

& SONS
A Stage Play
By
Gary Kott

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

FATHER/RABBI/ATTORNEY -- The boys' nightmare.

DAVID NEEDLEMAN -- The oldest brother.

LOGAN NEEDLEMAN -- The middle brother.

BEN NEEDLEMAN -- The youngest brother.

JOAN -- Ben's wife.

LOLLY/MELANIE/MONICA -- Logan's girlfriends.

CARLA/ALLISON -- David's wife/mistress.

PETE KELLY -- The company foreman.

ACT ONE

A funeral parlor chapel in the afternoon. A casket is at rest under a Jewish star. Three brothers, DAVID, LOGAN, and BEN, stand ill at ease. A RABBI is presiding.

RABBI

I didn't know your father well. He wasn't a regular member of the congregation.

DAVID

(Loudly, to himself)

Because he worshipped the devil.

LOGAN, the middle brother, slaps DAVID, the oldest.

LOGAN

How about some respect, moron.

DAVID

(Slaps him back)

Asshole.

BEN, the youngest and strongest, steps between them.

BEN

You both want to join Pop?

They don't, but just to make sure, BEN grabs his brothers by their wrists. LOGAN is still wearing a hospital patient band.

LOGAN

You don't have to squeeze so hard, baboon.

BEN squeezes harder. LOGAN cries out in pain. The RABBI, who has ducked behind the casket, waits for things to settle down then sticks his head out.

RABBI

Gentlemen, if we could.

DAVID

Sorry, Rabs.

BEN

How can we help you here?

RABBI

Since I didn't know your father, I thought perhaps you could tell me a few things about him. I'd like to make my eulogy a personal one.

The brothers shuffle uncomfortably as they think.

LOGAN

Well, he enjoyed ridicule.

DAVID

And abuse.

LOGAN

Mental.

DAVID

Physical.

LOGAN

He was a master of the put-down.

DAVID

Can we show our scars at the grave?

RABBI

I don't think that would be appropriate.

(To BEN)

Maybe you could tell me something to say about your father.

BEN

Me?

RABBI

As Jews, we are taught to sanctify the memory of our fathers. To keep fresh the memory of their deeds, their good character.

BEN

(Contemplates the significance of the
RABBI's request)

Ah, just say he was a bastard, and leave it at that.

The other brothers agree and exit
the chapel.

Time pushes forward to later that
night, inside a lawyer's office.
The three brothers are sitting as
far away from each other as
possible. Each is with his better
half. DAVID mutters something to
his wife, CARLA.

DAVID

If they get one penny more than me, I'll contest the will
to kingdom come.

CARLA

Honey, remember the ten thousand your father slipped the
judge when Logan got busted at the border?

DAVID

Pop better have made an adjustment for it.

CARLA

And don't forget the eight thousand he loaned Ben when he
knocked up that cheerleader.

DAVID

There better be a make good.

CARLA

I hope I'm not upsetting you on this sad day.

DAVID

You're the memory I wish I had.

CARLA

I live to serve you.

LOGAN, leaning against the
attorney's desk, spots the will.
He motions for his girlfriend,
LOLLY, to stand in front of him.

LOLLY

(Picking up the cue)

Sweetie, do I have something in my eye?

LOGAN

Let me see, dear.

She steps in front of LOGAN, blocking him from the sight of his brothers. Quickly, LOGAN takes the will and leafs through it.

LOLLY

(Whispering)

How much did he leave you?

LOGAN

I haven't found it yet.

BEN's wife, JOAN, notices something strange going on at the desk. She pokes her husband, who's staring out the window.

JOAN

Pssst, Ben.

BEN

Hmm?

JOAN

Your brother's up to something.

BEN notices, storms over to the desk, brushes aside LOLLY, and confronts LOGAN.

BEN

What are you trying to pull?

LOGAN

I was just sneaking a peek.

BEN

And that's all.

LOGAN
Absolutely.

BEN
Then what's this?

BEN grabs LOGAN's arm and squeezes it tightly. LOGAN cries out in pain, and his clenched fist opens. A small bottle falls out.

BEN
White Out!

DAVID
(Furious, he charges at LOGAN)
You fucking prick! You fucking, fucking prick!

LOGAN
(Hiding behind BEN)
I wasn't changing anything of yours. Honest. I didn't get to that part yet.

DAVID
Bullshit!
(He manages to get LOGAN in a chokehold)

LOGAN
(Gasping for air)
Dad left Pete Kelly a hundred thousand dollars. I was whiting out a few zeroes.

DAVID
(The focus of his rage shifts)
Dad left Pete Kelly a hundred grand?

BEN
(This doesn't sit well with him, either)
His foreman?

LOGAN
Look for yourself.

He shows them the will. BEN and DAVID are thunderstruck.

BEN

A hundred thousand dollars.

DAVID

Give me that White Out.

Time pushes forward an hour. The brothers listen intently as their father's attorney, ALAN MOFFET, reads the will.

MOFFET

"And to my loyal foreman, Pete Kely, who worked by my side for thirty-seven years, who sacrificed himself for the sake of the family business, even though he wasn't a member of the family, even though my own family -- namely, my lazy, worthless sons -- had long since abandoned the family business, I leave the tidy sum of ... one hundred dollars."

The brothers snicker to themselves. MOFFET looks up.

MOFFET

Nice try, boys. Your father thought you might pull something like that.

MOFFET takes another copy of the will out of a desk drawer and finds the appropriate page.

MOFFET

Let's see. Pete Kelly gets ... one hundred thousand dollars.

DAVID

What a gyp.

LOGAN

The guy's a fucking employee.

BEN

He's on salary. What more does he want?

MOFFET

Sorry. It's all here in black and white.

LOGAN

Yeah, well, what's not there is what's in this for us.

DAVID

We didn't find our names anywhere in the will.

MOFFET

That portion of the document I kept out of harm's way.

(He removes a codicil from his jacket
pocket, and reads)

"To my beloved sons, David, Logan, and Ben --"

DAVID

Beloved, my ass.

LOGAN

You wrote that part for him.

MOFFET

(He continues to read)

"Did I say 'beloved?' What I wanted to say was beheaded. Because if I was alive and in this room right now I'd do everything in my power to sever those three useless hunks of dead weight from their necks."

DAVID

Ah, Pop.

LOGAN

That's our old man.

MOFFET

(Reading)

"To David, my eldest, who by the age of five demonstrated his natural talents for usury, swindles, fraud, and so many other forms of despicable finagling --"

DAVID

I never knew he was such a fan.

MOFFET

(Reading)

"And to Logan, my middle darling, who convinced me to entrust him with checks for his college tuition, only to discover that four Ivy League years went up his nose and into his veins --"

LOGAN

(Waves his hospital band)

Look, Dad, I'm in a methadone clinic. I'll spend my inheritance clean and dry.

MOFFET

(Reading)

"And to Ben, Gentle Ben, my youngest sweetheart, whose adorable tantrums forced me to refurnish three local taverns, a whorehouse in Reno, and the Turf Club at Del Mar Race Track --"

BEN

(Slams his fist on the desk)

The fucking eight horse bumped my sure thing!

MOFFET

(Reading)

"To my trio of sons -- when I began my company and the gruelling march to fortune, I bragged to all who'd listen that this, all this, would one day be yours --"

DAVID

Oh, Christ, not this again.

LOGAN

Who the hell wants a bathroom supplies factory?

BEN

We'll take the cash, Dad. Thanks anyway.

MOFFET

(Reading)

"I know what you're saying. 'Not this again.' 'Who wants a toilet supplies factory?' 'Just hand us the dough, Pop.'"

(The brothers exchange glances)

"I never could interest you bums in an honest day's work. Why should I think that just because I'm dead, things would be different?"

DAVID

(To MOFFET)

Look, shyster, could you skip the lecture.

LOGAN

We heard enough of his shit when he was alive.

BEN

Just get to how much he left us.

DAVID

And make it quick. My wife and I are catching a plane to Acapulco.

LOGAN

I'm due back at the clinic for my six o'clock fix...medication.

BEN

A daily double awaits me in Saratoga.

MOFFET

Sorry, fellows, I'm afraid you're not going anywhere.

(Reads)

"And so, to each of you, David, Logan, Ben, I leave you the grand inheritance of ... nothing."

(The brothers look at MOFFET. Is this a joke? MOFFET continues to read)

"You heard me. Zero. Zip. Zilch. However, to the three of you as a unit, I bequeath everything. Thirty million dollars. Ten million each."

DAVID

Awright!

LOGAN

Pop, my man!

BEN

What a guy!

MOFFET

(Reading)

"BUT! I taught you clowns there was always a but. BUT! ... You don't get the money for ten years. And you don't get a nickle of it unless you live up to one simple condition. From this day forward, you three boys will finally take the reins of Needleman & Sons, the family business."

(The brothers gasp and groan)

"That's correct. You three -- well, let's not mince words -- losers will run the company for ten years. And you'll run it well. You'll show a profit every year. You'll keep

MOFFET (Continued)

us out of the courts. And you'll treat our employees fairly. IF! ... at the end of ten years, Needleman & Sons is still solvent, the thirty mil is yours. If not, well, Mr. Moffet will explain the sad penalty. But for now, let's be positive. Good luck. You might succeed if you jump start those pathetic, corrupt, wasted organs you call brains."

Time pushes forward to the next morning, outside a factory. It's an old, red brick building. A sign reads NEEDLEMAN & SONS. The brothers approach from the parking lot.

DAVID

The man's a sadist.

LOGAN

Ten years with you assholes. Uhhh.

BEN

I wish Pop was alive so I could kill him.

The foreman, Pete KELLY, approaches from the loading dock. He's met with utter contempt.

KELLY

David, Logan, Ben. Sorry about your father.

DAVID

I'll bet you are.

KELLY

He meant a lot to me.

LOGAN

You can dry your tears on that hundred thousand dollar bill.

KELLY

Believe me, I was stunned by your father's generosity. Stunned, but pleased. I'm also pleased that you're taking over the company.

BEN

Do you want to work for us, or should we call that hundred G's severance pay?

KELLY

Your father found me a valuable asset to Needleman & Sons. I hope you will, too.

BEN

Fine. Here's your first assignment.

Time pushes forward an hour, still outside the factory. Pete KELLY is up on a ladder with a bucket of paint. He's finishing blacking out the name NEEDLEMAN. The company sign now reads "& SONS."

We can see the sign through a window inside the President's office. The brothers are milling about their father's old domain. An imposing portrait of Nathan Needleman hovers over them. A shelf displays samples of the company's products: plungers, toilet paper holders, air fresheners.

LOGAN

Toilet supplies. What the hell do I care about toilet supplies?

BEN

What do I care about running a business?

DAVID

(He's reading over a sheet of paper)

Hey, here's some good news.

LOGAN

A check for thirty million. This was all a practical joke.

DAVID

No. It's a list of holidays the company takes off. Christmas, New Years, Columbus Day --

BEN

Hoo-ray. We bust our hump all year for a few lousy days off.

LOGAN

Until today, I had every day off.

DAVID

Boys, boys, you're not catching my drift. We're the presidents of the company, right?

BEN

So?

DAVID

So, as President, I vote we add a few more holidays. Chinese News Years, Lent, Purim --

LOGAN

Spring Break.

BEN

Win, Place, Show Day.

DAVID

What's Win, Place, Show Day?

BEN

Any day we feel like it, we go to the track.

DAVID

I vote for Win, Place, Show Day.

LOGAN

I second it.

BEN

Motion adjourned. Come on. We can still make the trifecta in the second.

They head for the door. DAVID is distracted by the portrait of their father, which seems to be staring down in disapproval.

DAVID

Wait a minute. I move that we take down Pop's portrait.

LOGAN

And burn it.

BEN

I second, third, and fourth the motion.

He reaches up, grabs the frame, but is startled to hear...
father's voice

(Coming from a hidden speaker)

No, no, naughty, naughty, stupid, stupid. You can't get rid of me that easily. That's why I had this picture frame wired. I want to be with you when you perform your duties. I want to see you screw up. I want to watch you suffer. By the way, how's your first day of work so far? You weren't planning on playing hooky, were you? Just to be certain, I've instructed Pete Kelly to drop in from time to time. He'll report any excessive absences to Moffet.

(The brothers moan)

Oh, don't be such pansies. Work won't kill you. BUT! ... if you ever have sons, they will.

Time pushes forward to later that evening. Three living room doors open simultaneously, as DAVID, LOGAN, and BEN return home from their first day of work. They're greeted by their better halves.

CARLA

Honey, how did it go?

JOAN

What was it like?

LOLLY

Can I fix you a drink?

DAVID

It was a nightmare.

BEN

Horrendous.

LOGAN

Give me a percodan.

LOLLY

No narcotics. Doctor's orders.

LOGAN

Screw the doctor. I'm a mess.

LOLLY

I'll fix you a nice martini. That should ease the pain.

LOGAN

I don't want a fucking martini. Give me a perc.

LOLLY

I flushed them.

LOGAN

You what!

LOLLY

Doctor's orders. He said any pills were dangerous to have around the house.

(LOGAN breaks down in tears)

Oh, honey, I hate to see you like this. Here. Have a martini. I'll leave out the vermouth. I won't even pour it in a glass. You can drink the gin straight from the bottle.

(LOGAN cannot be consoled. He cries harder)

DAVID, distraught, opens a drawer in a cabinet and removes a shoebox.

CARLA

David, put that away.

DAVID

Forget it.

CARLA

But you swore you were through with all that.

DAVID

I thought I was inheriting a lot of money.

(He removes some photographs and a small black phone book. He finds a telephone number, then dials)

Hello, Mr. Brooks. This is David Sanderson of Sanderson

DAVID (Continued)

Realty. I spoke with you a few months ago about some property in the Rockies --"

CARLA

You don't own that land!

DAVID

Uh, hold on, Mr. Brooks.

(Cupping the phone)

Carla, put a lid on it. I'm not stepping inside that factory again. Not for ten million dollars. Not for ten billion.

CARLA

You'll end up back in prison, so help me god.

DAVID

I made a dumb mistake. I called someone in a different state. This guy's local. The Fed can't touch me.

(Into phone)

Sorry, Mr. Brooks. My assistant just told me about ten acres in Aspen. I'm confused now. I don't know which one you'd like more. We can fly out there this weekend so you can choose for yourself. Ooo, that's right. I forgot you were in a wheelchair. Well, I have some snapshots of the property. If you'd like, I can messenger them over to you."

BEN sits on a chair in a controlled rage. JOAN, afraid he'll explode, walks on eggshells.

BEN

His portrait spoke to us.

JOAN

Yes, dear.

BEN

I heard his voice.

JOAN

I'm sure you did.

BEN

"Stupid. Stupid." It was like he was alive.

JOAN

He's dead, sweetheart. Your father's dead.

BEN

Later, I sat down at my desk. He wired my chair, too. I heard his voice again.

JOAN

It's stress, dear.

BEN

He said, "Ben, who are you trying to fool? You'll never be able to run this factory. You're an idiot. You always have been, and you always will be."

JOAN

Chalk it up to first-day-on-the-job jitters.

BEN

(He grows agitated)

I'm not an idiot!

JOAN

Of course not, honey.

BEN

(Angry now, he rises)

I won't let him talk to me that way!

JOAN

Honey, try to relax.

BEN

(He snaps)

Ahhhhhh!

(He grabs the chair and begins smashing it violently on the floor)

The three women watch helplessly as their men cry, con, and smash. Simultaneously, the women scream at the top of their lungs.

LOLLY

LOGAN!

CARLA
DAVID!

JOAN
BEN!

The urgency in their voices yanks
the three brothers back to their
senses.

LOLLY
You don't need drugs.

CARLA
I won't see you go to jail again.

JOAN
I'm not buying more new furniture.

LOLLY
If it's too painful at the factory, quit.

CARLA
We'll find another way to survive.

JOAN
We can move away from here. Make a new start.

LOLLY
You're too sensitive to be in business.

CARLA
You should be your own boss.

JOAN
You can go back to school.

LOLLY
I won't see you destroy yourself.

CARLA
You don't deserve to suffer.

JOAN
You need people who appreciate you.

The brothers are calming down.

LOGAN

Maybe I could become an artist. The nurse at the clinic said I was a natural.

DAVID

I always wanted to own a small TV station. Nothing big. I don't need my own network or anything.

BEN

I was never good at betting on horses. But I'd make a wonderful owner. We could buy a horse farm somewhere.

JOAN

Of course we could. I love farms.

CARLA

You'd be the best TV station manager in the country.

LOLLY

I saw your drawings. You're like Picasso.

LOGAN

All I'd need is a little artist studio. And some oil paints. And an easel.

DAVID

There's a section in the back of Broadcast Magazine. It lists the TV stations for sale.

BEN

I met a stable owner at Hialeah last spring. He said he was getting too old for the horse game.

LOGAN

I can do it.

DAVID

I'm ready.

BEN

The time is now.

LOLLY

Go for it.

CARLA

Make your move.

JOAN

I'm behind you all the way.

LOGAN

I have the talent.

DAVID

The brainpower.

BEN

All I need is a little --

The six people pause a moment for
thought.

EVERYONE

(Simultaneously)

MONEY!!!

Time pushes forward to the next
day, in the factory. The brothers
are at their desks, bemoaning
their fate.

DAVID

This sucks.

LOGAN

I OD'd two years ago. I'm sorry they pulled me through.

BEN

Only nine years and three hundred sixty-four days to go.

DAVID

Unless the company goes under.

LOGAN

Don't even think that.

BEN

Let's hope the toilet gods are smiling down on us.

DAVID

Well, so far, things are going pretty smoothly.

LOGAN

Being President is easier than I thought.

BEN

Maybe Pop was making too big a deal of all this.

DAVID

Maybe we could have made it on our own.

LOGAN

If we had to.

DAVID

Maybe.

LOGAN

Probably.

BEN

Definitely.

DAVID

We could have been as big as Pop.

LOGAN

Bigger.

BEN

We would have stepped all over him.

DAVID

Ground him into the dirt.

LOGAN

Squashed him like an ant.

DAVID

We'll make this company worth sixty million.

BEN

A hundred million.

LOGAN

We'll make the Fortune Five Hundred.

DAVID

We'll branch out.

BEN

Diversify.

Expand.

LOGAN

BEN
We'll move into home furnishings.

LOGAN
Art supplies.

DAVID
Communications.

LOGAN
I think we can do it.

DAVID
I know we can do it.

BEN
I'm sure we can do it.

The door opens, and Pete KELLY enters, a bit frantically.

KELLY
Sorry to barge in, but we have an emergency in shipping.

The brothers are at a loss.

DAVID
Emergency?

BEN
What's wrong?

LOGAN
Where's shipping?

KELLY
You know that container of brass fittings that was due in today?

DAVID
Brass fittings.

BEN
Today.

LOGAN

Due in.

KELLY

It's right there on the loading schedule.

The boys look at the schedule for the first time.

DAVID

Oh, right.

BEN

We forgot.

LOGAN

Those brass fittings.

KELLY

Well, they didn't show. Johnny Nesman down in purchasing called and gave them hell.

DAVID

Good for Johnny.

LOGAN

That's the kind of spirit we like to see around here.

BEN

We'll remember Johnny at the next salary review board.

KELLY

I'm sure he'll appreciate that. Meanwhile, we have four dozen toilet bowls going to the Holiday Inn with no brass fittings.

DAVID

Uh oh.

BEN

Yow.

LOGAN

Is that an emergency?

KELLY

Not if we don't care about losing the Holiday Inn account.

DAVID

Ooo, we care about that.

BEN

We care a lot.

LOGAN

Yes, indeed.

KELLY

So, what should I do?

DAVID

Solve the problem, that's what you do.

BEN

Immediately.

LOGAN

That's what we pay you for.

KELLY

With all due respect, I'm not authorized to make those kinds of decisions.

LOGAN

Who is?

KELLY

You. The Presidents. Your father used to call all the shots. I just carried out orders.

The brothers look to each other for help. This is what they were afraid of. They stall for time.

DAVID

Um, well, as the oldest President, I feel that before we can come up with a solution, we must isolate the problem.

BEN

Exactly.

LOGAN

The problem being --

DAVID

(He thinks)

We have no brass fittings.

BEN

There you go.

LOGAN

Beautiful.

DAVID

(Getting excited)

And so, the solution, in my opinion, is simple. We need to find some brass fittings.

BEN

Yes!

LOGAN

That's my bro!

DAVID

(He's on a roll)

Okay, here's the plan.

(To KELLY)

I want you to muster the troops. Give every man, woman, and child who works here a screwdriver and a wrench. Send them into all the restrooms in the factory and have them remove the brass fittings. We'll use those to fill the Holiday Inn order. In the meantime, call one of those portable john places and have them send over some Porta-Stalls. We can't have our employees pissing in the alley.

The other brothers stare at DAVID in disbelief. They're stunned at the stupidity of the solution.

BEN

Maybe Dad was right.

LOGAN

Maybe we are idiots.

KELLY coughs to break the tension.

KELLY

Uh, I might be out of line here, but I could make a

KELLY (Continued)

recommendation. Something like this happened a few years ago. Your father was on the brink of missing a deadline for the first time.

BEN

He was?

LOGAN

He never mentioned it to us.

DAVID

What did he do?

KELLY

There's a plumbing supply store over on St. Johns Place. Your father hated buying retail, but he had no choice.

DAVID

Do they sell brass fittings?

KELLY

The same kind we use.

BEN

Then get over there A.S.A.P.

LOGAN

Chop chop.

KELLY

I have to warn you. This will screw up our profit margin.

DAVID

Profit margin? Is that all anyone ever thinks of?

LOGAN

We have a reputation to uphold.

BEN

When "& Sons" makes a commitment, we keep that commitment.

DAVID

Now go get those brass fittings.

LOGAN

And fit them in.

BEN

Move. The folks at Holiday Inn are waiting.

KELLY hurries to the door.

DAVID

(Calling after him)

And don't hesitate to bring any other problems to us.

KELLY exits. The brothers look to each other: "Did we do well?" Then DAVID notices the portrait of their father, which is staring down at them.

DAVID

(To the portrait)

Oh, shut up.

Time pushes forward to later that night. DAVID is in his kitchen, getting something to drink. He notices a package on the counter.

DAVID

(Calling to the next room)

Carla, what's this?

CARLA (o.s.)

What's what?

DAVID

The package?

CARLA (O.s.)

Oh. It came today from Moffet. Something your father left for you in his office.

DAVID opens the package. It's a small tape recorder. Curious, he hits the play button.

FATHER'S VOICE

Hello, David, my oldest and biggest disappointment. I didn't get a chance to talk with you today at the office. I figured you were too busy trying to con your way out of working. Or am I being judgmental? Am I using your past to predict your future? Who knows, maybe you're a reformed man who's not afraid anymore to roll up his sleeves and get muddy. Wait a minute. Did I say "man?" I don't know what came over me. I guess I was thinking of the qualities a person your age should possess. Qualities that seemed to have passed you by completely. Oh, I don't mean to single you out. Your younger brothers don't have one shred of quality in them, either. I guess, in some respects, you should be proud of yourself. Look how your brothers emulated you. The only sibling rivalry in this family is which boy could disappoint his father more. David, I'm not trying to pass the collective failure of my sons off on you. On the contrary, I seem to have made the biggest mistake of all. What made me say yes when your mother begged me to have children is beyond me. I should have stood my ground. I should have used a rubber.

LOGAN is sitting alone in his living room, listening to a similar tape recorder.

FATHER'S VOICE

Logan, my favorite whiner, my best sniveler, my primo hypochondriac, my number one weakling. How's life at the factory for you? Are those rough brutes at the loading dock frightening you? Is your workload overwhelming? Are all those invoices and job orders stifling your creative sensitivities? I hope the cleaning staff is keeping your office spic and span. I know how much you hated it when our maids didn't keep your room exactly to your liking. Oh, how you would carry on. Remember the day you and I went fishing on the boat, when the bait can spilled and I asked you to help clean the deck? You took one swipe with the mop, ran to the cabin, and fainted. I hope the trauma of office work doesn't make you equally frail. If it does, you can always rush down to the nurse's station on the fourth floor. I think you'll like our R.N., Mrs. Jamieson. But I must warn you. Mrs. Jamieson doesn't keep anything around stronger than aspirin. So, if you're thinking of breaking into her medicine cabinet for a taste of your favorite narcotic, save your strength for the pharmacy on

FATHER'S VOICE (Continued)

Broad Street. You know, the one you knocked over three years ago. Lucky for you I was pals with Lieutenant Scharf. Lucky he called me before he booked you. Unlucky for you I'm not around any more for him to call. I hear they're not very nice in jail to sniveling whiners.

BEN's in his bathroom, brushing his teeth. As he listens to his tape, he finds it more and more difficult to look in the mirror.

FATHER'S VOICE

Ben. Baby Ben. I don't mean baby as in "baby." God only knows that you're too lethal and too violent to be called that. What I was referring to was the fact that you're the infant of the brood, the cub, the yearling. You were also my final hope at a decent son, my last gasp. And you started out with such promise. As a child you were bold, you were curious, you were ambitious. You also exhibited something I'd never seen before from any of my sons -- character. I'll never forget the day when you were eight. You were playing outside and noticed that my car had a flat tire. I don't know how you did it, but you managed to get the jack out of the trunk. By the time I came outside, you had the car two inches off the ground. I wish I knew what happened to you in the years that followed. All I remember is one phone call after another from school principals, truant officers, police sergeants, insurance brokers, lawyers, all making the same claim -- your son is a misfit, a vandal, a lowlife, a barbarian, a waste. What troubles me most is that of all my sons, you resemble me the most physically. People would often tell me, "Ben. A chip off the old block." When you were young, it made me proud. But as you grew older, and I looked at you, I could only see what the others saw -- a waste. How about you, Ben? When you look in the mirror, do you see the waste? Go ahead. Look in a mirror now. Look at that face. The face that looks like mine.

(BEN tries to look, but can't)

Look closely. There you are. In the mirror. My son.
Ben. The waste.

BEN forces himself to look at his reflection. Then, with all his might, he slams his fist into the mirror, shattering it.

Time pushes forward to the next morning, in the factory. DAVID is already at his desk, thinking. LOGAN and BEN, his hand bandaged, enter from separate doors. All are subdued.

Good morning.

BEN

Hey.

DAVID

What's up?

LOGAN

BEN and LOGAN sit at their desks. Nobody has much to say.

So, what did you guys do last night?

DAVID

Nothing much. Watched TV.

LOGAN

Me, too.

BEN

I hit the sack early.

DAVID

They're all relieved that nobody challenges. They sit silently again.

What happened to the hand?

LOGAN

(Noticing BEN's bandages)

Cut myself shaving.

BEN

You shave your knuckles?

DAVID

BEN

I have hairy knuckles.

Again, nobody challenges. There's another round of silence.

LOGAN

So, what are we going to do today?

BEN

I don't know. The same as yesterday.

DAVID

Sit around and wait for Pete Kelly to stop by with a problem.

The brothers contemplate this a while. Each is on the verge of making a suggestion, then backs off.

LOGAN

(Screws up his courage)

You know, I was thinking last night.

BEN

You said you were watching TV.

LOGAN

During the commercial. This idea came to me.

DAVID

You want to start an in-house methadone center?

LOGAN

No. But that's not bad.

BEN

Forget it.

DAVID

So, what's your brainstorm?

LOGAN

Well, uh, you'll probably think I'm crazy or something. Or stoned. But, uh, I thought that ... well, since we have to

LOGAN (Continued)

be here for ten years, we might as well figure out how to run this factory.

(Realizing how dumb his idea is)

Okay, don't jump down my throat. I told you. I thought of this during a commercial.

LOGAN is surprised that his brothers aren't harassing him. On the contrary, they're taking him quite seriously.

DAVID

Funny. I was kind of thinking along those same lines. I mean, we don't have to run the business exactly the way Dad did. But it wouldn't kill us to pick up a few tricks.

BEN

At breakfast this morning, I was telling Joan that maybe I could enroll in night school. Maybe take a crash course in business management.

DAVID

I mean, after all, if we want that thirty mil, we better make sure this company does okay.

LOGAN

We can't depend on other people to run it for us.

BEN

We have to do it ourselves.

DAVID

I mean, just because we've never done anything right before, doesn't mean we can't start now.

LOGAN

Anyone can change.

BEN

Even us.

LOGAN

We're not total morons.

DAVID

My guidance counsellor told me my I.Q. was above average.

BEN

I almost made the honor roll in the ninth grade.

DAVID

A lot of successful people didn't do well in school.

LOGAN

Henry Ford. He didn't even go to college.

BEN

Dad never made it past the eighth grade.

DAVID

We could teach ourselves how to run this business.

BEN

It couldn't be that difficult.

LOGAN

Dad used to say it was ninety-percent common sense.

DAVID

And hard work.

BEN

I'm not afraid of a little hard work.

LOGAN

I've never tried before but, hey.

BEN

(Points to the volumes of business texts in
the bookshelves)

Everything we need to know is right there. I don't mind
reading.

DAVID

(Opening some file drawers)

All our current accounts are in here. I could go over
them.

LOGAN

(Taking papers out of the in box)

Here's a stack of inter-office memos. I'll try to find out
what all the departments are up to.

The brothers absorb the impact of what they're about to attempt.

DAVID

I mean, we could do it, right?

LOGAN

Of course we could. I guess.

BEN

Why would you even doubt it?

Simultaneously, the brothers look at the portrait of their father, which is staring down at them in disgust.

Time pushes forward to the next day, Yom Kippur, inside a synagogue. The wives are seated with the congregation, listening to the RABBI recite a prayer in Hebrew. The brothers are off to the side, entertaining themselves. Their noise is distracting the women and the RABBI, but the brothers don't notice.

RABBI

(Reciting throughout)

Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu, dibarnu dofi; he-evinu, v'hirshanu, zadnu, hamasnu, tafalnu sheker; ya-atznu ra, kizavnu, latznu, maradnu, niatznu, sararnu, avinu, pashanu, tza-rarnu, ki-shinu oref; ra-shanu, shi-hatnu, tiavnu, tainu, ti-tanu.

LOGAN

(Laughing along with his brothers)

Did you catch the look on Kelly's face?

LOGAN

He barged in to spy on us for Moffet.

DAVID

He seemed disappointed that we weren't at the track.

BEN

(To LOGAN)

And then you said, "Kelly, did job number K-62219 get out on time?"

LOGAN

His jaw flopped open.

DAVID

The man turned into a stuttering baboon.

LOGAN

(Imitating Kelly)

H...H...How did you know about K...K...K-62219?

DAVID

And then you reamed his ass.

(Imitating LOGAN)

There'll be hell to pay if that delivery goes out one minute late!

BEN

Kelly hustled out of there so fast.

LOGAN

I was worried he'd trip and break his leg.

DAVID

The schmuck. He doesn't know who he's dealing with.

BEN

The new us.

DAVID

& Sons.

BEN

Yes!

LOGAN

& Fucking Sons!

The women turn to them, angrily.

LOLLY

Shhh!

JOAN

Ben, get over here.

CARLA

For God's sake, it's Yom Kippur.

LOGAN

Chill out.

BEN

We're talking business.

DAVID

You want that thirty million, don't you?

LOLLY

Shhh!

JOAN

For one day a year, you boys can behave.

CARLA

Even your father observed Yom Kippur.

DAVID

Bullshit. The old man came here for P.R. purposes.

BEN

He thought it would look good to his clients.

LOGAN

He picked up the fucking Josh Berman account here.

The RABBI ends his prayer and
looks over at the brothers.

RABBI

Shhh.

(He points to three empty chairs.

Reluctantly, the brothers sit)

Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement. The day that we, as
Jews, knock at the gates of repentance, pleading before the
Creator for pardon, hoping for the answer, "I have been
forgiven." As it is written -- we have trespassed, we have
dealt treacherously, we have robbed, we have spoken
slander, we have acted perversely --

DAVID

Hey, I thought I erased that video.
(The brothers laugh hysterically)

CARLA

Shhh!

RABBI

We have wrought wickedness, we have been presumptuous, we have done violence --

BEN

Ah, I barely tapped the guy on the chin.
(The brothers laugh again)

JOAN

Shhh!

RABBI

We have framed lies, we have counseled evil, we have spoken falsely --

DAVID

I didn't know I was selling swampland.
(The brothers laugh)

CARLA

Shhh!

As they listen to the RABBI, the brothers do their best to keep from laughing.

RABBI

We have acted wickedly and have transgressed; wherefore we have not been saved. O incline our hearts to forsake the path of evil, and hasten our salvation. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for He is ever ready to pardon.

DAVID

(To LOGAN and BEN)

He ain't gonna pardon you lowlives.

BEN

Us? You're the one who whacked off on the school bus.

LOGAN

I say we hasten our salvation over to Brannigan's. Thank God the Irish don't close their pubs on Yom Kippur.

BEN

We can't break the fast until sundown.

LOGAN

Who's going to eat? I'm on a liquid fast.

DAVID

I second the motion. We came. We repented. We're forgiven.

BEN

Hallelujah.

LOGAN

Let's begin a new year of transgressions.

The brothers bid adieu to their wives, and begin to exit. The RABBI halts their forward motion.

RABBI

For those of you with parents who have deceased --
(He directs this to the brothers)
Including those who are in their first year of mourning --
(The brothers stop)
We will now begin our Yizkor service. It is the Jewish custom to memorialize our loved ones with prayer and pledges of charity for the deceased. During Yizkor, we ask God for the elevation of the souls of our parents.

DAVID

Oh, Christ.

LOGAN

Give me a break.

BEN

(The RABBI has somewhat broken through)

Shhh.

RABBI

We do this because the dead, as ourselves, need atonement. If the son gives for the Benefit of his father, this helps

RABBI (Continued)

to lighten the punishment, since the son gives merit to the father. During the first twelve months after death, the deceased have the greatest need for mercy, and so I ask you all to join me in our memorial prayer.

Reluctantly, DAVID and LOGAN stand still. BEN bows his head.

RABBI

Yizkor Elohim nishmat avi mori sheh-halah l'olamo. Ana t'hi naf-sho tz'ru-ra bi-tz'ror ha-ha-yim, u-t'hi m'nu-hato kavod, sova s'ma-hot et pa-neha, n'imot bi-minha netzah. Amen.

DAVID

(Starts to exit)

Okay, we did it. Vamosos compadres.

LOGAN

(Follows)

Yeah, Brannigan's is starting Happy Hours.

BEN

(Stops them)

Wait. He's not finished.

RABBI

In memory of father.

(Recites)

The memory of your life, dear father, rises before me this solemn hour as I recall all the kindness, love, and encouragement which you showed me during your life --

DAVID

Oh, please.

LOGAN

Don't make me laugh.

BEN

Shhh.

RABBI

With untiring zeal you provided for my physical and spiritual needs --

DAVID

Is this guy joking?

LOGAN

The most spiritual thing Dad ever said was "Goddamnit."

BEN

Guys, knock it off.

RABBI

You rejoiced in my achievements, you guided me in my perplexities, and strengthened me in my trials and disappointments --

DAVID

I'm out of here.

LOGAN

Me, too.

BEN

(Grabs them both)

You're not going anywhere.

DAVID

Get your hands off me.

LOGAN

Let go.

RABBI

I can pay you the tribute which you so richly deserve, by cherishing the ideals and principles you have taught me --

DAVID

Are you listening to this crap?

LOGAN

They're not talking about our old man.

BEN

I don't care.

(He holds them tighter)

RABBI

Though you are gone from my physical view, the bond of love which unites us can never be severed --

Bullshit!

DAVID

Fucking bullshit!

LOGAN

Shut up!

BEN

May the memories of your life spur me on to follow truth
and righteousness --

RABBI

Our father should rot in hell!

DAVID

(With a mighty tug, he yanks free from BEN
and storms out of the synagogue)

The wives, the RABBI, and the
congregation look over, stunned.
LOGAN stares back at them,
unapologetically.

Amen.

LOGAN

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

The brothers' office at the factory, five years later. Through the window we see a newer, bigger sign that boasts "& SONS." DAVID, LOGAN, and BEN are at their desks talking on phones. There's an air of efficiency about them.

DAVID

(Into phone)

Yes, I've seen the projections. I have the numbers right here...I know they've been cutting back...I can see they're in a cash squeeze. Look, you're the head of sales, do me a favor. Rip up all your reports, get in your car, and go sell --

LOGAN

(Into phone)

The trade ads look fine, but where are the point of purchase displays I asked for? You call that a display? If I saw that in a store, I'd think the night janitor missed something with his broom --

BEN

(Into phone)

Okay, give it to me again. We have twelve blacks, three Puerto Ricans, and one Ecuadorian. And they're still complaining? Okay, try this. Shift two of the blacks to shipping, and move the Ecuadorian to the mailroom...We already have one in the mail room? Okay, try this. Move the Puerto Rican --

Pete KELLY rushes in, panicked.

KELLY

Trouble down below.

DAVID

(Into phone)

Have to go.

LOGAN

(Into phone)

Call me back.

BEN

(Into phone)

Later.

They hang up.

KELLY

One of the truckers slipped on the loading platform and hurt his back.

DAVID

So?

LOGAN

Send him to the nurse.

BEN

Then give him a Lollipop.

KELLY

He said he's suing.

DAVID

On what grounds?

LOGAN

This is a workman's comp case.

BEN

He's covered.

KELLY

He clocked out ten minutes before. He says this isn't a work related injury.

LOGAN

What's the guy's name?

KELLY

Alex Greer.

LOGAN

Greer. Oh. The new guy from Chicago.

KELLY

Exactly. How did you know?

LOGAN

Checked his references yesterday. He didn't put down on his application that he has a D.U.I. in Illinois. That's grounds for dismissal. Tell the fucker that if he causes trouble for us, we'll return the favor in kind.

KELLY

I have to hand it to you. Even your father never checked references.

DAVID

Our father never had us working for him.

BEN

Damn right.

LOGAN

Damn fucking right.

KELLY

On the other hand, your father's first reaction would have been concern for the man's back. He'd have gone down to the nurse's station personally.

The brothers are nonplussed.

DAVID

Kelly, get lost.

LOGAN

Go do what we told you to do.

BEN

And if you trip, land on your head and die.

KELLY exits.

LOGAN

What a complete schmuck.

DAVID

Five years and I still hate his face.

BEN

Only five more years, and we'll never have to see it again.

DAVID

Not quite. Five years and two days.
(He crosses off another box on his calendar)

LOGAN

I can't believe we're half way there.

DAVID

The slowest five years of my life.

BEN

Slower than your time in the slammer?

DAVID

At least in jail I didn't have to look at that every day.
(He points to the portrait of their father,
still glaring down at them)

LOGAN

(Groans)
Don't remind me.

DAVID

We should rip it down once and for all.

LOGAN

Fine by me. But what if it's still wired?

DAVID

What more could the fucker say to us that he hasn't said
already?

LOGAN

I'm not sure I want to find out.

DAVID

Ah, who cares any more?
(He reaches for the frame)
Adios, Pop.

BEN

(Grabs DAVID by the arm)
Stop.

DAVID

Hey, asshole.

BEN

Leave the picture up.

DAVID

What for? Aren't you sick of listening to the son of a bitch?

LOGAN

If you want, we can take his place.

(Imitating the father)

Ben, you're an idiot. You're a moron. You're a worthless piece of shit.

BEN

The point is, we can show him a little respect.

DAVID

The same respect he showed us.

(Flips middle finger at the portrait.)

LOGAN

Respect? Man, who's been feeding you this bullshit?

BEN

I just think we can start being a little grateful for what he gave us.

DAVID

(Looking at his watch)

Oh, brother, time for me to call it a day.

LOGAN

Me too.

DAVID and LOGAN head for the door.

DAVID

You seeing Sarah tonight?

LOGAN

Melanie. Sarah moved out, remember?

DAVID

I can't keep them straight anymore without a program.

LOGAN

How about you? Heading home to Carla?

DAVID

Indirectly.

LOGAN

After you stop by a certain file clerk's apartment first.

DAVID

Hey, I'm an executive who believes in boosting employee morale.

LOGAN

I've seen Ms. File Clerk's body. I wouldn't mind boosting her morale, myself.

They exit. BEN is left alone. He returns to his desk and tries to do some paperwork. Troubled, he looks up at the portrait of his father.

BEN

(To the portrait)

You saw me I tried. Look, I can't control them -- I'm doing my best. What do you want from me? I'm trying goddamnit I'm trying.

BEN hurries out the door.

Time pushes forward to later that night, in three separate bedrooms. The brothers are in bed with their women -- DAVID with his mistress, ALLISON, LOGAN with his new live-in, MELANIE, and BEN with his wife, JOAN. The three men are staring at the ceiling. The women are troubled.

JOAN

Honey, why don't you touch me anymore?

MELANIE

Am I doing something wrong?

ALLISON

Don't I turn you on?

JOAN

It's been over a month.

MELANIE

I'm a little confused.

ALLISON

Tell me what you want me to do.

JOAN

It's not the lovemaking I miss.

MELANIE

It's the contact.

ALLISON

I like to feel you next to me.

JOAN

Maybe we should talk to someone.

MELANIE

We could pour oils in a hot bath.

ALLISON

I'll massage you then you massage me.

JOAN

Are you having an affair?

MELANIE

Did this happen with Molly, too? And Sarah?

ALLISON

Do I remind you of your wife?

JOAN

I'm still very much in love with you.

MELANIE

I want this to work out for us.

ALLISON

I need you.

JOAN

Talk to me.

MELANIE
Tell me what's wrong.

ALLISON
I'm here for you.

The men roll over.

BEN
I'm just tired.

LOGAN
I'm a little strung out lately.

DAVID
I had a rough day at the factory.

BEN
I know it's been a while.

LOGAN
Be patient with me.

DAVID
I'll get over this.

BEN
There's no other woman.

LOGAN
Lolly and I had nothing going -- Sarah, either.

DAVID
I never think of my wife when I'm with you.

BEN
I still love you.

LOGAN
We'll get there again.

DAVID
You turn me on like crazy.

BEN
I'm just working a few things through.

LOGAN

I'm not used to making love without drugs.

DAVID

I'm stretched a little thin.

BEN

My life is actually terrific.

LOGAN

I love being clean and dry.

DAVID

I've never been so productive.

BEN

Five years we've kept the business going.

LOGAN

Nobody thought we could do it.

DAVID

We proved them wrong.

BEN

I never even think of owning a horse farm any more.

LOGAN

I'm satisfied helping out in our graphics department.

DAVID

I was interviewed last month on the local TV station.

BEN

I'm happier than I've ever been in my life.

LOGAN

Life's good.

DAVID

I couldn't ask for much more.

BEN

I'm coming to peace with myself.

LOGAN

I'm beginning to like who I am.

DAVID
I give myself a lot of credit.

BEN
I'm just a little tired lately.

LOGAN
I need some sleep.

DAVID
I'm beat.

They kiss the women.

BEN
Good night.

LOGAN
Good night.

DAVID
Good night.

Time pushes forward to the next morning, in a PSYCHIATRIST's office. DAVID is with his doctor.

DAVID
I feel that things are going well at the factory. I'm doing everything I'm asked to do. I show up every day at nine. I take no more than an hour for lunch. I say hello to people in the hallways. I deal with problems well. I'm honest. I don't cut corners. I'm available to do anything for the good of the company. And, still, I'm always afraid that he's going to be angry with me.

PSYCHIATRIST
Who's going to be angry with you?

DAVID
Moffet.

PSYCHIATRIST
The attorney.

DAVID
Yes.

PSYCHIATRIST

What are you afraid he'll do to you?

DAVID

Well, for starters, yell at me for screwing something up. He's done it before.

PSYCHIATRIST

What did he yell at you about?

DAVID

Last year, I made a deal with the Executive V.P. of Carthon Industries. At the last minute, the President of Carthon read my proposal and nixed the deal.

PSYCHIATRIST

And Moffet yelled at you.

DAVID

Well, he didn't exactly yell. But he did tell me that he read the proposal and didn't like it either.

PSYCHIATRIST

And so you feel that it was your fault that you lost the account.

DAVID

My father would have landed it.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you think you wrote a good proposal?

DAVID

I thought so when I handed it in.

PSYCHIATRIST

Had anyone else read it?

DAVID

Only my brothers.

PSYCHIATRIST

And what did they think of it?

DAVID

They thought I did a good job. But what do they know, they're morons.

PSYCHIATRIST

But at first you thought the proposal was well written.

DAVID

It wasn't War and Peace. But it was good enough, I thought.

PSYCHIATRIST

And the Executive V.P. of Carthon liked it.

DAVID

I guess so. He passed it on to his boss.

PSYCHIATRIST

And so, when one man didn't like it, you felt like you had failed miserably.

DAVID

Two men. Moffet.

PSYCHIATRIST

Maybe Moffet was frustrated about losing the new business.

DAVID

What difference does it make? He's my boss.

PSYCHIATRIST

I thought he was the Executor of your father's estate.

DAVID

Technically, he is. But If I screw up, I don't collect my money.

PSYCHIATRIST

Ah, so you're afraid of being cut out of the thirty million dollars.

DAVID

Yes.

PSYCHIATRIST

And if Moffet doesn't approve of your performance, he'll take that money away.

DAVID

Yes.

PSYCHIATRIST

It means nothing to you that there's a binding legal agreement that states that if the company is solvent, you'll collect your money. And, right now, the company is solvent.

DAVID

But he can always say that I breached the contract.

PSYCHIATRIST

Mr. Needleman, by your own admission you seem to be conducting yourself in a businesslike manner, and yet you're convinced that you are failing. You even believe that some evil force, this legal Executor, is hovering over you waiting to inflict cruel punishment. It's almost as if there's a fundamental belief inside of you that says you don't deserve success, and whatever you've earned will be taken away.

DAVID

(He doesn't get it)

That fucker Moffet better not get in my way! I'll hire my own lawyer and haul his ass into court!

PSYCHIATRIST

(Waits for him to settle down)

When I was in the army, I was attached to the medical corps. I never made it overseas. They assigned me to a hospital in New York to care for soldiers coming home from Europe. During a time when men dreamed of being war heroes, it was the most unglamorous post in the military. One day, a G.I. came into my office. He'd just returned from Europe. He was bright and friendly. He saluted me and said he was requesting a transfer into my unit. I asked him why he wanted to work in a dingy hospital in Brooklyn. He said, "I want to work with you because you're so clever, you have everyone believing we're in America." I looked at him and said, "But we are in America." The man winked at me, as if to say, "Don't worry, your secret is safe with me." I said to the man, "If we're not in America, where are we?" The man answered without a moment of hesitation, "England." I took him over to the window and pointed out at the Statue of Liberty. "If we're in England why is that there?" The man answered with complete conviction, "You see, that's how clever you are."

Inside a drug center, LOGAN is talking to his COUNSELLOR.

LOGAN

Most of the time I never think of using. But then somebody will make some asshole remark -- usually one of my fucking brothers -- and all I can think of is running into the men's room to snort up.

COUNSELLOR

The main thing is, you didn't.

LOGAN

But I still think of it.

COUNSELLOR

You can think it all you want. As long as you don't do it, you're still clean.

LOGAN

When won't I think about it any more?

COUNSELLOR

Maybe never.

LOGAN

Sometimes, I say fuck it, the hell with the money, I should quit and get far the fuck away from my brothers.

COUNSELLOR

In recovery, we don't use and we don't leave.

LOGAN

But they're such a pain in the ass. Yesterday, David sat at his desk and ate three bags of pretzels. He's a fucking pig.

COUNSELLOR

The man's nervous. Show a little compassion.

LOGAN

I'd like to show him my fist in his nose. Like he did to me when we were kids.

COUNSELLOR

Your brother broke your nose?

LOGAN

Breaking bones was a family tradition. My father came home once from work in a bad mood. David met him at the door and said hi. Whack. My father belted him like a ton of bricks. Made his face look like a bulldog. He had to have his nose fixed. We told everyone at school he fell off a horse. A few years later, I was making fun of David for flunking math. Whack. I still can't breath out of my right nostril. The doctor said I need a septum operation, but fuck it.

COUNSELLOR

You say "fuck" a lot.

LOGAN

It's descriptive.

COUNSELLOR

It's angry. Anger's not good for drug addicts. It makes them want drugs.

LOGAN

Fuck it.

COUNSELLOR

There is an antidote. You might consider making a list of things you're grateful for.

LOGAN

You sound like Ben.

COUNSELLOR

Your younger brother?

LOGAN

The gorilla. Every other day he grabs me and almost breaks my arm or my hand. He's a fucking psychopath.

COUNSELLOR

What does he say about gratitude?

LOGAN

Who listens? Yesterday, he got up on his soapbox and started preaching about my father. He said we should show him some respect. Be grateful for the things he gave us. Fuck that. Why don't I thank Hitler for sending my grandmother to the ovens?

COUNSELLOR

You sound like you want to stay angry.

LOGAN

I see nothing good that my father gave me. So, fuck him.

COUNSELLOR

Well, if your way is working for you, don't let me interrupt your misery.

Inside an office at the synagogue,
BEN is talking to the RABBI.

BEN

I'm nervous about tomorrow.

RABBI

Yom Kippur is our most sacred day. You must prepare yourself for kibbud av ve'aim. You have the responsibility of honoring your father.

BEN

I will. I only wish I felt he was worth it.

RABBI

Our halachah tells us, "Do not judge your parents ungenerously."

BEN

I could present some pretty damaging evidence.

RABBI

But neither you, nor I, are the ones to indict.

BEN

What if I told you that when I was a kid he --

RABBI

No matter how a father is judged by his fellow and God, he never forfeits the minimal loyalty of his son.

BEN

But this was an evil son-of-a --

RABBI

Even if the father is a wicked man, he must honor and revere him.

BEN

That's a rough one for me.

RABBI

You owe your very existence to this man.

BEN

Who asked for it? He gave me a life of pain and abuse.

RABBI

You sound like a kofer, only capable of declaring his ingratitude.

BEN

You should have heard me at the office yesterday. I chewed my brothers' heads off for not being grateful.

RABBI

And?

BEN

They looked at me like I was an asshole.

RABBI

You can't quit. You must convince them. "Those who give life merit the utmost gratitude."

BEN

But my brothers are less thrilled with living than I am.

RABBI

No man requests to be born. And life, once given, is of debatable worth. Even Job asked, "Why did I not die from the womb? Why did I not perish at birth?" Adam was more direct. "Wherefore didst thou beget me? I sought it not." You three brothers aren't the first to consider the weighty fact that no man is consulted about his coming into being. But neither Adam, nor Job, nor Ben Needleman is exempt from the mightiest of laws. Your father created you. You owe him a debt.

BEN

It's going to be a hard sell.

RABBI

You can't look on it as a chore. You should see it as a

RABBI (Continued)

privilege. You and your brothers are your father's creation. Your life is good. Gratitude is in order. You must believe this. You must rely on this. "My son, at all times remember me, and may my image be before your eyes -- let it never depart from you."

BEN

Maybe that's why he left his portrait in the office.

RABBI

Your reverence will be your stepping-stone to humanity. Your continued impiety will be your downfall. "There is a generation that curse their father. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes. And yet are not washed from their filthiness."

BEN

Okay, I'll try again.

RABBI

You must win them over.

BEN

They're very bitter.

RABBI

Bring them to synagogue on Yom Kippur.

BEN

I'll do my best.

RABBI

Make sure your own reverence is in order, you'll do fine.

BEN

If they ask, how far are we supposed to go with this honoring thing?

RABBI

"Till the father throws the wallet of the son into the sea, and his son does not shame him."

Time pushes forward to the next morning, at the factory. LOGAN is at his desk, working. DAVID enters carrying a shopping bag.

DAVID

Well, we did it, little bro. Five years today.

LOGAN

Halfway to paradise.

DAVID

And to celebrate the occasion...

(He takes a bottle out of the bag)

Champagne.

LOGAN

Thanks, asshole. You know I'm not supposed to drink.

DAVID

I thought you couldn't do drugs. Otherwise, I would have bought a few pounds of P.C.P.

LOGAN

I told you ten times. No booze, no drugs, no nothing.

DAVID

In that case...

(He removes another bottle from the bag)

Sparkling Apple Cider for my degenerate, broken down, junkie brother. See, I listen.

LOGAN

What a guy.

DAVID

Hey, I can always "accidentally" switch my glass of champagne with your apple cider.

LOGAN

I don't think they'd buy that down at the drug center.

DAVID

You can blame it on me. Everyone knows I'm a fuck up.

LOGAN

Thanks, but I better play this one by the rules.

DAVID

Have it your way. But don't expect me to suck on cider today.

LOGAN

Knock yourself out. I'll get high just thinking of the thirty million dollars.

DAVID

Our thirty million dollars.

LOGAN

Our fucking thirty million dollars.

DAVID

Nobody can say we didn't earn it.

LOGAN

We've kicked ass.

DAVID

Kept this leaky tug afloat.

LOGAN

Hell, we turned it into the Queen Elizabeth.

DAVID

I have to admit. When we started, I didn't think you were up to it. I figured by now you'd be zonked out in some crack house.

LOGAN

Me? I thought we'd be sending you progress reports up in San Quentin.

DAVID

You've really surprised me.

LOGAN

You've shown me a lot, too.

DAVID

I mean, I always looked at you as -- and I hate to sound like Dad -- well, a bum.

LOGAN

To me, you were holding a one-way ticket to Palookaville.

DAVID

When I was doing time, I felt like I'd proved Dad right. I was nothing but a loser.

LOGAN

I'd wake up every morning, and my first thought was always, "Oh, shit, not this again."

DAVID

I once aimed my car at a telephone pole.

LOGAN

I've hit flatline three times.

DAVID

Well, you've got no reason to be down on yourself any more.

LOGAN

You should feel pretty good, too.

DAVID

I do. Sometimes.

LOGAN

I had a flash of it, myself. About a week ago.

DAVID

I can't say that enjoying life comes naturally to me.

LOGAN

I feel like a total beginner.

DAVID

Maybe we need training wheels.

LOGAN

Or a paint-by-numbers book.

DAVID

Maybe we just have to tell each other we're doing okay.

LOGAN

Pat each other on the back every now and then.

The brothers look at each other for a moment. This is awkward for both of them. Then, self-consciously, DAVID pats LOGAN on the back. LOGAN recoils.

DAVID

Relax. It won't kill you.

LOGAN

Fine. But you get yours, too.

(He pats DAVID on the back then DAVID pats LOGAN. Reluctantly, they begin to accept it. Then, as if drawn by a hidden force, they look up at the portrait of their father. They stop patting each other, return to their desks, and begin working in silence.)

BEN enters, dressed in a suit and tie.

BEN

I thought I'd find you two here.

DAVID

Where else? It is a workday.

LOGAN

And you're late.

BEN

It's Yom Kippur.

DAVID

So?

LOGAN

Go to synagogue.

DAVID

We won't dock your pay.

BEN

I'd like you to come with me.

DAVID

We did once, remember?

LOGAN

I think the Jews are better off without us.

BEN

It's for Dad.

DAVID

Oh, please, spare us.

LOGAN

Moses has come down from the mountain to deliver us from bondage.

BEN

We owe this to our father.

DAVID

(Ignoring him)

Logan, do you have that Jefferson invoice?

LOGAN

(Searching his desk)

I saw it here yesterday.

BEN

Whatever Dad did to us, we have to be loyal.

LOGAN

(Finding the invoice)

Ah, here it is.

DAVID

Good. I need to check the purchase number.

BEN

It's our responsibility to honor him.

LOGAN

P.O. number FP-190.

DAVID

Thanks.

BEN

He gave us life.

DAVID

(To BEN)

Excuse me, Rabbi, we've got work to do. Why don't you go tend your flock.

BEN

(To LOGAN)

Look at everything Dad's done for us.

LOGAN

You look at it. I'm busy.

BEN

He gave us a house to grow up in.

LOGAN

I would have been safer in an orphanage.

BEN

He fed us.

LOGAN

He complained every night about the food bills.

BEN

He gave us this business. And a chance to get very rich.

LOGAN

(Hates to admit it)

Can't argue with you on that.

BEN

So we have a lot to be grateful for.

LOGAN

Christ, that word again.

BEN

Maybe if we go to synagogue, we can think of some more things.

LOGAN

You are an optimist.

BEN

I'm just sick of being sick.

LOGAN

I hear you.

BEN

Then come with me to services. It's our only chance.

LOGAN

I'd like to, but there's too much to do here.

DAVID

I'll cover for you.

LOGAN

You?

DAVID

Hey, if you dopes get cured, maybe some of it will rub off on me.

LOGAN

(To BEN)

I'm not dressed.

DAVID

You look beautiful.

LOGAN

(To DAVID)

Sure you don't mind?

DAVID

Go. Seek thy salvation. But be back at sunset so we can toast our cider.

Time pushes forward an hour, to the synagogue. The RABBI is leading the congregation in prayer. BEN and LOGAN head for their seats.

RABBI

O Lord, what is man that Thou takest knowledge of him? Or the son of man that Thou doest regard him? Man is like unto a breath. His days are as a shadow that passes away.

Before reaching the seats, LOGAN gets cold feet.

BEN

What's wrong?

LOGAN

Nothing. I just...could we wait minute?

BEN
(Sensing his discomfort)

Sure.

They step aside.

RABBI
Man is frail; his life is short and fleeting, like an aimless cloud that drifts at noonday, like the morning mists that rise and gather, like the grass that sprouts and grows and withers.

LOGAN
It's weird. I never thought we'd be showing up voluntarily.

BEN
And paying attention.

LOGAN
I still don't understand what the Rabbi's talking about.

BEN
Even when he's not speaking Hebrew.

LOGAN
When we were kids, I only came on Yom Kippur because Dad made me.

BEN
I thought it was another form of punishment.

LOGAN
Almost worse than him punching us in the ribs.

BEN notices that LOGAN's yarmulke is crooked. He straightens it.

BEN
Remember the time we came to synagogue the night before and hid our jeans and sweatshirts in the bushes outside?

LOGAN
We stayed for one prayer, snuck out, changed clothes, and played football all day.

BEN

Then changed back by the end of services.

LOGAN

No one could figure out why our suits and ties were so neat, but our faces were so filthy.

BEN

That was David's idea, wasn't it?

LOGAN

Who else.

BEN

Hey, remember when you were hanging out with that girl you met at Sunday school?

LOGAN

Shelly Weinstein?

BEN

The only twelve year old with tits.

LOGAN

I used to take her downstairs and feel her up in the Hebrew School.

BEN

I used to sneak down after you and peek through the door.

LOGAN

Get out.

BEN

I was there the first time you got under her bra.

LOGAN

You dog.

BEN

Hey, I had to learn somehow.

LOGAN musses up BEN's hair. BEN flicks LOGAN's chin.

BEN

Ready to go in now?

LOGAN

I guess.

BEN takes his seat. LOGAN follows nervously, but he has a rough time listening.

RABBI

O merciful Father, in whose hand are the souls of the living and the dead, we consecrate this sacred hour to the memory of our dear ones who have been summoned to their eternal reward --

LOGAN

(Whispering)

It's hot in here.

BEN

We'll be out soon.

As the RABBI continues, BEN doesn't notice how much difficulty LOGAN is having. It's almost unbearable for him to listen to what the RABBI is saying.

RABBI

With sorrowing hearts, children remember their beloved parents whom Thou hast removed from the scene of their earthly tasks and called unto Thee. With what love they tended the young lives entrusted to their care. With what beauty life blossomed under their tender guidance and understanding devotion. Untiring were their endeavors to direct their children on the path of virtue and kindness. Ever mindful were they of their welfare, ever anxious for their happiness --

LOGAN

Ben, I'm going.

BEN

Please don't.

LOGAN

I'm sorry. I can't do it.

Without creating a scene, LOGAN slips out. BEN tries to put his focus back on the RABBI.

Time pushes forward to later that afternoon, at the factory. DAVID and LOGAN are working at their desks. BEN enters, still wearing his suit and tie.

Hi.
BEN

Hi.
LOGAN

Hi.
DAVID

How'd it go?
LOGAN

I prayed to him for all of us.
BEN

Did he hear?
DAVID

I don't know.
BEN

Did it make you feel better?
LOGAN

I'm not sure.
BEN

Nobody has anything else to say on the subject. DAVID grabs the bottles of champagne and cider.

Well, hey, let's celebrate our anniversary.
DAVID

Five years down and five to go.
LOGAN

BEN
Who'd have thunk it?

DAVID pours three glassfuls, and
the brothers raise them high.

DAVID
Here's to our dreams.

LOGAN
Our plans.

BEN
Our future.

LOGAN
My art studio. In the South of France, where else?

BEN
Needleman Farms at Kentucky Downs.

DAVID
TV station KLO Honolulu.

LOGAN
I want you all at my opening in the Louvre.

BEN
When I take the Derby, you'll be in the winner's circle.

DAVID
You're going up on stage with me at the Emmy's.

The door opens, and Alan MOFFET
enters. He's carrying an
envelope. The brothers are
surprised to see him.

LOGAN
Well, look what the wind blew in.

BEN
His royal Executor.

DAVID
Here to congratulate us on hitting the halfway mark?

MOFFET

I do applaud your impressive efforts.

LOGAN

Gee, thanks.

BEN

Our first compliment in five years.

DAVID

We accept.

MOFFET

You deserve it. But we need to discuss business. Your father left this envelope in my safe a few weeks before he died. It's been sealed, with instructions to be opened in the event that you three managed to run the business successfully for five years.

(The brothers look at each other curiously, as MOFFET opens the envelope. He removes a legal document and reads)

"Last Will Of Nathan Needleman. I, Nathan Needleman, being of lawful age and sound mind and memory, and not actuated by any duress, menace, fraud or undue influence, hereby make, publish and declare this to be my Last Will. I hereby revoke all Wills and Codicils previously made by me. I intend by this Will to dispose of all property which I have a right to dispose of by Will. I give all the furniture and furnishings, machinery, tools, and other tangible equipment in my factory at 1801 North Knoll Drive to my sons who survive me in equal shares as they shall agree. All other assets, cash, or investments (including both principal and accrued or undistributed income) shall be distributed to the government of South Africa, to help insure the survival of that great nation. I subscribe my name to this Will. Nathan Needleman."

The brothers stand there, stunned.

DAVID

This is a joke, right?

MOFFET

I wish it were.

LOGAN

It's not legal.

MOFFET

I'm afraid it is. To the letter of the law.

BEN

But what about the old will?

MOFFET

Null and void.

DAVID

And the thirty million dollars?

MOFFET

South Africa gets it. Minus expenses and taxes.

LOGAN

All we get is the machinery and furniture?

MOFFET

And the tools.

BEN

What about the building?

MOFFET

It's an asset.

DAVID

So South Africa gets it.

MOFFET

I'm afraid so. But I'm going to check with the probate judge. Maybe, under the circumstances, he'll delay the sale until you three can get back on your feet.

LOGAN

Swell.

DAVID

Just what we needed.

BEN

Our lucky day.

MOFFET

I don't know what to tell you boys. I lose out, too. I

MOFFET (Continued)

was getting a fee for being Executor of the estate. I doubt if South Africa will keep me on the payroll.

The brothers have no response. They're in a silent state of shock.

MOFFET

Call me at my office if you have any questions.
(He begins to exit, then remembers something)

Oh. This was in the envelope, too. It's from your father.

He hands DAVID an audiocassette then exits. DAVID puts it in a tape recorder, and hits the button.

FATHER'S VOICE

(From the tape recorder)

This is the saddest day of my death, because I can't be there to see the look on your faces. Oh, what I wouldn't give for one more breath of existence to witness, first hand, David's rage, Logan's pain, Ben's anguish. Wherever I am right now, I just hope they give me the pleasure of knowing that I let you three down as much as you did me. Is that the only reason I put you through this? No, though I must admit that revenge is sweet. I did it to let you experience a few years of the backbreaking, thankless work I did all day, every day. Work I never wanted to do, or enjoyed. Work I did only to feed mouths, most notably yours. I'm not certain if I did the world a great service by meeting that obligation. The planet might have been better off if I'd let you three starve to death. So. Here you are. As broke today as the day I died. Correct that. I left you the furnishings and machinery, didn't I? Let's see, I bought most of it forty years ago, so, minus depreciation, you three are worth a grand total of fifteen, maybe eighteen thousand dollars. I know that's twenty-nine million, nine hundred and ninety thousand less than you were expecting, but look at it this way -- you each walk away with over five thousand bucks. See, I'm a generous man after all. Well, so long now my darling children. Have a nice life. Don't spend all your money in one place. Oh. And let me give you one last piece of fatherly advice. If you three ever think of having sons ... use a rubber.

The brothers stand there, lost.
DAVID breaks the silence.

DAVID

(To BEN)

This is the man we should honor.

LOGAN

We should show him gratitude.

BEN has nothing to say. He's in a quiet rage. He looks up at the portrait of his father and loses all control. BEN grabs the frame, rips the portrait off the wall, and begins smashing it viciously.

FATHER'S VOICE

I thought I told you not to touch this picture! Don't you listen to anything? You idiots, you morons, you worthless pieces of shit!

DAVID and LOGAN join BEN in tearing the portrait to shreds.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

Inside the factory, seven years later. Through the window we see a new company sign that reads "NATHAN NEEDLEMAN INTERNATIONAL." DAVID, LOGAN, and BEN are at their desks, working with focused energy. LOGAN is writing orders, DAVID is at his computer, BEN is checking invoices.

BEN

(To Logan)

What's with the cargo from Sydney?

LOGAN

The container arrived on time this morning.

BEN

Any problems with customs?

LOGAN

None that got in our way.

BEN

(To David)

And the air shipment from Athens?

DAVID

Cleared a special route over Algiers.

BEN

What airline?

DAVID

We bought a plane for this one. An old 707.

LOGAN

(To Ben)

How about the Wiesbaden account?

BEN

I signed them yesterday.

DAVID

I thought they were staying with their German distributor.

BEN

They couldn't resist the old Nathan Needleman charm.

LOGAN

(Stops writing)

Wiesbaden. That's a four million dollar windfall.

BEN

Four point eight. Five if the deutschemark keeps dropping.

DAVID

Where does that leave us?

BEN

I'll double check with Moffet. But my rough figuring puts us at thirty point two six million.

DAVID

No shit.

LOGAN

Whoa.

BEN

Boys, we did it.

DAVID

On our own.

LOGAN

On our fucking own.

DAVID

Pulled a rabbit out of a hat.

LOGAN

Turned straw into gold.

BEN

Parted the Red Sea.

DAVID

(Turning off his computer)

I need a minute to digest this.

I need a week.

LOGAN

We have the rest of our lives.

BEN

Thirty million dollars.

DAVID

After taxes.

LOGAN

Free and clear.

BEN

In only twelve years.

DAVID

A little longer than we planned.

LOGAN

But we made it.

BEN

It's strange how life works out.

DAVID

I wouldn't have bet a nickel on us.

BEN

I thought we were down for the count.

LOGAN

Pete KELLY storms in, upset.

Okay, who the hell fired Johnny Nesman without talking to me first?

KELLY

I did.

LOGAN

No, it was me.

DAVID

BEN

We all fired Johnny Nesman.

LOGAN

Want to make something of it?

DAVID

We could arrange for you to join Johnny.

BEN

Since you're so loyal to him.

KELLY

(Settles down)

Fine. Nesman's out. But who's this numbnutz you replaced him with?

DAVID

Eric Robertson.

LOGAN

An upstanding citizen.

BEN

A fine human being.

KELLY

But the man has no experience at all in purchasing.

DAVID

So train him.

LOGAN

Work late if you have to.

BEN

Take him out to dinner.

KELLY

I can't train someone to be head of purchasing over dinner.

LOGAN

Then you do his work for him.

BEN

Cover his ass.

DAVID

Make him look good.

KELLY

But why pick Eric Robertson over Johnny Nesman in the first place?

DAVID

Because Johnny Nesman is white.

LOGAN

And Eric Robertson is African American.

BEN

You should know company policy by now.

DAVID

Whites out, African Americans in.

LOGAN

The more blacks we have, the harder it is for South Africa to sell this company.

BEN

It wouldn't look good for them to put so many blacks out of work.

DAVID

They'd have a race riot on their hands.

LOGAN

And a shitload of bad press.

BEN

The more African Americans we hire, the longer this company stays in business.

KELLY

But there's only five of us whites left, and four of them are us.

DAVID

The more blacks the merrier.

BEN

Treat them well.

LOGAN

Affirmative action at its best.

BEN

Now go teach our new head of purchasing the ropes.

LOGAN

For the sake of Nathan Needleman International.

BEN

For the sake of saving your own ass.

KELLY

(Resigned)

White or not, I still say Johnny Nesman got the shaft.

DAVID

It's a cruel world.

LOGAN

Life sucks.

BEN

What can I say?

KELLY

Twenty-two years the guy busted his hump here.

DAVID

Buy him a gold watch.

LOGAN

But don't charge it to us.

BEN

Reaching into a drawer)

Here. Give this to Johnny.

He removes a stack of money, and
tosses it to KELLY, who gives it a
quick count.

KELLY

Five thousand dollars --

DAVID and LOGAN look at BEN:

"Have you lost your mind?"

BEN

(To KELLY)

Get lost.

KELLY

(Starts to exit, then turns to BEN)

Your father liked Johnny.

BEN

(Raising his fist)

Out!

KELLY exits. As he leaves, a slip of paper falls out of the stack of money. DAVID picks it up and looks at it.

DAVID

Well, looky here. A winning daily double ticket. Someone's been playing the horses again.

LOGAN

He sure didn't get that five grand out of petty cash.

BEN

What can I say? I took Joan to the track last Saturday.

DAVID

This is a bookie receipt.

LOGAN

I wonder how many more we'll find in his drawer.

BEN

What I do with my spare time is none of your business.

DAVID

It is if your little hobby costs us money.

LOGAN

You're not into the bookies for substantial losses, are you?

BEN

I only pick one race a week. Just for kicks.

DAVID

That's what you said once when you asked me to sell my car.
You were playing a sure thing. Just for kicks.

BEN

I was a different person then.

LOGAN

Yeah. Sure.

DAVID

You're a pickle that's turned back into a cucumber.

BEN

Get off my back, both of you.

LOGAN

Hey, we're not out to get you.

DAVID

We're on your side.

LOGAN

We're your brothers.

DAVID

We love you.

LOGAN

We just want what's best for you.

DAVID

We're protecting you.

LOGAN

From yourself.

DAVID

We know you too well.

LOGAN

That's why we want you to be careful.

DAVID

You could shoot yourself in the foot.

LOGAN

And the bullet might bounce back and hit us.

DAVID

We don't want to get shot.

LOGAN

We've worked too hard.

DAVID

We want what's coming to us.

LOGAN

So from now on, keep away from the bookies.

DAVID

At least until we've split up the thirty million.

LOGAN

Then you can do whatever the fuck you want.

DAVID

You can blow your share on one race.

LOGAN

Ten mil on the nose.

DAVID

It'll be your money then.

LOGAN

Just don't come to us for help.

DAVID

Or a hand out.

LOGAN

Dickshit.

DAVID

Asshole.

Time pushes forward to later that night, in three separate bedrooms. The brothers are sound asleep with their better halves. The silence is broken when the brothers,

simultaneously, bolt up screaming.

Ahhhhhh!
BEN

Noooooo!
DAVID

Hellppp!
LOGAN

JOAN, CARLA, and MONICA, LOGAN's
new live-in, spring up, startled.

What!
JOAN

David!
CARLA

What!
MONICA

I'm on fire!
BEN

They stole it!
DAVID

I'm falling!
LOGAN

He has a knife!
BEN

They're out there!
DAVID

Catch me!
LOGAN

He's one of them!
BEN

He's lighting the match!
DAVID

I'm going down!
LOGAN

Ahhhhhh!
BEN

Noooooo!
DAVID

Hellppp!
LOGAN

The women clutch their men.

Ben, you're dreaming.
JOAN

You had a nightmare.
CARLA

It's over now.
MONICA

Wake up.
JOAN

Calm down.
CARLA

I'm here.
MONICA

The brothers begin to realize
where they are.

DAVID
My God, what a dream. I was in my house. The one I grew up in. I was counting money. Millions and millions of dollars. The door crashed open. Soldiers charged in. They were Nazis. They saw me and the leader yelled, "Shoot him." Somehow, I managed to run out the back door. The Nazis chased me. I made it into the woods and hid behind a tree stump. The Nazis kept coming. It was dark. They turned on their flashlights. The beams hit the log, but they couldn't find me. The leader told the others to get back into the house. As he turned off his flashlight, I could see his face. It was Dad. He joined the other Nazis

DAVID (Continued)

in the house. I hid in the woods all night. I didn't move a muscle. In the morning, I could see the Nazis leave the house. I waited a while then snuck back in. I looked for the money. It was gone. They took it. They took all the money.

LOGAN

I was on the ledge of a building. I don't know how I got there. It was a mile down. On the ground below me was a hole. The ledge was solid concrete. There were two enormous pillars on either side of me. It was impossible to climb around them. There was a party going on in a room. People were laughing. A man stepped out on the balcony. It was Dad. He told me he would get me off the ledge. Then he went back into the party. A gust of wind almost blew me off. Dad came back on the balcony. He reached out his hand to me. I reached for his. Our fingers touched. Then someone from the party called Dad, and he went back inside. The ledge began to shake. I looked down. There was a vial of cocaine. I went for it, and slipped off the ledge. I fell down and down, into the hole. I kept falling. There was nothing for me to grab onto.

BEN

I was in a field with my father. We were walking with farm animals. Cows. Sheep. Goats. God spoke out to my father. "Nathan." And he said, "I'm here." God said, "Take now thy son, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I tell thee of." The next morning, my father chopped the wood that he was going to burn me with. Then he took the knife that he would kill me with, and we went to God's mountain. On top of the mountain, my father built an altar, and laid the wood on it. He tied me up in ropes, and placed me on the wood on the altar. Then he took his knife and, as God ordered, he raised it over my chest. He was all set to plunge the knife in me when the voice of God echoed through the mountain. "Nathan, don't kill the boy, for now I know that you are a God-fearing man." And Nathan looked up at God, with the knife still in the air, and said, "That's okay, Lord, I don't mind." And then he plunged the knife deep into my heart.

Simultaneously, the brothers hurry out of bed.

DAVID
Carla, it's time to pull up anchor.

LOGAN
Get the suitcases.

BEN
We're moving on.

DAVID
I have a surprise for you.

LOGAN
We bought a compound of houses in South America.

BEN
We're through with the business.

DAVID
We're leaving tonight.

LOGAN
Just say goodbye to your friends.

BEN
Make sure your passport is in order.

DAVID
We're finally getting out.

LOGAN
We're free.

BEN
We have what we dreamed of.

DAVID
All the money in the world.

LOGAN
Ten million dollars each.

BEN
Start packing.

CARLA

Honey, aren't you overreacting a little?

MONICA

Why the rush?

JOAN

It was only a dream.

CARLA

Maybe you should go back to therapy.

MONICA

You stopped seeing your drug counsellor.

JOAN

You haven't spoken to that Rabbi in years.

CARLA

You're all jumbled up again.

MONICA

You're filled with anger.

JOAN

Guilt.

CARLA

It's like you're ashamed of the money.

MONICA

You're afraid of it.

JOAN

You think God's going to punish you.

DAVID

I am not going back to the shrink.

LOGAN

Fuck the drug center.

BEN

I don't need a Rabbi.

DAVID

What's broken can't be fixed.

LOGAN

I lost my legs and I'll never grow new ones.

BEN

The Rabbi only cares about the dead.

DAVID

Besides, what do I have to be guilty about?

LOGAN

I'm not ashamed of our money.

BEN

I've done nothing to be punished for.

DAVID

We earned this money the hard way.

LOGAN

We deserve every penny of it.

BEN

We're honest businessmen.

DAVID

Don't you trust me?

LOGAN

Do you want to check over the books?

BEN

Why don't you ask Moffet?

CARLA

Sweetheart, you don't have to tell me how you made the money.

MONICA

It's none of my business.

JOAN

I don't need to know.

CARLA

I just want to see you happy.

MONICA

Feeling good about yourself.

JOAN

Getting a night's sleep.

Time pushes forward to the next morning, in the factory. The brothers are at their desks, running various documents and files through the paper shredder.

LOGAN

(Finding an old job order)

Whoa. Here's one nobody should get a look at. Two thousand crates of bowl cleanser for the palace of Agha Abu Mustafa.

BEN

Well, there was white powder in those crates.

DAVID

But you wouldn't flush it down a toilet unless the cops were banging down your door.

LOGAN

I only wish I could have sampled that shipment.

BEN

Why do you suppose we never sent you overseas?

DAVID

There would have been nothing left to sell.

LOGAN

Asswipes. I hook you up with my connections, and someone else has all the fun.

BEN

You don't do drugs any more, remember?

LOGAN

I know. But a man has his dreams.

LOGAN shreds the job order.

BEN

(Leafing through some papers)

Uh-oh. These definitely have to go. The Berman deal memos.

DAVID

How could they hurt us?

BEN

They show that Berman tried to cancel his account with us.

LOGAN

Were they written before of after the car accident?

BEN

Before.

LOGAN

No problem. Everyone knows that Berman's brains were scrambled in the wreck.

DAVID

Poor guy can't even remember he wrote these.

(DAVID takes the letters and shreds them)

LOGAN

I always thought Josh Berman took better care of his cars.

DAVID

He should have had that steering wheel checked.

BEN

I warned him that accidents do happen.

DAVID

(Finding some documents in a file)

Christ, I thought I destroyed these months ago.

LOGAN

The land transactions?

DAVID

Yeah, but these are the actual prices I paid, not what I wrote in the books.

BEN

Shit, get rid of them.

LOGAN

If South Africa audits us, we'll be screwed.

(He grabs for the file, starts to shred the documents then notices something)

Hey, what's this?

DAVID

Give that to me.

LOGAN

(Hands the file to BEN)

Looks like our big brother has a little side business.

DAVID

I said, hand it over.

BEN

(Reading)

Nathan Needleman International convertible bonds.

DAVID

That's none of your business.

LOGAN

We're privately held.

BEN

We don't even sell stocks.

DAVID

Okay, okay, so I saw a way to make a couple of bucks.

BEN

How many of these certificates did you have printed?

DAVID

I don't know. A dozen.

LOGAN

How many did you sell?

DAVID

A couple. Three at most. And all to long-term investors. By the time they cash them in, we'll be long gone.

LOGAN

You're so fucking stupid it makes me sick.

BEN

You put our whole operation in jeopardy for what? Ten, twenty thousand dollars?

DAVID

Sixty. I made up some whopping year-end dividends.

LOGAN

You're such a moron.

BEN

An idiot.

LOGAN

A worthless piece of shit.

DAVID

Don't call me that.

BEN

Moron!

LOGAN

Idiot!

DAVID

Knock it off.

LOGAN

Worthless piece of --

In a rage, DAVID attacks LOGAN and BEN. A fight erupts, with all three brothers swinging, punching, and wrestling.

MOFFET enters. He watches the melee for a bit, then slams a chair on the floor to get their attention.

MOFFET

Gentlemen!

(The brothers disengage)

I thought your last day of work would be filled with joy and brotherly love.

BEN

Wait till you hear what brainless did.

LOGAN

He's been selling bogus bonds.

DAVID

I'm sorry. I couldn't help myself.

MOFFET

Where's the evidence?

DAVID

(Hands him the file)

Here.

MOFFET

I'll make it go away.

DAVID

Thank you.

MOFFET

But as for future shenanigans, cease and desist. That goes for all of you. Every transaction this company has made, at least on paper, is to the letter of the law. So you men can retire without looking over your shoulder every minute of the day. Meanwhile, the bank I deal with appreciates all the special business you've brought their way. Your personal monies have been washed, bleached, and run through the rinse cycle. Thirty million dollars awaits you upon your exit from the country.

(He hands them each a plastic card)

Here are your banking identification cards. Show them at any C.B.B.I. branch around the world, and you can make unrestricted withdrawals, up to ten million dollars each. On a personal note, I want to congratulate you on an extraordinary effort in recouping your fortunes. Seven years ago, when I read your father's last will, I wouldn't have believed this possible. I'm not saying your father

MOFFET (Continued)

would have been proud of you -- he truly was a despicable human being -- but he surely would have been astounded by your resiliency. Before we part company, I ask you all to consider one last time -- are you certain you want to call it quits? There's more gold to be mined in these hills.

The brothers look at each other.
"Do we?" Then they turn to
MOFFET.

DAVID

Nah, we're out.

LOGAN

We'll settle for the thirty million.

BEN

You know the old saying. Pigs get fat, hogs get slaughtered.

MOFFET

Then this is goodbye. Just remember. There's no need for you to live like criminals. Between my legal work and the efforts of our bank, nobody can point a finger at you. But even if something did go wrong, you needn't worry. The company's web is so complex, it would take investigators forty years to untangle it. And the first twenty would lead them on a wild goose chase around Asia and Pakistan. By the time they trace things back here, they'd have to worm their way through six congressmen, two state senators, and a former Secretary of State. Even then, the Justice Department would do everything in its power to derail the investigation. Our river runs deep. And so, gentlemen, adios, hasta la vista, via con dios.

MOFFET exits. The brothers look
at their plastic cards.

DAVID

So, this is what ten million dollars looks like.

LOGAN

It's not even a gold card.

BEN

But it will have us seeing green.

LOGAN

Or whatever the fuck color cash is in South America.

DAVID

Boys, we're rich!

BEN

Awright!

LOGAN

Fucking rich!

DAVID

And I know just how I want to celebrate this moment.

(He opens a closet door and pulls out the portrait of their father. It's bent and twisted from the beating it took seven years ago)

Dad, you fucking, fucking, prick, take this --

(He spits at the portrait)

LOGAN

I second the motion.

(He spits at the portrait)

BEN

Hey, we don't have to do that.

DAVID

What's the matter?

LOGAN

You turning religious on us again?

BEN

I just don't see why we have to go that far. We've got our money. Let's get out of here.

DAVID

Think back a minute.

LOGAN

To all the shit this man did to us.

DAVID

To all the beatings.

LOGAN
All the damage.

DAVID
Think.

LOGAN
Think.

BEN stands there, staring at the portrait. Then, disgusted, he spits.

Time pushes forward to later that afternoon, in the RABBI's office. The RABBI is studying at his desk. There's a knock on the door.

RABBI
Come in.

(BEN enters)

Hmmm.

BEN
Hello, Rabbi.

RABBI
It's been a long time.

BEN
Seven years.

RABBI
I haven't even seen you at Yizkor.

BEN
Exactly.

RABBI
The caretaker at the cemetery told me that you canceled perpetual care of your father's grave.

BEN
My brother David did that.

RABBI

You should have stopped him.

BEN

It wasn't in my heart.

RABBI

Your father's grave has become overrun by weeds.

BEN

I hope the neighbors don't complain.

RABBI

You've become bitter. I'm not surprised. Proverbs tells us, "The eye that mocks at his father, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young vultures shall eat it."

BEN

Look, Rabbi, I didn't come here for a sermon.

RABBI

Why did you come?

BEN

I've stopped by to make a donation. I'd like to set up a fund for abused children.

RABBI

A worthy cause.

BEN

(Hands him a check)

Here's fifty thousand dollars. I'll send you more from time to time.

RABBI

That's very generous.

BEN

There are a lot of injured children out there who need help.

RABBI

Yes, there are.

BEN

I want this money to heal their wounds.

RABBI

I understand your wishes. But I will not accept your money, Ben Needleman.

BEN

Why not?

RABBI

I've heard rumors about the source of your money from members of my congregation. Terrible rumors.

BEN

Jealous gossip.

RABBI

I saw Josh Berman last week. He didn't seem jealous. Only crippled.

BEN

I heard about his accident. Bad luck.

RABBI

I thought you'd say something like that.

BEN

What did Mr. Berman tell you?

RABBI

Nothing specific. He seems too addled. Or frightened. You got to him quite effectively.

BEN

I'm sorry for Mr. Berman. He's a valuable customer. But I don't see why you won't take my money. The children can use it.

RABBI

Perhaps I could buy them some of the drugs your company is supplying on the streets.

BEN

More gossip.

RABBI

Or send them to camp on the phony land you claim to have bought.

BEN

My company sells bathroom supplies. That's our sole source of income. It's a matter of record.

RABBI

Doctored records.

BEN

Every transaction we made is by the letter of the law.

RABBI

The law of man, perhaps. Not the law of God.

BEN

Spare me.

RABBI

What's most disturbing is that you changed the name of your company. Nathan Needleman International. Sadly, when your empire crumbles, his name will be blackened, not yours.

BEN

Exactly what we had in mind.

RABBI

That is no way to treat a dead man.

BEN

His was no way to treat living children.

RABBI

If you had followed my directions seven years ago, your hatred for him would have subsided.

BEN

A sudden change in my financial status made it impossible for me to pay my respects.

RABBI

You asked me once how long you should show gratitude. "Till the father throws the wallet of the son into the sea, and his son does not shame him."

BEN

It's a stupid rule.

RABBI

But it's not my rule. It's God's.

BEN

Let me talk to him.

RABBI

You don't need to. Someone already did. When Moses received the Decalogue, he was told, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

BEN

Maybe he heard wrong.

RABBI

Pardon me?

BEN

There was a lot of thunder and lightening on Mount Sinai. Maybe Moses didn't hear everything God said.

RABBI

We're talking about the Ten Commandments. I wouldn't carry my irreverence too far.

BEN

Maybe there was another commandment.

(To God)

Hey, Ace, didn't you forget something?

RABBI

Now you dishonor Him.

BEN

What about "Honor Thy Children?"

RABBI

The father is partners with God in the creation of man.

BEN

You left your sons out in the cold to have the shit kicked out of them.

RABBI

To dishonor your father is to dishonor the Lord.

BEN

You've got some mopping up to do down here.

RABBI

"I am the Lord, I have made decrees, you are not at liberty to criticize them."

BEN

Speak out again, God -- speak out for the children.

RABBI

"My judgments shall ye do, and my statutes shall ye keep."

BEN

Tell all your fathers. Tell them not to beat us. Tell them not to demean us. Tell them not to rape us.

RABBI

"Be in awe and fear of the King of Kings, who has commanded reverence of your father."

BEN

Tell them to teach us. Tell them to help us. Tell them to be kind to us. Tell them, goddamnit.

RABBI

Quiet, you ingrate. You owe everything to God.

BEN

(To the Rabbi)

I owe him nothing. God owes me.

RABBI

"He who does anything to dishonor his father, let him die."

BEN

I'll take my chances.

(To God)

If Nathan Needleman ended up there with you, you fucked up royally.

RABBI

You will regret this when you have a son of your own.

BEN

Don't worry about that. I took the one bit of smart advice my father ever gave me -- I use a rubber.

BEN takes back his check from the RABBI, and exits.

Time pushes forward to later that evening, in an airport men's room. DAVID and BEN are standing at the urinal. LOGAN is in one of the stalls. The three are in a celebratory mood.

DAVID

South America, here we come.

BEN

Ole, toro.

LOGAN

(From the stall)

Buona sera.

DAVID

That's Italian, dumbwad.

LOGAN

Fine. So how do you say, "Here come three rich Americans" in Spanish?

DAVID

(Opens his pocket dictionary and leafs through)

Aqui venga tres ricos Americanos.

LOGAN

Ricos Americanos. I like the sound of that.

(He exits the stall, joins the brothers at the urinal, and unzips his fly)

BEN

How do you say, "Where's the racetrack?"

DAVID
(Looking it up)
Donde es la pista de carreras?

BEN
Pista de carreras. Thanks. Not that I'll be going there
or anything.

LOGAN
Sure. You'll be taking up knitting.

BEN
(Noticing LOGAN urinating)
I thought you just went in there.

LOGAN
I did.

DAVID
(Seeing something on his nostril)
White powder.

BEN
Were you snorting up?

LOGAN
No. Honest.

BEN
Bullshit.

BEN grabs LOGAN's free wrist, and
squeezes it tightly. LOGAN cries
out in pain.

LOGAN
Oww. Watch it, Godzilla.

BEN
What's in your hand?

LOGAN
Nothing. Owww!

BEN squeezes harder, forcing
LOGAN's clenched fist to open. A

small bottle drops out. DAVID
picks it up.

DAVID

Cocaine!

BEN

You asshole!

LOGAN

(Reaching for the vial)

Give it back.

DAVID

You're supposed to be off this stuff.

LOGAN

I am. I just treated myself to a little bon voyage line.

BEN

Fantastic. We're on our own for six hours, and pea brain
is already hitting the self-destruct button.

LOGAN

Mind your own business.

DAVID

You are our business.

LOGAN

Guess again. I'm a free agent now. Our partnership is
dissolved.

DAVID

Not until we get off the plane.

BEN

We don't want to be near you when you get busted.

DAVID

If you're going to rot away in some South American prison,
leave us out of it.

BEN

Let's just hope your entire ten mil doesn't go up your
nose.

(He empties the vial into the urinal)

LOGAN

Hey! What the fuck are you doing?

BEN

Watching out for my middle brother.

DAVID

Protecting him from his own frailties.

LOGAN

Ah, who cares? You pussies never knew how to enjoy life anyway.

(He flushes, heads for the sink, and washes his hands. DAVID reflects)

DAVID

Boys, as the eldest ex-president of Nathan Needleman International, I don't mind telling you that these past twelve years weren't half bad.

BEN

We did make a pretty good unit.

LOGAN

Despite how fucked up you two assholes are.

DAVID

Hey, don't say those things. It only reinforces what Dad told us all those years.

BEN

That's right. We've learned how to function like real human beings.

LOGAN

Somewhat.

DAVID

Almost.

BEN

All the way.

LOGAN

We're strong.

Mighty. DAVID

Invincible. BEN

We're "& Sons." DAVID

& Sons. BEN

& Fucking Sons. LOGAN

BEN
(Joins them at the sink)
How do you say that in Spanish?

DAVID
(Looks it up)
"Y Hijos."

Y Hijos. BEN

Y Fucking Hijos. LOGAN

DAVID and LOGAN check their hair
in the mirror.

DAVID
I better go find Carla.

LOGAN
Monica's probably still in the duty-free shop.

DAVID and LOGAN head to the exit.

LOGAN
See you on the plane, hijo.

BEN
You got it, hijo.

Remember. We're strong.

DAVID

Mighty.

BEN

In-fucking-vincible.

LOGAN

In-fucking-vincible.

BEN

DAVID and LOGAN exit. BEN washes his hands. He's feeling strong, mighty, in-fucking-vincible.

Then he looks in the mirror and sees his face. Involuntarily, he lets out an agonized scream.

Ahhhhh!

BEN

It's the cry of all battered, ruined sons.

END OF THE PLAY