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Samuel French Acting Edition

The Shadow Box

by Michael Cristofer

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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OPENING NIGHT, MARCH 31, 1977

The Morosco Theatre

Operated by the L-O Management Corporation,
Lester Osterman — Richard Horner — Allan Francis

**Lester Osterman, Ken Marsolais, Allan Francis
and Leonard Soloway**

present

The Mark Taper Forum/Long Wharf Theatre

production of

THE SHADOW BOX

1977 Tony Award Winner

1977 Pulitzer Prize Winner

by

MICHAEL CRISTOFER

starring

(in alphabetical order)

JOYCE EBERT

GERALDINE FITZGERALD

LAURENCE LUCKINBILL

MANDY PATINKIN

PATRICIA ELLIOTT

ROSE GREGORIO

SIMON OAKLAND

JOSEF SOMMER

VINCENT STEWART

Setting by

MING CHO LEE

Costumes by

BILL WALKER

Lighting by

RONALD WALLACE

Directed by

GORDON DAVIDSON

Originally produced by Center Theatre Group of Los Angeles
at the Mark Taper Forum.

LONG WHARF THEATRE:

Arvin Brown, Artistic Director; M. Edgar Rosenblum, Executive Director

CENTER THEATRE GROUP:

Gordon Davidson, Artistic Director; William P. Wingate, General Manager

Associate Producers: Philip Getter and Bernard Stuchin

The Producers and Theatre Management are Members
of The League of New York Theatres and Producers, Inc.

THE CAST

(*in order of appearance*)

THE INTERVIEWER *Josef Sommer*

COTTAGE ONE

JOE *Simon Oakland*

STEVE *Vincent Stewart*

MAGGIE *Joyce Ebert*

COTTAGE TWO

BRIAN *Laurence Luckinbill*

MARK *Mandy Patinkin*

BEVERLY *Patricia Elliott*

COTTAGE THREE

AGNES *Rose Gregorio*

FELICITY *Geraldine Fitzgerald*

The play takes place in three cottages on the grounds of a large hospital.

“There are five different stages that a person will go through when he faces the fact of his own death: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. These stages will last for different periods of time, they will replace each other, or exist at times side by side . . . But the one thing that usually persists through all these stages is hope.”

E. Kubler-Ross, M.D.

CHARACTERS

COTTAGE ONE:

JOE

MAGGIE

STEVE

COTTAGE TWO:

BRIAN

MARK

BEVERLY

COTTAGE THREE:

FELICITY

AGNES

INTERVIEWER

The Shadow Box

ACT ONE

Morning.

A small cottage that looks like a vacation house, set in the trees, secluded. A front porch, a living room area, and a large kitchen area.

The lights come up first on a small area Downstage and away from the cottage. We will call this area the "Interview Area."

JOE is surprised by the light. He is a strong, thick-set man, a little bit clumsy with moving and talking, but full of energy.

He steps into the light and looks out toward the back of the theatre. A MIKED VOICE speaks to him.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Joe? Joe, can you hear me?

JOE. Huh? (*Looking around.*) What . . . uh . . . ?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Can you hear me?

JOE. Oh, yeah. Sure. I can hear you real good.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Good. Have a seat, Joe.

JOE. (*Still looking around, a little amused.*) What? Hey, where . . . uh . . . I can't see . . .

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. We're out here.

JOE. What? Oh, yeah. I get it.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes.

JOE. You can see me. Right?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes. That's correct.

JOE. You can see me, but I . . .

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes.

JOE. . . can't see you. Yeah. (*He laughs.*) I get it now. You can *see* me, huh?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes, we can.

JOE. Far out.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. What?

JOE. (*Smiling.*) Nothing. Nothing. Well, how do I look?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Have a seat, Joe.

JOE. That bad, huh? I *feel* all right. Lost a little weight, but outside of that . . .

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Have a seat, Joe.

JOE. Sure, sure. (*He sits.*) Okay. What?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Nothing special. We just wanted to talk. Give you a chance to see how we do this.

JOE. Sure. You got people watching, huh?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes. There's nothing very complicated about it. It's just a way for us to stay in touch.

JOE. Yeah. It's like being on T.V.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Just relax.

JOE. Right. Fire away.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. You seem to be in very good spirits.

JOE. Never better. Like I said, I feel great.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Good. (*There is a pause. JOE looks out into the lights.*)

JOE. My family is coming today.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes. We know.

JOE. It's been a long time. Almost six months. They would have come sooner, but we couldn't afford it. Not after all these goddamn bills. And then I always

figured I'd be going home. I always figured I'd get myself back into shape and . . . *(Pause.)*

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Have you seen the cottage?

JOE. Yeah. Yeah, it's real nice. It's beautiful. They're going to love it.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Good.

JOE. Maggie always wanted a place in the mountains. But I'm an ocean man. So, every summer, we always ended up at the beach. She liked it all right. It just takes her a while to get used to things. She'll love it here, though. She will. It's real nice.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Good.

JOE. It just takes her a little time.

(The lights slowly start to come up on the cottage area. MAGGIE and STEVE'S VOICES are heard Offstage.)

STEVE. Here. Over here.

MAGGIE. Stephen!

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. *(To JOE.)* Then everything is settled, right?

JOE. Oh, yeah. Maggie knows the whole setup. I wrote to her.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. And your son?

JOE. Steve? Yeah. I told Maggie to tell him. I figured he should know before he got here.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Good.

JOE. It's not an easy thing.

STEVE. *(Still Offstage—overlapping.)* Come on, Mom.

JOE. I guess you know that.

MAGGIE. *(Still Offstage.)* Give me a chance to catch my breath.

JOE. You get used to the idea, but it's not easy.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. You seem fine.

JOE. Oh, me. Yeah, sure. But Maggie . . .

MAGGIE. (*Overlapping.*) What number did you say it was?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. (*Overlapping.*) What number cottage are you in?

JOE. Uh . . . one. Number one.

STEVE. (*Overlapping.*) Number one. One, they said.

JOE. You get scared at first. Plenty. And then you get pissed off. Oh, is that all right to say.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes, Joe. That's all right. It's all right for you to be angry or depressed or even happy . . . if that's how you feel. We want to hear as much as you want to tell us.

STEVE. (*Still Offstage.*) Look at all these goddamn trees!

MAGGIE. (*Still Off.*) Watch your mouth.

JOE. Yeah, cause I was. Plenty pissed off. I don't mind telling you that. In fact, I'm glad just to say it. You get tired of keeping it all inside. But it's like, nobody wants to hear about it. You know what I mean? Even the doctors . . . they shove a thermometer in your mouth and a stethoscope in their ears. . . . How the hell are you supposed to say anything? But then, like I said, you get used to it . . . I guess . . .

STEVE. Come on, Mom!

JOE. There's still a few things . . .

MAGGIE. You're going to give me a heart attack.

JOE. I could talk to you about them . . . maybe later.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Even if it's just to listen. That's what we're here for, Joe.

JOE. I mean, it happens to everybody, right? I ain't special.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. I guess not Joe.

JOE. I mean, that's the way I figure it. We could talk about that, too.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes, we can.

JOE. Maybe tomorrow.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Alright, Joe. We won't keep you now.

JOE. I'm a little nervous today.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. But if you need anything . . .

JOE. (*Distracted.*) Huh . . . What . . . ?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. If you need anything . . .

JOE. Oh, sure. Thanks. We'll be all right.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. You know where to find us.

JOE. Is that it?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. That's it. Unless *you* have something . . .

JOE. Oh . . . yeah. One thing . . . I . . . uh . . .

STEVE. (*STEVE, a young boy, about fourteen years old, enters.*) Dad? (*He rushes onto the stage, runs around the cottage.*)

MAGGIE. (*Still Offstage.*) Stephen?

STEVE. Here! Over here!

JOE. I . . . uh . . . no. No. I guess not.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. All right, then. Thank you, Joe.

JOE. Sure. Any time.

STEVE. (*Rushing into the cottage.*) Number one. This is it! Jesus!

JOE. Oh, yeah. I want to thank you for making all this possible. (*He looks out into the lights. There is no answer.*) Hello?

STEVE. He's not there.

JOE. You still there? (*Still no answer.*) Well, I'd better be getting back. (*Still no answer. The lights*

fade on the Interview Area and come up full on the cottage.)

STEVE. *(Running out of the cottage.)* Mom? Where the hell . . .

JOE. *(Turning toward the cottage.)* Stephen! Hey, dad!

STEVE. Holy shit! Holy . . . ! *(He does a little dance, runs to his Father and embraces him.)* Where the hell . . .

JOE. There you are . . . I been waiting all day.

STEVE. . . . have you been? We been traipsing around the whole goddamn place. . . .

JOE. *(Laughing.)* I been here. Waiting. Where's your mother?

STEVE. One cottage after another. Is this it. Is this it.

MAGGIE. *(Still Off.)* Joe? Stephen, is that your father?

STEVE. Far out! I brought my guitar. Wait till you hear . . . *(Calling Off.)* Mom! Over here, for Christ's sake. *(To JOE.)* So many goddamn trees . . .

JOE. What do you think? Huh?

STEVE. So many . . .

JOE. There's a bunk in there.

MAGGIE. *(Off.)* Joe?

JOE. Hey, Maggie. Get the lead out!

STEVE. Yeah. I saw. Bunk beds and a fireplace . . . we got any wood?

JOE. You can take the top one night and the bottom the next.

STEVE. Uh-uh. I'll take the bottom. I fall off, I'll break my fucking head.

JOE. I'll break your fucking head, if you don't watch your fucking mouth.

STEVE. Holy, holy shit! (STEVE hugs his Father again. JOE holds him at arms length for a second, to catch his breath.) You okay?

JOE. (Quickly recovers and returns to his previous level of energy.) Yeah, yeah. I'm great.

STEVE. You look terrific. I was worried. I missed you. Hey! How long can we stay? Huh?

JOE. (Holding him tightly.) I don't know. A couple of weeks . . . I don't know how long it . . .

STEVE. Great. (He drags JOE into the cottage.) Come on. I'll show you the guitar. It was pretty cheap. I ripped off the case, so that didn't cost anything. It's got a little compartment on the inside for picks and capos and dope and shit like that . . .

(They go into the cottage. MAGGIE struggles onto the stage, a mass of bundles, shopping bags and suitcases. She's dressed up—high heels, bright yellow print dress—but she looks a mess. She's been walking too long, carrying too big a load. Finally, she stops near the cottage.)

MAGGIE. End of the line. Everybody off. (And she lets all the shopping bags, packages, and suitcases crash to the ground around her. She straightens her back with a groan and looks around her.) Steve? Joe? The jackass is here! Come and get your luggage? (No answer. She walks up to the porch of the cabin, and tentatively takes one step up. But the cottage seems to frighten her. She stops, looks at it and then backs away from it.) You leave me alone out here for one more minute and I'm taking the next plane back to Newark. (She gives out a long, loud whistle through her teeth.) Stephen, are you in there or not?

STEVE. (*From inside the cottage.*) Hey, Mom, come on in if you're coming.

MAGGIE. I'm not coming in. You're coming out. And don't give me . . .

JOE. (*Coming out of the cottage and saying her line with her.*) . . . and don't give me any smart back talk or I'll split your lip.

(*Surprised by JOE's sudden appearance, she doesn't move for a second. Then, very carefully, she takes a few slow steps toward him. JOE walks down to meet her. All MAGGIE can manage to do is reach out one hand and touch him, just to see if he's really there. When she is sure that he's not an illusion, she takes a deep breath, goes back to her bundles, and starts talking very quickly, trying to keep control of herself.*)

MAGGIE. Well . . . I brought you some things . . . I didn't know what, what for sure you'd want, but I thought it was better to be sure, safe . . . so . . .

JOE. We'll take them inside . . .

MAGGIE. No . . . Steve'll get them. I been dragging them all . . .

JOE. Let me look at you, huh?

MAGGIE. (*Continues to fumble nervously with her hair, her dress, the packages.*) I didn't know what you'd need. There's some jelly and some peppers I put up. (*She starts pulling jars out of one of the bags.*) I thought it was forty pounds on the plane, but they let you have extra. You can put things under the seat. A lot of people didn't *have* anything, so I put stuff under *their* seats, too.

JOE. How are you, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Oh, fine, I brought the newspapers. (*She pulls more jars out.*) Some cookies, and some pumpkin flowers. The airplane made me sick. There was a man sitting next to me. He kept talking and talking. All those clouds. It looked like you could walk on them. I wanted to throw up, but the man next to me made me so nervous I couldn't. Where did I put . . .

JOE. Come on inside. You want some coffee?

MAGGIE. (*Reaching into another bag.*) I brought some coffee. You've got everything here already. You should've told me.

JOE. I did. I told you over the phone.

MAGGIE. I don't remember. I'll clean up tomorrow. First thing. Straighten everything out.

JOE. It's already clean.

MAGGIE. You want to live in somebody else's dirt?

JOE. Maggie, it isn't the Poconos. It's clean. It's clean.

MAGGIE. Well, you can't be too sure. Mom sent some bread . . .

JOE. How is she?

MAGGIE. Oh, good. Yeah. She fell down and hurt her leg. I don't know. It's not healing so good. She's getting old. What can you do. But she made the bread anyway. I told her not to, but she said she wanted to. So . . . And Fanny says hello. She gave me . . . uh, something . . .

JOE. I can see it later.

MAGGIE. . . . where is it? Oh, yeah. (*She pulls out a wrapped package.*) I don't know what it is. You know Fanny. It could be anything . . . and some clam broth. (*Takes out spilled clam broth.*) Oh, Pop and Josie, they went crabbing, they took the kids. Steve went with them. They gave me almost a whole

bushel. So I made some sauce. (*Another jar emerges.*)
We can . . . do you have a stove in there?

JOE. Sure. Come on inside. I'll show you. It's real nice. (*He starts to head her toward the cottage, but she pulls away.*)

MAGGIE. No, I don't want to go inside.

JOE. Huh? Why not?

MAGGIE. I don't . . . I'll see it. I'll see it.

JOE. But . . .

MAGGIE. How do I look? It's a new dress.

JOE. You look real pretty.

MAGGIE. I got dressed for the plane. I don't know. I should have worn pants. You get so tired, sitting, all pushed together like that. My ears hurt so bad. Steve loved it. I couldn't make him sit still. He was all over the place, taking pictures. The stewardess was crazy about him. She was *pretty*, too. They look real nice. They wear . . . they smile. I asked her what to do about my ears and she just smiled. I don't think she heard me. So I smiled, too, but it didn't do any good . . .

JOE. (*Hugs her.*) You must be tired, huh?

MAGGIE. Yeah. I don't know.

JOE. Come on in. You can rest.

MAGGIE. (*Ignores his offer.*) One minute you're there. The next minute you're here. I still feel like I'm there. (*She pulls away from him and starts rummaging through the bags.*) What else? Three thousand miles, it must be. They . . . Oh, yeah. I made a ham . . . (*She pulls the monster out of a bag.*)

JOE. What?

MAGGIE. A ham. We can have it for lunch.

JOE. Christ!

MAGGIE. What's the matter? It's no good?

JOE. You mean you carried a ham three thousand miles across the country?

MAGGIE. No. I put it under the seat.

JOE. Well, what the hell are we going to do with it?

MAGGIE. I don't know . . . I thought it'd last, so . . .

JOE. We *got* everything we need. I told you.

MAGGIE. I don't remember. You can't eat this, huh?

JOE. No, I can eat it. I can eat it. That's not what I'm talking about.

MAGGIE. Then what *are* you talking about?

JOE. I'm talking about they got ham in California. They got stores like everyplace in the world and you go in and you buy whatever you want . . .

MAGGIE. (*Making a vain effort to hide the ham.*) I'll take it back with me . . .

JOE. It's all right! It's here now.

MAGGIE. It'll keep. I'll put it away. You don't have to look at it.

JOE. No. It's fine. It's all right. What the hell are we talking about?

MAGGIE. (*All upset, still holding on to the ham.*) You didn't say in the letter. And we talked and I couldn't remember. I tried. What the hell. They said to come and bring Steve. That's all. At first I thought that was it. Then I got your letter and you sound fine and I talk to you . . . so, I made the ham, I . . . (*She cries. JOE goes to her. Holds her and the ham in his arms.*)

JOE. I missed you, Maggie. I missed you real bad. (*Hugs her.*)

MAGGIE. You got to tell me what's going on. Don't make me feel so stupid. Like I'm supposed to know

everything. I don't know anything. I just know what I see.

JOE. Maggie . . .

MAGGIE. But you look real good. You're all right now, huh?

JOE. Maggie, listen . . .

MAGGIE. No. It's all right. You don't have to tell me. I can see it. You're fine. Huh? It's just I got so scared. Thinking about it. Making things up in my head. But it's all right now. I can see it's all right. I knew it would be when I got here.

JOE. (*Giving in.*) Yes, Maggie. Everything's all right.

MAGGIE. I knew it. I knew it.

(*They embrace, and move Upstage. Our focus shifts now to the Interview Area. BRIAN is talking.*)

BRIAN. . . . people don't want to let go. Do they?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. How do you mean, Brian?

BRIAN. They think it's a mistake, they think it's supposed to last forever. I'll never understand that. My God, it's the one thing in this world you can be sure of! No matter who you are, no matter what you do, no matter anything—sooner or later—it's going to happen. You're going to die. (*BRIAN is a graceful man . . . simple, direct, straightforward . . . mind and body balanced, like an athlete.*) . . . and that's a relief—if you think about it. I should say if you think clearly about it.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. I'm not sure I follow you.

BRIAN. Well, the trouble is that most of us spend our entire lives trying to *forget* that we're going to die. And some of us even succeed. It's like pulling the cart

without the horse. Or is that a poor analogy? (STEVE enters and sits in woods with guitar.)

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. No, Brian. I think it's fine.

BRIAN. Well, you get the gist of it anyway. I'm afraid I've really lost my touch with words. They don't add up as neatly as they used to.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. But you're still writing.

BRIAN. Oh, yes. With great abandon. I may have lost touch with the words, but I still have faith in them. Eventually they have to mean *something* . . . give or take a few thousand monkeys, a few thousand typewriters. I'm not particular. Am I being helpful or just boring?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Very helpful.

BRIAN. Well, I don't see how. Too much thinking and talking. My former wife once said to me, 'We've done enough thinking. Couldn't we just dance for a few years?'

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Did you?

BRIAN. No. I have lousy feet. Instead, I started going on about music and mathematics, the difference between Apollonian airs and Dionysian rites, explaining to her the history of dance and the struggle with form . . . and before I finished the first paragraph, she was gone . . .

(The lights fade on the porch area of the cottage where JOE and MAGGIE are. Then they start to come up on the living room area of the cottage.)

BRIAN continues his interview.)

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Gone for good?

BRIAN. Like a bat out of hell.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. I see.

BRIAN. So do I . . . now. But then I didn't. I became totally irrational . . . idiotic, in the Greek sense of the word. I blamed her, I damned her, I hated her . . . I missed her. And I got so worked up I began to realize what she was talking about. You see, I'd lost the energy of it, the magic of it. No wonder she left. After all, the universe isn't a syllogism, it's a miracle. Isn't it? And if you can believe in one small part of it, then you can believe in all of it. And if you can believe in all of it . . . well, that is a reason for dancing, isn't it?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. What happened to her?

BRIAN. Beverly? Oh, she's still dancing as far as I know.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. I see.

BRIAN. Well, every life makes sense on its own terms, I suppose. She must be very happy. I'm sure of that. Otherwise she would have come back. There I go, rambling on again. I'm sorry.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. You seem to have everything so well thought out.

(In the living room area of the cottage, MARK enters. He is a young man, passionately intelligent, sexually attractive.)

BRIAN. *(Still talking to the INTERVIEWER.)* Well, I think it's important to be sensible. Even about the miraculous. Otherwise you lose track of what it's all about.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. How is Mark? *(MARK enters.)*

BRIAN. *(Smiles.)* Speaking of the miraculous . . . Well, he's fine.

MARK. (*In the living room, looking around.*) Brian?

BRIAN. (*To INTERVIEWER.*) What's the official line on him now?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. How do you mean?

BRIAN. Well, I know these are supposed to be strictly family situations. I'm curious. I mean, what are we calling him this week? Nephew? Cousin? Butler?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. No. I have him down as a friend.

BRIAN. I see.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. In the Greek sense of the word.

BRIAN. (*Laughs.*) Very good. Very good.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. He's welcome to come and talk to us if he likes. (*In the living room area, MARK takes off his jacket, throws it on a chair, sits down and takes out a package . . .*)

BRIAN. Well, we've talked a lot about it already. Generally, we have the same opinion on the subject. Wisdom doesn't always come with age. Occasionally the young can be as rational as you or I. (*MARK carefully takes six or seven bottles of medication from the package. He makes notes of each label, copying down the information in a small pad.*)

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes. I suppose they can.

BRIAN. (*Checking his watch.*) My watch is stopped. How long have I been babbling?

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. It doesn't matter. There's no hurry.

BRIAN. Not for you, maybe. Some of us are on a tighter schedule.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. I am sorry. I didn't mean . . .

BRIAN. (*Laughs.*) It's all right. It's all right. You

mustn't take all of this too seriously. I don't . . . Our dreams are beautiful, our fate is sad. But day by day, it's generally pretty funny. We can talk again tomorrow, if you want. I don't mind. It's a bit of a shock, that's all. You always think . . . no matter what they tell you . . . you always think you have more time. And you don't. But I appreciate what you're trying to do here, and I do enjoy being a guinea pig.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Good. Very good.

BRIAN. Tomorrow, then. If I'm still breathing. Or even if I'm not, I don't think it'll stop me from talking.

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER. Yes. Tomorrow.

(BRIAN exits. *The lights fade on the Interview Area and come up on the living room. MARK puts the medicine in a bookcase that is already loaded with bottles of pills and boxes of medical supplies. BEVERLY comes bursting into the living room, blowing a party horn.*)

BEVERLY. Surprise! Oh, who are you? I'm sorry. I'm looking for Brian . . . uh . . . Two. They said cottage two. I must have . . .

MARK. No, you didn't . . .

BEVERLY. I didn't?

MARK. No. This is two. This is cottage two.

BEVERLY. Oh.

MARK. Yes.

BEVERLY. Thank God. (*Pause.*) Is . . . uh . . .

MARK. (*A little uncomfortable.*) No. Not at the moment. But he should be back any minute.

BEVERLY. Good. (*Another pause. They look at each other.*) I wanted to surprise him and he's not here. Well . . . surprise! (BEVERLY starts to walk around

the cottage. She is an extremely attractive woman. Middle-aged. She's dressed curiously in what was once a very expensive, chic evening dress. But it is now soiled and torn. She also has over and around the dress about twenty odd pieces of jewelry attached wherever there is room for them. In her hand a noise-maker that squeaks uncheerfully, and over everything, a yellow slicker raincoat and rubber boots. Looking around.) Hmn. Very nice. Very nice.

MARK. Glad you like it.

BEVERLY. All the comforts of home. Amazing what you can do with a coffin if you put your mind to it.

MARK. (*Who would have found it difficult enough dealing with a postman, let alone this.*) What???

BEVERLY. Oh, sorry. Sorry. Introductions first. That way you'll know who you're throwing out. (*She extends her hand in a handshake.*) I'm Beverly. No doubt you've . . .

MARK. (*He doesn't shake hands.*) Yes.

BEVERLY. That's what I figured.

MARK. Brian's wife.

BEVERLY. Ex-wife.

MARK. Former.

BEVERLY. Yes. Former. Former wife. He prefers former, doesn't he?

MARK. (*Shakes her hand.*) Yes. I figured it was you.

BEVERLY. You did?

MARK. Yes . . . it wasn't hard.

BEVERLY. No, I guess not. (*She smiles.*) And you're . . . uh . . .

MARK. Yes.

BEVERLY. Yes. I figured.

MARK. Mark.

BEVERLY. Great. Well—

MARK. Well. (*Pause.*)

BEVERLY. Well, now that we know who we are . . . how about a drink.

MARK. A what?

BEVERLY. A drink. A drink.

MARK. Oh, no.

BEVERLY. No?

MARK. No. We don't keep any liquor here. I could get you some coffee or some penicillin, if you'd like.

BEVERLY. No. No. *I was inviting you. (Out of her tote bag she pulls a half finished bottle of Scotch.)* I had an accident with the Scotch on the way out here. There's quite a dent in it. (*She laughs—MARK doesn't.*) Anyway, we both look like we could use a little. Hmn?

MARK. No. I don't drink.

BEVERLY. (*Rummaging in her bag.*) Ah, a dope man.

MARK. Neither. I like to avoid as much poison as possible.

BEVERLY. I see.

MARK. Anyway, it's really not the time or place, is it?

BEVERLY. Oh, I don't know.

MARK. Well, you go ahead. If you feel you have to.

BEVERLY. No. No, really. I don't *need* it. I mean, I'm not . . . forget it. (*She looks remorsefully at the bottle, takes off the cap, takes a swig, replaces the cap and puts the bottle back in the tote bag. MARK stares at her, obviously displeased by the action. There is a pause. BEVERLY smiles. MARK does not.*) So. How is he?

MARK. Dying. How are you?

BEVERLY. (*Taken aback.*) Oooooops. Let's start again. Is he feeling any pain?

MARK. Are you?

BEVERLY. Strike two. Well, I think we've got it all

straight now. He's dying. I'm drunk. And you're pissed off. Did I leave anything out?

MARK. No, I think that just about covers it.

BEVERLY. Tell me. How is he?

MARK. Hard to say. One day he's flat on his ass, the next day he's running around like a two year old. But he is terminal—officially. They moved him down to these cottages because there's nothing they can do for him in the hospital. But he can't go home, either. There's some pain. But it's tolerable. At least he makes it seem tolerable. They keep shooting him full of cortisone.

BEVERLY. Ouch!

MARK. Yes. Ouch. You should be prepared, I guess.

BEVERLY. Prepared for what?

MARK. The cortisone.

BEVERLY. Why? They don't give it to the visitors, do they?

MARK. No. I mean it has side effects. It . . . well, you may not notice it, but the skin goes sort of white and puffy. It changed the shape of his face for a while, and he started to get really fat.

BEVERLY. His whole body?

MARK. Yes. His whole body.

BEVERLY. Charming.

MARK. Well, don't get too upset. A lot of it's been corrected, but he's still very pale. And he has fainting spells. They're harmless. Well, that's what they tell me. But it's embarrassing for him because he falls down a lot and his face gets a little purple for a minute.

BEVERLY. All the details. You're very graphic.

MARK. It happens a lot. The details aren't easy to forget.

BEVERLY. I guess not.

MARK. I just want you to know. If you're staying around. I mean, I think it would hurt him if people noticed.

BEVERLY. Well, if he turns purple and falls on the floor, it'd be sort of difficult not to notice, wouldn't it?

MARK. (*Taken aback.*) What?

BEVERLY. I mean, what do people *usually* do when it happens?

MARK. I don't know. I mean, there hasn't been anyone here except me and . . .

BEVERLY. And you have everything pretty much under control.

MARK. I do my best.

BEVERLY. I'm sure you do.

MARK. Look. I don't mean to be rude or stupid about this . . .

BEVERLY. Why not? I like people to be rude and stupid. It's one of the ways you can be sure they're still alive. Oh dear, I did it again, didn't I?

MARK. Yes. You have to understand—I mean, you will be careful, won't you?

BEVERLY. About what?

MARK. That's exactly what I mean. You're . . . I'm sorry, but you're very stoned, aren't you? And you're dressed in funny clothes, and you're saying a lot of funny things but I'm just not sure, frankly, what the fuck you're doing here.

BEVERLY. (*Still flip.*) Neither am I. You sure you wouldn't like a drink?

MARK. Positive. Look, please, don't you think it'd be better if you came back some other time, like tomorrow or next year or something?

BEVERLY. I'd just have to get drunk all over again.

MARK. I mean, it's sort of a delicate situation, right

now. He's had a very bad time of it and any kind of, well, disturbance . . .

BEVERLY. Such as me? Oh, you'll get used to it. You just have to think of me as your average tramp.

MARK. . . . any disturbance might be dangerous, especially psychologically and . . . Shit! I sound like an idiot, the way I'm talking. But you don't seem to be understanding a goddamn word I'm saying!

BEVERLY. No. I am. I am. You know, you don't *look* like a faggot.

MARK. Oh, for Christ's sake!

BEVERLY. No, I mean it . . . I mean, I didn't expect . . .

MARK. Well, you'll get used to it. You just have to think of me as your average cocksucker. All right?

BEVERLY. Good. Now we're getting someplace. Are you sure you wouldn't like a drink?

MARK. *No!* I would not like a drink. *You* have a drink. Have two. Take off your clothes. Make yourself at home. *(He grabs his jacket and heads for the door.)* When you're ready to throw up, the bathroom is in there. *(He exits.)*

BEVERLY. *(Left with the bottle.)* Hey!

(The lights come up on the porch area where STEVE is just coming out of the cottage to join MAGGIE and JOE.)

STEVE. Hey! Is this place bugged or what?

JOE. Bugged?

MAGGIE. *(Reaching into a shopping bag.)* I brought some Lysol. Here.

STEVE. No. Bugged. *Wired.* What do they do? Listen in with hidden cameras?

JOE. (*Laughing.*) Yeah. Every move. Every word.

MAGGIE. Joe, cut it out.

STEVE. (*Continuing.*) But they got wires near the bed.

JOE. That's for me. Don't worry about it.

MAGGIE. (*Changing the subject.*) Here. (*To STEVE.*) You take this stuff inside. And keep the noise down.

JOE. (*To MAGGIE.*) Come on in, Maggie. I'll show you around.

MAGGIE. No. I want to stay outside. For a while, it's nice.

STEVE. (*Runs back into the cottage.*) I'll get my guitar . . .

JOE. You like it, don't you?

MAGGIE. Sure. It's nice. (*Calling.*) Stephen, you help me with this . . .

JOE. (*Overlapping.*) I knew you would. I'll take you for a walk later. They got a swimming pool. And a tennis court. There's a little river, just a little one, runs back through the trees. Over there. I'll show you later. We got time. There's no hurry.

MAGGIE. Stephen!

JOE. Ah, leave him be. I'll get this. (*He starts to pick up the bags.*)

MAGGIE. No, you rest. Stephen!

JOE. I can get it. The more exercise I get, the better I feel.

MAGGIE. (*Stopping him.*) There's no sense pushing it, huh? Steve can do it. (*STEVE comes out of the cottage with his guitar. He sits down and starts to play it.*) Stephen! Put that thing down and give your father a hand.

JOE. (*To STEVE.*) Wait till you see, dad. From the north side, near the gate when you come in, you can

see the whole valley. All squared off and patched up with farms like a quilt. Hundreds of them. I'll show you.

STEVE. Farms? They got farms?

JOE. Yeah. Hundreds of them. Christ it was great to get out of that city.

MAGGIE. Stephen, take this bag inside. Put this one in the kitchen. (*To JOE.*) You got a kitchen?

JOE. Sure. A kitchen, a bathroom, two bedrooms, a living room . . .

STEVE. (*Overlapping.*) We never did get our farm. We should do that. We should get that farm. (*He takes bag inside.*)

JOE. Well, maybe we should have.

MAGGIE. (*To STEVE.*) There's more here, when you're finished, so hurry up.

JOE. A little place like this.

MAGGIE. Don't start on the farm, for God's sake. It always ends up bad when you start on the farm.

STEVE. (*Returning.*) We could sit out every night, singing and howling at the moon. (*He howls like a wolf.*)

MAGGIE. (*Getting more and more agitated.*) Stephen, be quiet. Where do you think you are? This goes in the bedroom.

STEVE. Aren't you ever coming in?

MAGGIE. (*A little too firmly.*) I'll go in when I'm good and ready. (*STEVE exits with suitcase.*)

JOE. (*Noticing MAGGIE's nervousness, trying to keep things happy.*) It might have worked, Maggie. See me all dressed up in coveralls, early morning, up with the sun. What do you think?

MAGGIE. (*More irritated.*) It's a lot of work. I don't want to hear about it.

JOE. A little hard work'll never kill you.

MAGGIE. Don't tell me about hard work.

JOE. It's good for you.

MAGGIE. Good for *you*. Not for me. Milk the cows, clean the chicken coop, who would have done that, huh?

STEVE. (*Returning.*) We could have had a couple hundred acres . . .

JOE. No, someplace small, something we could keep our hands on. Al and Lena had that place, we used to go every Sunday.

MAGGIE. It was dirty.

STEVE. No, it wasn't.

MAGGIE. And I never had anything to say to them, anyway. Out there in the sticks. Who do you see out there? Chickens and pigs.

JOE. They had neighbors.

MAGGIE. Chickens and pigs.

JOE. You get used to all that . . .

MAGGIE. I don't want to hear about it. Here, Stephen. It's the last one. Put it anywhere.

STEVE. (*To MAGGIE.*) You would too have liked it. Get a little chicken shit between your toes, kiss a few pigs . . . It'd change your whole disposition . . . (*He grabs the bag and MAGGIE and starts whirling her around.*)

MAGGIE. (*Almost laughing.*) Cut it out! Stephen!

STEVE. (*Starts to tickle her and push her toward the cottage.*) Come on inside, Chicken Lady. I'll show you the roost! (*MAGGIE is laughing hard now. STEVE clucks like a chicken, tickling her, and steering her toward the cottage. JOE laughs and joins them.*)

JOE. Come on, Maggie. We got you. (*He pushes her toward the cottage.*)

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