs to find the one that worked. Keep at it, boy.

The lights fade on the kitchen.

Up in her bedroom, Bonnie pulls the curtains back. Peers fearfully out the window, as if waiting for something bad to happen.

Light spills onto Josie and Wendell in their kitchen

ACT ONE, SC. 4: PERRY'S JAIL CELL.

Josie pulls the curtains open, letting some sunshine into the kitchen and cell.

Wendell sits at the kitchen table, trying to swallow a muffin, but he gags on it; he can't do it. He drops it on his plate like a brick.

In the corner of his cell, Perry barely hides a homemade muffin under his bed. His breakfast plate is clean. He watches Josie and Wendell.

Wendell spits out the muffin.

WENDELL

When you gonna learn to cook a goddamned muffin? I ate better when the Krauts made me eat dog shit from the gutter.

JOSIE

I thought you liked cranberries.

WENDELL

Not baked in cement. How many times I got to tell you?

JOSIE

Perry ate his.

WENDELL

He ain't on Death Row yet. Thought you were a Christian.

Josie holds the plate of muffins in front of Wendell.

JOSIE

Here, this one's looks good, try this.

WENDELL

Get the hell out of my face, woman!

He slaps the plate away from him. It crashes against the wall. An awkward pause hangs in the room.

WENDELL

I'll grab something at Harman's.

He slams out the door. Pause.

JOSIE

Predicting a harsh one. Lots of snow. Which you ask me is a blessing, I mean what's Christmas without a little snow on the ground? Just the other night we had three inches. Like a gift from God, laying down a little soft blanket for the baby Jesus.

We don't have no kids. Just me and Wendell.

You're Momma know you got into trouble? What she like? I bet she's sad about it, I bet her heart's just broken into pieces over this. Well, when she comes to visit, we'll put on the dog for her. Show her boy's in good hands. She like Spanish Rice? One of my

favorite dishes, only Wendell, he can't abide it. His condition, goes right through him, and then he's off kilter for a week. You do not want Wendell off kilter, that's for sure. Prisoner of war. Three years. What they made him eat—well, we all got our cross, ain't that right. Some of us carry it outside, some of us inside. Don't matter. All the same to Jesus.

A tiny red squirrel appears in the window.

PERRY

(to the squirrel) Hi, Lil Red. Aren't you pretty?

Perry removes his uneaten muffin from under the cot, breaks off a few crumbs. Feeds it to the squirrel.

JOSIE

Well, ain't you got the way. Here I thought you ate it.

PERRY

No M'am. Too much baking soda. He likes it, though.

JOSIE

Hope it don't choke him. Wouldn't Wendell have a laugh.

Perry bends over, tries to rub the pain from his legs.

PERRY

Last thing I remember before skidding out on my motorcycle was trying not to hit a squirrel staring at me in the middle of the road.

JOSIE

That's because you got the light inside you.

The squirrel scampers away. Perry chomps on more aspirin.

Lights up on Bonnie, pacing in her room. She calls to Nancy.

BONNIE

Nancy, can you bring me a pill? Hon? Nancy?

PERRY

He asked for me yet?

Nancy appears in her door with a glass of water and a pill.

NANCY

Here you go, Mom.

Bonnie goes to Nancy, takes the pill, swallows water.

JOSIE

Who?

PERRY

My pal. Dick. Hickcock.

JOSIE

Oh, downstairs. Good-looking boy.

BONNIE

Thank you dear. Such a blessing.

PERRY

He ask about me?

NANCY

Lie down, Mom. Relax.

She brings her mother to her bed.

Lights out on Bonnie and Nancy.

JOSIE

(avoiding the answer) So how did you boys meet? Back in school?

Lights out on Josie as Perry lies on the cot. The lone light bulb hangs suspended above him, glaring. He presses his palms to his eyes, as if trying to erase something from inside his brain.

ACT ONE, SC. 5: PERRY'S JAIL CELL, ONE YEAR AGO.

Perry strips off his T-shirt, revealing his massive torso and ornate tattoos. He strums his guitar. The other cot is empty.

In walks DICK HICKCOCK, carrying his jail belongings. A handsome, lean athlete with the muscular body of a welterweight boxer, Dick has an affable air about him that stinks of charm.

His otherwise handsome features are tossed askew by his eyes, which seem to be lopsided, as if someone had sliced his head open and put the pieces back together slightly wrong.

He wears his prison pants, and only an athletic T-shirt. Sits on the cot opposite Perry, who continues to strum, and gaze at himself in the small mirror. Perry tries, with only mild success, to hide his instant interest in his handsome new cellmate.

DICK

Dick Hickcock.

PERRY

Good for you.

DICK

You got a name?

PERRY

I have two names.

DICK

Jane and Russell?

PERRY

Funny guy.

DICK

I try. How much time you got left in here.

PERRY

Five weeks. Perry. And Smith.

DICK

Real glad to meet you, Perry. Might as well be sociable and all, right, nothing else to do in here.

PERRY

Hope you don't mind my guitar.

DICK

Strum away, Elvis. Turns me on.

PERRY

Someday I'm going to play Vegas. Have my whole act planned.

Dick strips off his shirt, starts doing dips and pushups.

DICK

Gonna make headlines, huh?

PERRY

Perry O'Parsons. That's my stage name. Cars will be lining up, just watch.

DICK

I just want to get out of here and meet me some nice pussy, get away from all the hags in here. A normal like me ain't safe around

these big girls. They don't even buy you a drink first, catch what I'm saying?

PERRY

Perry O'Parsons. And after that, it's hasta la vista to the good old USA, and hello, Acapulco.

DICK

You know a lot of them meeda oiyay tunes?

PERRY

Nah, I'm going to be a treasure hunter.

DICK

Uh huh.

PERRY

Gonna buy a nice fishing trawler, take the rich boys out for deep sea fishing, then on the days off, I got these treasure maps, guaranteed million dollar jackpot.

DICK

Sounds hot, sweetie. Got it all figured out. Nice. Guys like us deserve the big payoff, right?

PERRY

I got a box full of maps, been saving them for years. My Dad took me to prospect up in Alaska when I was a kid. As soon as I make my wallet in Vegas, you watch, the easy life.

DICK

Count me in, baby. I'm ready to work on my tan.

Perry sits up, falling more under Dick's intoxicating charm.

PERRY

Really? I mean, you don't think it's crazy?

DICK

I think it sounds fantastic. You have to have some direction, some goal in life. This sounds a helluva lot better than pounding dents out of cars I'll never be able to afford for myself. Dream your dreams baby, that's the only way they'll come true.

PERRY

So what are you in here for anyway? Burglary? Petty?

DICK

Easy paper. You know the story.

PERRY

Bad checks, you for real?

DICK

I got charm, honey, I can pass a bad check on the Department of goddamn Treasury.

PERRY

(trying to impress Dick) I killed a guy once.

For the first time, Dick stops working out. He looks at Perry with keen interest.

Sits opposite Perry on the floor, starts doing sit ups.

DICK

You never killed nobody. Sit on my feet.

Perry hesitates a second, then slowly squats down onto Dick's feet, holding them in place while he continues his sit-ups.

PERRY

I like you Dick. I trust you. See, I'm going to put myself in your power by telling you something I never told anyone, not even Willie Jay.

DICK

Fucking Mary.

PERRY

He's a holy man.

DICK

Chaplain's ass-licker.

PERRY

But I'm telling you something now.

DICK

Go on, sweetie, I'm all ears.

PERRY

It was a couple of summers ago. Out in Vegas. I was living in this old boarding house, it used to be a fancy cathouse. But all the fancy was gone. The cheapest rooms were in the attic, and I lived up there. So did this nigger. Name was King. Transient. That means he was just passing through.

DICK

Thanks, Daniel Webster. I know what it means.

PERRY

Sorry. You need a break?

Dick momentarily stops, sits up, smiles into Perry's face.

DICK

I can go all night long baby. So this nigger called King--

Continues his sit-ups.

PERRY

Every time I passed by, he was always lying there buck-naked. Sometimes we'd have a beer together, and once he lent me ten dollars. I had no cause to hurt him. But one night we were sitting in the attic, and it was so hot you couldn't sleep, so I said, "Come on King, let's go for a drive."

Drove way out in the desert. Out there it was cool. We parked and drank a few more beers. King got out of the car, and I followed after him. He didn't see I'd picked up this chain. A bicycle chain I kept under the seat. Actually, I had no real idea to do it till I did it. I hit him across the face. Broke his glasses, teeth, nose, jaw. I kept right on. Afterward, I didn't feel a thing. I left him there, and never heard a word about it. Maybe nobody ever found him. Just buzzards.

DICK

Damn.

PERRY

I got a short fuse. But a big smile. And the strength of ten men.

Perry smiles. Flexes his large biceps.

PERRY

Watch this.

He stands. Grabs Dick's hand, lifts him to his feet.

Don't worry, I'm not going to hurt you.

He puts one hand on Dick's chest, the other near his crotch, and without skipping a beat, presses Dick over his head.

DICK

Whoa, put me down, put me down.

PERRY

I could do this all night.

DICK

Ok honey, I believe you.

Perry puts Dick back down. Smiles. Flexes.

DICK

You are one strong bastard. I guess you could do a lot of damage.

PERRY

Yeah.

DICK

No telling what we could do, you and me. Working together, I mean.

PERRY

(extends his hand) Sounds good, man.

DICK

(shakes Perry's hand) Honey, where have you been hiding all my life?

PERRY

Did you notice how my face can catch the smallest mood and color?

DICK

Huh?

PERRY

Check it out man, it's uncanny. See?

Dick leans in, watches Perry's face closely.

Perry slowly changes the expression on his lips and eyes in what he believes is an exhibition of his uber-expressive face. The result is more frightening than fascinating, like two apes grooming each other, as Dick continues to watch Perry change his expression.

Lights fade on them.

ACT ONE, SC. 6 PERRY'S CELL

Josie sweeps the kitchen floor.

A light rises on Perry eating the last of his muffin.

PERRY

Muffin's better today, M'am.

JOSIE

I guess you was right about the baking soda.

PERRY

Just a soupcon is all you need.

JOSIE

A what?

PERRY

A pinch. Mom couldn't cook either.

JOSIE

How'd somebody like you learn?

PERRY

My Dad.

JOSIE

Your daddy? How about that.

PERRY

He taught me a lot of things.

JOSIE

Parents are supposed to teach their children how to live right.

PERRY

Or something. Anyway, my parents weren't your ordinary hoi polloi.

JOSIE

You got the prettiest words, don'tcha.

PERRY

They were big in the wild west shows before the Depression.
"TEX AND FLO", KING AND QUEEN OF THE WILD WILD
WEST!

A light rises on a large color 3 sheet poster for the Wild West Show. Tex and Flo strike proud poses on the poster, standing side by side.

A light rises on TEX SMITH, a "character" to be sure; decked out in classic Wild West Show garb, he hops in and out of a twirling lasso.

JOSIE

Oh my.

A light rises on FLO SMITH, pretty, Native American, dressed in Cherokee ritual dress. She expertly cracks a bullwhip. Lights out on them.

PERRY

Mom was a trick rider. Best in the business. A real Cherokee. She and her sister killed a mountain lion with their bare hands when she was 16. You should have seen her ride. She was beautiful.

JOSIE

Show business! So glamorous.

A light rises on an old jalopy at the side of the road, bed sheets strung across the open doors in a make-shift lean-to. 4 YEAR OLD PERRY and his young brother and sisters (all played by straw dolls), sit around a kerosene hot plate.

Tex roasts a dead squirrel on a stick over the fire. Flo swigs liquor, eats baked beans out of a can.

PERRY

It was great. Til it ended in '31. Then we lived out of a car. All four kids. So my dad taught us how to cook, hunt, trap.

JOSIE

See?

PERRY

What.

JOSIE

Oh you know, just the nice things we learn from our folks is all.

Belches. Lights down on them and the kids.

PERRY

Uh huh.

JOSIE

Gonna make Spanish Rice tonight.

PERRY

Go easy on the paprika.

JOSIE

The what?

PERRY

Can you find out if they'll let me have a guitar while I'm in here? I know over 250 songs.

JOSIE

They'd be afraid you'll hang yourself with one of the strings. But I can ask.

Lights out on Perry and Josie.

Rises on Herb and FLOYD WELLS.

ACT ONE, SC 7: CLUTTER RANCH, THREE YEARS AGO.

Herb's office.

Herb sits behind his desk, back straight. He smiles at the lanky FLOYD WELLS. Lean to the point of bordering on skinny and sporting a crop of bright red hair, Floyd is a hired man who works for Herb. Not the brightest bulb in the lamp. A bit of a stutter.

Shifting back and forth, Floyd holds a bag of his belongings. Wears his traveling coat.

HERB

Floyd, you been a good man and a good ranch-hand while I've known you, and I expect you have a lot to offer the world.

FLOYD

Yes sir. Gonna head up North, try my luck at Wyoming, Montana.

HERB

Keep your nose clean is all I'm going to say. Stay away from the bad influences. Cigarettes. Hard drink. Can only make a man lose his self-respect.

FLOYD

You don't have to tell me twice, sir. I seen how you are with the b-b-boys, and I figure I might as well try to b-b-be like that.

HERB

Young man like you gonna need a hand up to get started, no?

Herb reaches down into his pockets. Pulls out a wad of bills.

FLOYD

Like my Mamma used to say, the Lord will p-p-provide.

HERB

Yes he will. But until he does, here's a 50 dollar severance bonus to fall back on.

Floyd tries not to sputter as he sees the money.

FLOYD

Mr. Clutter, you shouldn't oughta, I mean, 50 dollars?!?

HERB

Keep in touch now and then. The wife gets a kick out of Christmas cards.

FLOYD

Thank you, sir. Thank you so much.

HERB

Just you make your parents proud, Floyd.

They shake hands.

As Floyd turns, he removes his coat, revealing a striped prison shirt. A flash goes off, taking his mug shot. He turns to the side, another flash snaps his profile.

A light comes up on Dick alone in his cell.

ACT ONE, SC. 8: DICK'S JAIL CELL, ONE YEAR AGO.

Floyd plops down on Perry's cot. Dick and he smoke cigarettes.

FLOYD

Yeah, Mr. Clutter he was damn well off. One of the richest farmers in the state.

DICK

And his safe is in his office, right?

FLOYD

Gee, Dick, I already told you a hundred times already.

DICK

So tell me a hundred more. That safe in his office or not?

FLOYD

I ain't sure b-b-but I'm p-p-pretty sure it's gotta be. You shoulda seen the wad, man, at least 5,000 b-b-bucks b-b-burning through his p-p-pocket.

A light rises on Bonnie in her room, pacing in front of the window. Occasionally peeking through the curtains.

DICK

He sleeps downstairs, to the right of the office, and upstairs are the boy, and his nutso wife, and the daughter. Pretty little thing, right? Ain't that right?

Nancy brings up her mother's medicine. Watches her mother pace.

FLOYD

Well, she was just a kid when I saw her, b-b-but yeah, I'm sure she turned out okay.

NANCY

Mom?

DICK

What, 12, 13 now? Just right for the picking, dig me daddy? Gonna bust her cherry and then blow her brains out. Make a night of it.

FLOYD

Nice p-p-people. Real respectable. He told me to keep my nose clean.

Nancy gives her mother her pills and a glass of water. Bonnie takes her medicine.

NANCY

What's wrong, Mom?

DICK

Me and my pal, we're gonna blow those respectable heads clear off, splatter the wall with hair, I kid you not.

FLOYD

Uh huh.

BONNIE

I smell smoke. Do you smell smoke, Nancy?

NANCY

There's no smoke, Mom.

DICK

You don't believe me, do you?

NANCY

Come lie down now.

She helps her mother to the bed, pulls the comforter over her legs.

DICK

Perry Smith, man, his Momma was full Cherokee, a real scalper bitch. He's a friggen whacko, I kid you not. Mean as a snake, though you'd never know it. Keeps it hidden under his face.

BONNIE

Something's coming. I don't know.

DICK

And I know just how to work him.

BONNIE

You don't smell smoke?

DICK

Like a match to a fuse.

NANCY

It's just the wind Momma. Try to rest now.

DICK

Yessiree, me and Perry, gonna paint the walls with blood. No witnesses. It's gonna be lights out for the Clutters.

Nancy turns off Bonnie's lamp. The stage goes dark.

ACT ONE, SC. 9, PERRY'S JAIL CELL; HIS NIGHTMARE.

A light rises on Perry, twisting and turning in his bed. He is in the grip of a nightmare.

PERRY

Daddy, Mommy—wait—Daddy—

Flo laughs drunkenly in the back seat, while a transient HOBO has sex with her.

Tex enters with a bunch of wild roots in his arms, foraged from the woods. He sees Perry in the bed, sees the jalopy, sees Flo and the hobo.

TEX

What the hell you doin', woman?

FLO

I'm fucking this hobo.

TEX

How many times I got to tell you?!

FLO

You don't own me, you dumb Mic--

He yanks the hobo off Flo, chases him away. Flo stumbles out of the car, swilling the liquor. Perry watches from his bed.

PERRY

Mommy--

FLO

(to Perry) What the hell you looking at?

TEX

A vile whore, that's what he's lookin' at—

FLOW

Don't you fucking judge me, "Tex Smith"—

TEX

No self-respect is what you got, stupid Cherokee bitch—

FLO

Some life you made for me, cooking rats in the woods—

TEX

Nail it shut woman—

He grabs away the bottle.

FLO

Tex Smith the biggest loser with the smallest cock in the Wild,
Wild West!

TEX

Goddamn whore--

He backhands her hard across the face. She staggers back as he empties the contents of the bottle in a ditch. She grabs the bullwhip.

Lights down on them.

Perry whimpers in bed, trapped in his bad memories.

PERRY

Mommy— help, help me--

From out of the darkness comes a towering NUN, draped in her habit, carrying a flashlight. She aims the flashlight on him, pulls back the covers and screams:

NUN

Bed-wetter!! BED-WETTER!!!!

She savagely beats him with the flashlight, driven to an extreme anger by the puddle of urine in his bed.

PERRY

Stop stop don't please help me, Mommy, help me—

Lights up on Flo as she cracks the bullwhip in a rage. The nun beats Perry. Flo cracks the whip again. A blast of tribal Cherokee music freezes the Nun in mid-action.

A yellow bird descends from the heavens, circles around Perry, as he gets out of bed. The nun is still frozen in action.

Flo steps forward to Perry, places a yellow bird headdress on his head. She slips two taloned gloves on his hands. The Cherokee music roars.

Flo cracks the whip. The nun resumes her action, beating the empty bed.

Perry, possessed with the spirit of the avenging Thunder Bird, rips the dark with his scream. Tears into the nun with his talons, shredding her body.

As the nun lies convulsing at his feet, Flo removes the headdress, takes the gloves. Grabs the nun by one hand and drags her dead body into the darkness.

The yellow bird ascends to the heavens as Perry lies back in his bed. He sits up with a shout, escaping his nightmares. He feels the puddle of urine in his bed.

Josie, roused from sleep, rushes into the kitchen.

JOSIE

Are you alright?

He cries.

PERRY

I wet my bed.

Josie looks at him.

Lights up on Bonnie, in her bedroom. She peers through her curtains in the middle of the night. Shivers.

Lights down on Josie and Perry.

ACT ONE, SC. 10 CLUTTER KITCHEN

Nancy and her young pie protégé, JOLENE CRUMBSETTER, remove a hot cherry pie from the oven. Place it on the stove-top to cool. They blow on it together.

Jolene is stunned at the result of her pie lesson. Unknown to the girls, Bonnie watches from the doorway.

JOLENE

Wow.

NANCY

See how easy it is?

JOLENE

I can't believe I made this all by myself!

NANCY

Well, yes you did, with a little help. Honestly, Jolene, this is as good as any pie I ever made.

JOLENE

I can't wait to have a piece. You'll have some too, right?

NANCY

I'll have to skip it right now.

BONNIE

Nancy's a very busy girl, Jolene.

The girls turn in surprise.

JOLENE

Oh, hi Mrs. Clutter. How are you feeling today?

NANCY

Is everything okay, Mom?

BONNIE

I'm fine, Nancy. Thank you for asking, Jolene. You're so well mannered. I just thought I smelled something. I guess it was the pie.

NANCY

Mom, since you're here, would you mind waiting with Jolene until her mother comes? I have to pick up the material for the brides maids' dresses.

BONNIE

You go, dear. I'll keep Jolene company. That is, if Jolene doesn't mind keeping *me* company.

JOLENE

Uhm no that would be great.

NANCY

Thanks, Mom. Pour yourself some milk, Jolene, makes the pie taste even better. See you later.

Nancy grabs her jacket and races out of the kitchen.

Jolene cuts herself a piece of pie.

JOLENE

Would you like some, Mrs. Clutter?

BONNIE

No, dear. But it looks wonderful.

Pause.

BONNIE

I hope you won't think her rude, running off like that.

JOLENE

Goodness, no. I just love her to death. You know what Mrs. Stringer in Home-Ec says? 'Nancy Clutter is always in a hurry, but she always has time. And that's the definition of a lady'.

BONNIE

Yes. All my children are very efficient. They don't need me.

Jolene eats her pie at the kitchen table, watching Bonnie. Bonnie pours herself a cup of coffee, sips it as she walks back and forth around the kitchen.

JOLENE

This is so good! Sure you don't want some?

BONNIE

No, they don't.

JOLENE

Nancy loves you very much, Mrs. Clutter. I'm going to make one of these every day seven days a week.

BONNIE

Always running here and there. It'll be the same with you. No, no – why did I say that? Forgive me, dear. I'm sure you'll never know what it is to be tired. I'm sure you'll always be happy.

Awkward pause.

JOLENE

My mom should be here any minute.

BONNIE

Do you like miniature things? Tiny things? I love to collect them, ever since I was your age. Little scissors, thimbles, fans, toy figurines. We spent the summers in California, by the ocean, when I was your age. There was a shop that sold little darling things, and my Daddy bought me a miniature tea set. I had a lovely childhood. Sometimes I miss the ocean so.

JOLENE

Uh huh.

BONNIE

Mr. Clutter is always headed somewhere. Washington and Chicago and Oklahoma and Kansas City, sometimes it seems like he's never home. But wherever he goes, he remembers how I dote on tiny things. Look—

She reaches into her robe pocket and pulls out a small clasp purse. She opens it and pulls out a tiny horse made of blue glass.

JOLENE

Oh, what a pretty little horse.

BONNIE

He brought me this from San Francisco. It only cost a penny. But isn't it pretty? Little things really belong to you. They don't have to be left behind. You can carry them in a shoebox.

JOLENE

Carry them where to?

BONNIE

Why, wherever you go. You might be gone for a long time. Longer than they told you even. Like on a vacation. Or a hospital. Gone a long time. Or you might never go home, at least sometimes it seems like that. And it's important to always have with you something of your own. That's really yours.

From off-stage, a car horn honks. Jolene is up instantly.

JOLENE

That's my mom. Can I use these pot holders? I'll give them to Nancy at the church bake sale tomorrow.

BONNIE

Of course dear. Off with you now.

Jolene grabs her jacket, uses the pot holders to hold the pie.

JOLENE

Bye Mrs. Clutter. I really like your horse.

BONNIE

Goodbye dear.

Jolene runs out. Bonnie waves after her.

Sits at the table. Looks at her little blue horse.

BONNIE

It's only a little thing. But it's mine. And it's pretty.

Lights down on Bonnie.

ACT ONE, SC. 11, HARTMANN'S CAFÉ, TWO MONTHS AGO.

Bonnie continues to pace and peer out her curtains.

Lights up on Harman's Café. A few tables, counter.

Herb sits at the counter, sipping his coffee. LARRY HARTMANN fills his cup.

MYRTLE CLARE, the postmistress, sits nearby with her mother, SADIE TRUITT, the mail carrier. They share a piece of apple pie.

HERB

Best coffee in the state, Larry.

LARRY

Oh, Herb, you old saw, you. Wedding's right around the corner, no?

HERB

House is a three-ring circus, I can tell you. Expecting some 200 people

MYRTLE

(barging in to the conversation) He's got the money, don't know what he's complaining about.

SADIE

What's he saying?

MYRTLE

The wedding, Ma.

HERB

Nothing like marrying off one of your daughters to put age on you, am I right?

LARRY

Right as rain, Herb.

SADIE

Try burying them. That's a real kick in the pants.

MYRTLE

Don't be whining on that again, Mother. We live, we die, everything in-between is an accident.

Bonnie sniffs around her room, by the window. Sure she smells something.

LARRY

How's Bonnie holding up?

HERB

Okay, I guess.

MYRTLE

Not meant for this world, you ask me.

HERB

I don't remember asking you, Myrtle Clare.

LARRY

Myrtle, hush that mouth.

SADIE

What's happening?

MYRTLE

Bonnie, Ma.

BONNIE

I'm sure I smell smoke.

SADIE

Poor thing.

MYRTLE

Now, Herb, I don't mean nothing by it, I like Bonnie as much as the next gal. She's just not made for this world, is all I'm saying.

HERB

Myrtle, thank you for your opinion. I'll give her your regards.

LARRY

How's she doing these days?

HERB

Oh, you know, I think the wedding, marrying off your second-born, the whole clan coming down in three weeks, all the plans, it's got her jittery. Preoccupied. I don't know. She's fine, I guess.

LARRY

A wedding would make anyone jittery. Someone like Bonnie, I mean, someone with Bonnie's temperament, well, it's a lot of pressure on the woman. Things have to be just right.

HERB

I know what you mean. She's a good woman.

SADIE

Who?

MYRTLE

Bonnie, Ma. Bonnie.

BONNIE

(to herself) Don't be crazy.

SADIE

Oh, Bonnie. Poor thing.

Lights out on the café.

Bonnie peers again through the curtain. Draws them closed.

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SC. 12, PERRY'S CELL, MORNING

Perry changes his bed-sheets. Josie sips her coffee, sits on a stool on the outside of the cell.

JOSIE

Alls I know is I woulda done a whole lot better by you, if you were my boy. Way I see it, a mother's got one duty, and that's to her children.

PERRY

After the divorce, she got all twisted around the bottle, turned her into someone I didn't know, made her fat, evil. Rip you to pieces with her tongue without even thinking about it. And wouldn't let Pop see us, moved to San Francisco just to put distance between them.

JOSIE

(with anger) "Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other." No way to raise a boy, you ask me.

PERRY

I became kind of wild child, you might call it.

Lights up on a JUDGE, Tex and Flo. Perry stands between his parents. Flo looks drunk, disheveled, fat. Tex can barely contain his anger.

TEX

Your Honor, sir, if you let me tell you honest, it ain't the boy's fault what he done.

JOSIE

Poor little boy.

JUDGE

Mr. Smith, your 8 year-old son mugged and beat an old woman in broad daylight. For 35 cents.

TEX

And he ought to pay for what he done, I ain't saying that. I always taught him you got to pay for your misdiscretions, so throw the book on him your Honor. But it's his whore of a mother what should be behind bars, not Perry.

FLO

Who's behind on child support, you goddamn Irish pencil dick? You ain't even supposed to be a mile near that boy, and you know it.

TEX

She's a whore, your honor, spreading those legs for any Tom, Dick or Harry walking outside her window. And she don't even make

them pay! What kind of mother is that? Hungry kids and she's giving it away for free!

FLO

I wish I never had met you, Tom Smith. I wish you never slipped it in me. I shoulda punched it outta me when I still could, punched the baby right out of me.

JOSIE

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

FLO

And now look at him. Look at me. Look at what you done to my life, you goddamn sonofabitch!

TEX

Vile, cocksucking whore!

Tex and Flo hurl themselves at each other savagely.

JUDGE

Order! Order!

Lights down on the courtroom.

JOSIE

Your Momma shoulda give you love, love, love, love, love, love. And a good hard spanking.

PERRY

My Pop started showing up after I got out of Juvie Hall the first time, Mom couldn't handle me. So I left for the road with Dad. Which was good. For a time.

Lil Red appears at the barred window. Gently, Perry nestles the squirrel in his hands.

A light rises on Tex Smith. He holds a dead squirrel in his hands, letting it hang upside down.

Perry and Tex move in parallel lines. Perry plays with the squirrel, feeding it little bits of muffin.

Tex places the dead squirrel on the ground. Puts his foot on the tail. Holds a sharp knife.

PERRY

Hi, little fella. How are you today?

TEX

Goddamn it, Perry, pay attention, how do you expect to learn?

PERRY

Aren't you a little sweetie?

TEX

First you slice along the base of the rump, here, at the base of the tail. You want to cut wide along the bottom here, one clean swipe--

PERRY

Look at this pretty tail, look how big and fluffy.

TEX

Now with your foot on the tail, grab the hind legs, like this—

PERRY

My little sweetie pie—

TEX

Now, pull up hard so the skin and fur comes off in a nice smooth sheet, like this—

Tex skins the squirrel. Holds up its pelt. Smiles.

Light out on Tex.

Perry lets Lil Red scamper away out the window.

PERRY

Dick asking for me yet? Anything?

JOSIE

Well, no. But that don't mean he ain't thinking about you. Sometimes people keep their feelings inside. Sometimes they just get out of bed and you don't exist no more, except to make the coffee.

PERRY

By the way, M'am, your coffee...

JOSIE

Yeah, I know. You heard from your family?

PERRY

My brother and sister are dead. That leaves just my sister Barbara. I don't talk to my Dad any more.

JOSIE

Well, maybe Barbara will come see you.

PERRY

Last year I was doing time, Barbara told me what she thought of me.

A light rises on BARBARA JOHNSON, Perry's sister. She is an attractive, dark haired woman. Wears an attractive, middle class housedress. She speaks aloud the contents of the letter.

BARBARA

Dearest brother Perry,

We got your second letter today and forgive me for not writing sooner. Your first letter was very disturbing, as I'm sure you must have suspected but that was not the reason I haven't written. It's true the children do keep me busy and it's hard to find time to sit and concentrate on a letter as I have wanted to write you for some time.

PERRY

I asked my friend, Willie Jay to take a look at her letter.

WILLIE JAY, a tall, handsome burglar who works for the chaplain's office, stands, critiquing a long, 8-page letter.

JOSIE

Was he a convict too?

PERRY

Yes. He found God while doing time. A brilliant, first-class mind.

Dick, shirtless, smokes on his bed, reads a magazine. He doesn't like Willie Jay, and the feeling is mutual. They fight for influence over Perry, like the angel and devil sitting on his shoulders.

WILLIE JAY

She displays good intentions, but she's so wrapped up in her maudlin, middle-class emotionalism, that she can't help but evince her real feelings, which range from envy to derision.

DICK

(mocking Willie Jay) "She's so wrapped up in her maudlin, middle-class emotionalism"—cut me a major fucking break already--

WILLIE JAY

I wasn't speaking to you, Dick.

DICK

Better not be fucking speaking to me, little girl.

PERRY

She always hated me, even when we were kids.

BARBARA

I truthfully feel none of us, you, me, Fern, Jimmy--

PERRY

(to Josie, who sits outside the cell) Fern fell out a window in San Francisco. Drunk. Maybe jumped. My older brother Jimmy shot himself in the head the day after he drove his wife to suicide because of his jealousy.

JOSIE

Men can be so stupid sometimes.

WILLIE JAY

(reading from the letter) "None of us, even Mother and Dad, have anyone to blame for whatever we have done with our own personal lives."

DICK

Bullshit. It's all their fault.

PERRY

Right?

WILLIE JAY

Wrong—Perry, listen to me--

DICK

Ignore him, honey.

BARBARA

It has been proven that at the age of 7 most of us have reached the age of reason, which means we do, at this age, understand and know the difference between right and wrong.

WILLIE JAY

"Of course, environment plays an awfully important part in our lives"—

BARBARA

Such as the Convent in mine and in my case I am grateful for that influence."

PERRY

(to Willie Jay) Yeah, she got a convent and I got gang-banged in the Merchant Marines.

DICK

Those gals are mean.

WILLIE JAY

She's just asking you to take some responsibility, that's all.

BARBARA

We have very little control over our human weaknesses, and this applies also to Fern and Jimmy and the hundreds of thousands of other people including ourselves –

WILLIE JAY

“For we all have weaknesses. In your case, I don't know what your weakness is”—

BARBARA

But I do feel it's no shame to have a dirty face, the shame comes when you keep it dirty.

DICK

Fuck her. Cunt.

WILLIE JAY

You're not helping the issue here, Dick.

DICK

You want to start something, Mary?

At this point, Willie Jay and Dick slowly circle each other, facing off. Dick holds something in his hand, behind his back. Perry loves being fought over.

JOSIE

She obviously cares for you, she's your sister, she loves you.

PERRY

I hate her.

WILLIE JAY

No, I don't think you do--

DICK

Yes, he does. (to Perry) And so do I, honey.

BARBARA

In all love for you Perry, Dad is not responsible for your wrong doings or your good deeds.

WILLIE JAY

“What you have done, whether right or wrong, is your own doing.”

BARBARA

From what I personally know, you have lived your life exactly as you pleased without regard to circumstances or persons who loved you – who might be hurt.

PERRY

I’d like to crack her head open. Split that skull in half.

WILLIE JAY

That would only substantiate the anti-social tendencies she is attacking you for.

Dick speaks to Perry, but is up in Willie Jay’s face, ready to attack.

DICK

Don’t listen to this asshole, sweetheart, first thing we do we get out of here, plan a little visit to sis, slice her up good.

PERRY

Wouldn’t she be surprised.

JOSIE

Now, Perry, I’m sure she loves you.

WILLIE JAY

Perry, you need to exercise self-control with that temper. Try to shut out the bad influences around you.

Behind his back, Dick drops a shiv into his hand, ready to attack. Perry rises, concerned for Willie Jay’s safety and thrilled by Dick’s violent, territorial aggression.

DICK

Who the fuck are you, his mother?

WILLIE JAY

No. I’m his friend. And what are you?

Perry takes the knife out of Dick’s hand. He circles slowly around his sister, who is unaware of his presence.

BARBARA

In case you want the truth about Dad, his heart is broken because of you. He would give anything to get you out so he can have his son back, but I'm afraid you would only hurt him worse if you could. You know he always loved you best. Still does.

JOSIE

She resented you, maybe. Because your Daddy liked you better.

Perry sneaks up behind her, slits her throat. She slumps to the floor, bleeding to death.

PERRY

One clean swipe.

DICK

There's my baby! Ear to ear grin.

Barbara rises to her feet, dabs away the blood with a hankie, and regains her poise.

WILLIE JAY

Perry, you are in control of your own life. God gave you a choice.

DICK

(snarling) Fuck off, Mary.

PERRY

Be nice, Dick.

BARBARA

I'm sorry to let you have it so strong but I feel I must speak my piece. You are a human being with a free will. Which puts you above the animal level. But if you live your life without feeling and compassion for your fellow man, you are as an animal.

Perry slowly approaches her, aiming his hand like a pistol. Raises it slowly to her temple.

Think about it Perry. You and only you are responsible and it is up to you and you alone to overcome this part of your life. Hoping to hear from you soon.

With love and prayers, your loving sister--

Perry cocks his thumb. Fires his "pistol". A shot rings out. Barbara falls back, dead.

Lights out on Willie Jay and Dick. Perry talks to Josie.

PERRY

And that's all that's left of my family. One moronic sister who hates me and a father who is ashamed of me. Everyone else, dead. Mom, dead. Fern, Dead. Jimmy, dead. I wish I were dead.

JOSIE

You don't mean that.

PERRY

Yes, I do. I think about it all the time. I should just be brave and off myself.

JOSIE

Don't say that!

PERRY

I ought to unscrew that light bulb and smash it and cut my wrists. That's what I ought to do. While you're still here. Somebody who cares about me a little bit. Then maybe I'd be happy. Or free. Or something.

JOSIE

God loves you, Perry. Have a cookie.

She holds out a tray of cookies. Perry munches on a cookie. Josie goes back to the kitchen. Perry stares up at the naked light bulb suspended above him.

Lights down on them.

ACT ONE, SC. 13, HERB'S OFFICE, DAY OF THE MURDER

Herb sits behind his desk, taking a final perusal over a large stack of insurance papers.

BOB JOHNSON, a stocky, balding Insurance Agent, hovers around Herb, waiting for him to sign.

Herb holds the pen in the air over his checkbook. But hesitates.

BOB

Know what they say about you, Herb? 'Since haircuts went to a dollar-fifty, Herb writes the barber a check'.

HERB

That's correct, Bob. That's the way I do business. When those tax fellows come poking around, canceled checks are your best friend. Keep my money in the bank and out of my house, that's what I say.

BOB

So, uhm, Herb, are you going to sign the check? We been going back and forth on this policy so long, I almost feel like one of the family, ha ha.

HERB

I'm just thinking.

BOB

Ah, the Solemn Moment. Everyone taking out a life insurance policy gets them right before they sign.

HERB

Well, it does make you think. I've plenty to be grateful for. Wonderful things in my life. The kids. We've been lucky there. Shouldn't say it, but I'm real proud of them. Take Kenyon. Right now he kind of leans toward being an engineer, or a scientist, but you can't tell me my boy's not a born rancher. God willing, he'll run this place some day. If anything ever happened to me, I'm sure I could trust him to take responsibility; Bonnie, by herself—Bonnie wouldn't be able to carry on an operation like this.

BOB

Herb, you're a young man. Forty-eight. And from the looks of you, from what the actuarial report tells us, we're likely to have you around couple of weeks more.

Herb holds up his pen again.

HERB

Tell you the truth, I feel pretty good. And pretty optimistic. I got an idea a fellow could make some real money around here the next few years.

Herb finally signs the check, the first payment on a \$40,000 life insurance policy.

HERB

There you go, Bob. Signed, sealed, and delivered.

BOB

You're a good man, Herb. You'll be glad you did this.

HERB

I already am, Bob, I already am.

They shake hands. Lights down.

ACT ONE, SC. 14, PERRY'S CELL

Josie sits with her profile facing Perry, nursing her split lip. Perry draws her portrait with charcoal in his sketchpad. She nurses a split lip.

PERRY

You believe in destiny, Josie?

JOSIE

I believe in God. I believe things happen for a reason.

PERRY

Like a divine plan?

JOSIE

That's right.

PERRY

I guess maybe my life was destined to lead me here, you know what I mean? Maybe it was your destiny to get stuck with a man who treats you like a punching bag. Nice lip, by the way.

JOSIE

"Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net."

PERRY

Maybe those people were destined to die at my hands. What do you think about that? Act of God?

JOSIE

Can't always seek to understand the workings of the Lord. Believe me, I know.

A light comes up on Willie Jay, sitting at a diner, eating French Fries.

PERRY

Remember Willie Jay? Both he and Dick were getting out around the same time. Both wanted me to meet them in Kansas City.

JOSIE

But you chose Dick? Instead of Willie Jay?

PERRY

No. No I didn't. It was fate. Bus broke down. I was late, that's all. About 18 hours. By the time I pulled in, Willie Jay was gone. Forever.

Willie Jay leaves the table, replaced by Dick. He eats the French Fries.

Perry joins him. Sulking

DICK

Hey, sweetie, I thought you'd never get here.

PERRY

Here I am.

DICK

Ain't ya glad to see me? Where's that perfect smile?

PERRY

You sure about this score? You got reliable sources?

DICK

First hand account. Guy I bunked with after you left, Floyd Wells, used to work on the farm with this filthy rich bastard, loaded to the gills.

Lights rise on the Clutters, sitting down to dinner. Herb sits at one end, Bonnie sits nervously at the other. Nancy and Kenyon sit with heads bowed.

DICK

Got the ground plans carved into my head. Gonna go off like clockwork and no witnesses, right? Paint the walls with hair.

CLUTTER

Amen.

They eat dinner, reaching for and passing food.

JOSIE

I guess we can always wonder what it would have been like if we did things different.

HERB

Food looks delicious, Nancy.

DICK

Have some fries.

NANCY

Thanks, Dad.

PERRY

Maybe we don't have to kill them. What if we got masks?

DICK

No witnesses, Perry.

KENYON

Mom, the string beans--

JOSIE

If we married the other man.

PERRY

No witnesses, huh?

BONNIE

Oh, the potatoes, I don't know where, I, oh dear—

NANCY

That's okay, Mom, I can get them--

PERRY

How about your source? He's a witness.

DICK

Floyd? He's afraid, and besides, he's still locked up. He won't say nothing.

PERRY

Anything.

DICK

Whatever.

BONNIE

I'm fine, Nancy.

DICK

I got it all taken care of.

BONNIE

You don't have to do everything around here, you know.

DICK

We'll pick up the shotgun tonight after dinner at my folks, then start driving. Should be in Holcomb by midnight.

BONNIE

Here Kenyon, oh, they're hot, hurry, take them--

JOSIE

If he hadn't of died...

KENYON

Thanks, Mom.

JOSIE

Maybe Wendell'd be different.

PERRY

Did you get the rubber gloves?

DICK

Yellow and pink. Take your pick, honey.

JOSIE

I had a choice.

PERRY

How about stockings?

HERB

What time is he coming over, Nan?

DICK

I told you no stockings.

NANCY

I told you, Dad, around 7:30.

PERRY

And I told you I thought it a good idea. In case there are any witnesses.

DICK

Che habla, baby? No witnesses. *No witnesses.*

JOSIE

But you don't choose your fate, it chooses you.

NANCY

We're just going to watch some television.

PERRY

But what if the ineffable happens?

KENYON

Yeah, before they make out.

DICK

I don't give a shit what happens--

HERB

(to Kenyon) That's enough out of you, young man.

DICK

No witnesses!

HERB

(to Nancy) I'll just watch some with you, that is if you don't mind.

PERRY

Black stockings would be best. We can stop at the convent outside of town. Nuns wear them all the time.

JOSIE

Sometimes you just do the wrong thing.

DICK

You want me to buy black stockings from nuns in a convent?
That's a damn stupid idea!

BONNIE

(stands with alarm) Does anyone else smell smoke?

JOSIE

And then you're stuck.

PERRY

I think it's a smart idea.

JOSIE

For the rest of your life.

HERB

There's no smoke, hon.

JOSIE

Can't figure out God's ways.

NANCY

Mom, I told you--

DICK

I've already invested enough money in this little operation. No stockings.

JOSIE

Just got to grin and bear it.

PERRY

Fine.

KENYON

Want me to check in the basement, Dad?

PERRY

Did you get enough rope?

HERB

Sit down, Bonnie, it's alright.

DICK

I bought the rope you said to get. White nylon cord.

NANCY

Sit, Mom.

PERRY

Did you get enough?

DICK

How the hell should I know?

PERRY

You better damn well know. You're the mastermind here.

KENYON

I'll protect you Mom, don't worry.

Bonnie sits. An awkward silence at the table.

DICK

There's him. Her. The kid and the girl. And maybe the two older daughters. But it's Saturday. They might have guests. Let's count on eight or even twelve.

BONNIE

I'm sure it's nothing.

DICK

The only sure thing is every one of them has got to go.

Lights out on the Clutter family.

PERRY

(to Josie) All a part of destiny. I guess.

JOSIE

I have to pee.

Josie rises, leaves the kitchen. Dick and Perry get in their car. Drive.

ACT ONE, SC. 15 DICK AND PERRY AT GAS STATION/CLUTTERS
WATCHING TELEVISION

Phillips 66 gas station.

JAMIE, the lone gas station attendant, pumps gas into Dick and Perry's car.

Dick gets out of the car while Perry runs to the Men's Room.

PERRY

Give me a minute.

DICK

Well, hurry it up honey, we ain't got all night.

Perry slams the Men's Room door behind him. Sits on the toilet, holding his legs in pain.

Outside, Dick glowers at Jamie.

JAMIE

Filler up?

DICK

Yeah. And do something about the bugs on the windshield. Hurry up, boy, I ain't got all night.

JAMIE

Yes, sir.

Dick sees a candy machine next to the Men's Room. He bangs on the door, yells to Perry.

DICK

Hey, you want some candy? They got a machine out here.

PERRY

(from inside) No. I'll be right out.

DICK

Hey, jelly beans! It's my lucky day.

As Dick punches the machine to dislodge some jelly beans, Perry sucks down aspirin, chews them dry.

Jamie keeps his eyes on Dick as he fills up their tank.

DICK

What are you looking at, boy?

JAMIE

Nothing, sir.

DICK

Kinda slow around here.

JAMIE

You're the only body stopped here since two hours. Where you coming from?

DICK

Kansas City.

JAMIE

Here to hunt?

DICK

Just passing through. How far we from Holcomb?

JAMIE

Just about 7 miles.

Jamie finishes.

DICK

(to Perry) Hear that, Perry? Holcomb is seven miles from here. Hot damn!

PERRY

I'll be right out.

JAMIE

That'll be three dollars and six cents.

Dick pays him.

DICK

Keep the change.

JAMIE

Thanks. You'll excuse me sir? I'm doing a job. Putting a bumper on a truck.

Jamie disappears to the back of the gas station.

DICK

(to Perry) Hey, baby, want some jelly beans?

On the other side of the stage, a light comes up on Herb, Nancy, Kenyon and BOBBY RUPP watching a crime show on TV. Bobby is a handsome 17 year old boy, the star of his basketball team.

Herb rises.

HERB

Can I get anyone an apple? Bobby?

PERRY

I said no goddamnit.

BOBBY

No, sir.

DICK

What's the matter? You sick?

HERB

You kids have enough room?

PERRY

I'm fine.

HERB

Here, I'll sit over here in the chair. Give you some elbow room.

DICK

Well, hurry up baby.

NANCY

We're fine, Daddy.

HERB

Spread out, relax.

DICK

I wanna get back home in time for Sunday dinner.

Herb exits to kitchen.

BOBBY

Your father hates me.

PERRY

Your mother hates me.

DICK/NANCY

Don't be stupid.

NANCY

He likes you. He told me so.

KENYON

When?

DICK

Perry, please.

NANCY

Turn around and watch the TV, Edison.

PERRY

(still rubbing his legs on the other side of the door) Can't say I blame her.

BOBBY

I know he thinks I'm not good enough for you. But I love you, I can't help it.

DICK

She likes you, she likes you.

NANCY

I know you do. Me too, you.

PERRY

No she doesn't.

KENYON

I just ate, okay, don't make me barf.

BOBBY

Maybe next year when you're 16, you'll know what it feels like to lose your heart to a girl, Kenyon.

DICK

Look, it's not like we're getting married.

KENYON

Don't bet on it.

Herb comes back, sits in his chair. Gestures for some space between Nancy and Bobby. She reluctantly slides over a bit.

PERRY

She's a nice woman. She should hate me.

DICK

She doesn't hate you. You got the gloves?

PERRY

In my pocket. I'm a nice person.

DICK

I said she likes you, stupid.

PERRY

Then why won't she let me stay in your house tomorrow?

DICK

Because she don't like me hanging with anyone from inside the Walls. Makes her nervous.

PERRY

I could help her cook.

Perry takes deep breaths, trying to control the pain in his legs.

Bonnie's voice cuts through the air.

BONNIE

Herb? Herb?

KENYON

Dad.

DICK

You're not getting nervous on me are you?

HERB

I hear her, son.

PERRY

Don't you worry about me!

HERB

Well, I guess I should go make sure she's alright, then it's shuteye for me. You kids, ten more minutes. (he kisses Nancy on the cheek) Bobby, I'll see you tomorrow, I suppose?

BOBBY

Yes, sir, Mr. Clutter.

HERB

Alright then, goodnight to all the ships at sea. Kenyon?

Kenyon stands, towering over his father. Kisses him on the cheek. Lies back down in front of the TV. Herb leaves.

After about 4 seconds, Nancy and Bobby start making out on the couch.

Dick pounds on the bathroom door.

DICK

COME ON!!

KENYON

Sheesh. You guys.

Perry opens the door. Stands face to face with Dick.

DICK

You ok?

PERRY

Let's go.

He puts a bottle of aspirin to his lips, sucks down a few. Crunches them.

DICK

You don't got bubbles in your blood, now do you? Gonna go chicken on me at the last moment?

PERRY

I'm fine. Let's get going already.

DICK

You sure you killed that nigger in Vegas?

PERRY

I'm sure. Who'd you ever kill?

Lights out on Perry and Dick. Lights out on Kenyon, Nancy and Bobby.

ACT ONE, SC. 16, BONNIE'S ROOM

Bonnie paces, freezing. Herb enters the room.

HERB

Are you cold?

BONNIE

Freezing.

HERB

I can turn up the heat.

BONNIE

Am I crazy, Herb? I think maybe I am.

HERB

You're not crazy, Bonnie. You just need to rest.

BONNIE

I just have the oddest feeling.

HERB

That's all it is, dear. A feeling, not a fact.

BONNIE

I'm so cold.

HERB

Here, Bon. Time for bed now.

He puts her under the covers.

BONNIE

I'm sorry I cause so much trouble for you Herb.

HERB

Who's causing trouble?

BONNIE

I do love you, you know.

HERB

You don't have to say that. I know you do.

BONNIE

If only it could have been different.

HERB

What.

BONNIE

Everything.

HERB

Sleep well, dear.

BONNIE

Herb, can you—oh I feel so silly.

HERB

What do you need? A glass of water? Some Kleenex?

BONNIE

Would you mind sitting here and holding my hand until I fall asleep?

HERB

No, I wouldn't mind. Close your eyes now.

BONNIE

Good night, Herb.

HERB

Good night, Bonnie.

He sits holding her hand. Turns off the light.

Lights out.

ACT ONE, SC. 17, CLUTTER FRONT STEPS

Bobby and Nancy kiss goodnight on the porch. The wind is audible around them.

BOBBY

I hate saying goodnight. But it can be fun too.

NANCY

Are you coming over tomorrow?

BOBBY

Like always.

NANCY

Sue and Mary Jane are going to pick me up for church, so I'll see you after that.

Bobby's attention is caught by a shooting star.

BOBBY

Look, up there—a shooting star—

NANCY

It's good luck. Quick, make a wish.

BOBBY

I already did.

NANCY

What was it?

He kisses her again, deep and long.

NANCY

Whew.

BOBBY

What did you wish for?

NANCY

That's for me to know and you to find out.

They kiss again. The lights fade on them.

ACT ONE, SC. 18, THE CLUTTER DRIVEWAY

Perry and Dick drive up silently, their headlights off. Turn off the engine.

Sit in their car, hidden from the full moon by the overhanging trees. The cold night wind moans around them.

DICK

Gimme some more of that Orange Blossom.

Perry pulls out a pint bottle from the glove compartment. Takes a swig and passes it to Dick, who sucks it down.

PERRY

You scared?

DICK

No. You?

PERRY

We could still turn back.

DICK

We're here. We can't turn back.

PERRY

I'm saying if one wanted to turn back, now's the time to do it.

DICK

Paint the walls with hair.

Pause.

PERRY

Ok, Dick, I'm with you.

DICK

No witnesses.

PERRY

No witnesses.

DICK

No witnesses.

Perry and Dick sit in the car. The wind howling around them. The full moon shining through the trees.

Perry reaches down, pulls up the shotgun. Cocks it. Waits.

A shooting star streaks by overhead.

DICK

Make a wish, honey.

Lights fade slowly.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO, SC. 1 HARTMANN'S CAFÉ, SUNDAY MORNING

Lights up slowly on Herb Clutter drinking coffee at the counter of Hartman's Café.

Sadie drinks her coffee silently at the other end of the counter. Church bells chime nine times in the distance.

Hartman refills Sadie's cup.

LARRY

More coffee, Sadie?

SADIE

Don't mind if I do.

The blaring sound of an ambulance races by. Larry and Sadie look up, startled.

LARRY

Wonder what that's all about.

SADIE

Maybe old man Jennings down the road.

LARRY

Looks like it's turning up towards the Clutter place.

SADIE

Could be Bonnie having another one of her spells.

LARRY

On a Sunday?

SADIE

Poor thing.

LARRY

Milk?

SADIE

Thanks.

Another ambulance wails past the diner. They both look up, at each other.

Another siren races by.

LARRY

What on Earth?

SADIE

Maybe there was an accident on the highway?

LARRY

On Sunday morning, no less.

One last siren races by the diner.

The door bursts open. In walks Myrtle Clare, Sadie's daughter and the Post Mistress of the town.

SADIE

Myrtle, what's going on?

LARRY

Coffee, Myrt?

MYRTLE

Black. Same as always.

SADIE

Myrt, what's going on?

MYRTLE

I heard you the first time, Mother. Settle down and I'll tell you what I know.

LARRY

Come in and warm up. Bad enough you have to work on a Sunday.

MYRTLE

Mail stops for neither man nor woman, Mabel. Them trains come through here, sometimes they're going a hundred miles an hour. And when those mail sacks come flying out, sakes alive! It's like playing tackle on a football team: Wham! Wham! WHAM!

SADIE

Myrtle, for Heaven's sake, the ambulances, will you please tell me what—

MYRTLE

Well, I'm not surprised, is all I've got to say.

LARRY

Surprised by what?

MYRTLE

When you think how Herb Clutter spent his whole life in a hurry, running in to get his mail with never a minute to say good-morning-and-thank-you-dog, rushing around like a chicken with its head off—

SADIE

What about Herb?

MYRTLE

Joining clubs, running everything, getting jobs maybe other people wanted. And now look. It's all caught up with him. Well, he won't be rushing any more.

SADIE

Why, Myrt, Why won't he?

MYRTLE

(With a sudden crack in her voice) BECAUSE HE'S DEAD.

LARRY

Herb? Dead?

SADIE

Stop it, I don't believe it.

MYRTLE

Bonnie, too. And Nancy. And the boy. Somebody shot them.

SADIE

(breaks out with a sob) Poor Bonnie. Poor, poor Bonnie.

LARRY

Myrt, don't say things like that, it's not funny.

MYRTLE

I sure ain't trying to be funny.

SADIE

For God's sake, who shot them?

MYRTLE

(sipping her coffee) The man in the airplane. The one Herb sued for crashing into his fruit trees. If it wasn't him, maybe it was you. Or somebody across the street. All the neighbors are rattlesnakes. Varmints looking for a chance to slam the door in your face. Holcomb, New York City, it's the same the whole world over, you know that.

SADIE

(putting her hands over her ears) I don't. I don't know any such thing.

MYRTLE

Varmints.

HERB

Best coffee in the state.

LARRY

I can't believe my ears.

SADIE

I'm scared, Myrt.

MYRTLE

Of what? When your time comes, it comes.

Larry hands Sadie a tissue to wipe the tears from her eyes.

LARRY

Here, Sadie.

MYRTLE

And tears won't save you. When my Homer died, I used up all my tears I had in me, and all the grief, too. If there's somebody loose around here that wants to cut my throat, I wish him luck. What difference does it make? It's all the same in eternity. Just remember: If one bird carried every grain of sand across the ocean, by the time he got them all on the other side, that would only be the beginning of eternity. So blow your nose.

A police siren rips through the streets outside. Sadie, Larry and Myrtle turn to look out to the street.

From the counter, Herb finally looks up in the direction of the sirens.

Lights down on the café.

ACT TWO, SC. 2 MURDER SITE/KANSAS BEUREAU OF INVESTIGATION OFFICE

The basement of the Clutter home.

A nice, comfortable finished basement: A couch, work area, a furnace off to the side.

Blood covers the walls and floors. Seeps into the couch. The entire room is drenched with the paint and smell of death.

Men swarm around the room, dusting for fingerprints, taking photos of the couch, the work room.

A large piece of bloody cardboard lies by the furnace.

In the center of the swirl stands AL DEWEY, 40s a tall, strong looking man in a suit and tie, shakes his head at the violent mess. Without looking at him, he addresses his partner, HAROLD NYE, 34, a small, peppy man with restless, distrustful eyes and a sharp chin, nose and mind. Nye carries a small book behind his back.

Bonnie walks around the room, sniffing for smoke.

DEWEY

What a mess.

NYE

Fun party, alright. Glad I wasn't invited.

DEWEY

I was real fond of Herb and Bonnie. Had dinner with them a few weeks ago. Who in their right mind would want to hurt this family? Any of them? Did you see Nancy in *Tom Sawyer*? Just the other night. Played Becky Thatcher. Damn good performance.

NYE

Odds are it was Mr. Clutter, the target. Because his throat was cut, before they shot him in the face.

DEWEY

Were Nancy or Bonnie—did the animal or animals who did this—

NYE

As far as we presently know, neither woman was sexually molested.

BONNIE

(to herself) Does anyone else smell smoke?

DEWEY

What they take from the house?

NYE

Nothing. Nada. Zip. Except a small radio from the boy's room. A pair of binoculars. And maybe 40, 50 dollars from Herb's billfold.

DEWEY

Which leads me to think the killer or killers are not from around here. Everyone knows Herb doesn't keep cash in the house.

NYE

The two women were bound upstairs in their respective beds, and shot point blank in the face with a .12 gauge shotgun. No shells found. Very thorough work.

DEWEY

Herb and the boy were found down here in the basement, right?

NYE

Correct. Kenyon Clutter was here on the couch, bound by someone who knew his way around a rope. Herb was over near the furnace on this piece of cardboard, like someone wanted to make him more comfortable. Throat slit right across before taking a shotgun blast in the face.

DEWEY

It's hard to see how one man, armed or not, could have handled the two of them by himself. Herb would have fought like a tiger if he thought his family was in danger.

NYE

Which is why we lean towards the double perp theory.

DEWEY

How could two individuals reach the same degree of rage, the kind of psychopathic rage and envy it takes to commit such a crime. It doesn't make sense. But none of it does.

NYE

Two things going for us. Number one: we found a footprint on the bloody cardboard underneath Mr. Clutter. A diamond patterned boot print.

DEWEY

That's something.

NYE

And number two: this slender little nugget.

Nye hands Dewey the book. Dewey opens the front page.

DEWEY

Nancy's diary.

NYE

The final entry is from last night. Before she went to bed. Nothing out of the ordinary, except about her boyfriend. One Bobby Rupp.

DEWEY

Sure, Bobby and Nancy grew up together. Been steady since the ninth grade.

NYE

Seems he was the last to see them alive.

Lights rise on Bobby sitting in a chair in the KBI office. Nervous and pale, he is hooked up to a lie detector machine.

Dewey and Nye stand over Bobby.

BOBBY

Like I said, it was just a regular night over at the Clutters. I went over after dinner, and we all just sat around watching TV. Except Mrs. Clutter. She stayed upstairs in her room.

DEWEY

What time did you leave?

BOBBY

Well, I guess it was just around 11. Mr. Clutter had just gone to bed. I said goodnight to Nancy outside. Right after we both made a wish on a falling star.

DEWEY

You never had any argument with Mr. Clutter?

BOBBY

I loved Mr. Clutter.

DEWEY

It says in Nancy's diary he didn't approve of her seeing so much of you.

BOBBY

But that's just because we're Catholic. I mean him being Methodist and all, he didn't see much hope of us ever getting married.

DEWEY

Anything else you remember? Think hard, now, Bobby.

Nancy appears next to him.

BOBBY

No, I'm sorry. Except whoever did it must have been waiting for me to leave. Maybe they were out there in the long drive, waiting in the dark. Maybe if I was there, I mean when they broke in, maybe I could have saved them. Maybe they'd be alive right now. Maybe Nancy —

NANCY

Quick, make a wish.

Bobby breaks off, sobbing. Dewey motions for Nye to back off.

Nancy puts a hand on Bobby's shoulder. Lets him cry.

The lights go down on the KBI office.

ACT TWO, SC. 3 A DESOLATE BLUFF/ET AL

Sirens fade into the hills.

Perry and Dick sit on the hood of their car. Dick wolfs down several hamburgers from a paper bag. Perry pours over a newspaper.

DICK

I never been so hungry in all my life. You gonna eat yours?

PERRY

Christ, can't you let me concentrate?

DICK

You don't have to read it fifty times.

PERRY

(reading from paper) "The investigators are left faced with a search for a killer or killers whose cunning is apparent if his (or their) motive is not. For this killer or killers--"

DICK

We out of ketchup?

PERRY

"For this killer or killers". That's incorrect. "For this killer or *these* killers." Anyway, I don't believe it. Neither do you. Own up, Dick. Be honest. You don't believe this no-clue stuff?

DICK

Let it rest, will ya? If those cowboys could make the slightest connection, we'd have heard the sound of hoofs a hundred miles off. You're boring me to death already.

PERRY

I've always played my hunches. I have a high degree of "extrasensory perception". For instance, right before I had my motorcycle accident, I saw the whole thing happen; saw it in my mind, the rain, the skid tracks, me lying there bleeding and my legs broken. And that damn squirrel watching me. That's what I've got now. A premonition.

Perry slugs back some raw aspirin. Chews on them.

DICK

(with a sudden, angry edge to his voice) For Christ's sake, have a friggen hamburger already. All you eat is goddamn aspirin and root beer, no wonder you got the leaps. Come on, baby, get the bubbles out of your blood. We scored. It was perfect.

PERRY

(quietly, italicizing the malice in his tone) I'm surprised to hear that, all things considered.

Perry smiles insinuatingly at Dick. Dick hides his anger behind a smile.

DICK

Ok, maybe I had some wrong information.

PERRY

Bingo!

DICK

But on the whole it was perfect. We hit the ball right out of the park. It's lost. And it's gonna stay lost. There wasn't a single connection.

Josie enters, smoking. Sits.

PERRY

(to Josie) So I told him, well, I can think of one.

Lights up on Floyd, lying back on his prison cot. Listening to the radio.

RADIO

Today's top stories: President Eisenhower put in seventy minutes going over space problems and the budget for space exploration with Dr. T. Keith Glennan...

FLOYD

Got a space p-p-problem in here, too, Ike.

He cracks himself up. Lights out on Floyd.

Dick angrily spits out the burger in his mouth. Fury rearranges the normally handsome features of his face.

DICK

Why you got to go spoiling it all the time?

Perry goes even farther, testing his excitable pal.

PERRY

Floyd. Is that his name?

JOSIE

Floyd Wells, right?

PERRY

(to Josie) That's right, Mr. Floyd Wells.

DICK

It'd be worth it. Like if I was nabbed on a check charge, it'd be worth it. Just to get back in there. Grab a fork, a shiv. Right through the heart. That m-m-motherfucker.

PERRY

I'm not saying he would. He'd be too scared. Isn't that what you said?

DICK

Sure. Sure. He'd be too scared.

PERRY

Sure.

Dick's anger is instantly abated. Eats another burger.

DICK

You got the bubbles, baby, that's all. We need a vacation.

PERRY

With what, Dick, we have about 40 bucks out of our perfect score, that'll be gone in a few days. Then what?

DICK

I have it all planned, sweetie, don't go nervous on me. First thing, I pass around of ton of bad paper. Course, my folks are gonna be the ones stuck with the bad checks. I feel bad about that I do.

A light rises on a SALES CLERK in a men's clothing store. He adds up the bill and juggles a mound of bags and boxes. Dick is all smiles, oozing good-natured charm. Perry hangs back, silent, smiling.

JOSIE

A shopping spree? Can't remember the last time I bought anything nice.

DICK

I'm his best man, he's about to get married, if you can believe any woman would ever marry this lunkhead, am I right?

CLERK

There's a woman for every man, sir.

DICK

Right you are. Sometimes 3 or 4. Ha ha.

CLERK

Ha ha.

PERRY

(to Josie) Dick has charm.

DICK

The boy's got no sense of style, so I'm shopping around trying to find clothes he'll want. Ha ha, what you might say his – ha ha - trousseau. For the honeymoon. And beyond.

CLERK

Yes, sir. And beyond.

DICK

You should see the hot little rabbit he's caught. This girl would make bacon sizzle, if you know what I mean.

CLERK

Yes I suppose I do, sir.

DICK

How about that, an ugly runt like him, he's making it with a honey who's not only built but loaded. While guys like you and me,

good-looking guys...Hey, did you hear the one about the nanny goat's nightmare?

JOSIE

I don't think I want to hear that one.

PERRY

Dick has no self-control.

The clerk hands Dick the bill.

CLERK

Here's your bill sir.

Dick reaches into his back pocket, frowns, snaps his fingers.

DICK

Hot damn! I forgot my wallet. Can I write you a check?

CLERK

Well, ordinarily we frown on that—

DICK

Come on, be a pal, handsome guy like you. My friend's getting married.

Perry smiles innocently.

CLERK

I guess a check will be fine.

Dick pulls out a check book.

DICK

Fine. Do you mind if I write it for say \$80 more than the bill? Cover me till I find my wallet.

CLERK

That shouldn't be a problem, sir.

DICK

You're a good man.

CLERK

That's what my mother tells me, sir.

Lights out on the clerk. Dick and Perry are back on the bluff.

JOSIE

His poor folks.

PERRY

(to Josie) His Mom'll blame me, of course.

DICK

We can clear 5,000 clams real fast, like in two days. Then we go down to Florida maybe, then over to Mexico. Get some work there doing cars.

PERRY

Mexico first. Hey, we can pay back the checks for your folks.

JOSIE

(proud of Perry) You got a good heart, boy.

DICK

How?

PERRY

(hurt) What do you mean how? I told you a million times, we get to Mexico, buy a boat, take out the fat cats deep sea diving, and on the weekends, we go hunt up some of that sunken Peruvian bullion, jewelry. Sixty million dollars, that's what they say it's worth--

DICK

Uh huh.

PERRY

Even if we don't find it all, even if we found only some of it—are you with me Dick?

A cloud hangs between the two men: Dick getting tired of going along with these idiotic fantasies, and Perry terrified that Dick does not now, nor has ever, believed in his plans.

Their future together hangs in the balance.

And with easy charm, Dick pokes Perry in the ribs. Smiles.

DICK

Sure, honey, I'm with you. All the way. Our little honeymoon.

Dick strips out of his clothes, suns himself on the back of a boat.

JOSIE

So did you ever find that Peruvian whatchoomacallit down in old Mexico?

COWBOY, a tightly built Acapulcan man of 21, pilots the boat. He wears tight cut-off shorts and nothing else. He carries a deep sea fishing rod.

COWBOY

Mr. Perry sir.

Perry raises his arms. Cowboy removes Perry's shirt. Hands him the rod.

PERRY

Well, no, but we met this big German lawyer in Acapulco.

JOSIE

Acapulco! (trying to sound international) How ex-ot-que.

PERRY

Otto something, he took a real shine to Dick.

Perry steps onto the back of the boat. Casts his rod.

OTTO, a thick, hairy German tourist, in a Speedo that is perhaps three sizes too small for him, sketches Dick, who leans against the back of the boat in the nude. He fights off sea-sickness.

OTTO

Turn this way Dick. Perfect the light.

Dick, on the verge of hurling, moves gently, so Otto has a full frontal view. Otto smiles, sketches.

DICK

It's your money, Otto.

OTTO

Very manly, Dick.

PERRY

(to Dick) I bet he says that to all the boys.

JOSIE

It must be nice to go on vacation.

Dick pukes overboard.

OTTO

Dick you seem not to be looking so well as you might? I think maybe the ocean does not make you happy.

Cowboy stands in the cabin, hand on his crotch.

COWBOY

Mr. Otto, more drink for you?

OTTO

Ah, Cowboy, how could you reading my mind like that? Dick, you relax. Deep breaths.

Otto joins Cowboy in the cabin. Puts his arm around the young man; they shoot back drinks, laugh.

Dick leans over the bow of the boat. Perry is intent on his line.

PERRY

Been a fun four days on this boat, do it the rest of my life. Treasure just waiting. Sun on our backs. (to Josie) Yes sir, this is how it's supposed to be.

JOSIE

It sounds wonderful! Just got to be careful not to burn.

DICK

Then why the hell ain't you taking off those pants? You ain't been in the water since we got here.

PERRY

I told you I don't want to disgust anyone. (explaining to Josie) On account of my legs being mangled and all.

DICK

You want to be a deep sea treasure hunter, but you can't get your ass into the water? Something's off here, am I right?

A cloud crosses Perry's face.

PERRY

Fuck you.

DICK

Sorry to burst your bubble, honeypot.

PERRY

So what do we do next, Einstein?

DICK

I get a job up in Mexico City. Save our dough, see what happens.

PERRY

Jesus, Dick, I thought you had it figured out.

DICK

Honey, please, my guts on fire.

Otto sticks his head out the cabin.

OTTO

Time is setting now, boys. We must to head back in before the darkness comes.

DICK

Jesus, I'm sick. Please, baby, let's be very, very quiet.

Suddenly, Perry's line pulls tight. A large fish pulls Perry to his feet, shouting with excitement.

PERRY

Oh my God hurry hurry—

Dick, Otto and Cowboy instantly converge around Perry, whooping and hollering.

Perry struggles mightily with the fish. His face determined to conquer the wild beast at the end of the line. Slowly, he reels in the fish. The boat rocks. Closer and closer it comes to the bow. With a mighty yank, Perry pulls the catch on board.

Perry stares at the fish, an angel from heaven at the end of his line.

Behind him, Wendell stands in the kitchen doorway, watching Perry and Josie silently.

PERRY

Oh my God.

OTTO

Is very big, yes? The largest I ever have seen.

DICK

Baby, you did it.

JOSIE

You really did it.

DICK

What a fucking fish!

COWBOY

Photo for you, Mr. Perry.

He runs to get the camera. Perry stands up, holds the catch up next to him. Cowboy aims the camera.

DICK

Smile, honey. You just won the jackpot.

Perry smiles, as if every care in the world were suddenly cleansed from his mind. For a fleeting moment, Perry looks like the man he wishes he could be.

Cowboy takes the picture.

Lights out on Dick, Otto, Cowboy and the boat.

Josie applauds the end of the story.

PERRY

I think possibly that was the best day of my entire life.

JOSIE

Oh, Perry, how wonderful! A vacation might be just the thing to fix things between me and Wendell, you reckon?

WENDELL

JOSIE!

Josie jumps up as Wendell barks. Perry slits his eyes and watches.

JOSIE

Wendell, what are—

WENDELL

Get the hell away from the fucking animal now! A goddamn murderer, and you're talking to him about fishing.

Wendell approaches Josie; she backs away..

JOSIE

I'm sorry, Wendell--

WENDELL

You stupid stupid stupid woman.

JOSIE

I was just being Christian, Wen, stop, please, not in front of him--

He grabs her by the hair, yanks her across the floor.

WENDELL

Stupid woman! Stupid! Stupid!

JOSIE

Wendell no please stop my hair please stop my hair—

He backhands her across the mouth.

WENDELL

Gonna have a little talk, me and you. Stupid fucking woman.

He shoves her offstage into the bedroom.

Perry sits on the edge of his cot, sucking down aspirin. Rubbing his hands over his eyes, he hears Josie screaming and moaning from Wendell's beating.

When the beating is over, there is a silence, like after a tornado.

Wendell comes out. Approaches the cell. Stares at Perry. Perry smiles.

WENDELL

Lucky you're in that cage, boy.

PERRY

(a challenge) You're the lucky one.

WENDELL

Rip the lungs right up out of you with my bare hands.

PERRY

I'm right here, Big Man.

Wendell lunges, arms through the bars reaching for Perry's throat. Perry steps back calmly. Wendell pulls back.

WENDELL

Due process, boy. You're gonna get what's coming to you.

PERRY

And what's that?

WENDELL

Six knots at the end of a rope. Hands strapped in front of you. Pretty little black hood to cover your pretty little face. And then your body drops through the platform. Four minutes of jerking and twitching once the oxygen gets cut off to your brain. Ever been to a hanging, boy? I have.

Four minutes with a crushed windpipe, blood vessels bursting in your eyes and cheeks, face puffing out, turning blue. Tongue swelling to fill your mouth. Pants filled with shit and piss. If you're lucky, you might even shoot your last load of ejaculate right there in front of everybody.

Four minutes of nothing but you and pain, four minutes shut off

from the rest of the world, so alone you won't be able to think about nothing else except how alone you really are.

And in those four minutes, in between the pain and suffering and swelling and excrement, in between the twitching and spastic kicking, in between each second of loneliness, I want you to think about Herb and Bonnie Clutter. And then I want you to think about their two kids.

And then I want you to think of me.

Wendell walks out the door. Slams it shut. Perry sobs.

After a beat, Josie enters. Bleeding from her nose, she has a black eye. Holds a wet towel to her face. Sits far from the cell. Trembling.

Perry lights a cigarette. Holds it through the bars.

Slowly, Josie rises. Pulls herself across the kitchen. Takes the cigarette. Picks up the Bible. Sits near the cell. Takes a big hit off the cigarette.

PERRY

(quietly) Leave the cell unlocked tonight. I promise you he won't hurt you again.

Josie doesn't answer. Perry cries, stares up at the light bulb. It pulses and glows brighter for a moment.

As Josie lets out a spume of smoke, Floyd replaces Perry on the cot. Smoking. Listening to the radio.

ACT TWO, SC. 4 FLOYD WELLS' JAIL CELL

Floyd smokes a cigarette on his jail cot. Listening to a small portable radio. Christmas music fades out.

Josie sits on the other side of the bars, smoking pensively.

The News Anchorman replaces the fading Christmas Carol.

RADIO

More on the weekend weather forecast coming up, but first, this: Officers investigating the tragic slaying of four members of the Herbert W. Clutter family have appealed to the public for any information which might aid in solving this baffling crime.

Floyd sits up. Stunned.

FLOYD

Oh no. Shit.

JOSIE

Wendell—he don’t—he—

RADIO

Clutter, his wife, and their two teen-age children were found murdered in their farm home near Garden City early on the morning of November 15. Each had been bound, gagged, and shot through the head with a .12 gauge shotgun.

FLOYD

Jesus Christ.

Floyd turns the radio off. Paces around his cell.

A light rises on Dewey at his desk. Pictures sprawled on the desk. He is at the end of his rope.

Two Guards usher in Floyd Wells. He sits. Scared.

FLOYD

My life ain’t worth shit they find out I’m spillin’ on one of the b-b-boys.

JOSIE

He don’t like me talking all to you.

DEWEY

I’ll personally see to it that you are moved to another facility, and if we get the animals who did this, we’ll throw away the rest of your sentence. There’s a reward, as well, but I’m sure you know that.

FLOYD

I don’t care about the money. I just don’t think it’s right. Mr. Clutter was a fair shooter.

Lights up on the Federal Court. JUDGE TATE sits next to and above Floyd. THE PROSECUTING LAYWER paces back and forth.

Dewey writes down Floyd’s info in his office.

PROSECUTOR

Can you point out the man in question?

DEWEY

Can you tell me his name?

Floyd points. A light comes up on Dick and Perry, sitting in their chairs. Glaring at Floyd.

FLOYD

Dick Hickcock.

Dick lunges in his chair.

DICK

Motherfucker!

JUDGE TATE

(pounding gavel) Order. Order.

DEWEY/PROSECUTOR

Go on.

JOSIE

Sometimes you're stuck. Sometimes there's no way out.

FLOYD

He wanted to know if Mr. Clutter was a wealthy man. Yes, I said, he was. I said it sometimes cost him ten thousand dollars a week to run his operation. After that, Dick never stopped asking me about the family. Said him and P-P-Perry was gonna go out there and rob the p-p-place. He described to me a dozen times how he was gonna do it, how him and P-P-Perry was gonna tie them p-p-people up and gun them down. I told him, Dick, you'll never get away with it.' B-B-But I can't honestly say I tried to p-p-persuade him different.

DEWEY/LAWYER

Why not?

JOSIE

Sometimes you do things you know you shouldn't.

FLOYD

You hear p-p-plenty of talk in Lansing. Nobody takes it serious. That's why, when I hears what I heard on the radio, well, I didn't hardly b-b-believe it. Still and all, it happened. Just like Dick said it would.

JOSIE

Seems like a good idea at the time.

LAWYER

No more questions, your Honor.

JUDGE

You may step down, Mr. Wells.

JOSIE

Then you pay for it the rest of your life.

Lights down everyone but Josie. She lets out another spume of smoke as the lights rise on Perry, back in the cell on his cot.

ACT TWO, SC. 5 PERRY'S JAIL CELL

Josie and Perry smoke.

PERRY

Funny. I knew exactly what I was doing.

JOSIE

So did I. Thought so anyhow.

PERRY

Divorce his ass. Easy as pie.

JOSIE

He was such a handsome boy. One day he shows up at my Pa's store, all decked out in a uniform. Enlisted before the end of the war. So handsome, like Gary Cooper. Asked me to marry him right then and there. Swept me off my feet, only one ever did that. I felt so chosen. Told him yes right at the train station. Gave us both hope, something to wait for.

Three weeks out, he gets captured, spends a year in that God-awful camp. Knocked all his teeth out when he refused to eat the dog poop the first time. After that, went down easier, I guess. A year in there turned him into somebody else. I was still home, waiting. Praying to Jesus for to bring him back alive.

And he did. But you could see something was dead inside. In his eyes. Got married anyway, gal of my word. Was the least I could do after what he went through. I thought I could take care of him, such a sad little boy with no teeth. And those big eyes.

During the honeymoon, I should have known. He kept waking up, screaming, swinging those fists. First time he hit me he was asleep. Bad dreams, I guess.

But then he started doing it awake, like he couldn't say what he needed, his thoughts got all clotted-like inside him, so he used his

hands. I prayed for strength, but he could go off on me about anything. I thought maybe if we had a child, he would change. See life different.

Right after he joined the department, we had relations again. On our anniversary. Three weeks later, there's a little Wendell growing inside me, size of my thumbnail. A miracle from God.

Made a dinner with candles and all, my special meatloaf and biscuits. I could feel his son inside me, wanting to say hi to his Daddy. But before I could tell him, Wendell starts choking on a biscuit. So I slap him on the back, to help him is all. Never even saw his hand pop me in the face, he was on me before I hit the floor. Broke my nose. Then he looks at me, covered in my own blood, he starts bawling like a baby.

I was at the top of the stairs, bleeding, heading to the doctor. And all I could see was those fists and how big he was and how long our lives were gonna be and I could feel this tiny baby inside me. I saw what his life was gonna be like with his daddy. I loved that little baby more than Jesus, I wanted to be a good mother. I wanted to make him safe. I wanted to save him. So I threw myself down the stairs. I could hear my baby crying all the way down. By the time I hit the landing, I couldn't hear him no more.

I never told Wendell. He still don't know.

Perry stomps out his cigarette. Josie exits.

A light comes up on Perry and Dick in a hotel room in Mexico.

ACT TWO, SC. 6 MEXICO, PERRY AND DICK'S HOTEL ROOM

Perry finishes boxing up his belongings. Dick lies on top of INEZ, a young Mexican woman. They are naked. Dick pounds away at her, thrusting himself in and out, grunting, working up a sweat.

She smokes a cigarette while he pistons into her.

DICK

(to Inez) Is it good, baby? Is it good?

PERRY

For Christ's sake, Dick, will you hurry up? Our day here ends at 2pm. Unless you have the money to pay for another night.

DICK

Baby oh baby...

PERRY

I have to get to the post office and send this off to Vegas before we leave. You got the bus tickets, right?

DICK

Is it good?

PERRY

Wish I could find the bastard who stole my guitar, I'd break his neck clean and easy.

DICK

Shut up, I'm trying to concentrate.

PERRY

You said you were going to get some honest work down here.

DICK

For Christ's sake, you know what they pay a real mechanic ? Two dollars a week! Forget it, we're going back to the States. Unless you want to split up and stay here.

PERRY

I still say we hang out down here, get a boat, go after that buried treasure.

DICK

C'mon, baby, tell me it's good.

PERRY

She doesn't speak English, Dick!

DICK

(in a sudden rage) Goddamnit, Perry. There ain't no caskets of gold. No sunken ship. And even if there was, hell you can't even swim. Take your head outta your ass and wake up!

Dick's tirade hits Perry like a lover slamming their way out the door.

PERRY

I, well, I mean I thought you believed in it, too.

DICK

Is it good?

PERRY

I thought you believed in me.

Dick finally climaxes. Rolls off Inez.

INEZ

Hey, was it good?

She snuffs out her cigarette. She gets out of bed, throws on her clothes and walks into the next scene as Barbara. Lights down on Perry and Dick.

ACT TWO, SC. 7 SAN FRANCISCO, PERRY'S SISTER'S HOME

The Johnson household.

Barbara Johnson finishes dressing for company as she speaks with Nye.

BARBARA

I'm sorry, it's just I'm expecting company in a few minutes.

NYE

You understand, Mrs. Johnson. It won't take more than a few minutes. See, we're working on the assumption that your brother will contact you. Write or call. Or come to see you.

BARBARA

He thinks I'm still in Denver. Please, if you do find him, don't give him my address. I'm afraid.

NYE

You think he might harm you?

BARBARA

I'm afraid of him. I always have been. He can seem so warm-hearted and sympathetic. Gentle. He cries so easily. Sometimes music sets him off, sometimes a sunset. Sometimes the moon. Oh, he can fool you. He can make you feel so sorry for him. The last time I saw him, he'd had too much to drink—

NYE

Yes? What happened?

Lights up on Perry, wolfing a sausage down his throat. Tex swoops in, tries to gab the sausage out of his hand.

They wrestle savagely across the floor for the food. Perry has his hands around his father's throat, slams his head into the floor. He gets up, wolfs the sausage down fast, panting.

BARBARA

We were discussing his childhood . My father always favored Perry, took him to live for a while in Alaska.

Tex rises to his knees, holding his throat and gagging.

TEX

Choke your own Daddy--

NYE

Did he say anything that gave you cause to fear him?

TEX

Bastard--

BARBARA

They'd had a fight.

TEX

Selfish greedy bastard.

BARBARA

Perry tried to strangle him over a sausage.

TEX

That's MY sausage!

Perry lunges forward. Grabs Barbara by the shoulders, pressing her up against a wall.

PERRY

I was his nigger, get me?

TEX

You're nothing, get me?!

BARBARA

Stop it!

PERRY

Somebody he would work their guts out and never have to pay them one hot dime.

TEX

Go on, get out.

PERRY

I was starving!

TEX

Get out!!

BARBARA

Daddy loves you! You're his favorite, always were!

PERRY

No, Bobo, I'm talking. Shut up.

TEX

Never no use to nobody--

BARBARA

You can't blame all the bad things in your life on Daddy!

TEX

Shoulda drowned you at birth like the runt you are--

PERRY

Shut up, or I'll throw you in the river.

He pulls back his fist, slams the wall near the side of her head.

BARBARA

Perry, stop!

PERRY

Like on that bridge in Japan, that guy just standing and staring at me, I picked him up and threw him in the river.

Tex grabs his shotgun. Points it right at Perry. Cocks it.

BARBARA

(crying) You're scaring me.

TEX

Look at me Perry!

PERRY

Please, Bobo. Please stop crying and listen. You think I like myself? Imagine the man I could have been! But that bastard never gave me a chance. He wouldn't let me go to school. Kept me ignorant, so I could be his slave forever.

TEX

I'm the last living thing you're ever gonna see.

BARBARA

It's your life, do something with it!

Tex pulls the trigger. Nothing. Tries again. No shells.

Tex drops the gun. Sinks to his knees, crying pathetically.

PERRY

I hate you, all of you. Dad and everybody. I should throw you all into the river. No, I should kill myself, then you'd see, then you'd all see--

He releases Barbara. Lights out on Tex.

Perry staggers back, weeping. Sits on his jail cot under the naked glare of the light bulb. As he cries, the light bulb glows brighter, as if calling to him.

Nye approaches Barbara with a tissue. Barbara takes it, wipes her tears away.

BARBARA

My guests should be here any minute now.

NYE

I'm sorry to have upset you. That's all for now.

BARBARA

Please don't tell him where I live.

NYE

I appreciate your help.

Perry swipes at the light bulb with his towel. Misses. Keeps trying.

BARBARA

Mr. Nye?

NYE

Yes?

BARBARA

The violence, the suicide. Sometimes I'm so afraid it's going to catch up to me. I have a life here. But Perry, my brother and sister, my mother. I don't want that for me. Or my kids.

Perry smashes the light bulb with the towel. Shards of glass fall to the floor. He picks one up.

Lights out on Barbara and Nye.

ACT TWO, SC. 8

Perry cries on the edge of the bed, the shard of glass on his wrist. He shakes, trying to find the moment of courage to slice into his flesh.

PERRY

Help me—

Behind him, a light rises on Flo, holding her bullwhip. She snaps it hard.

Perry lifts the glass above his wrist. Flo snaps the bullwhip again. Loud Cherokee music blasts forth.

Perry slowly lowers the glass to his wrist, but before he can slice his skin, Josie enters. The lights go out on Flo. The music vanishes.

Josie stands still, on the other side of the cell door.

JOSIE

(like a stern mother) You put that down right now, young man.

PERRY

I'm going to die anyway.

JOSIE

We all are. Put it down.

PERRY

Then what's the difference?

JOSIE

God only gives us one gift in this world, Perry. One. You throw it away, you throw it back in his face, there's no forgiveness. It's the one crime that has no pardon, and no punishment. He turns his back on you. And you're alone. Forever.

PERRY

You got no idea what it's like.

JOSIE

No. And yes.

PERRY

Big deal, you killed your kid. Big fucking mercy killing, sparing him a life of nothing. People will understand that. That's an act of charity. You can forgive that. But what I did, there's no reason. There's no forgiveness. I don't want to be alone.

He cries harder, tries to force the shard to his wrist.

PERRY

Make me brave--

Josie takes the key out of her pocket. Opens the cell door. Closes it behind her.

Stands across from Perry. They lock eyes. She slowly makes her way to him.

JOSIE

I lied to you, Perry.

PERRY

Get out of here—

JOSIE

I wasn't thinking about my baby. I wasn't trying to save him.

PERRY

I don't care—

JOSIE

All I could think of was Wendell and how much he hurt me.
That's what I was thinking about at the top of those stairs, how
angry I was.

Pause.

JOSIE

I'm just like you, Perry. I killed my baby out of anger. And I'm
gonna pay for it the rest of my life. You kill yourself, you throw
away the light inside you--the light you were born with. And
that's the worst crime of all.

PERRY

And what if I take this glass and slice you up, leave you dead on
the floor and run out, take my chances? Done it before, one more
will just be one more.

JOSIE

You won't do that.

PERRY

I will, I will do that.

JOSIE

You won't.

PERRY

How the hell do you know?

JOSIE

Because you got good in you, boy.

PERRY

I'm don't.

JOSIE

Deep down inside, you got the light. I know you do.

She extends her hand to him. But he grabs her, takes the glass, holds it to her throat.

PERRY

Cut you and leave you in a pool of blood, just like that family in their pajamas. Run out that door and keep on running.

JOSIE

Can't outrun destiny, Perry. Your own words.

PERRY

One clean swipe, Josie that's all it takes—

JOSIE

You have to pay for your crimes. That's your destiny.

PERRY

I'm gonna kill you, I swear to fucking Jesus—

JOSIE

You want to kill me, go on. Believe me, it would be a relief.

Perry prepares to slice the glass into Josie's throat. She closes her eyes.

He hurls the glass out of the cell. Releases Josie. Kneels by his bed, crying.

Josie walks slowly to the cell door. Opens it. Closes it slowly from the other side.

Locks it. Smiles at Perry.

JOSIE

Who's my good boy?

Lights down on Josie and Perry.

ACT TWO, SC. 9 HICKCOCK HOME

Walter and Eunice at the kitchen table, their dinner sits interrupted in front of them. Walter looks defeated, empty. Eunice puts on a smile, but her sweet face carries the weight of her son's misdeeds.

Al Dewey scribbles notes in a pad as he listens to the couple.

DEWEY

--And we believe that Dick may be passing along bad checks, that's all. Any information you can give us would be a big help in finding him before he gets into any more trouble.

WALTER

Dick promised me he was through writing the bad checks, but I'm not surprised. I tell you, Mr. Dewey, I've not got long, I'm with cancer, and Dick knowed that. Not a month ago, before he took off, he told me—

Dick and Perry carry dinner plates and join the Hickcocks at the table. Eunice glares at Perry.

DICK

Dad, you've been a pretty good old dad to me. I'm not ever gonna do nothing more to hurt you. I'm gonna bring in a good, clean paycheck, get you the finest doctor's money can buy—

EUNICE

Do you hear that, Walter?

DICK

We'll beat this thing yet, you and me, Pop.

EUNICE

(to Dewey) He meant it too.

WALTER

(to Dewey) Lord knows I wanted to believe him. (to Dick) Pass the potatoes, will you, Dick?

DICK

Sure thing, Pop.

WALTER

(to Dewey) I don't know what happened.

PERRY

The roast beef is magnificent, Mrs. Hickcock.

EUNICE

That friend of his. That's what happened.

Dewey holds up one of the two small photos he has in his lap.

DEWEY

Perry Smith.

WALTER

A Mexican, maybe. Something funny about him. Mentioned Vegas, Las Vegas. Wanted to go back and get his stuff out of hock.

DEWEY

You mean like from a pawn shop.

WALTER

That's right.

EUNICE

I wouldn't have him in this house. One look and I saw what he was. With his perfume. And his oily hair. (to Dick) I wish you'd given me some warning, Dick.

DICK

Perry just came in today, Ma, I told you.

EUNICE

I know what you told me. (to Dewey) Mr. Dewey, sure as I'm sitting here, Perry Smith was the one put him up to writing them checks.

WALTER

You boys heading out tonight?

DEWEY

Now, on this weekend trip, where did they go?

DICK

Perry's sister lives all the way down in Fort Scott, Dad, eight hours there and back.

DEWEY

I see. An overnight trip.

DICK

(to Walter) His sister owes him about \$1,500 right Perry?

DEWEY

Which means they left here sometime Saturday, November 14th?

PERRY

Right.

DEWEY

And returned Sunday, November 15th.

EUNICE

Sunday noon.

PERRY

Dick was nice enough to offer to drive me down.

WALTER

(to Dewey) Said he was looking forward to a second chance.

DEWEY

A second chance.

PERRY

Don't worry, Mrs. Hickcock—

EUNICE

(to Perry) I want you out of this house! Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to say that.

Perry sulks.

DEWEY

And what did Smith do then?

WALTER

Clammed right up.

EUNICE

Thank Jesus they left right after.

Perry and Dick leave the table.

DEWEY

Did you notice anything strange about Dick when he returned?

WALTER

He was mighty hungry. Started piling his plate before I'd finished the blessing. Dick, I said, you're shoveling it in as fast as you can work your elbow. Don't you mean to leave nothing for the rest of us?

EUNICE

Pickles. He can eat a whole tub of pickles.

WALTER

And after dinner, he fell fast asleep. When we was watching basketball. Never seen the like.

Dewey picks up a shotgun sitting in the corner.

DEWEY

You do much hunting, Mr. Hickcock?

WALTER

That's his gun. Dick's. Him and our other boy David go out once in a while. After rabbits, mostly. .12 gauge.

Lights up on Judge Tate and the Prosecuting Attorney. The Prosecutor lifts the gun out of Dewey's hands, brings it to the Judge.

PROSECUTOR

Your honor, I present Exhibit A, a .12 gauge Savage shotgun. The murder weapon used to kill Herb Clutter and his family.

Walter addresses the Judge. Breaks down in tears. Seems to age 12 years by the end of the speech.

WALTER

Your honor, sir, my boy may have some bad sides, with the fake checks and what not, but murder, he's nowhere near bad as that. Smitty's the one. Dick told me he didn't even know it when Smitty attacked the man, cut his throat. Dick wasn't even in the same room. He only run in when he heard them struggling. Dick was carrying the shotgun, and how he described it was "Smitty took my shotgun and just blew that man's head off." And he says, "Dad, I ought to have grabbed back the gun and shot Smitty dead. Killed him 'fore he killed the rest of that family. If I'd done it I'd be better off than I am now." I guess he would, too. He's a good boy, but how it is, the way folks feel, he don't stand no chance. They'll hang them both. And having your boy hang, knowing he will, nothing worse can happen to a man. Nothing.

Lights out on the Judge and Prosecutor.

Walter covers his face, embarrassed by his tears. Slumping in his chair.

Eunice hugs Walter. They sigh. Dewey makes a few more notes.

EUNICE

You have children, Mr. Dewey?

DEWEY

Two boys.

EUNICE

Then you know how it is.

DEWEY

One thing more. Have you any idea, any at all, where your son might have gone?

WALTER

Open a map. Point your finger—maybe that's it.

Lights down on Walter, Eunice, and Dewey.

ACT TWO, SC. 10 HIGHWAY IN THE DESSERT

Perry and Dick stand on the highway. Thumbs out for a ride. A swollen straw suitcase at Perry's side.

They look the worse for wear. Tired, hungry, broke.

The sun beats down on them.

PERRY

So glad you have it all figured out, Dick. No car, no money, no food.

DICK

Get off my case, honey. It's called going with the flow.

PERRY

I'm starving.

DICK

What I'd give for a pint of Orange Blossom and some squeaky clean Girl Scout pussy right about now.

PERRY

Jesus Christ, Dick, I don't want to hear that crap out of you anymore.

DICK

You don't know what you're missing til you pop yourself some 12 year old cherry, boy.

PERRY

I'm gonna kill you, Dick, you don't exercise some goddamn self-control fast.

DICK

You got the rock?

Perry pulls a sharp rock out of his pocket.

PERRY

Yes, Dick, I have the rock.

DICK

Remember, when I say Pass me a match, that's when you pound the bastard in the head, I grab the wheel. We bury the sonofabitch out here, and we're home free.

PERRY

I've been hearing the same song for three days, Dick. I know what to do.

They put their thumbs out again. Nothing.

PERRY

How long you think we can keep out-running destiny? Sooner or later, we're gonna slam right into it.

DICK

You want to know about destiny? Here it comes.

A car pulls over to the side of the road. MR. BELL, a traveling salesman in his 40s, smiles, opens the passenger door.

DICK

See, baby? Trust in me and I will provide.

PERRY

My legs are throbbing.

DICK

Remember, when I say Pass me a match—

PERRY

I know what to goddamn do.

DICK

Don't get all pissypants on me, honey. Just hit him with the rock.

They hop in the car, Dick in the passenger seat beside Mr. Bell, and Perry in the back seat, sitting right behind the driver.

MR. BELL

Well, boys, I can take you as far as Omaha, if that's towards where you're heading.

DICK

That's perfect. Me and my pal were thinking of rustling up some work up in Omaha. See what we can see.

MR. BELL

Jimmy Bell here, damn pleased to meet you.

DICK

I'm Dick, and this here is my pal, Perry. Say hello Perry.

Perry puts a bottle of aspirin to his mouth, chomps on some dry.

PERRY

Hello.

DICK

Whowee, will you just look at that watch?

MR. BELL

Yep, she's a beaut alright, ain't she?

DICK

Watch like that must cost a pretty goddamn penny, say five, six hundred dollars? Always wanted a watch like that.

MR. BELL

Well, not one to brag, but I do alright for myself, Midwest rep for Brock and Brock electrical supply. Huge domain, keeps me out on the road three weeks to the month.

Perry slowly removes the rock from his pocket. Rubs his throbbing legs.

DICK

I'm a first class car painter. Mechanic, too. I'm used to making real money. My buddy and me, we just been down in Old Mexico. Our idea was, we wanted to live down there. But hell, they don't pay any wages. Nothing a white man could live off of.

MR. BELL

Ah, Mexico. Me and the wife honeymooned in Cuernavaca. Lovely little town. Been meaning to go back. But it's hard to move around when you got five kids, am I right?

PERRY

Five kids, huh?

MR. BELL

Two boys, three girls.

PERRY

Dick loves kids, don't you, Dick?

MR. BELL

Yeah, me too. But sometimes I like to keep the company of adults.
Kids have a way of sucking up everything you got.

Perry shares a look with Dick: let's do it.

DICK

Hey, I got a funny one for you, though you don't want to repeat it
to your kids, yet.

MR. BELL

Go on, I love a good joke.

Perry lifts the rock, still concealed behind Mr. Bell.

DICK

Here's a riddle. The riddle is: What's the similarity between a trip
to the bathroom and a trip to the cemetery?

MR. BELL

A trip to the bathroom and a trip to the cemetery.

DICK

Give up?

MR. BELL

Go on, tell me.

DICK

When you gotta go, you gotta go.

MR. BELL

When you—

Mr. Bell laughs, more a barking cackle than a laugh. It builds and fills the car.

Perry presses his hands to his eyes, trying to blot out a memory.

Lights up on Tex. Laughing the same barking laugh as Mr. Bell.

DICK

Hey, Perry, pass me a match willya? Perry?

Perry shakes his head clear. Lights out on Tex.

MR. BELL

Damn, that's a good one.

DICK

Yeah. Perry, pass me a match.

Perry raises the rock slowly. Shaking, sweating. Poised to slam it into the back of Mr. Bell's skull.

Lights up on a man in Army clothes with a large duffel bag. He stands on the side of the road with his thumb out.

Mr. Bell slows the car to a stop.

Perry pulls the rock back, puts it in his pocket.

MR. BELL

Gotta help our boys in uniform, right?

DICK

Yep. That's right.

PERRY

Destiny, Dick.

MR. BELL

What's that?

Dick shoots Perry a harsh glance.

DICK

Oh, my friend was just saying how you were meant to pick this guy up, am I right, Perry?

PERRY

Something like that.

Lights out on Perry, Dick, Mr. Bell and the Soldier.

ACT TWO, SC. 11 A BARN IN OMAHA

A cold, dark barn. Thunder and lightning mix with the lashing rain outside.

Dick and Perry run in from the storm, wet and freezing.

Perry drops to his knees in the hay. Dick shadow boxes in order to stay warm.

Lights slowly rise on the Clutters. They form a wide circle around the boys. And watch.

PERRY

So cold.

DICK

Goddamn goddamn goddamn goddamn goddamn.

PERRY

Any Hershey's left? I'm starving, man.

DICK

We finished it yesterday. Here, Doublemint. Chew nice and slow.

PERRY

(grabs a piece of gum from Dick) Man with all the big plans.
Goddamn loser.

DICK

Let off it, willya?

PERRY

The perfect score. A home run. And I'm chewing gum like it was
a goddamn T-bone steak.

DICK

Just let me think already.

PERRY

I'm so cold. I'm so cold I wouldn't give a rat's ass if this barn
caught fire and burned me alive.

DICK

Got to think.

PERRY

We're paying now. For what we done. Back there.

DICK

(in a rage) Goddamnit, I told you to drop that shit, Perry. We did
it perfect, just like we planned.

PERRY

No, just like YOU planned. Goddamn clown, that's what you are.

DICK

What you call me, midget ?

PERRY

A goddamn clown and I got half a mind to snap your neck here and now.

DICK

Whenever you want to try, honey.

PERRY

Chewing gum, you got me feeding on goddamn Doublemint.

DICK

It's something.

PERRY

I told you I like Juicy Fruit!

DICK

Just take what you get.

PERRY

Jesus. Like I'm drowning in ice.

DICK

Shake it up baby, keep your body moving. Come on, keep moving.

He helps Perry to his feet. Perry blind-sides him, slamming his fist into Dick's temple.

Dick staggers back.

PERRY

No witnesses, that's what you said.

Perry lands a fist into Dick's gut.

DICK

Oooff—bastard—

PERRY

We're paying now, Dick. Those people in that house, the girl, the boy, they're laughing at us. And it's all because of you.

He holds Dick up, rears back a fist. But Dick blocks and knees Perry in the groin. Perry drops to his knees, panting.

DICK

You're the one said let's go to Mexico. Buried treasure! What a goddamn fool you are.

PERRY

(panting) My balls—

DICK

Little boy with big dreams, gonna be a singer, gonna find sunken treasure. I'm disgusted with myself for associating with you all this time.

Dick kicks Perry in the gut. Perry staggers, slowly gets to his feet.

PERRY

A radio, Dick we killed that family for a goddamn radio.

DICK

They mean nothing to me, little girl, nothing. All the money they had, and you know they had it, why should I care about them? What about me? Why should they get it all and I get nothing?

Dick jabs at Perry's face. Again. Again. Again. Perry's arms hang at his sides, he is wobbly, hurt.

PERRY

Set for life, that's what you said.

DICK

Should have shot you dead along with them.

Dick swings but Perry ducks, slams his fist into Dicks' balls. Dick doubles over. Perry pulls Dick's shirt over his head.

PERRY

Call me a midget, huh?

Perry pounds blows upon Dick's back and head.

DICK

I'm sorry, stop—

PERRY

I been dreaming all my life about that gold—

Perry rips the shirt off Dick's head. Grabs him around the ribs, trying to squeeze the life out of his partner.

Dick moans in agony.

DICK

Stop, my ribs, Perry don't, I gotta think, don't, please stop—

PERRY

Wasted my life because of you—

DICK

Can't breathe—

PERRY

All your fault--

DICK

I said stop—

Dick slams his hands across Perry's ears.

Perry drops Dick, staggers away across the barn, holding his ears. Dick holds his ribs, sucks in breaths. Charges after Perry, but Perry stops him with a mule kick to the guts.

Dick drops to his knees.

Perry grabs him by the hair and belt, lifts him to his feet, slams him head first into a large, hard object covered by a tarp. Dick drops to his knees.

Perry grabs Dick's hair. Slams his head repeatedly into the hard object.

Suddenly stops. Let's go of Dick. Looks at the covered object. Raps on it, hitting metal.

He pulls the tarp off, revealing a two-door Chevy.

PERRY

Dick, look. It's a goddamn car.

DICK

Don't say I never use my head. Owwww--

Perry checks the ignition.

PERRY

Hot damn, the keys are in the ignition! Dick, the keys—

DICK

Jeez, my head, Perry--

PERRY

I'm so hungry.

DICK

We need money. And I know how to get it.

Lights down on Perry and Dick.

Lights out on the Clutters.

ACT TWO, SC. 12 LAS VEGAS

Lights up on a flop house in Vegas. An old neon sign flashes its worn message: OOMS.

LOLA, a weathered, peroxide blonde of over 40, chain-smokes cheap cigarettes, stands behind the front counter. A beer can in front of her.

Dewey stands on the other side of the counter. Writes notes in his pad.

LOLA

You come all the way to Vegas to catch some runt because of parole? Well, I'm just a dizzy blonde, I believe you. But I wouldn't be telling that tale to any brunettes.

DEWEY

We ran a check on the local pawn shops. A Perry Smith listed this hotel as his place of residence.

LOLA

Yeah, he was here the beginning of November. Cute little thing, if you like gorillas. And you oughta hear him talk. Big, long words coming at you in this kinda lispy, whispery voice. Quite a personality. Tried to sweet talk me out of paying rent the last week he was here.

She snorts sips her beer.

DEWEY

While he was here, what did he do with himself? Does he have any friends?

LOLA

You think I keep an eye on every crawly that comes in here? Bums. Punks. I'm not interested. I got a daughter married big-big. No friends I know of. Sold his car to some colored, said he needed dough for a bus ticket.

DEWEY

Any idea where he was going?

LOLA

Play fair. Any money on the table? A reward? Because I got the impression wherever he was going he didn't mean to stay long. That he meant to cut back here. Sorta been expecting him to turn up any day. Look at this.

She disappears behind the counter, lifts up the box that Perry shipped from Mexico.

DEWEY

Bingo.

LOLA

Had it shipped here from Mexico. Figure he'd come in for it. Take a look.

Dewey opens the box.

DEWEY

"Beware! Property of Perry E. Smith! Beware!!"

LOLA

Cute, huh?

DEWEY

What have we got here?

He pulls items out of the box: bottles of aspirin, maps, white towels.

LOLA

Hey, the runt stole my towels! Figures.

DEWEY

Hello and Merry Christmas.

Dewey pulls out a pair of boots, turns them over to look at the soles. His eyes light up.

LOLA

Junk. Nothing but trash.

DEWEY

Diamond pattern soles.

LOLA

Hot dog. Anything else, I'm a busy gal.

DEWEY

(hands her his card) Here's my card. He comes back here, I'd appreciate a call.

LOLA

What's in it for me?

DEWEY

The thrill of doing a good deed.

LOLA

What do I look like, the Virgin Mary?

DEWEY

Kind of.

LOLA

Cute.

DEWEY

You sure are.

LOLA

Full of butter, ain'tcha?

DEWEY

Call any time, day or night.

LOLA

That an invitation?

She slips the card into her bosom. Smiles.

Lights out on Lola and Dewey.

ACT TWO, SC. 13 COURTROOM

Lights up on the Judge. The Prosecutor circles the witness stand.

Al Dewey sits on the witness stand.

PROSECUTOR

Can you go back a moment, and tell the Judge how you managed to catch Perry Smith and Richard Hickcock.

DEWEY

Yes, sir. We knew they were going to head to Vegas, so we had an all points out on them. They were driving a stolen car with hot plates.

Lights up on Perry and Dick in the car.

As they look for the flophouse, neither notices the police car that suddenly trails behind them.

DICK

So first thing, we stop at an officer's uniform supply store. Get me rigged up like some Air Force Captain. Gonna work the strip, hard and fast baby, just how I like it.

PERRY

One more block then take another left.

TWO COPS watch the stolen car. The cop in the passenger seat speaks into his squawker.

DICK

You watch me, honey, gonna lay a bundle of confetti like it was New Year's Eve. We can raise three, four thousand dollars over night, I kid you not.

DEWEY

Hickcock later said he was planning on making the fast money and leaving Smith that same night. Had enough of his "aches and ills, his superstitions, the weepy, womanly eyes, the nagging, whispering voice."

PERRY

If recollection serves me...

DEWEY

"He was like a wife that must be got rid of. And there was one way to do it. Say nothing and go."

The neon sign appears, blinking 'OOMS.'

PERRY

This is it, stop.

DEWEY

"Or shoot him in his sleep. One or the other."

DICK

Gonna be perfect, trust me

PERRY

Whatever. I just want my maps back.

Suddenly, the cops pop on their cherry top. The boys freeze in the front seat as the red light swirls behind them.

The cops go to Perry and Dick, escort them each to separate interrogation rooms. [Note: Their chairs, on-stage, are side by side, though in separate rooms.]

Nye walks slowly around Dick, who sits smoking.

Perry sits smoking in his chair. Rubbing his legs.

DEWEY

The suspects were caught December 30. A day before New Year's Eve. Inspector Nye and myself flew out immediately. Arrived at the local jail, and sequestered them in separate cars to the local headquarters. I handled Smith, Lieutenant Nye handled Hickcock.

Dewey takes his place next to Perry. Perry sucks down aspirin, chews them

The men circle around their respective killers slowly.

One by one, the Clutter ghosts appear from the shadows. Watching the interrogation.

NYE

Now, Mr. Hickcock—

DICK

Dick. Please.

NYE

Dick, we want to talk to you about your activities since your parole. To our knowledge, you've gone on at least two big check sprees in the Kansas City area.

DICK

Perry, my buddy Perry Smith, was paroled in the spring. When I come out, I get a letter from him. The idea was we would go to Acapulco, buy a fishing boat, and run it ourselves, take tourists deep-sea fishing.

PERRY

I told him I had a sister in Fort Scott, owed me a good sum, would he drive me there.

DICK

So I did.

DEWEY

That would be November 14th, a Saturday.

PERRY

Yes, sir. Didn't have her address--

DICK

So we went to the post office.

DEWEY

And once you found out your sister had moved, what did you do then, in Fort Scott?

PERRY

Walked around.

DICK

Tried to find some nice fresh pussy.

PERRY

And we did. Found two gals.

DICK

Drove out to the Fun Haven Motel. Little did we know these gals would clean out our wallets before we woke up.

NYE

And when you got home, what did you do?

PERRY

Slept all day at the Hotel Olathe.

DICK

Ate like a crazy man. Watched some basketball. Fell asleep.

PERRY

But we were still going to Mexico. I have these maps, see...

DICK

That's when we started hanging paper. Made a quick bundle, then lit out of there for good.

PERRY

We had no intention of ever returning state-side. We were going to buy the boat, go deep sea fishing, dive for--

DEWEY

(cutting off Perry) I guess you realize we wouldn't have come all the way to Nevada just to chat with a couple of two-bit check chisellers.

NYE

Would we, Dick?

DICK

What?

NYE

Come this far to talk about a bunch of checks.

PERRY

I can't think of any other reason.

DEWEY

Ever heard of the Clutters?

NYE

Dick, you heard about the Clutter murders?

Both Dick and Perry fidget, trying unsuccessfully to hide their anxiety.

PERRY

You got an aspirin? My legs are killing me.

DICK

Whoa, now, I'm no goddamn killer.

NYE

The question asked, was whether you heard of the Clutter murders.

PERRY

I may have read something.

DEWEY

A vicious crime. Vicious. Cowardly.

NYE

And almost perfect. But you made two mistakes, Dick. You left a witness, a living witness who'll testify in court.

DEWEY

Who'll stand in that witness box and tell a jury how Richard Hickcock and Perry Smith bound and gagged and slaughtered four helpless people.

DICK

I said Whoa! There ain't nobody can connect me with any goddamn murder. Checks. A little petty thievery. But I'm no goddamn killer.

DEWEY

Then why have you been lying to us?

PERRY

I've been telling you the truth.

NYE

What about Saturday afternoon, when you got to Fort Scott?

DICK

What about it?

DEWEY

When you got there you went to the post office?

PERRY

Yes. Like I told you. But they said she'd moved.

DEWEY

On Saturday afternoons the Fort Scott post office happens to be closed. Your second mistake, well, why don't I show you?

He goes to behind a desk, pulls up the box Perry shipped from Mexico. Pulls out the diamond patterned boot.

Dick starts to hyperventilate.

DEWEY

This is a one-on-one reproduction of the diamond pattern boot print found near Mr. Clutter's body. Your boots, Perry.

PERRY

You can't pin this on me. I'm being set up.

NYE

Here's what's going to happen. You'll be taken back to Kansas. Charged on four counts of first-degree murder.

DEWEY

Count One: That on or about the fifteenth of November, 1959, one Richard Eugene Hickcock and Perry Smith did unlawfully, feloniously, willfully and with deliberation and premeditation, and while being engaged in the perpetration of a felony, kill and take the life of Herbert W. Clutter.

NYE

Count Two: That on or about the fifteenth of November, 1959, the same Richard Eugene Hickcock and Perry Smith did unlawfully —

Dick cracks.

DICK

(impulsively) Perry Smith killed the Clutters. It was Perry. I couldn't stop him. He killed them all.

Dick faints, falls out of his chair. Lights out on Dick and Nye.

The Clutter ghosts recede back into the darkness. Disappear.

Perry sits with a blank expression, rubbing his legs. Tries to remain calm.

DEWEY

Your friend Dick confessed, Perry. Says he tried to stop you. But couldn't. Says it's all your fault.

PERRY

Uh huh.

DEWEY

Yes, sir, Perry, it's all your fault. Hickcock himself, he says he wouldn't harm the fleas on a dog.

PERRY

No, just run over the dog.

DEWEY

Says you're a natural born killer. Says it doesn't bother you a bit. Says one time out there in Las Vegas you went after a colored man with a bicycle chain. Whipped him to death. For fun.

PERRY

(spits on the ground, disgusted) I never killed any nigger.

DEWEY

That's not what your friend says.

PERRY

Real brass boy.

DEWEY

He said he was scared you'd shoot him, too.

PERRY

(a big realization) So Dick was afraid of me? That's amusing. I'm very amused. What he don't know, I almost did shoot him.

DEWEY

Tell me about it, Perry.

PERRY

I'm thinking. I want to get this right. See, after he got out, he sent me a letter, said he had a sure fire cinch. The perfect score. Dick must have said it a million times.

Lights up on Dick sitting in his car, in the dark long driveway to the Clutters.

DICK

No witnesses.

Perry joins Dick in the front seat. Picks up the shotgun sitting on the passenger side. Puts it on his lap.

DEWEY

How many witnesses did he expect to find in the Clutter house that night?

DICK

I don't know, maybe 4, 6, maybe 8. But they all gotta go, am I right?

PERRY

That seems like a lot, no?

DICK

It don't matter, honey, cuz we're going in there and splatter the walls with hair.

DEWEY

And you went with him.

PERRY

I wanted the money as much as he did.

DEWEY

And what time do you think this was?

DICK

Probably after midnight by now. We should do it.

PERRY

Look at this spread. The barns, the house.

DICK

Don't tell me this guy ain't loaded.

PERRY

I don't know. Something's not right. It's almost too good. I got a funny feeling.

DICK

Don't get bubbles on me now, baby. This is our destiny, let's get in there and start shooting it up. And remember, no witnesses.

PERRY

No witnesses.

DICK

No witnesses.

PERRY

(to Dewey) Just then the oddest thing--

A shooting star flies by in the night.

DICK

Make a wish, honey.

PERRY

A shooting star passed by. And that got me all willied out. Like a bad omen, something falling out of the sky. So I turned to him and I say, Count me out.

DICK

Goddamnit, here I've set up this big score, we've come all this way, and you want to chicken out.

PERRY

Don't be sore, Dick.

DICK

Maybe you think I ain't got the guts to do it alone. But by God I'll show you who's got guts. Gimme some more of that Orange Blossom.

Perry pulls out a pint bottle from the glove compartment. Takes a swig and passes it to Dick, who sucks it down.

PERRY

I'm saying if one wanted to turn back, now's the time to do it.

DICK

We're here, we can't turn back. We back away now, we'll regret it the rest of our lives. I don't want to be a loser, Perry, not again.

PERRY

(to Dewey) I didn't want to let him down, you see? (to Dick) Okay, Dick. I'm with you.

DICK

That's the spirit. Paint the walls with hair, baby!

Lights up on the Clutter house. Herb asleep on the first floor, Bonnie, Nancy and Kenyon asleep upstairs.

Dick and Perry get out of the car, put on gloves. Dick carries the flashlight and knife. Perry holds the shotgun and rope.

DEWEY

Hickcock had the knife, you had the gun.

Dick enters the front, unlocked door, Perry follows. They enter Herb's darkened office.

DICK

According to my diagram, this here should be the office. With the safe.

Dick immediately starts tapping the wall behind the desk. Finds nothing.

Perry picks up a pair of binoculars. Dick gets agitated, still not finding the safe.

DEWEY

And what did you find?

PERRY

(to Dewey) A pair of binoculars. (to Dick) I'm taking these with us. (to Dewey) Sold them in Mexico.

DICK

Jesus it's gotta be here somewhere.

PERRY

Did you look behind the desk, where you said it would be?

DICK

(hissing) Yes I looked behind the desk.

They both start looking under papers, tossing photos from the wall, creating a mess as they look.

DICK

This ain't getting us nowhere. Wait, let me think.

PERRY

Ain't no money here. Your information was wrong. Let's go.

DICK

I ain't leaving without that money goddamnit.

DEWEY

That when you woke up Herb?

They walk to a room off the office. Open the door. Shine the flashlight on Herb Clutter, waking him. He looks confused.

HERB

Honey? Is that you, honey? Bon?

DICK

Are you Mr. Clutter, sir?

Herb is suddenly wide awake, sits up in bed.

HERB

Who are you? What do you want?

Herb gets out of bed, in his pajamas, barefoot.

DICK

Now, sir, all we want you to do is show us where you keep that safe.

HERB

What safe? I don't have any safe.

DICK

Don't lie to me, you sonofabitch! I know goddamn well you got a safe.

Dick pushes him to the office.

PERRY

You don't have to be like that, Dick. Be civil.

HERB

I'm very sorry, son, but I just don't have a safe. Never did.

DEWEY

Everyone knew that.

Dick taps Herb on the chest with his hunting knife.

DICK

Show us where that safe is or your gonna be a good bit sorrier!

Frightened but trying to remain calm, Herb sticks to his guns.

DEWEY

Herb did all his business in checks.

PERRY

He's telling the truth, Dick. Let's go.

DICK

(to Herb) I know that safe is here somewhere. And you are gonna help me find it now.

Dick turns the room upside down like a manic hurricane.

Perry pulls the phone cord out of the wall.

HERB

Please, can I write you a check? Anything, but I just don't have cash here.

Dick hits Herb across the cheek.

DICK

I know you got a wallet here.

HERB

Yes, here, let me get it.

DEWEY

How much was in it?

Herb retrieves his wallet from the desk drawer. Gives it to Dick, who pulls 30 dollars out of it and tosses it on the floor.

DICK

Thirty dollars??? Are you crazy?

HERB

Please, it's all I have on me.

DICK

(blowing up) What kind of Mongolians do you think we are???
You got more money in this house than that, a rich man like you living on a big spread like this?

Perry hears footsteps from upstairs.

PERRY

Dick, there's somebody awake upstairs.

DEWEY

Bonnie and the kids were upstairs.

They move to the stairs, forcing Herb to lead the way up to the bedrooms.

HERB

(breaking down) Oh, please, please, my wife is an invalid, let her out of this, for God's sake, please.

DICK

Shut up! When we want you to talk, we'll tell you!

Upstairs. They stand in front of Bonnie's door. Dick pushes it open.

Herb walks in, turns on the light. Wakes Bonnie.

DEWEY

Bonnie was a fragile woman, must have scared the daylights out of her.

She blinks, fumbles for her glasses. Bursts into tears.

HERB

(holding her hand, patting it) Now, don't cry, honey. It's nothing to be afraid of. It's just I gave these men all the money I had, but they want more.

BONNIE

Sweetheart, I don't have any money.

HERB

They believe we have a safe somewhere in this house. I told them we don't.

DICK

(raising his hand to strike) Didn't I tell you to shut up?

BONNIE

But my husband's telling you the God's truth.

DICK

(roaring in her face) I know goddamn well you got a safe.

Bonnie grabs her little purse, hands it to him.

BONNIE

Here. My purse, take it. There's nothing in there.

DICK

Let me see that.

He opens the change purse. He lifts out the little glass horse.

DICK

Nothing. Except this.

DEWEY

The glass horse.

BONNIE

Oh, please, give that back.

He crushes the horse under his boot. Bonnie cries into Herb's shoulder.

Perry grabs Dick by the arm.

PERRY

We need to talk.

DICK

Fine. You two, where's the bathroom up here? Hurry it up.

Herb and Bonnie hold onto each other, move quickly to the bathroom. Perry grabs a chair from Bonnie's room. Places it inside.

DEWEY

Why the chair?

PERRY

Seeing as how she was an invalid and all.

DICK

Get in there you two. I'm gonna wake the kiddies.

BONNIE

Oh please please no no no, please don't hurt anybody, please don't hurt my children—

HERB

Sweetheart, these men don't mean to hurt anybody, they just want some money, that's all.

Dick closes the door on Bonnie and Herb.

DEWEY

So you locked Herb and Bonnie in the bathroom—

PERRY

And the boy.

Perry turns his flashlight on Kenyon's door. Opens it up.

KENYON

Where's my father? Who are you?

DICK

Shut your fucking mouth and move it!

Dick punches Kenyon in the mouth. Kenyon pulls on a pair of pants.

Perry sees a small radio. Pulls the plug out of the wall. Stuffs the radio under his arm with the binoculars.

Dick pushes him to the bathroom. Shoves him in and closes the door.

DEWEY

And what about Nancy?

In Nancy's bedroom, she has her ear to the door. Dressed in a kimono bathrobe, she removes her wrist watch and stuffs up in the toe of her discarded shoe.

She comes out of her room, meeting the men in the hallway.

NANCY

(trying to smile) Good grief, what is this, some kind of a joke?
What have you done with my parents? Where's my brother?

DICK

Mmmm, I can smell you baby. Like a veal chop frying in the pan.

Perry takes Nancy away from Dick, escorts her to the bathroom.

PERRY

They're all in here, miss. Just be quiet and nobody will get hurt.

He opens the bathroom door, pushes her in. Closes the door.

Dick and Perry lean against the wall. Thinking fast.

DICK

I gotta find that goddamned safe!

PERRY

We got a radio, a pair of spiffy binoculars, a very good make, by the way. Maybe 30 bucks from his billfold. I say we leave them locked in here and hightail it to Mexico.

DICK

We got to see this through, don't you get it, baby?

PERRY

We could get away.

DICK

No. I can't be a loser again, not when I had it all perfect.

DEWEY

So Dick went back downstairs, what did you do?

PERRY

I stayed by the bathroom. I could almost hear them through the door.

Perry stands guard at the door. Dick runs back to the office.

Dick makes a huge mess, throwing things in hot pursuit of the safe.

A light rises on the Clutters in the Bathroom.

Herb holds Bonnie. Nancy holds her mother's hand. Kenyon cries softly, facing the wall.

HERB

Shhh, now everyone, don't be afraid.

BONNIE

They're going to kill us. I know they are.

NANCY

Dad's right, Mom, they just want some money. Then they'll go.

BONNIE

Smoke, I was smelling smoke.

HERB

Nancy, do you have any money in your room?

NANCY

No, Dad. Just my wrist watch.

BONNIE

Not the watch. Herb, talk to them.

HERB

They don't want to talk, sweetheart. They have a gun and a knife.
Now I want you all to stay calm, and do what they tell you to do.
No one gets hurt okay?

NANCY

Ok, Dad.

Bonnie hugs Herb.

BONNIE

I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you.

HERB

I love you too, Bonnie. I love all of you.

NANCY

Oh, Daddy.

Nancy also hugs Herb. Kenyon continues to cry, his face still to the wall.

HERB

Kenyon, come here to your father.

KENYON

No, Dad, please. I can't.

HERB

What's wrong? Kenyon?

KENYON

I wet myself, Daddy.

HERB

Oh, my boy, that's alright, come here.

Kenyon hugs his father. The family holds onto each other.

Lights out on the Clutters.

DEWEY

And Dick never found a safe.

Dick rejoins Perry.

DICK

Fuck! But I found another wallet.

DEWEY

How much was in it?

PERRY

Seven whole dollars.

DEWEY

Pretty pathetic. You killed four innocent people in cold blood for what, 40 or so dollars, a radio, some binoculars?

PERRY

And they were nice people. I kept hoping we didn't have to kill them. Seemed like nice folks.

DEWEY

So you bound and gagged them in different rooms, correct?
Bonnie in her bedroom--

PERRY

Yes.

DEWEY

Nancy was in her room. But you didn't tape her mouth?

Light rises on Nancy, bound, on her bed. Dick sits on the edge of the bed, his hand on her leg.

DICK

You're mighty pretty, young miss. What are you 16?

NANCY

I'll be 17 in January. Why don't you boys just leave, it's the truth my Daddy's telling you.

DICK

I never had a daddy. I was raised in an orphanage, never knew no love or nothing. My family blowed up in an accident, except me.

NANCY

I'm sorry.

DICK

(edging closer) You smell so soft.

NANCY

(edging away) Please, don't hurt my folks.

DICK

This kimono real silk? You gotta have money, you wearing silk like it was nothing, and you just what, 14?

He puts his hand up on her inner thigh. She gasps, terrified.

NANCY

Please, no, don't.

DICK

Don't worry, honey, I ain't gonna hurt you. Let me just see something —

Perry comes into the room.

PERRY

Excuse me, miss.

Yanks Dick away from Nancy, drags him into the hall.

Slams Dick up against the wall.

PERRY

What are you doing in there with her?

DICK

I'm gonna bust that little girl.

PERRY

Uh huh. But you'll have to kill me first.

DEWEY

You didn't approve of his actions.

PERRY

I hate that kind of stuff. Anybody can't control themselves sexually. I told him straight.

DEWEY

I'm guessing that's when Dick went to the basement?

Dick storms away, down to the basement.

PERRY

Exactly. I stayed up with the girl.

Perry pokes his head into Nancy's room.

PERRY

He won't bother you, miss.

NANCY

Thank you. You seem like a nice man, why can't you make him stop?

Lights rise on Kenyon and Herb, tied up in the basement.

Kenyon sits bound hand and foot on the couch, a pillow propping up his head for comfort. His mouth is gagged with duct tape.

On the other side of the room, near the furnace, Herb's arms are bound and strung up around a pipe. His mouth is gagged with duct tape.

Dick goes back and forth, making sure they are secure.

PERRY

Destiny, miss. Hard to change what was meant to happen.

NANCY

I have to go to college next year--

PERRY

College huh? What you gonna study?

NANCY

Art and music.

PERRY

I like drawing myself.

NANCY

Oh, I adore it. Next to riding my horse Babe, it's about the most fun thing there is.

PERRY

Well, now you ride horses, do you? That's something else we have in common.

NANCY

Oh really?

PERRY

Not me, but actually my mother was a champion trick rider, worked all the old Wild West traveling shows. She was incredible. (he smiles at her) College. That's great.

DEWEY

At this point, there must have been some bad feelings between you and Dick, about the girl.

PERRY

Correct.

Perry joins Dick in the basement.

Kenyon struggles to free himself. Dick kick s him in the head. Herb struggles madly, enraged at seeing Kenyon hurt.

PERRY

Damnit, Dick, I told you to put this cardboard under Mr. Clutter. It's cold down here. Excuse me sir—

Herb continues to struggle as Perry slips a piece of cardboard under him.

PERRY

So we're down there, the father and boy tied up, and I pull Dick aside, and I say, well, Dick, any qualms?

DICK

God.

PERRY

Leave them alive, and this won't be any small rap. Ten years the very least.

DEWEY

And what did he say?

PERRY

He didn't answer me.

DEWEY

Both Herb and Kenyon are still alive at this point.

PERRY

Yes, but I just got so angry at Dick for fouling everything up, and being so full of brag about it. I was trying to call his bluff, so I grabbed the knife away from him.

Perry grabs the knife from Dick.

DICK

What are you doing?

PERRY

Alright, Dick, here goes.

Herb struggles wildly.

Perry goes behind Herb. Herb desperately tries to tell Perry something. Perry rips the tape off his mouth.

HERB

Please, my wife, how is she? Is she alright?

DEWEY

Those his last words? Herb's?

PERRY

(to Dewey) Yeah. I really liked him, thought him a very nice gentleman. I thought so right up until I slit his throat. One clean swipe.

Perry draws the blade across Herb's throat. Blood gushes out of the wide gash.

Perry steps back, hands the knife to Dick. Herb sounds like a drowning man, gurgling on his own blood, thrashing around.

PERRY

Here. Finish him. You'll feel better.

DICK

No, I I I can't.

PERRY

The hell you can't—

He pushes Dick towards Herb.

Dick is too afraid, makes a half hearted attempt at killing Herb. Herb frees his hands and reaches for Dick.

Dick panics, tries to run out, but Perry holds him in place.

Perry lifts the shotgun, aims it at Herb. Hands Dick the flashlight.

PERRY

Oh for Christ sake. Aim that thing at his head, please. I got to do all the work?

Calmly, Perry fires. The room explodes with a blinding blue flash.

Herb lies dead, half his face blown off. A bay of blood spreading out from his body.

Dick runs after the discharged shell.

DEWEY

(shaken but hiding it) The boy next?

Perry aims the shotgun at Kenyon's face. Bam. The blue flame lights the room. Kenyon's face is splattered on the wall. The couch is seeped in blood.

Dick grabs the discharged shell.

Perry climbs the stairs to the bedrooms. Dick catches up.

DEWEY

So the order was Herb first, then Kenyon, then, who, Bonnie?

Perry and Dick open Bonnie's door. Aim the light on her. She is bound and gagged, her hands in the prayer position.

BAM. Her face is shot off, spewing the room in blood.

Dick grabs the shell.

They go to Nancy's room. She is scrunched against the wall, terrified. Bound hand and foot, but not gagged.

DEWEY

And Nancy was last.

NANCY

Oh please stop stop what have you done please—

PERRY

Here, you do it.

Perry tries to hand the gun to Dick, but Dick won't take it.

DICK

I can't do it.

PERRY

You can't do anything, can you.

Dick aims the flashlight at Nancy's head. Perry aims the gun.

NANCY

Oh, no! Oh, please, No! No! No! No! Don't! Oh, please don't!
Please!

Bam! The blue blast shines in the darkness, as Nancy's face and skull are blown off.

As Dick bends down to grab the shell, Perry aims the shotgun at him.

PERRY

Right there, in those few seconds before we ran out to the car and drove away, that's when I decided I'd better shoot Dick. He'd said over and over, he'd drummed it into me, No witnesses. And I thought: He's a witness. I don't know what stopped me.

Perry puts the shotgun on the bed, and takes his seat back in the interrogation room.

Lights out on the Clutter home and Dick.

Silence.

Dewey sits, weary. Devastated at the first hand account of his friend's fate.

PERRY

And that's exactly what happened in the house that night.

Lights out on the interrogation room.

ACT TWO, SC. 14 CLUTTER GRAVESITE/COURTROOM

The wind mingles with the sound of church bells, sadly peeling out their song.

A large crowd of MOURNERS gather around four open graves. A PRIEST bows his head.

HOWARD FOX, a man in his early 40s, speaks to the mourners.

As he speaks, lights come up slowly on Dick and Perry, standing in the courtroom about to receive their verdict.

HOWARD

Bonnie Clutter was my only sister. She was a beautiful, fragile, loving woman who raised a wonderful family and loved her husband unconditionally. I know there is much resentment in this community about the cruel fate Bonnie and Herb and Kenyon and Nancy had to face. I have even heard on more than one occasion that the man, when found, should be hanged from the nearest tree. Let us not feel this way. The deed is done and taking another life cannot change it. Instead, let us forgive as God would have us do. It is not right that we should hold a grudge in our hearts. The doer of this act is going to find it very difficult indeed to live with himself. His only peace of mind will be when he goes to God for forgiveness. Let us not stand in the way but instead give prayers that he may find his peace. That's what Bonnie would have wanted.

A light rises on Judge Tate.

JUDGE TATE

Perry Smith and Richard Hickcock, you have been condemned to death by hanging.

The judge bangs his gavel.

The mourners turn into a noisy crowd of trial spectators and reporters, exploding with cheers, hugging each other. Some hold cameras. Flash bulbs explode in Perry and Dicks' faces.

Dick is led out with the crowd. Lights out on them.

ACT TWO, SC. 15 PERRY'S CELL

Perry packs his belongings in the county jail.

Josie holds a package of home-made cookies. Watches him pack.

JOSIE

I made you some cookies. For the trip.

She hands him the cookies. He takes them, tears barely held in check. Josie wipes her tears away.

PERRY

You done right by me. I won't forget it.

JOSIE

Because I know, deep in your heart, you are a child of Jesus, sorry for what you done.

PERRY

But I'm not sorry, except that I can't walk out of this cell the way I'd like. I'm gonna die, Josie, those six knots are going to free me from this nightmare. And that'll be the happiest day of my life.

JOSIE

"Christ is the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."

PERRY

Bullshit. I'm getting out, I'm going to fly free, but you're stuck. Stuck til the day you die. If I were you, I'd pray for that day to come quick.

JOSIE

No. I may not always like it, but this is my life, the only one I got, and I'll be damned if I let myself give up because it ain't perfect. Excuse my language.

PERRY

I feel sorry for you. At least I know I'm gonna die but you just got to keep on the way you are, ashamed for what you did.

JOSIE

"Anyone who trusts in the Lord will never be put to shame."

PERRY

Empty words and you know it.

JOSIE

You got the light you were born with, before all the bad things started in on you. Try and feel it, try and open yourself to it.

PERRY

Knock it off.

JOSIE

Please try, Perry. This could be our last chance.

PERRY

What the hell you want out of me, old lady?

JOSIE

Goddamnit it, if you can tell Christ your sorry and win back his forgiveness, then maybe he can forgive me for what I did and take me back into his heart. And Perry, I got nothing else to live for. Nothing.

They stand close on either side of the bars. Silence.

PERRY

Uhm, here.

He reaches into his shirt pocket. Hands her a weathered photograph.

Lights up on a photo of 4 year old Perry, smiling. Tears well in Josie's eyes.

JOSIE

Oh, Perry, what a beautiful little boy —

PERRY

That's the kid with the light you were talking about.

JOSIE

Give him your heart, Perry, tell him you're sorry.

He bursts into sobs. Sinks down to his knees on the other side of the bars. Wracked with tears.

Without looking up, Perry extends his hand through the bars, wanting it to be held.

Slowly, Josie drops to her knees. Takes his hand. Holds it tight. Perry holds her hand like a frightened little boy.

JOSIE

Oh, my boy. My sweet, sweet boy. My angel, your Mamma loves you.

She rubs his hand. Reaches through the bars, rubs his back as he sobs.

After a beat, Perry pulls his hand away. Moves back from Josie.

PERRY

I...I can't.

Josie looks at him. Bursts into tears.

Lights out on Josie.

Perry stands, wipes his nose. Looks dully through the bars.

Lights out on 8 year old Perry.

The lights reveal another cell adjacent to Perry's.

ACT TWO, SC. 16 KANSAS STATE PENITENTIARY FOR MEN/DEATH ROW

Dick stands in his cell next to Perry. Both just look out the bars.

Perry is silent. Dick smokes a big fat cigar.

DICK

Well, I guess I don't have to quit smoking, anyway.

Sometimes I got to feel sorry for you, honey. Nobody never comes to visit. You must be one of the most alone people there ever was. But, hell, you mostly brought it on yourself. It's every bit your own fault.

Lights rise on a PRISON GUARD and a PRIEST.

As Dick speaks, they enter his cell, handcuff him, and prepare him for his walk to the gallows.

DICK

Funny thing is, I'm not all that against capital punishment. It's revenge, is all it is, and what's wrong with that? I was a kin to the Clutters, I couldn't rest in peace till the ones responsible had taken that ride on the Big Swing. Yes sir, I'm all for it. As long as I ain't the one being hanged.

Dick, now handcuffed, is lead out of his cell. He stops by Perry's cell.

DICK

Hey, I ever tell you the one about the nanny goat's nightmare?

The Guard and Priest lead Dick away.

Lights out on them.

ACT TWO, SC. 17 KANSAS STATE PENITENTIARY FOR MEN/GALLOWS

Lights up on a Group of Men, gathered to watch the hanging. Among them are Dewey and Nye and Judge Tate.

Lights up on a Gallows. A towering scaffold of wood. A noose dangles at the ready.

The HANGMAN, a leathery older man in a weathered cowboy hat, stands impatiently on the platform.

Perry is lead in, handcuffed, shy. He nods at Dewey. Looks up at the gallows. He bounds up the stairs. Relieved and filled with anticipation. At the top of the gallows, the Priest says:

PRIEST

The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. Blessed is the name of the Lord. May the Lord have mercy on your soul.

The Hangman places the noose around Perry's neck. Holds a black hood in his hands.

Perry looks out to the crowd of men. His sensitive eyes well with tears. He looks at his hands with a bashful smile.

PERRY

I think, I think it's a helluva thing to take a life in this manner. I don't believe in capital punishment, morally or legally. Maybe I had something to contribute, something—

I been in jails since I was 8 years old. Like an animal in a cage.
But now I'm going to be free. Finally.

He wipes away his last tears, takes a breath.

It would be meaningless to apologize for what I did. Even
inappropriate. But I do. I apologize. Sure hope someone out there
hears this.

Let's do it.

*The Hangman holds his open palm in front of Perry's mouth. Perry spits out his Juicy
Fruit gum into the Hangman's palm. The Hangman places the black hood on Perry's
head, covering his face.*

*As Perry waits with the noose around his neck, his memories gather beneath him to
watch his final exit: Tex and Flo in their Wild West garb stand beneath him; Barbara
stands next to Tex.*

The Clutters are the last to join the group.

*The platform slides open, and Perry drops through with a thundering WHOOSH. His
body dangles and twitches like some ugly dance on a string.*

*Instantly, a magnificent yellow bird flies out of Perry's soul, soaring around the stage
and up to heaven.*

Lights fade to black.