

AND THEN  
A Stage Play  
by  
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CHARACTERS:

ODIE, the company president.

TINK, his wife.

LISA, his employee.

FULLER, his golf buddy.

ACT ONE:

A one-room apartment, now.

A business office, one year ago.

A golf-club locker room, same year.

ACT TWO:

The one-room apartment, next day.

ACT ONE

A cluttered one-room apartment, littered with mounds of unwashed clothes, stacks of dirty dishes, wastebaskets overflowing with weeks-old garbage. An attractive but fed-up woman, TINK, is packing her suitcases. Her disheveled husband, ODIE, is sprawled on his back on a rumpled bed, head draped over the edge of the mattress, face facing the audience upside down.

ODIE

I think I finally have something. I'm sure I have something. I'm well aware you've heard me say this before. Yes I do believe I'm onto something. The germ of an idea is transforming before our very eyes into a planted seed that's taking root and blooming. We now have before us a full-blown notion. Yikes, lo, behold, I believe we've rocketed past the concept stage into a concrete plan of action. Pay attention. Don't be distracted. You are about to eyewitness the genesis of a heaven-sent revolutionary celestial order.

TINK, sick of hearing ODIE's worthless ramblings, ignores him. She searches under piles of rubbish for her belongings.

TINK

Have you seen my yellow sandals?

He ignores her. They talk aloud to themselves.

ODIE

A new religion.

TINK

I wore them a few weeks ago.

ODIE

A perfect religion.

TINK

I love those yellow sandals.

ODIE

A religion that works.

TINK

They're probably hiding under a week-old tuna sandwich.

ODIE

I don't know the name of this new religion.

TINK

There they are.

ODIE

A name has not yet appeared.

TINK

Peeking out from under the rotting towels.

ODIE

I'm also not sure of its tenets.

TINK

Don't be frightened yellow sandals.

ODIE

Its dogma.

TINK

Mommy's coming to rescue you.

ODIE

I do know that the new religion will be unobtrusive.

TINK

Gotcha yellow sandals.

ODIE

It will not attempt to tamper with other religions.

TINK

I'll pack you away neatly in the suitcase.

ODIE

This religion won't try to seduce those who truly believe.

TINK

Safe and sound from this pigsty.

ODIE

Will there be a bible? Commandments? Congregations?

TINK

This lunacy.

ODIE

I don't know, I'm not sure.

TINK

Let me find a few more of my things.

ODIE

This is all happening very quickly.

TINK

I'll finish packing.

ODIE

I need to be quiet now.

TINK

Then we'll be gone.

ODIE

I need to think.

ODIE, eyes closed, still upside down towards the audience, retreats into deep thought. A concerned TINK turns her attention towards him.

TINK

A new religion? Last week it was a revolutionary new window-tinting franchise. The week before that, oh I can't even remember. It's all gone too far now. You know I was behind you in the beginning. Quitting our jobs. Selling the house. Living off our savings. For a while it was fun. Adventuresome. Two daredevils leaping the Grand Canyon on a motorcycle. Escaping the rat race. Moving off the grid. It's not fun any more. The endless babbling. The indolence. The mess. Look at this pigsty. I thought that if I let the laundry and dirty dishes pile up it might

TINK (Continued)

snap you to your senses. You used to be so neat, so organized. At work they nicknamed you Mr. Cleanfreak. Instead of being offended you had a plaque made and displayed it on your desk. You nearly had another one made for your locker at the country club. Mr. Cleanfreak, look at you now. You haven't changed your underwear in ten days. If I didn't shave you every morning you'd look like Ozark Odie. A new religion. Honey. I think you were closer with your window-tinting idea.

TINK returns to hunting for items and packing her suitcase. ODIE's eyes open with the wonder of revelation.

ODIE

The new religion will need rituals. Chanting? Fasting? Pilgrimages? I don't know the rituals. The rituals have not yet appeared. I do know the goal of this new religion, its mission.

Lights down on the apartment, lights up on an executive office, decorated with stylish furnishings, walls covered with awards and diplomas. A nervous woman, LISA, is squirming in a chair in front of her boss' empty desk. There's a plaque displayed on the desk that reads "Mr. Cleanfreak." LISA is having trouble catching her breath as she speaks into a cell phone.

LISA

Yes, I'm in his office right now. No, I'm alone. The sadist's making me wait. Sweat it out for a while until he comes in and lowers the boom. I have no idea what I did wrong. It could be anything. He doesn't like the way I write reports. He doesn't like the way I handle clients, the color of my hair, my wardrobe, who the hell knows. Mel Markham didn't have a clue why he got canned. Nancy Keller thought she was being called in for a raise and left with a pink slip. Last week I spilled some muffin crumbs on my desk, maybe he's going to fire me for that. They don't call him Mr. Cleanfreak for nothing --

The sound of someone approaching is heard. LISA abruptly clicks off the cell phone, shoves it in her briefcase, attempts to compose herself, attempts to steady her breathing, in vain. ODIE enters the office, impeccably dressed, a poised, formidable business executive.

ODIE

Sorry I'm late, board meeting ran over.

LISA

No problem whatsoever.

ODIE takes his seat behind the desk and studies his nervous employee.

ODIE

Is it too warm in here?

LISA

Not at all.

ODIE

You're perspiring.

LISA

I skipped the elevator and walked up.

ODIE

Mid-day workout?

LISA

No time to get to the gym.

ODIE

It's seven flights of stairs between our offices.

LISA

In training for a 10-K.

ODIE

You're still out of breath.

LISA  
I jogged the last three flights.

ODIE  
Sure you don't want me to turn down the heat?

LISA  
Not necessary.

ODIE lets the stalemate rest. He  
picks up a bound volume.

ODIE  
I read your Bellingham report.

Her breathing grows more labored.

LISA  
If anything's unclear I'll be glad to work on it some more.

ODIE  
You think this report needs another draft.

LISA  
Probably, I'm sure I overlooked something in there.

ODIE  
Lisa?

LISA  
Yes.

ODIE  
What's troubling you?

LISA  
Nothing.

ODIE  
You seem so nervous.

LISA  
I'm just a bit anxious about the Bellingham account.



ODIE

Because?

LISA

It's one of our biggest pieces of business.

ODIE

You think they're unhappy.

LISA

You never know.

ODIE

I had dinner with Ned Bellingham, he's thrilled with us.

LISA's breathing is no better.

LISA

That's great news.

ODIE

Lisa?

LISA

Yes.

ODIE

What's troubling you?

LISA

Nothing.

ODIE

Things okay at home?

LISA

Perfect.

ODIE

Kids?

LISA

Excellent.

ODIE

Then I guess it must be me.

LISA

Sir?

ODIE

I see you around the halls you seem very relaxed. I see you at the company picnic you're the life of the party. You step into this office you fall apart at the seams. It must be me.

Changing subjects, he holds up the Bellingham report.

ODIE

This is a good piece of work. Clear. Concise. I have a bit of confusion in Part III, projected marketing modifications, I'm never too concerned about projections. I'm interested solely in business at hand, and the Bellingham business is gangbusters. After reading your report I can see why Ned Bellingham invited me and my wife Tink to spend the weekend on his yacht. If life were fair I'd send you and your husband instead. But put yourself in my place -- three days on a sixty-foot luxury yacht, lobster omelets, unlimited massages -- would you hand that to a subordinate simply because she did all the work and deserves it?

LISA

Never.

ODIE

Talk to me Lisa.

LISA

About?

ODIE

You.

LISA

Me.

ODIE

Who you are. What you want. Why you're nervous.

LISA pauses, chooses her words carefully.

LISA

I'm a hard worker, I want success, I shouldn't be fired.

ODIE

Like Mel Markham and Nancy Keller?

LISA

They've crossed my mind.

ODIE

Do you know why I fired them?

LISA

Nobody does.

ODIE

Nancy repeatedly stole money from petty cash.

LISA

She never mentioned that.

ODIE

Mel described his testicles to several women employees.

LISA

I heard rumors.

ODIE

Your job is secure, you'll never be fired unless.

LISA

Unless?

ODIE

Nervous executives tend to sabotage themselves and others.

LISA

Hm.

ODIE

Lisa?

LISA

Yes.

ODIE

What's troubling you?

LISA's breathing has grown calmer. She now seems somewhat comfortable in her boss' presence.

LISA

I don't know. I guess I worry about things. You know. My son Lonnie, I worry about -- I don't know. Are you sure you don't want any changes in that Bellingham report?

ODIE

No changes.

LISA

Then I guess I'll go back to my office.

ODIE

Bye.

LISA

Unless there's anything else you want to talk about.

ODIE

Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

LISA shakes her head no, rises from her chair and heads for the door. She stops, considers, there is more she'd like to talk about, but doesn't. LISA exits the office. ODIE waits a moment for her to return, then files away the Bellingham report.

Lights down on the office, lights up on the men's locker room of an exclusive golf country club. An important member, FULLER, sits in a plush chair waiting a bit impatiently for someone to arrive. The man's high-end golf gear and jewelry tell us he's wealthy. He checks his watch, looks around, rises, pokes his head off-stage in search of the person he's waiting for.

FULLER

No thanks, you guys go ahead. I'm catching a quick steam then racing off to the Jag dealer. My wife doesn't want to deal with the service people. Damn straight I'm henpecked. Do you have any idea what it would cost if she decided to divorce me? Enjoy the clubhouse. Have a drink on me, tell Ricky to put it on my tab. But booze only. If I see one steak sandwich on my monthly bill I'll get even with you bums at our next gin rummy game.

FULLER waves goodbye, then returns to the plush seat, sits, checks his watch, looks around impatiently. ODIE, dressed for golf, enters scowling at his putter.

ODIE

Eighteen inches from the cup and you miss by a foot.

FULLER

Smash the fucker.

ODIE

You think so?

FULLER

Best therapy on earth.

ODIE considers, scowls at his putter, kisses it goodbye, then, crunch, breaks it over his knee. He's overtaken by a profound sense of satisfaction.

ODIE

That. Felt. Divine.

FULLER

Stick with me kid.

ODIE begins to change out of his golf clothing.

ODIE

How'd you shoot today?

FULLER

Seventy-four, way off.

ODIE

In my dreams I've shot a way-off seventy-four.

FULLER

What do you expect playing once a week?

ODIE

A ninety-four, a hundred and four.

FULLER

Meet me at the driving range tomorrow I'll help you.

ODIE

Bobby gave up on me a month ago.

FULLER

Bobby's the club pro, he's afraid to kick your butt.

ODIE

You'll treat me like a drill sergeant.

FULLER

Hut downswing hut tempo hut loosen that grip recruit.

ODIE

I'll be on the driving range at oh eight hundred.

FULLER

Be prepared to win the club championship by Tuesday.

Awkwardly, FULLER checks to see if they're alone.

FULLER

Odie, you have a minute?

ODIE

Tink's meeting me here for lunch but I'm good till then.

FULLER

Ah it's nothing really.

ODIE

Then let's go play pinochle.

FULLER looks around to see if they're alone.

FULLER  
Remember when we had lunch last week?

ODIE  
Fun.

FULLER  
I'm feeling a bit uncomfortable about our conversation.

ODIE  
The best swimming pool cleaner in town?

FULLER  
Not that conversation, the one about --

He looks around again.

FULLER  
You know what we talked about.

ODIE  
Your wife's illness.

FULLER  
Did you mention it to anyone?

ODIE  
Of course not.

FULLER  
Not even Tink?

ODIE  
You asked me not to.

FULLER  
Chad Newmark said something strange to me today. We're driving in the golf cart and he asks out of the blue, 'So how's Andie?' I answer, 'Fine.' Three holes later we're approaching the tee area, Chad asks, 'We haven't seen Andie in a while is she okay?' Trying not to sound irritated I mutter something about Andie being busy with a charity auction, then I go quickly and hit the ball. On eighteen, right after I replace the final flagstick, Chad says, 'Nona

FULLER (Continued)

and I are having a cocktail party Friday night. We expect to see you there with Andie. WITH Andie is how it sounded, as if what? Andie died last week and I shoved her in a trunk?

FULLER measures his next words carefully.

FULLER

Odie, I'm not saying you leaked anything on purpose. I know you're a discreet man. Extremely discreet. That's why I felt I could talk with you at lunch. We've played golf together a dozen times, I've never once heard you gossip about another member of this club. The rest of these piranhas swim around gobbling up every scrap of dirt they can find then spew it out to anyone and everyone. An example. That new patio set you and Tink bought? We heard about it before you left the store. Odie, you're a new member of this country club, heed my words -- keep thine own council. Mum's the word. Take your secrets to the grave.

ODIE

What secrets?

FULLER

Everyone has secrets.

ODIE

You mean the time I was thrown out of college for cheating?

FULLER

I hope you're joking.

ODIE

The twelve thousand dollars I borrowed and never paid back.

FULLER

Careful.

ODIE

My high school girlfriend who put our baby up for adoption?

FULLER looks around, alarmed.



FULLER

Odie. Stop. That's enough.

ODIE, undressed by now, stark naked, grabs a terry bathrobe from his locker, puts it on, then heads for the shower room.

ODIE

Fuller, your wife's sick. Why you don't want anyone to know about it is beyond me. How can you play golf with the same men every day, eat lunch together, go to cocktail parties, and not confide in them? You need to talk, I need a shower. First, I'm calling Tink and canceling our lunch. I'll tell her it's a personal emergency, she'll understand. And a personal emergency it is. My friend you and I are having a burger together. Wait here ten minutes. Think about what you want to tell me. Start with that secret you referred to, the one you're taking to your grave. If you're not ready to go there yet at least we can begin with your wife's illness.

FULLER stares at ODIE, dazed.

ODIE

You look like a deer caught in the headlights. Don't be frightened, you can always run away while I'm in the shower. I give you permission to spew my secrets to the other members of the country club. On the other hand, now that the ice is broken, you can always stick around and --

Without finishing his thought, ODIE disappears into the showers, leaving FULLER alone with his decision. The wealthy man instantly starts to leave the locker room, then comes back, mulls, sits down in the plush chair, rises, leaves, stays...

Lights down on the locker room, lights up on the cluttered one-room apartment. TINK is still packing her suitcases, trying to ignore the ramblings of ODIE, sprawled on his back, head draped

over the mattress, face facing the audience upside down.

ODIE

I know, I'm aware. We're not all in need of a new celestial order. Some of us are just fine with the way things are. Minimal pain, reasonable anguish, great restaurants. Perhaps we're preaching to the choir. I can't pin down the nuts and bolts. I don't know the liturgy. The liturgy has not yet appeared. I do know we'll need patience --

He's growing exhausted.

ODIE

Patience and --

His eyes struggle to stay open.

ODIE

And --

He falls asleep.

ODIE

Patience.

TINK abandons the suitcases and approaches her husband with care and sadness.

TINK

Tell me I'm making a mistake. Tell me I should unpack my suitcases and stay with you. I know you won't say that. You're too sensible, too logical, the only person I ever met that was more sensible than me. Even my parents thought so. I never told you this. Mom and Dad grew so tired of us planning our wedding they sat me down and urged me to elope. "Five years you've been engaged. Five years we've been interviewing caterers. If you two kids don't do something spontaneous your father and I will find you some wild boy in a pool hall." Of course they admired that you wanted to wait until I finished law school. They grew to adore you so much. My mother joked that the only time she ever felt jealousy was when you'd come to visit. My father would grab you by the arm, yank you into his den, and lock the door behind. The two of you would be in there for

TINK (Continued)

hours, gabbing, gabbing, gabbing. It mystified my mother. Father was a private man, inward, reticent to speak about anything other than interest rates. Mom explained to us that Dad's type of personality was part and parcel of being a bank President. Then you came along. One day Mom was in the kitchen when Dad entered after one of your gabfests. My father had a tear in his eye. Alarmed, my mother asked what had happened in that den. "What did you two talk about that upset you so?" My father smiled then hugged my Mom. "Don't worry," he assured her about the conversation, "Mine are tears of sheer joy."

TINK remains on the bed stroking her husband's hair as he sleeps. Abruptly, ODIE opens his eyes with the wonder of revelation.

ODIE

Tink.

TINK

Yes?

ODIE doesn't see her.

ODIE

Tink.

TINK

I'm right here.

He hurries out of bed and searches.

ODIE

Tink. Tink.

TINK puts herself in his path.

TINK

It's me.

ODIE addresses her with crystal clarity.

ODIE  
I think I finally have something.

TINK  
Good.

ODIE  
I'm sure I have something.

TINK  
Terrific.

ODIE  
I need your help.

TINK  
Name it.

ODIE inspects her feet.

ODIE  
You'll have to change your shoes.

TINK  
Because?

ODIE  
There's a lot of walking involved.

TINK  
I could use some exercise.

ODIE  
I don't know your final destination.

TINK  
That's okay.

ODIE  
Your final destination has not yet been revealed.

TINK  
I'll be patient.

ODIE

I do know that you are needed.

TINK

Whatever you say.

ODIE

I thought it was me who was needed but it's you.

TINK

Honey you look tired.

ODIE

There's so much more I have to learn.

TINK

Maybe you should get back into bed.

ODIE lies down on his back.

ODIE

I need to be quiet now.

TINK

Rest your eyes.

His head drapes over the mattress.

ODIE

I need to think.

TINK returns to packing her suitcase.

TINK

Sleep honey, sleep.

ODIE's face now faces the audience upside down.

ODIE

You'll have to change your shoes.

Lights down on the apartment,  
lights up on ODIE's former office.  
LISA is sitting in front of the

boss' desk, talking on her cell phone.

LISA

No, he's not here yet. His board meeting's running late as usual. Why should I be nervous? My job's on solid ground. He told me so himself last time. There's something about this guy, he's not like a normal boss. He really seems to care. The man actually encourages you to open up about your --

She hears someone approaching.

LISA

(into phone)

Have you heard from Lonnie yet? Goddamn that man. He knows Lonnie's supposed to check in the minute he gets home from school. What more can I do? Maybe I should make a move to gain full custody.

ODIE enters and takes his seat.  
LISA doesn't immediately hang up the phone.

LISA

That kid's going to end up in major trouble and I have nobody to blame but myself. My meeting's starting, bye.

ODIE studies his employee.

ODIE

Are you ready to get to work?

LISA

Sorry, I was just speaking with my husband about --

ODIE holds up a bound volume.

ODIE

I read your latest Bellingham report, very disappointing.

LISA

My son --

ODIE

Right from page one your work is a mess.

LISA

You didn't like it?

ODIE

Muddled writing, fuzzy thinking, sloppy presentation.

LISA begins to breathe heavily.

LISA

I'm sorry I --

Her boss points to a paragraph in the report.

ODIE

What does this mean, 'detective market strategy.'

LISA

It's supposed to say defective.

ODIE

You don't check for typos?

LISA

I usually do but --

ODIE

And look at this, 'Sales quotas were met by mid March.'

LISA

I'm pretty sure that's accurate.

ODIE

Pretty sure?

LISA

I asked Hal Raynor about it.

ODIE

Asked versus analyzing computer printouts.

LISA

Hal's normally reliable --

ODIE

Sales quotas weren't met until the end of April.

LISA

I'm --

ODIE

Good thing I read this disaster before Ned Bellingham.

LISA

I don't know what to say.

ODIE

Lisa.

LISA

Yes?

ODIE

What's troubling you?

LISA

Right now the mess I made of this report.

ODIE

Talk to me Lisa.

LISA

About?

ODIE

Who you are. What you want. Why you botched this?

LISA doesn't know how to answer.

ODIE

What's the problem with your son?

LISA

Why would you ask that?

ODIE

You were talking about him on your cell phone.

LISA

To my husband.

ODIE

You waited for me to enter before ending your phone call.



LISA

I didn't want to hang up on him.

ODIE

You wanted me to hear.

LISA

That's not true.

ODIE sees that she's hesitant to speak frankly.

ODIE

I used to wish I had trouble with a son.

LISA

I didn't think you had children.

ODIE

One.

LISA

Boy or girl?

ODIE

I was never sure. My high school girlfriend got pregnant midway through our senior year. Her parents sent her away, told everyone she was in a foreign exchange program. Truth is, she was shipped off to a girls' home. I didn't find out for years. My girlfriend and I were never allowed to speak again. Her parents set up a wall of miscommunication that made it impossible for me to contact her. The only news I got was this. Nine months later, in my freshman year of college, I received a letter informing me that my baby had been put up for adoption and claimed by a responsible family. That was it. No mention of boy or girl. No mention of the baby's appearance, its health, the color of its eyes, if it looked like me, if it reached out for me. The greatest wrong a man can commit is not providing for his children, the greatest wrong. Somewhere out there was a child who'd never received so much as a bottle of milk from me.

LISA lets this settle a moment.

## LISA

My husband, my first husband that is, actually my only husband -- Ellory and I live together. I tell people we're married because it looks good at company functions. Ten years ago my ex-husband won sole custody of our son Lonnie. The courts took a dim view of my lifestyle back then. I didn't react well to our divorce. I met a man and ran off to Florida. Then I left him for a guy with a forty-foot schooner. We spent eight months sailing the Azores. The judge decided that Lonnie's father would offer a more stable environment for our child. What they didn't know was that my husband was an enormous drinker, an alcoholic. I thought about presenting that information in court, but my attorney talked me out of it. She felt it would be legal suicide to admit hearsay evidence. At stake were my visitation rights, the judge might view my accusations as reckless and vitriolic. So I remained silent about my ex-husband's alcohol problem. Now the chicken's come home to roost. My ex-husband is drunk most of the time, Lonnie is following in his footsteps. At sixteen, he already has a record of public intoxication, disturbing the peace, and possession of an illegal substance. Needless to say, I'm trying everything I can. I've managed to get Lonnie into a counseling program. I attend his meetings two nights a week. The counselors keep Lonnie on a tight leash, nine o'clock curfew, regular reports from his teachers. Lonnie's also under instructions to check in with me by phone every day after school. He's such a fragile boy. I worry that life will crush him. I worry that I'm inadequate, a poor mother, incapable of helping.

ODIE offers no judgment, no criticism. He just sits there absorbing the moment, two people exposed, trusting, being as honest as they can with each other.

Lights down on the office, lights up on the locker room at the country club. FULLER is ribbing some of his golf buddies off-stage.

FULLER

Why do you bums care how many times a week I have lunch with him? You all sound like a bunch of jealous lovers. Don't worry we haven't had sex yet, only conversation. Good conversation. Not like the unadulterated bullshit you call conversation. 'My golf cart goes faster than your golf cart.' 'My yacht is longer than your yacht.'

He waves goodbye to them.

FULLER

I'll meet you later for some gin rummy. Until then, don't lose all your dough. I relish watching you bums dig into your pockets for ten-dollar bills.

FULLER begins to remove his golf clothes. ODIE enters. Unlike his previous guarded demeanor, FULLER is eager for conversation.

FULLER

Ready to talk?

ODIE

Raring to go.

FULLER

Can we start with some unadulterated bullshit?

ODIE

I'd love it.

FULLER

How's your gas mileage these days?

ODIE

Eighteen city, twenty-four highway.

FULLER

I'm switching to diesel.

ODIE

I'm buying a digital camera tomorrow.

FULLER

I'm buying a mainframe computer.

ODIE

I'm buying a new yacht.

FULLER

I'm buying sixty-four private jet airplanes.

ODIE concedes defeat, and begins changing out of his golf clothes.

ODIE

How's Andie?

Looks around, whispers.

FULLER

Not good.

He corrects himself.

FULLER

Hey, I have no secrets.

In a normal voice.

FULLER

My wife is very ill.

ODIE

Test results in?

FULLER opens up, but he's still awkward with the concept. He resists staying on the important point.

FULLER

Hodgkin's disease. Lymphoma. The doctors are taking more blood tests and X-rays this afternoon. They might operate, cut into her abdomen, a biopsy to see how far the cancer has spread. Andie's in misery. Her neck is swollen, her underarms are riddled with lumps, she's lost thirty pounds. That's one of the reasons she's been staying away from the country club. Andie can't stand to look at herself in the mirror. For years my wife fought to keep her weight down. She exercised fanatically, ate lettuce day and night, more exercise at night. The other women in the club seethed

## FULLER (Continued)

with envy. They'd be on every fad diet, high protein, low carbs, no protein. Andie's friends would lose ten pounds, gain twenty, back and forth, back and forth. Andie held the same weight, same dress size, year after year. The other men in the club were jealous of me. 'If my wife looked like Andie I'd be the happiest chimp on the planet of the apes.' When we were boys, we were so boastful about our sexual conquests. We'd brag about the mere touching of a breast. Not so in this country club. If men are having affairs, it's all very hush-hush. Innuendoes, rumors run rampant. Outright admissions are few and far between. There was a member here several years ago, Matt Carson, he had some sort of breakdown. In front of all the men. It happened during our annual member-member golf tournament. Guys were bitching and moaning about the speed of the greens, the length of the rough. Not a substantive word was heard all day. Suddenly, Matt Carson started babbling. The men in the clubhouse were stunned. Matt Carson had been a member for seven years. He never seemed upset about anything. His business was good. His children were beautiful. He enjoyed his wife Carla. The fact that Carla was sixty pounds overweight never seemed to bother him. The couple joined us for cocktail parties, nights at the theatre. Carla was treated with kindness and respect at all social functions. Any negative comments about the woman's weight were expressed privately and discreetly. If anything, Matt Carson was held in high esteem for being so loyal to a woman who stood out among a club-full of obsessive size sixes. Until that luncheon. Matt Carson started babbling, 'I can't stand it anymore. She's so fat. You guys are lucky. Your wives are thin. Beautiful.' He then felt compelled to get something off his chest. 'My wife threw me out of the house when she found out I was sleeping with our baby sitter.' Wrong time for a confession. Jack Kelley, the former college All-American, went up to Matt Carson and decked him with one vicious punch. He might have killed him had we not all jumped in to stop the assault. Matt Carson was lucky to be alive. Jack Kelley's daughter had been one of their babysitters.

Lights down on locker room.

The stage remains dark, save for the beam from a flashlight in the hands of TINK. She's holding it in order to continue packing her

suitcases. ODIE's voice is heard coming from the direction of the bed, but he is immersed in darkness. During ODIE's ramblings, TINK is overtaken by emotions. She stops packing and places the flashlight on a suitcase, casting her in a grief-stricken beam. At times she tries to block out ODIE's voice, reach for him, implore him to be quiet, beg him to return to normal.

ODIE

We are waiting for the divine white light. Our awakening will not be true without it. We must wait in darkness until the divine white light arrives. I don't know the source of its origin. Its source of origin has not yet appeared. I do know that we will be engulfed in an infinite wellbeing. I have met many who have known it. I met a woman who could not trust, who had been so cruelly misused that her heart had all but shut down. She was frightened by love, wary of promises. A man came into her life, by chance, unplanned. They were standing next to each other at a bus stop. They talked until the bus arrived, sat next to each other on the bus, went for coffee when the bus dropped them off. They talked, talked, talked some more. Later, when she was reciting her vows at their wedding, she mentioned nothing about receiving cupid's proverbial arrow of romance, but described a stream of healing light that shined directly from her husband's soul to hers. I met a woman utterly void of faith, whose teenage son was decimated by drugs and alcohol. The faithless woman worried endlessly about her son's crisis, until one day a flash of white light blew right through her, freeing her from her doubt and fear. I knew a man crippled by vanity, his wife critically ill with cancer. The vain man was too absorbed in his prideful self-centeredness to chart a course through his merciless seas, until a divine white light illuminated a dignified path of action. And then I met a happy woman once mired in sorrow, and a gentle man once riddled with anger. The divine white light. Our awakening will not be true without it. We must wait in darkness until it appears. And then I met a man whose child committed an unconscionable act of violence --

ODIE grows tired.

ODIE

And then I met a man whose child committed an unconscion --

His voice begins to fade.

ODIE

And then I met a man --

His voice disappears into slumber.

ODIE

And then --

The beam from the flashlight  
vanishes.

Lights down on the apartment,  
lights up on ODIE's former office.  
He's sitting at his desk reading a  
report. LISA appears at the open  
door and politely knocks.

LISA

Hello?

ODIE

Ah Lisa, my Bellingham star.

LISA

May I come in?

ODIE

That's why the door's open.

LISA

If you're busy I can come back.

ODIE

Sit, I'm only reading reports.

She remains standing.

LISA

Mine?

ODIE

Wally Mark's, this report is a dreadful piece of junk.

LISA

Wally's a very bright guy.

ODIE

Well something's screwing with his brain.

LISA

Sorry to hear that.

ODIE

You wouldn't know what's troubling him would you?

LISA

I haven't a clue.

ODIE

Three times this week I've tried to get him to open up.

LISA

Wally's a pretty private person.

ODIE

A tough nut to crack.

LISA

He never shares anything about his personal life.

ODIE

I've even primed the pump by telling him my woes.

LISA

He only talks business with me.

ODIE

Some men crawl into a cave alone and lick their wounds.

LISA

Maybe I can encourage him to open up to you.

ODIE

I wish you would.



LISA

It might help him, and the company.

ODIE

The better my employees feel, the better for business.

LISA

I know that our chats have meant a lot to me.

ODIE

Lisa.

LISA

Yes?

ODIE

What's troubling you.

She takes a moment to gather herself.

LISA

My son, Lonnie, he had a relapse.

ODIE

Alcohol?

LISA

Drugs.

ODIE

Is he okay?

LISA

He's in a hospital.

ODIE

And the father?

LISA

The police found him drunk at the train station.

ODIE

Maybe it's time you filed for custody.

LISA

It's not so simple.

ODIE

Under these circumstances?

LISA

I'm ashamed to admit I lied to you.

ODIE

Ashamed?

LISA

I didn't tell you the truth about my past.

ODIE

Your call.

LISA sits, steadies herself.

LISA

I have a real mess on my hands, and there's nobody to blame but myself. My son Lonnie is so addicted to drugs, doctors feel that only a miracle can save him. An act of god. This from the best medical experts on earth. My ex-husband can't help. If he's not passed out in some train station, he's unconscious on the living room floor. Under normal circumstances, a judge would transfer custody to me in a second. These are not normal circumstances. My record with family court from ten years ago is coming back to haunt me.

She takes a moment to decide if she wants to continue.

LISA

I told you about my ex-husband's history with alcohol abuse. I was being honest, painstakingly honest. Here's what I forgot to mention, check that, wholeheartedly lied about. The reason the judge granted full custody to my ex-husband? I said it was because I ran off with a guy on his schooner. The truth. After my marriage broke up, I was off the deep end on drugs. That's not what nailed the coffin with family court. The guy with the schooner? His name was Nino. He was a major dope dealer, running product from Spain to California. Back in the States there was an unlimited supply of drugs around the house, anywhere, everywhere. To prove my love for Nino I acted as his bagman for large cash transactions. With me on many runs

LISA (Continued)

was my son Lonnie, six-year-old Lonnie. What that boy witnessed, Mom walking into shooting galleries, whorehouses, I can't even think of it. I finally left Nino and went into re-hab. I've been clean and dry now for ten years. It's painful for me to talk about this period of my life. I hope it's understood why I didn't include any of this information on my resume.

She musters all her courage.

LISA

Nino and I stayed up late one night. I blacked out god only knows when. I remember Lonnie shaking me and shaking me, 'Mommy, wake up, wake up Mommy.' How long he shook me is anyone's guess. My eyes finally opened and I followed Lonnie to where he frantically led me. There, in the bathroom, was Nino, a hypodermic needle jabbed into his veins, his naked body contorted over the toilet. He was dead. Had been for hours. His body was discovered by a six-year-old boy. Terrified. Crying. Alone and abandoned with death.

ODIE waits until he's sure that LISA is finished.

ODIE

I told you before that my high school girlfriend put our baby up for adoption. I implied that I didn't know if the baby was a boy or girl. I also implied that I never met the child. Both were true until eighteen months ago. Since then two things have happened. One, I learned that I was the father of a boy. Two, the boy, now grown, has become an integral part of my life. The discovery was made in the most bizarre way. An old buddy from college started sending me joke mail from his home in the Pacific Northwest. A local hoodlum had been making small-town headlines for a rash of violent crimes. A convenience store was robbed and the clerk badly beaten, a gym instructor was mugged outside a health club, a pet store was broken into and three puppies were clubbed to death. The crime spree ended with the arrest of an angry twenty-one-year-old. The young man had spent the majority of his life bouncing from one foster home and detention center to another. His name was Jerry Hennigan, though his original adoptive parents had long since dumped him on the streets and left the country. Local newspapers ran a series of

## ODIE (Continued)

stories, complete with photos of handcuffed Jerry Hennigan. The reason that my old college buddy sent me the joke mail was simple. The criminal looked exactly like me, hair, eyes, build, nearly a carbon copy. My college buddy had no idea that my high school girlfriend put our baby up for adoption. Nobody did back then. Jerry Hennigan's lawyer got him a light sentence of one year in prison. Soon interest died out, except within me. Were those photos only a coincidence? Could I possibly be the young man's father? Quietly, I hired a private investigator. It took him months, but he was finally able to obtain Jerry Hennigan's original birth certificate. My name was on it. That night I told Tink. For years, she was the only person on earth to know about my deepest, darkest secret. It was Tink who came up with the plan for what to do next. Through the help of lawyers, prison psychiatrists, and a helpful warden, the young man was shown his original birth certificate. Surprisingly, he wasn't hostile, wasn't bitter, only curious to meet his real father. A formal introduction was arranged at the prison. I flew up alone and met Jerry in the presence of a staff doctor and armed guard. Jerry and I hit it off from the get-go. No animosity. No regrets. We shared an uncanny flow of affection. For the next eight months Tink and I flew up every weekend to visit with him. Jerry took to Tink so immediately he started calling her Mom, though of course she was no blood relationship. When Jerry finished serving his sentence we had already decided that he would come live with us. With permission from the parole board, Jerry was released into our custody. It's been a very special year. Jerry is adjusting to little things he never had, a nice house, regular meals, kindness. The prison psychiatrist warned us that young people like Jerry with a history of violence sometimes revert to old habits. Tink and I are constantly on the lookout for warning signals. We do notice that Jerry flares up at the slightest hint of criticism. Occasionally, he bangs his fists on the table. A few months ago something occurred that had us quite concerned. One of our neighbors bought a new puppy that yipped and yapped around their backyard. Jerry couldn't stand it. The noise infuriated him. We tried to explain that yipping and yapping from puppies was perfectly natural, that most grow out of it quickly. Jerry didn't want to hear what we were saying. He hated puppies, he wouldn't say why, he just hated them. One day, the sound of yipping and yapping was replaced by the wailing of our

ODIE (Continued)

next-door-neighbor. She'd come outside to find her new puppy crushed and bloody, beaten brutally by a tree branch lying nearby. We sat Jerry down before dinner and asked him if he had anything to do with the animal's death. Jerry emphatically denied any involvement, his fists clenched and eyes raged at the mere suggestion.

Lights down on the office, lights up on the locker room at the country club. FULLER, dressed in golf gear, is waiting impatiently. ODIE hurries in dressed in his business suit.

ODIE

Sorry, sorry, sorry.

FULLER

Your office better have burned down.

ODIE

One of my executives had a personal dilemma.

FULLER

And of course you had to listen.

ODIE

Her son has a serious drug problem.

FULLER

As if you can fix it.

ODIE

Probably not.

FULLER

Then what good's listening going to do?

ODIE

Maybe you have a point.

FULLER

I have twelve hundred employees in my company.

ODIE

I didn't know it was that big.

FULLER

Imagine if I tried to listen to all their problems.

ODIE

Impossible.

FULLER

Maybe three would feel fuzzy-wuzzy about their boss.

ODIE

And the rest?

FULLER

Unemployed because I wasn't taking care of business.

ODIE

I guess maybe I should pull back on the personal touch.

FULLER

It would give you more time to practice your putting.

ODIE

And my chipping and my driving and my lousy sand game.

FULLER

You said it, I didn't.

ODIE

Do we still have time for a lesson?

FULLER

Bobby said he'd keep the driving range open a bit longer.

Pleased, ODIE begins to hurry into his golf clothes.

ODIE

How's Andie?

FULLER

You really need to speed it up.

ODIE

I was just wondering how your wife's doing.

FULLER

Shitty.

ODIE

Any news from the doctors?

FULLER

Would you please put a hustle on it.

ODIE

Did the latest test results --

FULLER

Her lymphoma's spreading fast, she starts chemo, move it.

ODIE realizes that FULLER's back  
in his shell.

ODIE

I can't believe I need golf clothes on the driving range.

FULLER

Club rules are club rules.

ODIE

I guess they're afraid I'll show up in overalls.

FULLER

We don't want this place looking like a public course.

ODIE

That we don't.

FULLER

Guys wearing beer t-shirts, cut-off jeans.

ODIE

Sneakers.

FULLER

Your golf shoes could use a polish.

ODIE

I'll drop them off with Del after we're done.

FULLER

Better have him look at your spikes too.

ODIE

Think they need changing?

FULLER

I notice your heels slipping on your backswing.

ODIE

That's not good.

FULLER

I have my spikes changed every two months.

ODIE

Soft spikes take a beating on concrete paths.

FULLER

I change my grips religiously too.

ODIE

Hence the one handicap.

FULLER

It's a mistake I see many golfers make.

ODIE

Not changing grips?

FULLER

Worn grips can destroy a good round.

ODIE

I'll take a look at mine.

FULLER

Charlie Clark's grips must be eight months old.

ODIE

Crazy.

FULLER

I tell him again and again to change them.

ODIE

Charlie's a stubborn old goat.



FULLER

He'd knock off three strokes easy.

ODIE

In that case I'll change my grips every hole.

FULLER notices that ODIE's dressed.

FULLER

Let's hit some.

ODIE

Onward to golfing immortality.

They begin to exit the locker room. FULLER stops their progress.

FULLER

Before we go.

ODIE

Yes?

FULLER

I'd like to tell you something.

ODIE

I'm here.

ODIE offers his complete attention, ready for FULLER to open up about his wife's illness.

FULLER

I think you're using the wrong putter.

ODIE

Wrong putter.

FULLER opens his locker.

FULLER

I have one in here I'd like you to try.

ODIE

Whatever you say coach.

FULLER grabs a putter, hands it to  
ODIE.

FULLER

This one's forged titanium, very forgiving.

ODIE

My golf game certainly needs forgiveness.

FULLER

Andy Powell bought this model two months ago.

ODIE

Nice guy Andy.

FULLER

His handicap dropped from a fifteen to twelve.

ODIE

Now that's something to talk about.

As they head out of the locker  
room, lights down.

The stage remains dark. TINK's  
voice is heard.

TINK

Odie?

There's no response.

TINK

Honey?

Still no response.

TINK

Are you awake?

TINK turns on the flashlight, aims  
the beam toward the bed. ODIE is  
in a deep sleep, lying on his

back, head draped over the mattress, face facing the audience. Careful not to wake him, TINK approaches the bed, studies her husband's face, tranquil for the first time in so long. The beam from the flashlight begins to flicker, the batteries going dead. TINK shakes it to no avail. The beam of light sputters, dims, and finally dies out. The stage is dark again.

TINK

Honey?

There's no response.

TINK

I'm turning on the overhead light.

Still no response.

TINK

If it bothers you I'll turn it off.

TINK heads across the room.

TINK

I'm sorry it won't be your divine white light.

She reaches the wall switch.

TINK

You'll have to keep waiting for that.

She places her hand on the switch.

TINK

Ready?

TINK turns on the overhead light. She's pleased to see that ODIE remains in his deep slumber, tranquil, face facing the audience. TINK returns to her

suitcases. She's unaware that while she speaks, ODIE's eyes open with the wonder of revelation. He notices the light in the room, but believes it to be the divine white light. He feels the celestial glow that has enveloped his face, his arms, his body. He is overwhelmed by a sense of peace and awe. He rises out of the bed, basks in the healing of his divine white light, face extended to the heavens, arms outstretched, palms up in grace and humility.

TINK

Who am I kidding? I'll never leave you. You might as well drive me crazy along with yourself.

She begins to unpack.

TINK

Four years in law school, twelve years lead counsel, nominated for appellate judge, and I'm playing nurse to the type of person we used to lock away. Damn you, Odie, for being such a good person. Damn you for being so kind. I remember when it was you playing nurse to me. I was painfully mistrusting. I'd been so cruelly misused that my heart had all but shut down. I was frightened by love, wary of promises. Then one day a man came into my life, by chance, unplanned. We were standing next to each other at a bus stop. We talked until the bus arrived, sat next to each other on the bus, went for coffee when the bus dropped us off. We talked, talked, talked some more. I told you things I'd never told anyone before. About my non-stop studying, about my compulsion to graduate first in law school, about my plans to one day lose myself completely in an abusive career. I told you about my terror of men. I told you about my childhood, my father, my father's misuse of --

She sees ODIE basking in his divine white light.

TINK

Honey?

There's no response.

TINK

Odie.

Still no response.

TINK

Let me help you back into bed.

Softly, TINK guides her husband to the bed. His leg accidentally thumps into the edge of a nightstand. He wakes up in a start, his wonder of revelation crashes to a halt.

ODIE realizes that he has not been graced by the divine white light. He's horrified, devastated. His body slumps to the bed, head draped over the mattress, contorted face facing the audience.

TINK drops to the bed, trying desperately to comfort her distraught husband. He is inconsolable. He begins to cry, the cry of the forsaken.

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO

ODIE is in the one-room apartment sleeping soundly on the bed, curled up, his back to the audience. TINK is talking on the telephone.

TINK

I can't believe he's still asleep. Sixteen hours, he hasn't budged an inch. If I didn't hear him breathing I'd swear he was dead. Doctor, I can't thank you enough for this. My husband's sleeping has been a godsend. I haven't had any rest in weeks. Needless to say this has been a nightmare experience. Yes, I took your advice. I made several phone calls. Two people have said they might stop by. I know you can't promise anything but I agree it's worth a chance. Maybe their presence can jolt him back to reality. After they leave I'll call with a report. Doctor, you're a gift from heaven. Bye for now.

TINK hangs up the phone, checks on her sleeping husband then continues cleaning the apartment. Curious, she checks again on ODIE. Is he alive? She lowers her ear to his mouth. He's still breathing. Satisfied, she plops into a chair, closes her eyes, and rests. TINK's thoroughly enjoying the peace and quiet when the doorbell rings. She climbs out of the chair and opens the door. It's LISA.

TINK

You came.

LISA

I can't believe you thought of me.

TINK

My husband was so fond of you.

LISA

The nervous wreck who worries about everything?

TINK

The wonderful nervous wreck.

They share a good natured laugh,  
LISA enters, sees ODIE curled up  
motionless on the bed.

LISA

Am I too late?

TINK

Don't worry, he's alive.

LISA

You're sure.

TINK

I just checked a minute ago.

Not convinced, they both stare at  
ODIE's motionless body.  
Simultaneously, they lower their  
ears to his mouth.

LISA

I hear definite breathing.

TINK

The doctor gave him an industrial-strength sedative.

LISA

He's that bad?

TINK

Beyond description.

LISA

It's hard to imagine your husband in this shape.

TINK

I never would have believed it possible.

LISA

He was the most grounded man I ever knew.

TINK

My parents thought I'd married some mythic seer.

LISA

They weren't far off.

TINK

You enjoyed working for him?

LISA

Cherished it, your husband saved my life.

TINK

I doubt if he'd put it like that.

LISA

He was way too modest about his impact on people.

TINK

I wonder if he was ever aware.

LISA

Maybe it's time he heard.

TINK

Would you?

LISA sits on the bed, places a caring hand on ODIE's motionless arm.

LISA

It's me, boss, Lisa. Nervous, worried Lisa. The Lisa who came to you without one ounce of faith. Worry, worry, worry, that was me. If I wasn't worried about some report I wrote, I was worried about the Bellingham account, losing my job. Of course you know my biggest worry, Lonnie, my son Lonnie, his problems with alcohol and drugs, his --

LISA is interrupted by the ring of the doorbell. TINK opens the door. It's FULLER, dressed very casually. His former showy signs of wealth are missing.

TINK

Fuller?



Tink.

FULLER

We finally meet.

TINK

You two dropped out of the country club way too fast.

FULLER

It just wasn't us.

TINK

Me either, other than the golf, dances, parties, friends.

FULLER

He sees ODIE motionless in bed.

TINK

If I putted as bad as you I'd go bonkers myself.

FULLER

He waits for a response.

TINK

The guy's completely lost his sense of humor.

FULLER

TINK smiles, appreciative of FULLER trying to break the tension. She then makes the introductions.

TINK

Fuller this is Lisa, country club meets work.

FULLER

The two do their best to lighten things up for TINK.

FULLER

You play golf, Lisa?

LISA

Nope.

FULLER

Tennis?

LISA

Never.

FULLER

Then what the hell are we going to talk about?

LISA

Clothes.

FULLER

Football.

LISA

Make-up.

FULLER

Hockey.

They turn to TINK.

LISA

You really know how to throw a lousy party.

FULLER

Yeah, Tink, can't you invite someone interesting?

The two have managed to get TINK  
laughing.

LISA

Can you believe this woman?

FULLER

Husband sick as a dog and she finds it funny.

LISA

I for one am shocked.

FULLER

Odie always bragged about his perfect wife.

LISA

Kind, sensitive.

FULLER

Solid as a rock.

LISA

Little did he know she's nothing but a goofball.

FULLER

A total wild woman.

Their teasing is lifting a weight off TINK's shoulder. FULLER looks around at the shabby apartment.

FULLER

Tink, I love what you've done with the place.

LISA

A decorative masterpiece.

FULLER

I especially like that garage-sale blender.

LISA

The frayed wires add a lovely touch.

FULLER

And look at this quaint old TV set.

LISA

That's the model before black and white.

The two men reach out to the laughing TINK who joins them for a group hug.

TINK

I asked you here to help Odie but it's me getting better.

LISA

Anything we can do to help.

FULLER

Anything.

TINK turns sadly to ODIE.

TINK

My husband.

She lowers herself to the bed and strokes ODIE's hair. FULLER and LISA follow her lead, sitting on

both sides, surrounding him in a protective ring, like a flock of birds. They sit in silence, watching over ODIE. ODIE remains motionless, disturbingly motionless. Simultaneously, the three lower their ears to his mouth.

FULLER

He's breathing.

LISA

That's not breathing.

TINK

It's goddamned snoring.

LISA

Maybe he's not even asleep.

FULLER

He could be faking.

TINK

He planned this to get even with us.

LISA

Payback for all the misery we put him through.

FULLER

Jabbering on and on about our woes.

TINK

Whining, crying.

LISA

Now he wants revenge.

FULLER

He's making us squirm.

TINK

Giving us a taste of our own medicine.

LISA waves her hand in front of ODIE's eyes.

LISA  
Woo, woo, fun is over.

FULLER snaps his fingers in  
ODIE's ear.

FULLER  
We get the joke.

TINK claps her hands loudly in his  
face.

TINK  
You can quit the act now.

They make noises that could wake  
the dead.

LISA  
Wabba wabba wabba wabba.

FULLER  
Bwop bwop bwop bwop.

TINK  
Kachew kachew kachew kachew.

ODIE continues to sleep  
motionlessly.

FULLER  
On the other hand.

LISA  
Maybe he has gone away.

TINK  
I'm pretty sure he's gone away.

FULLER  
Unless of course he's in one of those swami trances.

LISA  
Plugged into some mighty cosmic celestial force.

TINK

He was babbling about starting a new religion.

FULLER

Hm.

LISA

If anyone could do it.

TINK

He was also going to start a new window-tinting franchise.

FULLER

Window tinting.

LISA

Uh oh.

TINK

Three weeks ago it was an all-night bowling alley.

FULLER

Who the hell wants to bowl at three o'clock in the morning?

LISA

That's not the boss I knew in the business world.

FULLER

We really should start taking this seriously.

LISA

My knee-jerk reaction is to keep goofing around.

TINK

It has helped ease the tension.

LISA

What does the doctor say?

TINK

Clinical depression.

FULLER

My wife was diagnosed clinically depressed.

LISA

So was Lonnie, my son.

FULLER

When her chemo treatments failed she went downhill fast.

LISA

Lonnie's depression surfaced in his drug rehab.

FULLER

My wife couldn't bear her hair loss.

LISA

He simply couldn't face life without controlled substances.

FULLER

My wife had been a beautiful, fit woman.

LISA

Lonnie was a really happy child.

FULLER

Active, energetic, the envy of other wives at the club.

LISA

I have home movies of Lonnie laughing, laughing, laughing.

FULLER

Then, boom, cancer.

LISA

The divorce.

FULLER

I should have done something about it sooner.

LISA

I have nobody to blame but myself.

FULLER

My wife was clearly losing an inordinate amount of weight.

LISA

I allowed him to continue living with his alcoholic father.

FULLER

But I had a mega company to run.

LISA

I was re-married and preoccupied with a thousand worries.

FULLER

Business was booming.

LISA

I was worried about keeping my new husband happy.

FULLER

My golf handicap was at an all-time low.

LISA

I was worried about the Bellingham account.

FULLER

Then there was my regular gin rummy game.

LISA

I was worried about losing my job.

FULLER

I just completely ignored her weight loss.

LISA

I pretended that Lonnie's drug use was a teenage phase.

FULLER

She still looked good in most of her clothes.

LISA

It seemed all teenagers were experimenting with drugs.

FULLER

My wife continued to be the belle of the ball.

LISA

I convinced myself that Lonnie was smoking a little pot.

FULLER

She looked stunning at cocktail parties, dinner dances.

LISA

Giggling with other teenagers about girls at school.

FULLER

Then one night I saw my wife getting undressed.



LISA

I got the call from the police station.

FULLER

A skeleton.

LISA

Lonnie was arrested on three different felony charges.

FULLER

I told her she better see a doctor one of these days.

LISA

I was appropriately stern when I bailed him out.

FULLER

I said half-heartedly, 'Honey, are you feeling okay?'

LISA

'Lonnie, this is unacceptable behavior.'

FULLER

But the next morning I was back on the golf course.

LISA

By midnight I was worried stiff about my Bellingham report.

FULLER

The doctors said I waited too long to start treatment.

LISA

Lonnie's shrink chided me for burying my head in the sand.

FULLER

Early detection could have worked wonders.

LISA

I was too busy blaming everything on my ex-husband.

FULLER

My idea of marriage was looking good in the clubhouse.

LISA

My son needed me and I wasn't there.

The two grow silent. TINK does her best to lighten their spirits.

TINK

Hey, you two call those blips real-life dilemmas? I'm the one with a husband who thinks he's Mahatma Gandhi.

FULLER

She's right.

LISA

Let's drown our woes in a few dozen donuts.

Lights down. Lights up again an hour later. The three are sitting in silence keeping watch over ODIE. He's still sleeping motionlessly, back to audience. The kitchen table and counters are scattered with donut and pizza boxes. FULLER is the first to notice.

FULLER

He's moving.

LISA

I see it.

TINK

Thank god.

ODIE's body shifts, jerks, slides, turns, until he's lying on his back, head draped over the edge of the mattress, face facing the audience upside down. He remains asleep, motionless. The three are disappointed.

FULLER

Aw, come on.

TINK

Wake up, honey.

LISA

We need your help.

FULLER specifies.

FULLER

That is, two of us need your help.

LISA

Fuller and I are a mess.

FULLER

Your wife on the other hand is perfect.

LISA

Just like you always said.

FULLER

Kind.

LISA

Sensitive.

FULLER

Solid as a rock.

LISA

You need to wake up and be with her.

FULLER

She misses you.

LISA

On the other hand, me and Fuller?

FULLER

We're hurting.

LISA

You were there for me like nobody ever was.

FULLER

Sometimes I resisted, but you always broke through.

LISA

I felt safe opening up to you.

FULLER

I told you things I never told anyone.

LISA

You always made me feel better about my life.

They poke ODIE.

FULLER

Wake up, friend.

LISA

Boss.

FULLER

We need you.

LISA

Your wife wants to take you to the movies.

TINK has been listening with  
bemusement.

TINK

Kind? Sensitive? Solid as a rock? You guys should have known me before I met Odie. What you see is not what he got. I was a bitter, suspicious ball of flying daggers. Several men tried to pursue me before Odie. Most gave up after a few phone calls. One stubborn boy persisted until his friend, a psychology grad student, intervened. 'It's okay to pick up wounded birds,' the psych student advised, 'But you don't have to become a goddamned veterinarian.' The source of my fury was no mystery. Between the ages of eleven and seventeen, my father had sex with me on a regular basis. I won't go into details, you can use your imaginations. I never took appropriate actions, never reported him to the police, not even to my mother. I chose simply to go away to college and never come home. It was six years since I'd seen my parents when I met Odie. We were standing next to each other at a bus stop. Our eyes met. Something powerful occurred. It wasn't cupid's arrow of romance. It was a stream of healing light. The light shined directly from Odie's soul into mine. Within months of knowing Odie, I could feel my bitterness begin to evaporate. Then the real miracle began to happen. Odie

TINK (Continued)

convinced me that it would be safe to travel back for a visit with my parents. I went in total fear. How Odie managed to accomplish the rest is beyond human understanding. Through a series of long, private conversations with both my father and me, reconciliation was achieved. Our visits home increased from once a year, to major holidays, to birthdays. Last year my mother commissioned a family portrait. We dressed up, assembled in their living room, primed in the mirrors. The photographer snapped the family in several traditional poses, then took some impromptu candid shots. He had us cooking in the kitchen, gardening in the backyard, then he went for something cute. The photographer sat my father down in his favorite easy chair and urged his baby daughter, me, to sit on his lap. Clearly, the photo shoot was finished.

LISA and FULLER offer nothing in response. They simply absorb the moment, three people exposed, trusting, being as honest as they can with each other.

Lights down.

Lights up, several hours later. In addition to the pizza and donut boxes are some empty fried chicken and ice cream containers. ODIE is still sleeping motionless, head draped over the mattress, face facing the audience upside down. TINK, LISA, and FULLER aren't paying a bit of attention to him anymore.

LISA

Okay, I cheated on my first husband.

TINK

How the hell would you know?

FULLER

You took so many drugs you probably don't remember.

LISA

A woman bares her soul and what does she get?

TINK

Grief.

FULLER

Heckling.

FULLER decides to come clean.

FULLER

So did I.

TINK

Did what?

FULLER

Cheat on my wife.

TINK

As your lawyer I need to hear every sleazy detail.

LISA

Up close and personal.

FULLER

I had a series of one-night stands.

LISA

Care to show us the Polaroids?

FULLER

I burned them immediately upon development.

TINK

Decent of you to spare your wife the humiliation.

FULLER

It was me who would have been humiliated.

LISA

The women were that ugly?

FULLER

Did you ever kiss a hairy leg?

LISA

Spare us.

TINK

I love kissing hairy legs.

FULLER goes for the gold.

FULLER

With the men you've had affairs with?

TINK

With my husband.

LISA

No holding out Tink.

TINK

Cross my heart, one man all these years.

FULLER

Noble loyalty.

TINK

Partly.

LISA

And the other part?

TINK

Incest survivors like me are loathe to be touched.

FULLER

You must really trust Odie.

TINK

With all my battered heart.

Lights down.

Lights up, hours later. It's the middle of the night, ODIE hasn't budged. TINK, LISA, and FULLER are sprawled on the floor, couch, coffee table. Their conversation is keenly focused.

## FULLER

Andie lay there dying. This once beautiful, proud woman reduced to skin and bones, face pocked with bloody open sores, her flesh drooping onto the bed. Naturally, she wouldn't let anyone come visit her. Not that there were many volunteers. Our friends at the country club were die-hard fair-weather friends. Their creed -- I regrettably need to include Andie and myself in this -- our creed was look good, sound good, set a stunning dinner table. My wife and I were alone, first in a grim private hospital room, then after doctors and medicine had run their course, at home. For three months I never left the house. I turned the reins of the company over to my long-time assistant. All golf dates were canceled, my regular gin rummy game found a fill-in. My whole purpose was administering to my dying wife, injecting pain medication, applying compresses to raw wounds, washing soiled sheets. Her eyes, it was her dying eyes that were hardest to take. For weeks she had lost the ability to speak. The cancer ate away her larynx. Her eyes now were her only means of communication. And what those eyes said haunt me to this day. Andie would stare up at me from her deathbed. 'You did this, you killed me.' I know she was sick, I know she was frightened, but those eyes. I held an elegant funeral, closed coffin, which was attended by dozens of handsomely dressed members of the country club. Exquisite words were spoken by many of our friends, eulogizing Andie's sense of style, her energy, her beauty. A week later I put my company on the market, sold it for a king's ransom, boarded my boat, and sailed off to Bali.

The room goes still, and remains still for a while.

## TINK

My father wrote me a letter after I'd run away to college. It was a threatening letter, a letter of mal-intent as we say in the legal profession. My father's goal was to intimidate me into keeping quiet about our incest, our special love as he liked to call it. The words in that letter were carefully selected to inflict maximum damage on an already brittle psyche. One passage stays with me to this day. 'You're a loathsome little girl, Tink, who's teetering on the precipice of becoming a loathsome young woman. I know more than anyone how your heart works, so cold, so spiteful. I have produced a daughter of evil spirit capable of heinous deeds. I feel it my duty to



## TINK (Continued)

inflict on you my most severe displeasure.' Naturally, the letter frightened me. Was my father bluffing? Or would he really try to hurt me? When I was fourteen, my father let me sit in on a business meeting he was holding in his home study. He'd invited the first vice-president of the bank to solve an awkward company problem. A former bank officer, now running for city counsel, made disparaging remarks about my father's business ethics. My father took immediate and decisive action. He dug up some unsavory tidbits about the would-be councilman, and instructed the first vice-president to dispatch them wisely and expeditiously. The first vice-president inquired, 'Do you mean threaten the man with our discoveries?' My father snapped, 'No threats. Send this information straight to the press and his family. I want this man hurt. I want him ruined.' In the following weeks, my father made certain that his fourteen-year-old daughter was kept abreast of local politics. The man running for city counsel dropped out of the election, his wife divorced him, he moved to another city. My father was not a man to be trifled with. Our special love flourished for years to come.

The room is further stilled.

## LISA

My son Lonnie sank lower and lower into drug addiction, topped only by my ex-husband. It was inevitable that the volcano would explode, and soon it did. Lonnie was shot and wounded in a downtown drug den, my ex-husband was nowhere to be found. He showed up three days later, claiming he'd been visiting his brother in Chicago. I could no longer sit by idly, I had to face my biggest fear. I hired a lawyer and set out to win custody of my son. My lawyer obtained letters from counselors confirming that I was ten years drug free. I had a steady job with a respected corporation. I was married to a new and stable husband. Yet, ironically, the legal cards were stacked against me. Court documents still existed of a six-year-old boy finding the dead body of a man, hypodermic needle dangling from his veins. The paper trail against my ex-husband? Barely a parking violation. The judge would be making a decision based on solid documentation against me versus hearsay accusations. My lawyer rolled the dice. She called my ex-husband to the witness stand and asked him to dump the contents of his pockets onto a table. His

LISA (Continued)

lawyer objected. The judge allowed the unusual request. It came down to this. If there was nothing in the pockets but chewing gum and car keys our case was dead. Reluctantly, my ex-husband emptied his pockets. Onto the table, scattered among loose change and paper clips, were four vials of cocaine. That night, I spent a private moment with my son. I asked him, not demanded, to bring me his drugs. He wanted to know why. I told him we'd hold a ritual toilet flushing, something I'd performed ten years earlier. Lonnie agreed, went into his bedroom, and retrieved a stash bag filled with pills and baggies of white powder. We went into the bathroom, stood at the toilet bowl, flushed, flushed, and flushed. The next day, Lonnie came to me a bit sheepishly. He showed me another baggie. He admitted that he'd held out on me. Then he flushed the baggie of white powder down the toilet. I asked him to level with me. 'Is that all there is?' Lonnie shrugged, 'I hope so Mom.'

After a few moments of stillness,  
lights down.

Lights up, hours later. A glow  
from the window indicates it's  
dawn. ODIE is still motionless.  
LISA, TINK, and FULLER are sitting  
on the floor, grouped closely  
together in a triangle, nearly as  
one.

LISA

They told me ten years ago that drug addiction doesn't end when we stop using. They told me that the urge to get high creeps up on us when we least expect it. When my son Lonnie moved in with us I watched carefully for telltale signs of relapse. For months I saw no evidence. Lonnie's grades improved at school. He was home every night at curfew. His friends changed from dropouts to students. All was well. All was positive. Then one day, like they told me ten years earlier, I was aware that there was trouble. But the trouble wasn't with Lonnie.

LISA removes something from her  
purse.

LISA

I've been carrying around this baggie of white powder. I've had it since the night my son and I flushed his drugs down the toilet. I'm not sure why I saved it. I'm not sure if I ever would have used it. Who knows.

LISA tosses the baggie into a wastebasket. TINK and FULLER offer no judgment, no criticism.

TINK

That letter my father wrote to me when I ran off to college? I kept it for years, reading and re-reading it until the paper was limp and yellow. I was searching for understanding and some sort of redemption. Redemption. Was such a thing possible after what I'd endured as a child? Even in law school I re-read my father's letter. By then I wasn't looking for redemption any more, simply revenge, legal revenge. Unfortunately, my father had written the letter very cleverly, very obscurely. There was no concrete evidence linking him to incest. I eventually burned the letter, hoping its disappearance would make his damaging words disappear. 'I have produced a daughter of evil spirit capable of heinous deeds.'

TINK owns up.

TINK

The night before I left home for college, I brought my father a tumbler of his favorite bourbon. It was a ritual I performed each time we engaged in our special love. This night I added something to the bourbon, tetramethylene disulfotetramine, rat poison. My father's central nervous system sent his body into spasms. I watched my father convulse in agony, then I called 911. The paramedics arrived in time to save his life. My father could never tell the doctors what really happened. The poisoning was written off as a home accident. For years, my only regret was that I called 911.

Once again, there are no judgements or criticisms.

FULLER

My wife's eyes spoke the truth. 'You did this to me, you killed me.' I admitted to you that I cheated on my wife. During my series of one-night stands, most were with men.

FULLER (Continued)

I wasn't lying when I said I kissed hairy legs. Unfortunately, one of the men I slept with was HIV positive. Soon after, my wife Andie was diagnosed with AIDS. Her cancer was ferocious, my wife's dying eyes cruelly accurate, 'You did this to me, you killed me.'

The three lean together in mutual weakness.

At first, they don't hear the fourth voice in the room.

ODIE

What's for breakfast?

ODIE's eyes are wide open and radiant. He's still lying on his back, head draped over the edge of the mattress, face facing the audience upside down. LISA, FULLER, TINK, are slow to react.

FULLER

Odie?

LISA

Boss?

TINK

Are you awake?

ODIE

Am I awake?

With an unexpected burst of energy, ODIE flips from his back to his stomach, bounds from a lying position to all fours, then springs out of bed like a hungry tiger on the prowl.

ODIE

I said what's for breakfast?

The others are still registering his surprise re-appearance.

Honey.

TINK

You look good.

LISA

Are we sure it's him?

FULLER

ODIE notices the messy apartment with disdain.

ODIE

Empty pizza boxes, donut crumbs, this is disgusting.

TINK

I don't believe it.

FULLER

He can't stand the mess.

LISA

Mr. Cleanfreak.

TINK/LISA/FULLER

It's him. Thank god. He's back.

The three rush to ODIE, hugging him, shaking his hand, patting his back.

ODIE

Lisa, Fuller, what are you two pests doing here?

LISA

Bumming a free meal.

FULLER

Checking out your elegant new mansion.

ODIE indicates the cramped apartment.

ODIE

We were featured last month in Town & Country.

LISA

And it started quite a trend.

FULLER

People in Palm Beach are all moving into the slums.

LISA

My husband and I bought a gloomy dump down by the docks.

FULLER

Broken windows.

LISA

No electricity.

FULLER

Hordes of cockroaches.

ODIE asks TINK.

ODIE

Care to move down to the docks?

TINK

I am getting tired of basking in luxury.

LISA and FULLER get serious with  
ODIE.

FULLER

There's really no need for you to be living like this.

LISA

We realize things have gone a bit south.

FULLER

We'd like to help you get back on your feet.

LISA

I can find you a terrific job.

FULLER

If money's a problem I can --

ODIE won't hear about it.

ODIE

Guys I appreciate it, but I'm working on a big idea.

FULLER

Your new religion?

ODIE

New religion?

LISA

Tink told us you're in the process of formulating one.

Confused, ODIE looks at his wife.

ODIE

I am?

TINK

You don't remember?

ODIE

I know you're putting me on.

TINK

The genesis of a heaven-sent revolutionary celestial order.

ODIE

My wife sounds like a loony-tunes.

TINK

A perfect religion, a religion that works.

ODIE

I guess I'm missing the joke.

TINK realizes he doesn't remember.

TINK

Honey, don't listen to me, I've been up all night.

ODIE

You'll go to bed early I'll clean the kitchen.

TINK

You are an angel.

She goes to give him a peck, ODIE carefully draws her near and kisses her on the lips. The kiss extends into a one of true affection and passion. FULLER nudges LISA.

FULLER

We really need to leave these two lovebirds alone.

LISA

Yeah, I've got to meet my husband for breakfast.

They head to the door.

ODIE

Sure you don't want to stay a while?

LISA

Maybe another time.

FULLER

I'm too pooped to pop.

ODIE

Looks like I missed out on quite a party.

FULLER

So-so.

LISA

Ho-hum.

FULLER

This bum knows nothing about golf.

LISA

He can't tell rouge from eyeliner.

FULLER

We had nothing to talk about.

LISA

Chit-chit, small-talk, nonsense.

FULLER

Unadulterated bullshit.



ODIE

Well, I'll fix that next time you come over.

LISA

You better.

FULLER

We're counting on it.

ODIE

I'll get you pests to really open up.

LISA, FULLER, and TINK exchange glances, all hug goodbye, LISA and FULLER exit.

ODIE abounds with energy, TINK studies him a bit apprehensively at first.

ODIE

I feel spectacular.

TINK

You do seem pretty good.

ODIE

I've got to call Dr. Kline and thank him.

TINK

You remember him being here?

ODIE

Of course.

TINK

But you don't remember anything about a new religion.

ODIE

Maybe I better tell Dr. Kline to come see you.

TINK

What about the idea of opening a window-tinting franchise?

ODIE

You really are overtired.

TINK

An all-night bowling alley?

ODIE

Who the hell wants to bowl at three o'clock in the morning?

TINK

Hm.

ODIE

I better start cleaning up this mess.

TINK

Mr. Cleanfreak.

ODIE

That's my name don't wear it out.

ODIE begins to clean the apartment, TINK pitches in. ODIE stops working and watches her. He loves her so much.

ODIE

Was I in that bad shape?

TINK

You went through quite a trauma.

ODIE

Thanks for sticking it out with me.

TINK

Oh, I started to pack my bags.

He looks around at the shabby apartment.

ODIE

Maybe it's time we got out of this dump.

TINK

If you think you're up for it.

ODIE

There are a few headhunters who'd like to hear from me.

TINK

I got a nice note from the State Attorney last week.

ODIE

We could start kicking around ideas.

TINK

You know I love talking with you.

She notices he stopped cleaning.

TINK

Hey, get cracking lazy bones.

ODIE

Oops.

ODIE scrambles to collect pizza boxes and ice cream containers. He needs something to toss them into, the wastebasket is filled. ODIE opens the cabinet under the sink and removes a box. It's empty.

ODIE

We're out of trash bags.

TINK

Uh oh.

ODIE looks in the cabinet.

ODIE

No bleach either, and we're low on dish detergent.

TINK

I'll run to the store.

ODIE

I'll go, you're tired.

TINK

I'm not sure you're ready to run around town.

ODIE

I feel great.

TINK heads to the door.

TINK

Let's not push things.

ODIE

I'll start with the beds.

TINK

Clean sheets are in the closet.

ODIE

You might as well pick up some new sponges.

TINK

The old ones are dirty?

ODIE

You know me.

TINK

New sponges for Mr. Cleanfreak.

ODIE

Whatever happened to that plaque I had made?

The two kiss goodbye, pleased that life is returning to normal.

TINK exits, ODIE starts on the bed. He strips the sheets, yanks off the pillowcases.

ODIE

I don't know the name of this new religion. A name has not yet appeared. I'm also not sure of its tenets, its dogma. I do know that the new religion will be unobtrusive. It will not attempt to tamper with other religions. It won't try to seduce those who truly believe. Will there be a bible? Commandments? Congregations? I don't know, I'm not sure. I can't pin down the nuts and bolts. I don't know the liturgy. The liturgy has not yet appeared. I do know that we'll need patience. Patience and patience.

ODIE opens the closet, removes some clean sheets, proceeds to make the bed.

ODIE

Mr. Cleanfreak. I really get a kick out of that. When the people at work started calling me Mr. Cleanfreak I didn't know what to think. Should I have been offended? Should I have written a memo instructing them to stop? After all, I was the boss, and wasn't it the responsibility of the boss to maintain an atmosphere of respect and authority? The boss before me was certainly authoritative. He ran the company with hardnosed resolve. He was called the man with pencil. His pencil had the power to rewrite any report, nix any business proposal, sign a letter of termination if need be. To be certain, the employees, from senior officers to support staff, fell dutifully in line. It was a nervous bunch, this company of employees. Everyone was on edge, wondering if they were performing up to par. Nothing seemed to give them a lasting sense of security, good evaluations, raises, even promotions. People would be elevated to vice-president one day, second-guessing themselves the next. I'm not sure why the old boss fostered that kind of atmosphere, perhaps he felt that fear was an effective motivator. When I took over the company I saw things differently. For the most part my employees were conscientious, capable individuals who simply needed to be treated nicely. I didn't want to walk down the halls and look into frightened eyes. Naturally, I laid down guidelines of conduct and expectation, but I left it up to people's common sense to comply, not their anxiety. I admit that one of my directives might have been a bit over the top. I wanted everyone to keep their offices neat and organized. There was an old adage I subscribed to, look into the back seat of someone's car and you're looking into their mind. An office littered with crumpled papers and old coffee cups didn't signify to me a hard worker, it meant would-be trouble from a chaotic brain. Because I was 'the boss' people took my directive too seriously. I'd be walking down the hallway, spot someone in their office, immediately they'd hang up the phone and start neatening their desk. That's when I ordered the plaque, Mr. Cleanfreak. I placed it on my desk in hope of making people relax, smile. It did. I'm really not a fastidious person. I do like to eat on clean dishes, sleep on fresh sheets. Clean sponges? Okay, I don't like it when they

## ODIE (Continued)

sit on the kitchen counter for weeks turning brown and grimy. New sponges make me feel better.

Bed made, ODIE starts in on the dishes, trying to make a little detergent go a long way.

## ODIE

There was a young man who worked for me, Casey Peters. Now there was a handful. Into my office he'd march, pouring his heart out about his break-up with Jacqueline, only to bounce in a week later madly in love with Sheryl. Three months later Sheryl was out, Alison in, until a ballet dancer named Rebecca rolled along, followed by Lila the bathing-suit designer. One of my marketing executives, Gwen Morton, was equally caught up in a romantic whirlwind. Gwen was madly-in-love-with-then-emphatically-through-with John the actor, Rob the drummer, Danny the Certified Public Accountant. Danny provided something Gwen always craved in a man, more stability than her usual flaky creative types, until a rock guitar god whisked her away from that suffocating numbers-cruncher. Matters of the heart. At times I wanted to post a sign outside my door that read, 'I am not a psychiatrist. I am not a marriage counselor. I am not a psychic, phone-in radio host, healer, self-help guru, matchmaker, love doctor.' It wouldn't have done a bit of good. People in my company, so many of them, had a burning need to vent problems they had with their mates, grieve failed marriages, curse their loneliness. One of our summer interns, a beautiful nineteen-year-old newlywed, was so devastated when her twenty-year-old husband asked for a divorce she ran off to Tibet and never returned. Our controller, a conservative, ethical man, happy in his job, agonized when his life partner received a job offer across country. In my company there were scandals aplenty. Good people, smart people, made incalculably dumb mistakes. A senior vice-president met a beauty in a bar and wooed her away on a three-day junket to Spain, all charged to his company credit card. Fired. A woman on the fourth floor decided to come out of the closet with a member of her support staff at a late-night holiday party. Lawsuit. There were divorces galore, death threats, suicide attempts, one fistfight. Matters of the heart, if people had simply marched into my office with money woes or health issues my life would have been so simple, so calm. Yet I never denied anyone a chance to voice their pain, their

ODIE (Continued)

sorrow, their regret, especially those whose hearts had led them to disaster. My own heart once led me to --

He examines a dishrag.

ODIE

My high school girlfriend put our baby up for adoption.

He wrings out the dishrag.

ODIE

Years later I was reconnected with the child, now grown.

He folds the dishrag.

ODIE

The young man moved in with my wife Tink and me.

He puts the dishrag down.

ODIE

One day our neighbor's puppy was found brutally beaten.

ODIE loses his train of thought as he begins straightening the bookshelves.

ODIE

Thank god for my country club. Nobody there wanted to talk to me about anything of a personal nature. My golf partners were content talking hour after hour about graphite shafts, sixty-degree wedges, rescue clubs, luxury resorts in Hawaii, luxury resorts in Palm Springs, the British Open, the U.S. Open, the Masters Tournament. During a mind-boggling lunch in the dining room, I listened to three men debate from salad to desert whether a famous par four in Scotland was a great hole or merely a good hole. Occasionally, I'd hear snippets about a daughter who was having some sort of unspecified trouble in college, or a golfer's nagging limp caused by an unspecified war wound. Whether or not there was anguish felt about the troubled daughter, or haunting grief about fighting a war, it certainly wasn't expressed to me. Wrapped tight were my golf partners at the country club. I guess that's why I felt lucky when I received the phone call from Tink in the men's lounge. I didn't have to reveal my troubles. The

## ODIE (Continued)

room was crowded with golfers watching football, ordering drinks, paying off bets. Nobody noticed the shock on my face after Tink broke the news to me. When my shock turned to torment, two men stole a glance my way then pivoted their eyes back toward the large-screen TV. I left the country club without one person approaching to find out what was wrong. At home, Tink was on the front porch warding off irate neighbors. A puppy was found brutally bludgeoned to death. Everyone was convinced that my son Jerry did it. Without knowing any details, I defended my son from any and all accusations. Two of the neighbors led me to a fence so that I might witness the brutality. Still lying on the lawn was a bloody, battered carcass, a tree branch lying nearby. I was sickened, and worse, by now I was suspicious. I remembered Jerry growing infuriated at the yipping and yapping of my neighbor's new puppy. Tink and I tried to reason with him, explaining that yipping and yapping from puppies was perfectly natural, that most grow out of it quickly. Jerry didn't want to hear what we were saying. He hated puppies, he wouldn't explain why, he just hated them. Inside the house Tink and I sat Jerry down. We asked him directly, 'Did you have anything to do with the animal's death?' Jerry emphatically denied any involvement, his fists clenched and eyes raged at the mere suggestion.

ODIE removes a book from the shelf.

ODIE

The prison psychiatrist warned us about kids like Jerry.

He dusts off the book.

ODIE

Kids with a history of violence.

He returns the book to the shelf.

ODIE

They sometimes revert to old habits.

ODIE pushes on to wash the windows. He sprays some cleaner, grabs a clean towel, begins to wipe, then stops. He's overcome,



overwhelmed by anguish. He struggles to compose himself, succeeding by switching off the overhead lights.

He's now visible only by daylight streaming in from the window. His face extends toward the heavens, arms outstretched, palms up in grace and humility.

ODIE

We are waiting for the divine white light. Our awakening will not be true without it. We must wait in darkness until it arrives. I don't know the source of origin of this divine white light. Its source of origin has not yet appeared. I do know that we will be engulfed in an infinite wellbeing. I have met many who have known it. I met a woman who could not trust, who had been so cruelly misused that her heart had all but shut down. I met another woman utterly void of faith, whose teenage son was decimated by drugs and alcohol. I met a man crippled by vanity, his wife critically ill with cancer. And then I met a man whose child committed an unconscionable act of violence, an act of savagery, of butchery --

ODIE lowers his outstretched arms.

ODIE

And then I met a man whose child committed an unconscion --

He lowers his head from the heavens.

ODIE

And then I met a man --

He switches back on the lights.

ODIE

And then --

He continues to wash the windows.

ODIE

I loved it when people marched into my office and opened up their hearts to me, their pain, their flaws. Sometimes it

## ODIE (Continued)

took a while to earn a person's confidence. When they eventually spoke, no matter what they told me, I offered no judgment, no criticism. I would sit there in appreciation of the moment, two people exposed, trusting. Once in a while, after barriers and fears began to dissolve, someone would admit that they'd been lying to me. They were ashamed because they didn't tell me the truth about their past. Ashamed? I always found that to be a harsh reaction. It takes an enormous amount of trust to disclose one's darkest secrets.

ODIE stops washing the windows,  
sets down the towel, and addresses  
the audience.

## ODIE

My high school girlfriend got pregnant midway through our senior year. Her parents sent her away, told everyone she was in a foreign exchange program. Truth is, she was shipped off to a girls' home. Nine months later I received a letter informing me that my baby had been put up for adoption. That was it. No mention of boy or girl. No mention of the baby's appearance, its health, the color of its eyes, if it looked like me, if it reached out for me. Years later, an old buddy from college started sending me joke mail from his home in the Pacific Northwest. It seems that a local hoodlum had been making small-town headlines for a rash of violent crimes. During one, a pet store was broken into and three puppies clubbed to death. The crime spree ended with the arrest of an angry twenty-one-year-old. The young man had spent the majority of his life bouncing from one foster home and detention center to another. The reason that my old college buddy sent me the joke mail was simple. The criminal looked exactly like me, hair, eyes, build, nearly a carbon copy. The young man received one year in prison. Soon interest in him died out, except within me. Were those photos only a coincidence? Could I possibly be the young man's father? Quietly, I hired a private investigator. It took him months, but he was finally able to obtain an original birth certificate. My name was on it. Through the help of lawyers, prison psychiatrists, and a helpful warden, my son was shown his original birth certificate. Surprisingly, he wasn't hostile, wasn't bitter, only curious to meet his natural father. When he finished serving his sentence my son was released into our custody. The prison psychiatrist

ODIE (Continued)

warned us that young people with a history of violence sometimes revert to old habits. One of our neighbors bought a new puppy that yipped and yapped around their backyard. My son couldn't stand it. The noise infuriated him. One day the sound of yipping and yapping was replaced by the wailing of our next-door-neighbor. She'd come outside to find her new puppy crushed and bloody, beaten brutally by a tree branch lying nearby. I asked my son directly. 'Did you have anything to do with --

ODIE hesitates.

ODIE

And then --

He turns away from the audience.

ODIE

And then --

He turns back in absolute openness.

ODIE

Three months later, I was sitting in my office at work when the police entered. They came to take me to headquarters for questioning. A recent wave of brutal unsolved murders had finally drawn to an end. Three coeds were found slain in their dormitory rooms, unconscionable acts of violence, butchery, two were dismembered. The murderer was traced to the house of a successful company president. In the basement police found clubs and knives splattered with blood matching that of the victims. An immediate arrest was made of a young man hiding in his bedroom closet. Forensic tests proved that my son's fingerprints were on the murder weapons. Publicity during the trial centered on the killer's disturbing past. A baby born out of wedlock to teenage parents, given up for adoption, a child who never received so much as a bottle of milk from his natural father. I never went back to the office. After Jerry's execution, Tink and I sold the house and lived off our savings. For a while it was fun. Adventuresome. Two daredevils leaping the Grand Canyon on a motorcycle. Escaping the rat race. Moving off the grid. However, our existence is no longer fun. My wife Tink and I are talking things over. We've more or less decided to move on with

ODIE (Continued)

our lives. There are a few headhunters who'd like to hear from me. Last week the Attorney General sent a nice note to Tink. We're going to talk more later. Tink's out right now buying cleaning supplies.

ODIE stands in silence, facing the audience, lending time for the horror he shared to be judged, criticized. He just stands there, exposed, trusting.

**END OF THE PLAY**