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Come Back to the 5 & Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean

A Comedy-Drama

by Ed Graczyk

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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"Come Back to the 5 & Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean" was first produced by Players Theatre of Columbus, Ohio in September, 1976 and directed by the author. It was subsequently produced by the Alliance Theatre Company, Atlanta, Georgia in February, 1977, directed by Fred Chappell. The original New York production was directed by Barbara Loden and David Kerry Heefner at the Hudson Guild Theatre in February, 1980. The Broadway production, directed by Robert Altman, opened February 18, 1982 at the Martin Beck Theatre. This script is a combination of the Off-Broadway and Broadway productions.

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OPENING NIGHT — February 18, 1982

MARTIN BECK THEATRE

OWNED AND OPERATED BY JUJAMCYN THEATERS
RICHARD G. WOLFF, PRESIDENT

DAN FISHER JOSEPH CLAPSADDLE JOEL BRYKMAN

and
JACK LAWRENCE

present

SANDY
DENNIS

CHER

KAREN
BLACK

*Come back to the 5 & Dime
Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean*

A new play by

ED GRACZYK

also starring

KATHY BATES MARTA HEFLIN

and

SUDIE BOND

with

MARK PATTON

Scenic Design by
DAVID GROPMAN

Costume Design by
SCOTT BUSHNELL

Lighting Design by
PAUL GALLO

Sound Design by
RICHARD FITZGERALD

Casting Director and Assistant to the Director
SCOTT BUSHNELL

Directed by

ROBERT ALTMAN

ORIGINAL N.Y. PRODUCTION BY THE HUDSON GUILD THEATRE
DAVID KERRY HEEFNER, PRODUCING DIRECTOR

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

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Juanita	SUDIE BOND
Sissy	CHER
Mona	SANDY DENNIS
Joe	MARK PATTON
Sue Ellen	GENA RAMSEL
Stella May	KATHY BATES
Edna Louise	MARTA HEFLIN
Martha	ANN RISLEY
Alice Ann	DIANNE TURLEY TRAVIS
Clarissa	RUTH MILLER
Joanne	KAREN BLACK

CAST

JUANITA

MONA

MONA (THEN)

SISSY

SISSY (THEN)

JOE

JOANNE

STELLA MAY

EDNA LOUISE

TIME

SEPTEMBER 30, 1975

SEPTEMBER 30, 1955

PLACE

A FIVE-AND-DIME IN McCARTHY,
A SMALL TOWN IN WEST TEXAS

THE SET

The H.L. Kressmont Company is one of a small chain of nickel and dime emporiums struggling for survival in small out-of-touch towns throughout Texas. This particular store has existed since the late twenties and to this day has been virtually ignored by time, and change.

Upstage in the main wall, elevated by several steps, are large crowded windows of sun-bleached merchandise, through which can barely be seen the outside world. Between the two windows are double swinging screen doors. Wooden doors with glass inserts stand open with green window shades at half mast. Dirty white globes hang from the suggestion of a decorative pressed-metal ceiling, along with a large blade fan. A lunch counter is stage right with several swivel stools in front. Near the counter are two small tables with four chairs crowded around each. Behind the counter are limited cooking facilities and a section of wall boasting one of those paintings on glass that light up of the "Last Supper." Directly beneath it hangs the meager menu, and surrounding it, several tacked up advertisements for Dr. Pepper, Alka-Seltzer, etc. Black-crusted coils of flypaper dangle over the counter and the covered dishes of cakes and doughnuts. A beat-up Orange Crush machine churns and gurgles away on the upstage end of the counter.

Stage left is a curtained door leading into a section of the back storage room. Stacked boxes

and crowded shelves isolate a small playing area, beyond which is a restroom, and additional storage space.

There is a comic book rack with a bench in front, a pay telephone, gum ball machine and several potted plants on stands that hang limp from the heat. A glass transom over the doors proclaims the existence of the "H.L. Kressmont Co." in the same lettering style that identifies five-and-dime stores all over the country.

The walls of the store are crowded with framed photographs, magazine covers and memorabilia of James Dean. A small table around which most of the photos center acts as a shrine. The center photo is framed with a string of Christmas tree lights that can be turned on by a switch. There is also hung a gawdy gold plaque awarded the employees of the store for outstanding sales, and a photograph of the original "Disciples of James Dean."

The store is in the process of being decorated for the twentieth reunion of the "Disciples." Twirled and swagged overhead are streamers of black crepe paper and decorations from holidays past; a Santa Claus head, red paper bells, Halloween skeleton, Thanksgiving turkey, etc. A crudely painted sign hangs above proclaiming the event: "The 20th Anniversary Reunion of the Disciples of James Dean, September 30, 1955—September 30, 1975." Several streamers still dangle without connection near a ladder and cardboard box of more decorations.

ACT I

(The store sags motionless with only the sound of the gurgling Orange Crush machine until moments before the house lights begin to dim, softly at first, seeping from the innards of the store, is heard the overture to "Giant." The music builds in volume as it travels forward to engulf the audience with its majestic movie impression of Texas. As the lights dim to darkness the music fades to underscore the opening scene. A light comes up behind the screen doors on JUANITA, the manager of the store. Her hair is attractively styled, but obviously the result of a home permanent. She wears a simple housedress, kitchen apron and comfortable shoes. SHE shields her eyes from the sun as she searches the street.)

JUANITA. Jimmy Dean?...Jimmy Dean?!...You come back here to the five-and-dime now. Jimmy Dean. *(The phone rings and the lights come up inside the store.)* Jimmy Dean, are you hearin' me? *(SHE mutters to herself as SHE goes to the phone.)* His mother's gonna die a thousan' deaths when her bus comes pullin' on in an' he's no where to be found. *(Answers the phone.)* Kressmont five-and-dime, Juanita talkin'... Who?... I can't hardly hear you... Stella May?!... Well, where are ya talkin' from,

the moon?... Oh... Well, we got your letter just day before yesterday... ain't nothin' gone wrong now, has it?... You're still comin' to Mona's reunion party ain't ya?... Good... good... Mona would be real heart-sick not to have you here. No, no, she went over to Marfa this weekend... her bus is nearly two hours late in gettin' back... Sure hope there ain't been no... What?... She goes there every year 'bout this time to get together with all them others who was in that movie with her (*SHE hears the bus coming down the street.*) Wait... wait, I think I hear her bus pullin' in now, if you want to hang on... All right then... fine... fine, I'll tell her. You drive careful now, you hear... and tell Edna Louise we're all lookin' forward to seein' her too... now, you don't pick on her like that, you hear?... Bye, see you real soon.

(During the above a fly has been annoying her.

SHE goes behind the counter for her fly swatter and stations herself in wait. SHE notices the "Last Supper" picture isn't lit and pulls the string. MONA appears at the door. SHE is in her late thirties and wears a simple shirtwaist dress and low heels. SHE carries a purse, small beat-up suitcase and a paperback copy of "Gone With The Wind." The long bus ride and horrible heat show their effects on her. The built up anxiety of the reunion along with the haunting memories churned-up during the trip to Marfa has caused her to become restless and high-strung.)

MONA. (*Ruffled*) That darn-fool of a bus broke down out there in the middle of nowhere and it took them nearly forever to get it repaired. Look at me... would you just take a look at me, I'm a shambles... an absolute shambles.

JUANITA. Come sit yourself down and let me fix you a nice cold Orange Crush. You do look like somethin' the cat mighta dragged in.

MONA. (*Pulling her dress away from her sticky body.*) Isn't this heat somethin' terrible though? My clothes are just stickin' to my body like glue. (*Fanning herself.*) We were forced to sit out there in that desolute emptiness in that broken down old bus for nearly four hours... four hours in this oppressin' heat.

JUANITA. Two.

MONA. What?

JUANITA. Two hours. It was only two hours.

MONA. (*Laughs.*) Well, it seemed more like four. (*Suddenly remembers.*) Sandwiches... did anybody remember about sandwiches?

JUANITA. Sissy's gone by to pick up the fixin's... all we gotta do is put 'em together... just calm yourself down.

MONA. (*A sigh of relief.*) Well thank heavens that worry can be erased from my mind. (*Takes a deep breath.*) It's so hot an' suffocatin' I can hardly hold a breath. (*SHE switches on the lights around the photo of Dean.*) Where's Jimmy Dean?

JUANITA. He ran off sometime after lunch an' I haven't seen hide nor hair of him since...

MONA. Juanita, somethin' awful coulda happened

to him and you'd never know about it.

JUANITA. (*Irritated.*) Ain't nothin' happened to that boy, awful or otherwise... He's prob'ly just over to Luke's Texaco watchin' him work on the cars or somethin'.

MONA. You know how I hafta worry about...

JUANITA. You worry about him entirely too much... now, drink this here Orange Crush an' cool yourself down. He's a big boy an' can take care of himself.

MONA. (*Laughs.*) Well, *that's* not a true remark and you very-well know it. (*SHE chuckles.*) My, that really does hit the spot. He shouldn't be runnin' aroun' out there in this heat though, he could get himself sun-stroke. (*Looks up.*) I sure wish that poor old broken ceilin' fan up there could see its way to start spinnin' again in time for tonight's party.

JUANITA. Sissy's stoppin' over to see if Luke'll come on by an' take a look at it... although I don't know what good it would do even if he could get it to spinnin' again.

MONA. It's prob'ly just too hot an' tired to move.

JUANITA. Aren't you even gonna mention the decorations?

MONA. (*Startled.*) Good heavens, I neglected to even notice. (*SHE rushes down to get the full view.*) My, would you just look how this place has been all gussied up... and what a clever idea to use the holidays as a way of showin' the passin' of the years.

JUANITA. Sissy worked all day long practic'ly, stringin' that stuff up there...

MONA. (*Rushes to JUANITA.*) Are you as excited and nervous as I am? I could hardly contain myself the whole week-end long in Marfa just thinkin' about it. (*Studying the sign.*) Twenty years tonight... seems like only yesterday, doesn't it...when that fatal crash took away his life.

JUANITA. Lord, I nearly forgot, Stella May called-up just as your bus was pullin' in to say she's stopped off over in Odessa to give Edna Louise a ride...just as quick as Edna can close-up the Beauty Parlor, they'll be on their way.

MONA. (*Excited.*) Won't it be wonderful to see them again...Stella seem like she's changed any to you?

JUANITA. Her *voice* sounded much the same as it did back then...an' she was pickin'-away at Edna same as before.

MONA. Anybody else call you an' say they was comin'?

JUANITA. 'fraid not.

MONA. Maybe they're intendin' to surprise us... do ya think?

JUANITA. Don't get your heart too set on...

MONA. I sent them little reminder notes to everyone askin' them to R.S.V.P.

JUANITA. It's been twenty years...things change.

MONA. (*SHE goes to the group photo of the Disciples.*) I certainly hope we'll all be able to recognize each other...wouldn't that be awful? (*Putting down the photo.*) I'm sure they'll all remember...how could they possibly have forgotten such a devoted promise as that. (*SHE turns to see a figure standing behind the screen door. It is a young boy (Joe)*)

looking like a vision of an angel with the pale look of vulnerable innocence. His face is soft and delicate with eyes like a wounded animal. HE wears a short-sleeved shirt, faded denim overalls and high-top black tennis shoes looking ever so much like James Dean in "East of Eden." MONA turns away from him quickly losing a breath.)

JUANITA. You all right?

MONA. It seems like my heart just skipped a beat or somethin' (SHE turns again. *The figure has disappeared.*) . . . it's just all this dry air I guess, affectin' my asthma somethin' awful.

JUANITA. (*Going to the counter.*) Now, you come set over here an' drink some more of this Orange Crush. It'll do wonders to cool off your insides.

MONA. I don't think I'll be able to sit again for a week or more. (*Rubs her backside.*) It seems that bus ride gets longer and longer every year. Either that or I'm gettin' older and less tolerable. (SHE starts to drink but is interrupted by something that makes her laugh.) Alice Marie . . . you remember Alice Marie from over in Waco? . . . She says I remind her of Scarlett O'Hara. Isn't that an odd thing to say though? (*Laughs.*)

JUANITA. (*Tracking a fly with her swatter.*) Why on earth would she say somethin' like that?

MONA. Well, I suppose it's because that's who I remind her of. She says Reata is my Tara and James Dean is my Clark Gable. (*Smiles as SHE picks up the copy of the novel and flips through it.*) I never had given that a thought before but you know, it really is an interesting coincidence.

JUANITA. You find yourself some silly kinda co-

incidence in everythin'. You an' that Scarlett O'Hara are about as similar as me an' Jean Harlow. (SHE swats a fly.) Aha!

MONA. (*Moves up to the door.*) Well, Alice Marie discovered a resemblance.

JUANITA. It's all that movie watchin'...an' book readin' that puts them ideas in your head, if you ask me.

MONA. Bein' deprived of a formal college education the way I was...because of an affliction of which I had no control if I may again remind you... I have been forced to investigate on my own the mysteries of the universe or become totally ignorant of life like everybody else in this town...present company excluded, of course. I have managed to save my life from becomin' merely an existence with an aid of the novel-of-the-month club and the motion picture industry, of which I am totally indebted.

JUANITA. (*Heading toward the back room.*) Church goin' an' Bible readin' would have done you a whole lot better good.

MONA. You are well aware of my religious feelin's.

JUNITA. (*Stepping into the back room.*) You have none.

MONA. (*Moving down to the shrine.*) Precisely, the Lord turned his back on me at a very crucial time in my early life, causin' scars that will never heal.

JUANITA. (*In the back room.*) You can't blame the Lord for what...

MONA. (*Moves up to the screen doors.*) I can...

and I do! (*From outside, a young female voice calls out.*)

MONA (THEN). Juanita! (*The lights begin to change focus, altering the look of the store.*)

JUANITA. (*Sticking her head through the curtains and gestures toward the shrine.*) The blame belongs to that face there hangin' all over these walls... It was him, not the Lord, who put all them foolhardy notions in your young head.

MONA (THEN). Juanita!

MONA. At that time of our lives he was our savior... the only one who understood us. (*SHE goes outside. The sound of thunder and rain. The fan starts spinning and the lights have transformed the store dramatically to September 30, 1955.*)

JUANITA. Don't you just walk away from me like that, young lady.

(*MONA (THEN) appears in the doorway. SHE is seventeen and wears a mid-calf school dress of the fifties, anklets and saddle shoes. Her hair is long and in a pony tail. She carries a beat-up suitcase. As we move into the past, JUANITA remains the same, but twenty years earlier.*)

MONA (THEN). (*Excited.*) Juanita, I'm back! Aren't you surprised?! (*Laughs.*)

JUANITA. (*Going to her. Surprised.*) Mona!... Lord, child, what are you doin' back here, already? We just waved you off to that college not more than a week ago.

MONA (THEN). I don't have to go after all... Isn't that wonderful?

JUANITA. Don't have to go? What in heaven's name went wrong? (MONA, *behind the screen door, watches the scene in shadow.*)

MONA (THEN). My asthma. It got worse, it really did. That climate there was not right for my asthma. The Doctor said so.

JUANITA. They had to send for a doctor?

MONA (THEN). It was terrible. It really was. I was standin' in line waitin' to sign up for my classes when I just collapsed in a dead heap on the floor. It was real scary to everybody. They told me so afterwards . . . They all thought I was dead or some-thin'. (*Rushes and hugs JUANITA.*) Oh, I'm so excited to be back home with everybody. I was a fool to think I could ever leave here. Sidney will give me my job back, won't he?

JUANITA. (*Stunned.*) I'm sure he will.

MONA (THEN). (*Moving to a photo of Dean.*) How lucky for me it happened in time to return for tonight's meetin' of the "Disciples." I was real worried how the club would continue without my leadership. (*All smiles.*) Oh, I just missed everybody so very much. (*Quickly.*) Where's Sissy? . . . and Joe? . . . I can't wait to see their faces when they hear I'm back to stay. (*The lights begin to return to 1975. The thunder and rain fade. The fan stops.*)

JUANITA. Sissy's in the back room unpackin' some . . .

MONA (THEN). (*Grabs her suitcase.*) I brought them back a surprise I can't wait to show 'em . . . It's a whole entire magazine devoted to James Dean . . . they'll just die when they see it . . . (*Rushes to the back room.*)

JUANITA. Mona, honey, Joe's not . . .

MONA (THEN). Sissy! . . . Sissy . . . Joe, I'm back. (SHE disappears into the back room. JUANITA starts to follow but is stopped by MONA)

MONA. (Through the screen.) Juanita, I apologize for losin' my temper to you like that.

JUANITA. It's just as much my fault as yours I suppose. It all the time ends up this way whenever the subject comes up about . . . (Gestures to the shrine.) him. Come on inside here now before that sun roasts you up alive.

MONA. (Entering.) If you think it's hot here, you should really have been there in Marfa.

JUANITA. (Fanning herself with a menu.) Was things there just like you was hopin' they'd be?

MONA. There's hardly anythin' left to Reata anymore. If nobody knew what was there, they'd never know it was that beautiful house from "Giant," A bunch of telephone poles stickin' up outta the ground is all that's left standin' . . . the rest is just lyin' all over the ground rottin' away in the hot sun. (SHE goes to her suitcase.) I managed to retrieve one last identifiable piece of it . . . one of those pieces that, I believe, was along the top of the porch roof. I had to really dig among those piles of destruction to find one that even had the slightest hint of recognition. (SHE produces a chunk of plaster with a hint of architectural definition.) Isn't it beautiful?

JUANITA. (Glancing over it.) Some of those you got in past years are better.

MONA. (Somewhat disappointed.) You really think so? (Suddenly defensive.) Souvenir hunters with thoughts of financial profit have absconded with all the really recognizable ones. Why, you know, that

house, for a time, was as much a landmark as the Empire State Building in New York City, New York. (*Fondling the piece of Reata.*) It was only the front, of course, that's the way they do things in the movies...deceivin' to the eye, they call it. (*SHE sets the piece of Reata on the shrine.*) If I don't wash some of this dust and stickiness from my body, I will scream.

JUANITA. You need to soak in a nice cool tub an' relax.

MONA. A sink bath in the ladies' room will suffice me for the time bein'. I feel so guilty wastin' our precious water supply on bathin' more than twice a week. I will be so grateful when this horrible dry spell is over and water again flows instead of trickles into this town.

JUANITA. It can't last forever.

MONA. (*Near the back room door.*) It will be so embarrassin' to have the Disciples return to see how this town has dried-up so... (*The thunder and rain slowly fade up and the lights start their fade to 1955.*) ridin' in on that bus it looked like a regular ghost town...

MONA (THEN). (*Off.*) Juanita...

MONA. Seems hard to believe how it has all changed so quickly. (*Looks around her.*) It hasn't changed much in here, though. They'll all remember how it was in here... in the five-and-dime. (*MONA stands in a trance as MONA (THEN) enters past her from the back room.*)

MONA (THEN). Juanita, Sissy just told me about Joe. Why?... Why did Sidney have to fire him?

JUANITA. My Sidney has done what he believes

is best for that boy, as well as the rest of us. You'll understand better as you get older.

MONA (THEN). What did he do that was so wrong? He never bothered nobody, just stocked the shelves an' oiled the floors like he was paid to.

JUANITA. It's nothin' to do with his work, it's what he is. Things'll be better without him around, Sidney has done the right thing.

MONA (THEN). But we're friends!

JUANITA. He should have friends who are boys, not you and Sissy. It's shameful the way you three dressed up as look-alikes an' pretended you were that singin' act... What's their names?

MONA (THEN). The McGuire Sisters...and that was just for the Senior Talent Show...for fun, that's all...just for fun.

JUANITA. Well, it didn't turn out that way. Everybody who saw it was shocked and disgusted. Then there was that incident at the final school dance with Lester T. Callahan, that has erupted into a regular scandal...he is a sick boy that should be treated before he grows up into a communist.

MONA (THEN). No, Juanita, you're wrong...you're all wrong. He's different from all them others, that's all.

JUANITA. Sidney knows what is best.

MONA (THEN). No, he doesn't.

JUANITA. Sidney an' me are good upstandin', Bible-believin' Christians...an' we've searched our Bible from cover to cover to find an excuse for that boy's behavior an' there is none. In the eyes of God he doesn't belong.

MONA (THEN). If God doesn't accept him, then...then I can't accept God, then.

JUANITA. (*Grabs her angrily.*) Listen here, young lady... I will not permit you to speak of our Lord that way.

MONA (THEN. (*Pulling away.*) He's not my God. I don't want him... I hate him! (*The lights begin to return to the 70's.*) I hate him... and I hate Sidney, too. (*SHE rushes into the backroom.*)

JUANITA. (*Following her.*) You have a lot to learn, young lady, if you expect to live in this world.

MONA. It just makes me cry sometimes... doesn't it you, Juanita?... to remember how active this town was, before the rain stopped comin'

JUANITA. (*In the back room rummaging on a shelf.*) The Lord will send rain, when he's ready.

(*From outside, Sissy is heard calling "Juanita" from down the street.*)

MONA. (*Laughs.*) Well, I hope we'll all recognize what it is when it arrives.

(*Sissy enters hurriedly carrying a bag of groceries and a newspaper. SHE is the same age as MONA with bleached hair pulled high atop her head. Her dress is flashy and extremely short. SHE wears as much dime-store jewelry as SHE can get away with. The single outstanding feature about Sissy is her gigantic breasts... large to the point of being abnormal... awesome.*)

SISSY (*Entering.*) Juanita... Hey, Juanita, guess what? (*Seeing MONA.*) Hey, kid... I see your bus finally managed to pull on in. Who was drivin' today, the cute Willie-Boy Brophy? Whew!... He can punch my ticket any-ol' time he wants.

JUANITA. (*Entering from the back room.*) What are you so all-fired up about, Sissy?

SISSY. (*Flashes the newspaper at her.*) You two are never gonna guess what's in today's "Odessa-American!"

JUANITA. News of a rain storm comin'?

SISSY. (*Smugly.*) Nope . . . the "Ice Capades."

JUANITA. The what?!

SISSY. The "Ice Capades" . . . They're comin' to the Ector County Coliseum for three whole days . . . and that's not all . . . (*SHE spreads the newspaper out over the table.*) Read . . . read what it says here in this article . . . They're goin' to hold tryouts to find new skaters to join up with 'em . . . My God, when I read that, my heart skipped four beats. It's my big chance . . . the chance of my lifetime!

JUANITA. (*Dumbly.*) To do what?

SISSY. What do you mean, to do what? . . . ice skate with 'em, that's what.

MONA. (*Laughing.*) You?

SISSY. Well, I ain't talkin' 'bout my Aunt Sally.

JUANITA. The only skatin' you know how to do is roller skatin', an' you ain't done none of that since the Dixie Roller Rink closed up nearly ten years ago.

SISSY. Skatin's, skatin'. I don't care if you do it on rollers, ice . . . or water, for Chrissake. It's all just a matter of balance an' form . . . an' God knows my form is well balanced. (*SHE throws out her chest to them.*)

MONA. Aren't you just a little late into life for somethin' like that?

SISSY. Late for you, maybe...but I'm just beginnin'. Hell, you'd think from the way you two are talkin' I was nearly over the hill, an' ready for a wheelchair.

JUANITA. You'd be less apt to break your neck wheelin' on ice, than skatin' on it.

(MONA joins her in a laugh.)

SISSY. You're gonna be laughin' outta the other side of your mouth...just wait an' see.

MONA. That sure is some fancy new dress you're wearin' there, Sissy. Did you get it special for to-night?

SISSY. Mimi Gonzolez made it up for me from a picture in a magazine. (*Models it.*) It's the cat's ass, ain't it?

JUANITA. It's too short, an' mind your language.

SISSY. I gotta keep up with the times, don't I?

JUANITA. The "times" is havin' trouble keepin' up with you, if you're askin' me.

SISSY. Well, I ain't.

MONA. It looks like one of them skatin' outfits you used to wear all the time.

SISSY. (*Laughs.*) Ya, it kinda does, don't it... Hey, remember how they'd all scream an' yell when I'd skate out onto that floor...glidin' an' twirlin' aroun' that roller rink like a...what?...what was it they used to call me?

JUANITA. Scandalous...that's what I called the way you always showed off...bouncin' yourself all over the place.

SISSY. Well, as the good Lord says... "if you got 'em... bounce 'em. (SHE discovers a stain on her dress.) Godamn that Luke Dempsey and his oily hands... Just look at the stain he left here on my dress... dammit all to hell!

JUANITA. (*Unpacking the groceries.*) You keep that kinda talk for the truck-stop, not... Sissy, you forgot the bread... how can ya make sandwiches without..

SISSY. Well, I got everythin' else didn't I! You got any stain remover aroun'?

JUANITA. (*Starts for the door.*) Out back.

SISSY. Out back, where?

JUANITA. Out back there on that shelf with the cleanin' stuff.

SISSY. Where you goin'?

JUANITA. To buy the bread you forgot. (SHE exits.)

SISSY. Jeezus, you'd think I'd committed a mortal sin or somethin'... hell, it's only bread. (SHE starts for the backroom.)

MONA. (*Lost in memory.*) Joe used to call you "Swanya Henie, the breastest bird on eight wheels." (*Laughs and turns to Sissy.*) Remember?

SISSY. Joe?!... Hell, I ain't thought about him in ages. What made you remember him all of a sudden? (SHE exits out of sight into the back room. MONA follows, but not out of sight. The lights start to cross fade to 1955.)

MONA. I don't know... he just sort of popped into mind, that's all. I was doin' a lot a thinkin' back there in Marfa... at Reata, and... He's still in my head I guess. (SHE sits on a crate losing herself again to the past.)

SISSY. (*Off.*) The three of us really had ourselves

one helluva good time back then, didn't we" That Joe Qualley was a real riot, wasn't he?

(SISSY (THEN) followed by MONA enter from the back room into the store. SHE has the same gigantic boobs forcing her thin sweater to its limit. SHE also wears a short skating skirt. MONA (THEN) is helping her carry boxes of cosmetics that they will hang from the display rack.)

SISSY (THEN). (*Entering.*) Me an' Joe was gonna get Stella May to take your place doin' the McGuire Sisters, but she wouldn't have been as good as you.

MONA (THEN). I don't think we should do that act anymore because of all that's happened. Juanita says it was that thing at the senior dance with Lester T. Callahan that started all the trouble.

SISSY (THEN). I thought it was a riot, a real riot. They all thought he was my cousin from Oklahoma City . . . especially Lester T.

MONA (THEN). He really does make a very pretty girl, doesn't he?

SISSY (THEN). Lester T. sure thought so, didn't he? . . . thought he was the cutest thing he'd ever seen. I would have given anythin' to see the expression on his face when he got Joe in the backseat of his car, reached in his dress, squeezed them balloons and strawberry jello exploded all over his rented white tuxedo. (*Laughs.*) Serves the bastard right for two-timin' me right in front of my face.

MONA (THEN). Joe should never have carried the joke so far. You think Lester T. will ever get even with him like he said?

SISSY (THEN). Shoot, I wouldn't put it past that goon-head.

MONA (THEN). It's been nearly three months. Maybe he's forgot.

SISSY (THEN). He ain't forgot...hell, it's the only thing outta twelve years of school he's remembered. (*Looks out the window.*) Thank God, that rain's finally gonna stop. I got me a date over at the graveyard tonight.

MONA (THEN). We've got a meetin' of the "Disciples," did you forget?

SISSY (THEN). The meetin' ain't gonna last all night is it? I just can't get over your bein' back... seems like I'm dreamin' or somethin'.

MONA (THEN). (*Excited.*) Oh, me too. (*They hug.*) I missed you so very much.

SISSY (THEN). And me, you.

MONA (THEN). I was so afraid for this summer to be over. Now it can stay summer forever, can't it?

SISSY (THEN). Shoot, I hope not. The heat's been so hot I think it's beginnin' to shrink my "bazooms." (*Throws out her chest.*) They look like they've shrunk any to you?

MONA (THEN). (*Inspecting.*) They both look the same to me.

SISSY (THEN). You think they might be as big as Marilyn Monroe's?

MONA (THEN). I think they might be bigger.

SISSY (THEN). (*Thrilled.*) You really mean it? Sidney said they were, but you know him.

MONA (THEN). He told you that?

SISSY (THEN). He's such a card...always pinchin' my bottom behin' one of the counters. Not where Juanita can see him though. She thinks he's as prim an' proper as a preacher. Boy, does he pull the wool over her eyes.

MONA (THEN). Where is he today, anyhow?... hung over again?

SISSY (THEN). Had some kinda meetin' over in Waco. (SHE takes a lipstick, eyebrow pencil, etc. from the rack and applies them.)

MONA (THEN). I'll never forgive him for firin' Joe.

SISSY (THEN). Well, whattaya expect from the buttholes in this town?

MONA (THEN). I'm afraid he might leave town now he's got no job.

SISSY (THEN). Hey, you got a thing for him maybe?

MONA (THEN). No!

SISSY (THEN). You do! That's why you really came back, ain't it?

MONA (THEN). (Quickly.) It was my asthma... my asthma...we're friends, that's all...just like you an' me.

SISSY. (THEN). O.K. . . . O.K. . . . Jeez, I was only kiddin'...Here try some of this new cheek blush that just come in. (Starts to apply it on her.) Hey, ain't you just bustin' for that movie to come out so's you can see yourself up there on the movie screen with James Dean? (A squeal and a shiver.) Ooh! He can drag me off to the graveyard any ol' night he wants...rainin' or not.

MONA (THEN). (*Nervous.*) Did you ever dream about what it would be like? You know, to make love to somebody real famous like him?

SISSY (THEN). All the time . . . but you really should experiment with some "nobody" before you tackle someone as important as him. That's all I'm doin' . . . sort of like homework for the big test later on. I just can't get over somebody your age haven't never been over to the graveyard with anyone before.

MONA (THEN). It's . . . it's too spooky.

SISSY (THEN). Oh, you get used to it after awhile. Some of the guys get scared an' have trouble gettin' goin', but they're mainly after my "bazooms" anyhow. They all gotta squeeze an' feel aroun' . . . most of 'em get their kicks just doin' that.

MONA (THEN). Aren't you afraid you'll get caught?

SISSY (THEN). Shoot, nobody goes over to that ol' graveyard no more. It's all grown over with stickers an' tall grass, an' the gravestones have all been pushed over to use for layin' places. I always do it on top of Colonel Jaspar P. Ramsland the second . . . soun's dreamy, don't he?

MONA (THEN). Wouldn't it be terrible to be left alone like that with nobody to pick the weeds off your body.

SISSY (THEN). Mona, how creepy!

MONA (THEN). I don't know anybody's who's ever died, an' I hope I never do. I'm so afraid I might never remember them anymore.

SISSY (THEN). (*Laughs.*) What the hell's that supposed to mean?

MONA (THEN). (*Laughs also.*) I don't know. I'm always sayin' stuff like that I can't explain.

SISSY (THEN). I can get in enough trouble sayin' stuff I *can* explain. (*Gets moving.*) I better get the rest of them boxes unpacked before Juanita gets back . . . c'mon an' help me.

MONA (THEN). Sissy, I feel somethin' so deep inside me about James Dean that I can't get words to come out about it.

SISSY (THEN). You mean love?

MONA (THEN). No, it's somethin' more.

SISSY (THEN). More than love? There's nothin' more than love . . . love's the end.

MONA (THEN). No, Sissy, you're wrong. There's somethin' beyond the end. (*The lights start to cross-fade*) As soon as I can save up enough money, I'm gonna buy Reata . . . an' you an' me an' Joe will move there an' live forever an' ever . . . Wouldn't that be wonderful.

SISSY (THEN). But it's only the front, silly . . . it's not a real house . . . c'mon. (*SHE exits* MONA (THEN) *rushes after her*)

MONA (THEN). It could be, Sissy . . .

MONA. (*To herself.*) It's just "deceivin' to the eye," that's all.

(*SISSY enters from the back, wiping her dress.*)

SISSY. What is?

MONA. (*Shaken from her memory.*) What? . . . Oh, nothin'.

SISSY. That oil stain look like it's gone to you?

MONA. I can't see it from here.

(*JUANITA enters with a loaf of bread. SISSY and MONA come out of the backroom.*)

JUANITA. Mona, you gonna go freshen yourself up, or ain't ya? . . . It's gettin' awful late.

MONA. (*Looks at her watch.*) My, I just seem to have lost all track of time. (*Gets her suitcase and goes into the backroom.*) I'll be right back.

SISSY. (*To JUANITA.*) Somethin' eatin' at her, or what? . . . She's actin' awful strange.

JUANITA. That long, hot bus ride turned her all inside-out, I guess. (*Starts to make sandwiches.*) You ain't serious about his Ice Capades business, are ya?

SISSY. Hell, if I ain't. (*Gets nail polish from the display rack.*)

JUANITA. You'd just be makin' a fool of yourself, an' you know it.

SISSY. (*Setting at a table and putting polish on her nails.*) Well, it's my life to fool aroun' with, ain't it?

JUANITA. I'm gonna ask my Wednesday night prayer club to devote our next few sessions to you.

SISSY. Better pray for them poor people over in China, they need it a helluva lot more than me.

JUANITA. We stopped prayin' for them. It didn't seem to be doin' much good. We're now prayin' for rain.

SISSY. I doubt you'll do any better than ya did for them poor Chinese . . . which is why I prefer you don't go prayin' for me. Frankly, I've found prayin' to be more of a curse.

JUANITA. Sissy!

SISSY. Oh, I used to pray . . . prayed all the time when I needed help. Never did a whole helluva

lot of good though. Then, when I stopped...hell, everythin' started in to happen. So, you've prob'bly done them Chinese a great big favor.

MONA. (*Entering.*) I turned on both them faucets an' nothin' comes out.

SISSY. Well, it's finally happened.

JUANITA. (*Sharply.*) *Nothin's* happened! (*To MONA.*) Did you turn 'em all the way?

MONA. As far as they'll go.

SISSY. You can't turn 'em no further than that. (*SHE goes to the door, waving her arms to dry her nails.*)

JUANITA. The pressure in the pipes must be down ... wait a while an' try again.

SISSY. Pressure, hell...the water's all gone for Chrissakes.

MONA. Three years without the benefit of rain. That must be some kinda record for a dry-spell, don't ya think?

SISSY. Everythin's just dryin' up an' dyin' away all aroun' us.

JUANITA. It will rain again soon I have faith in prayer, an' the Lord.

SISSY. (*At the door.*) Look at this thermometer for Chrissake...ninety-nine degrees. Can you believe it?! Hey, Juanita, how hot does that Bible of yours say it gets in hell?

JUANITA. The Holy Bible does not deal in that sort of information.

SISSY. Well, I'm willin' to bet it's cooler there, than it is here, by ten degrees or more...Yes sir, them Ice Capades are comin' to rescue my ass, just in time.

MONA. Sissy, did Luke say anythin' about that old fan?

SISSY. Said he'd come take a look at it first minute he had.

MONA. You think maybe it's just stuck?

SISSY. Juanita, hand me that broom over there an' we'll just find out.

JUANITA. (*Getting broom.*) What are you gonna do?

SISSY. Bang on them blades an' see if I can unstick it.

JUANITA. Careful you don't break it.

SISSY. How the hell can I break it if it's already broken.

JUANITA. Well, you could bend one of the blades, or...

SISSY. Hush up an' foot yourself on over there an' flick that switch back an' forth.

JUANITA. (*Goes to the switch.*) What good will that do?

SISSY. How the hell do I know?... Maybe it's just been "off" all this time... you flickin' (*SHE bangs on the blades with the broom handle.*)

JUANITA. Yes. (*SHE flicks the switch back and forth.*) Nothin's happenin'.

SISSY. (*Stops.*) No shit, Dick Tracy. (*Moves away disgustedly.*) How the hell they expect people to come in this rat-hole an' buy up their nickle an' dime crap in this heat, is beyond me.

JUANITA. It's just Mexicans anymore an' they're used to it.

SISSY. Even a goddam wetback has a right to be cool.

MONA. Maybe it's better the fan stays broken. It would only stir up lots of dust an' dead air, anyhow.

SISSY. If everybody don't hurry up an' get themselves here, all they'll find is our bleached bones. (To MONA) Hey, you ain't even said how you like the decorations...took me off a whole days work from the truck stop to get 'em strung up.

MONA. I think they're just perfect.

SISSY. (*Noticing a dangling streamer.*) Aw crap, that one's fell down already. (*SHE goes to the ladder.*) Hand me that end, would ya, honey? (*MONA hands it to her as SHE climbs the ladder.*)

My God, the higher I climb, the hotter it gets. (*Laughter.*) Wouldn't it just tick everybody off though, if all their lives they worked their butts off to get to heaven an' hell turned out to be the coolest spot all along?

MONA. (*Goes to the door.*) Where on earth is Jimmy Dean? I hope nothin's happened to him.

SISSY. Oh... He's workin'.

MONA. Workin'?!... What do you mean, workin'... Where?

SISSY. For Luke...over at the Texaco, puttin' patches on innertubes.

MONA. Doin' what?!

SISSY. Patchin' holes on innertubes. Luke's givin' him fifty cents a hole.

MONA. (*Upset.*) Luke's just takin' advantage of that boy's mental deficiency. I don't like that. I don't like that one bit!

SISSY. Oh, for Chrissake, Mona! He's havin' hisself a good time... leave him alone.

JIMMY DEAN, JIMMY DEAN ACT I

MONA. Luke's just tryin' to make a laughin' stock of him in front of the whole town.

SISSY. Nobody's laughin', Goddammit.

MONA. (*Frantic.*) They are! They laugh all the time . . . to themselves.

SISSY. Oh, Mona, you just *think* they do.

MONA. I *know* they do, because they're jealous . . . jealous because I was the one chosen to bring the son of Jimmy Dean into this world. (*Goes to the door.*) I am surprised at both of you for allowin' Luke to take advantage of . . . (*SHE goes outside and calls.*) Jimmy Dean! . . . Jimmy Dean!

SISSY. Mona, for Chrissake, he's old enough to . . .

MONA. (*Storms back in. Sharply at SISSY.*) This is none of your business!

JUANITA. (*To MONA.*) Calm yourself down now, or you'll get your asthma to . . .

MONA. (*To SISSY.*) You sound just like them . . . (*Gestures to the door.*) out there . . . those warped an' demented people who think they know so much more than all them doctors I have spent every penny I have earned workin' here in this dimestore, to take him to. He is retarded in the brain . . . a moron!

SISSY. Don't you call him no moron, dammit!

MONA. I will call him what he is. Oh, those doctors have their fancy names to confuse you . . . but the truth is . . . he's a moron! (*SHE starts to wheeze and gasp for breath.*) Mentally equal to a child between . . . the ages . . . the ages of . . . of eight and . . . (*SHE grabs a chair for support. JUANITA rushes to her.*)

JUANITA. Now see what you've gone an' done. Where's your pills?

(MONA gestures to her purse. JUANITA gets them along with the remainder of her Orange Crush.)

SISSY. It may not be none of my business, but it is just as warped an' demented to keep him cooped up in here all day, 'cause you're afraid of them laughin' at *you*... not him, Mona... but you!

JUANITA. Sissy, you stay out of this, Jimmy Dean is her son, not yours.

SISSY. I thought he belonged to James Dean fans everywhere... conceived in Mona, an' dedicated to the population.

MONA. He chose me from everyone else to bring his child into this world.

SISSY. Three cheers for Mona Magdalene!

MONA. (*Moving to SISSY on the ladder.*) You are a vile, jealous an' wicked person... just like all the others in this town! (*SHE grabs the ladder and frantically tries to shake her off. JUANITA tries to pull MONA away.*)

JUANITA. Mona!... Mona, stop... you'll make her fall.

SISSY. (*Escaping down the ladder.*) Mona, for Chris-sake, you gone crazy or somethin'?

MONA (*Moving away.*) I don't know why you have turned against me... my friend, the only friend I...

SISSY. All I said was...

MONA. I heard what you had to say, that he should be locked up in one of them institutions

for crazy people...the same kinda remarks "they" have been sayin' behind my back ever since I discovered the truth about him!

SISSY. I never said any...!

MONA. They're not goin' to take Jimmy Dean away from me, you hear?!...an' neither are you. You have turned out to be just as warped an' demented as they are.

SISSY. You were born an' raised in this town too, Miss!

MONA. Yes...but I rose above the attitudes of this town while you layed spread over a gravestone an' took them inside you.

JUANITA. Mona!

(SISSY stunned to silence, stares at MONA in disbelief. MONA nervously moves away. The sound of a passing train is heard in the distance.)

MONA. Juanita, would you call the Texaco for me an' have Luke send Jimmy Dean back, right away.

SISSY. You have gone one step too far this time, Mona. (SISSY goes to the door.)

JUANITA. Sissy, where you goin'?

SISSY. Outside to cool off. Ain't that a joke, though! (SHE exits.)

JUANITA. (Going to the phone.) Mona, that was a terrible thing to say to her.

MONA (THEN). (Dreamily to herself in the back room.) I dream about it all the time...me an' James Dean all tangled up in each other's arms

under the stars . . . All peaceful an' quiet with only the slightest summer breeze.

(The shadow of JOE again appears behind the screen door. His face is bruised and bleeding. MONA catches sight of him out of the corner of her eye before HE quickly disappears.)

MONA. Jimmy Dean?

JUANITA. Where?

MONA. Out of the corner of my eye . . . I thought I saw . . . someone.

MONA (THEN). *(To Sissy (THEN) who has joined MONA (THEN) in the back room.* This has been the most wonderful summer of my whole entire life . . . an' it's goin' away. I'm scared, Sissy, I can't let it go. Everythin's been so different since bein' in "Giant," an' meetin' James Dean.

SISSY (THEN). What's to be scared of, silly? . . . Hey, you got yourself into some kinda trouble you ain't tellin' me about?

MONA (THEN). *(Moving quickly away.)* I can't tell you . . . I can't.

(Sissy follows after her.)

MONA. *(To herself.)* It should have been the beginnin' of the summer that night, instead of the end.

JUANITA. *(Into the phone.)* Hello, Luke . . . Juanita, Is Jimmy Dean still over there with you? . . . He did? How long ago was that? . . . I see . . . I see . . .

Thank you Luke. See you at the prayer club Wednesday night. (SHE *hangs up*.) Luke says he rushed on over to the railroad sidin' to count box-cars on that passin' freight... Sounds like a long one. He counted eighty-five on Saturday. Maybe today he'll count a hundred... that's his goal.

MONA (Still in a dreamlike trance.) He's all I have left to remind me. I don't know how I could ever face tomorrow, or the day after, or the day after that without the memory he brings to mind for me so strongly. (Wiping her forehead and snapping out of her trance.) My, that long weekend in Marfa has left me so... so nostalgic or somethin'. (Again, SHE catches sight of JOE peering through the screen door. SHE rushes to the door.) Boy!

JUANITA. What boy? (HE disappears.)

MONA. At the door... the same one I thought I saw before.

JUANITA. Who was he?

MONA. (Puzzled.) I don't know. He was there, an' he just disappeared. (Sees something outside.) Juanita, come here, quick.

JUANITA. Now what's the matter? (Joins her at the door.)

MONA. Someone's arrivin' in one of them little sports cars... see... there, across the street.

JUANITA. Is it Stella May?

MONA. I don't think so... Whoever it is, they're alone.

JUANITA. Can you see who it is, then?

MONA. I can't tell... it's a lady though, an' she's lookin' over here at the store.

JUANITA. You think it could be one of them Disciples? . . . Martha Gibbons, or . . . Sue Ellen?

MONA. I certainly hope not . . . I haven't changed or nothin' (*Moves from the door quickly.*) Oh, oh . . . She's comin' right this way . . . Juanita, move away . . . She's gonna know we've been gapin' at her.

(*It's too late. JOANNE enters. SHE is a very classy in a lightweight pants suit. SHE wears large sunglasses.*)

JUANITA. Hello.

JOANNE. Hello.

JUANITA. We was just lookin' at that funny lookin' car you're drivin'.

MONA. It's a sports car, Juanita.

JUANITA. I know. I know . . . still funny lookin' to me . . . don't know how you can squeeze yourself all up inside it. (*Laughs.*) Must make you feel like a sardine in a can.

JOANNE. (*Giving her a half smile.*) Don't see many dime stores like this around anymore.

JUANITA. Still a few of us left hangin' on. Is there somethin' I can help you to find?

JOANNE. (*Caught off guard.*) Urm . . . (*Removes her sunglasses.*) Sunglasses . . . One of the lenses on these is cracked, and it's become very irritating to look through.

JUANITA. There's a few pair left hangin' on the wall over there. (*Gestures to a spot near the shrine.*)

JOANNE. Thank you. (*SHE goes to it.*)

MONA. Are you just passin' through?

JOANNE. You might say.

MONA. Not many people do, anymore . . . what with the super highway ignorin' us the way it did.

JOANNE. (*Looking up at the photos of Dean.*) I used to be a fan of his, too.

MONA. Not anymore?

JOANNE. (*Bluntly.*) He died . . . didn't you know?

MONA. Well, of course, I know . . . but he lives on in his movies and . . . did you happen to see "Giant?" It was filmed not far from here, in Marfa. I don't mean to sound boastful, but I was in that picture. Only in the crowd scenes, but my face does appear on the screen distinctly in one segment.

JOANNE. That must have been very exciting for you.

MONA. It was *the* most exciting time of my whole entire life. (*Curious.*) Your voice . . . it sounds so very familiar.

JOANNE. (*Going to the counter and mirror with several pair of glasses to check out how they look.*) People have said it's unusual. I've heard it all my life so it sounds perfectly normal to me.

MONA. (*Laughs.*) Well, yes . . . I suppose it would.

JOANNE. Are you the mother of his son? (*Gestures back to the photos.*)

MONA. (*Feigned surprise.*) How on earth did you know about that?

JOANNE. I saw one of your signs down by the highway . . . "See the son of James Dean, visit Kressmont's five-and-dime, nine miles ahead."

MONA. (*Embarrassed laugh.*) We never bothered to take them down because the words became so faded from the sun they couldn't be read anymore.

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