

PRUDENCE OF THE DEEP BLUE WILD

BY

WILLIAM L. LEDERER

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Joe Gill (middle-age) is sitting up in a hospital bed. His eyes are closed. He's wired up to monitors, being fed intravenously, tubes in his nostrils and has a catheter emerging from the sheets. FOREST SOUNDS: birds chirp, owl hoots, woodpecker raps. Suddenly lights flash and a far-off siren blares. The siren increases in volume until it's painfully loud.

Suddenly silence, then far off voices, indistinguishable words.

Silence again. Joe's eyelids pop open.

JOE

(his own amplified voice)

What? ... Where .. am ... Can't..

AMPLIFIED VOICE

Lift

A Far Off Scream

AMPLIFIED VOICE

Ea ... zy

Lights dim and rise. Periodic groans as lights keep dimming and rising. Joe's eyes are wide open.

JOE

Must .. Can't .. Move!

Jane (30's), the Nurse, enters.

JANE

Good morning, Mr. Gill.

JOE

(under breath)

Good morning.

She takes his thumb thermometer and looks at his chart.

JANE

Looks like you've had a good night.

JOE

Wouldn't know.

Jane reads his temperature.

JANE

You're doing fine.

A far off moan.

JOE

Shit, that's me!

JANE

I'm sorry.

Far off moaning again.

JOE

That's all right. I don't feel a -

Far off moaning. Then Jane checks catheter under the sheets.

JOE (cont)

thing ...

Jane looks at Joe's face.

JANE

Can you blink? ... Blink if you can.

JOE

(not blinking)

Godamnit, I'm blinking!

JANE

Are you comfortable? Blink if you're comfortable?

JOE

Yes, I'm comfortable. Blink blink blink!

Jane takes Joe's hand and molds it into a fist.

JANE

Keep slugging!

JOE

Yeah.

Jane exits.

Alice Gill (middle-age) enters. She's wearing dowdy clothing. She kisses Joe on the cheek.

ALICE

Good evening, honey.

JOE

Evening?

She tucks a blanket about his body.

ALICE

I would have been here earlier but I was with Kate .. Same problem. I can't imagine what she's going through.

Pause. Alice sits on the bed, takes his hand, presses it to her cheek, gets fidgety, picks at her cuticle.

JOE

I'm sorry for –

Alice looks at her watch.

JOE (cont)

for -

Alice kisses Joe on the cheek.

ALICE

Good night, Joseph. I'll see you tomorrow.

Alice exits.

A long pause.

Joe reaches under his sheet, monkeys around, pulls out the end of his catheter. Urine squirts from his loins. The monitor starts beeping.

Jane rushes in. She turns off the alarm, pulls back the sheet and starts refitting the catheter.

JANE

You can't keep doing this ..Are you angry? .. Don't be angry. (looking at his groin area)  
Is there any irritation? ... No, no irritation... Now go back to sleep .. And don't touch!

Jane exits.

A long pause.

Tim Gill, (30's) wanders in. He looks about. After an awkward searching of soul, he he kisses his father's forehead.

TIM

Hello, Father.

Tim sits and reaches for something to say.

TIM

The Sox won again. Four in a row.

JOE

He never kisses me.

A long pause.

Tim stands.

TIM

I'll see you this week-end.

Tim takes a few steps to leave ..

JOE

Don't - !

but comes back and kissed his father on the forehead again.

TIM

Hang in there.

Tim exits.

The lights dim.

JOE (cont)

Oh my God, I'm .. No –

BLACKOUT

JOE (cont)

(in dark)

Ohhh –

Kate Gill (20's) whines in t the dark. Lights come up. Kate Gill (20's) appears. She continues her whining which overlaps Joe's "Oh" of dread.

KATE

I'm sorry, father.

JOE

Everybody's sorry. But nobody sticks around.

KATE

Will you forgive me?

JOE

Yeah, just stay here.

KATE

I – I'm pregnant... I haven't told anybody .. Mom doesn't like him...

JOE

Shit!

A long pause. She looks into the pink light and makes a courageous change of mood.

KATE

Oh, father. You used to call me a whiner –

JOE

I'm sorr –

KATE

I am a whiner!

JOE

Go ahead, be a –

KATE

How can I whine seeing you like this?

JOE

Oh, Katie.

KATE

And seeing that sunrise outside? What you're missing?

JOE

Sunrise?

KATE

Maybe you can feel the warmth.

JOE

Warmth? I'm hot! I'm in some silly ass coma!

Kate kisses Joe on the forehead three times, then exits.

JOE

Tap tap tap. I'm hollow.

Far off sound of a woodpecker tapping.

JOE (cont)

Prudence .. I just can't think about you now ..

Bill (20's), an assistant nurse, sneaks in. He looks about, spots Joe and moseys over to the bed.

BILL

Hi

JOE

Hi

BILL

Can you speak?

JOE

In my mind's lips I can.

Bill waves his hand in front of Joe's face, then suddenly –

BILL

(in Joe's face)

Boo!

JOE

I'm past scaring, kid.

Bill makes a pinching gesture with his fingers ..

BILL

(in Joe's ears)

I'm a big old lobster coming to pinch you.

JOE

(sarcastic)

Anything but that.

Bill pinches Joe long and hard on the side of the rump.

JOE (cont)

I hope you're happy.

Bill takes Joe's hand..

JOE (cont)

Oh no! ..

and "strokes" it ..

JOE (cont)

I'm not gay!

Bill strokes the ring off Joe's finger.

JOE (cont)

Hey!

JOE (cont)

Bill examines the ring ..

JOE  
(shouts)

Help!!!

Bill looks at Joe and smiles.

BILL

Hmm

His index, thumb and middle fingers pressed together, Joe holds them up, shaking.

BILL (cont)

Oh, so you wanna write something down .. We gotta find out what that is,  
don't we?

Bill takes pen and pad from his jacket pocket. He fits the pen into Joe's fingers and places them on the pad.

JOE

(writing shaky but speaking the letters plainly)

H - E - L - P. Help!!

Bill takes the pad

BILL  
(reads)

Hmm ... Joe Gill.

JOE

I wrote Help. Help!

BILL  
(examining write)

Your lips are quivering .. Yes, your name must be the very core of you .. Somewhere in your head (points to his own forehead), heart (points to the middle of his chest) or all over (gestures a circle all over his head and torso), and flowing out of your fingers automatically.

JOE

There's been a switch in my circuitry!

BILL

Hmm ..

Bill puts the ring in his own pocket, then the pad and pen. He stands.

BILL (cont)

Either something's in a name or you've just performed a clever animal act.

Bill closes Joe's eyelids with his fingers and exits.

Joe opens his eyes, makes wild "sign" gestures and stops.

JOE (cont)

If I live –

Joe makes more crazy "sign" gestures and stops.

JOE (cont)

I'm gonna learn sign language or The Blinks or something!

Pause.

JOE (cont)

Thank God I haven't lost my marbles.

Alice enters. She's wearing sexy clothing. She kisses Joe on the forehead.

ALICE

I'm a little late, Joe. I've been invited to a party. I really don't want to go, but our

children want me to .. Oh well, I'll try to have a good time...

JOE

This is the beginning of the end.

Alice looks under his sheet.

ALICE

Everything's in place. .. They're taking good care of you.

JOE

And I took good care of you. Don't ever forget that.

She lowers the sheet.

Jane enters. She's dressed in party clothes, too, but still wearing her nurse's cap.

JANE

Alice, you look gorgeous!

ALICE

I – I don't think so.

JANE

I should look so good.

JOE

Hey!

ALICE

Jane, thank you for inviting me to your party.

JOE

Hey!

JANE

My pleasure. You're going to meet some nice people.

JOE

Hey!

ALICE

I'm sure I will because you're so nice.

JANE

One person I want you to meet: Harry Springfield. He lost his wife two years ago.

Joe reaches under his sheet. He pulls out the catheter. A pulsing jet stream shoots from Joe's loins.

ALICE

Well, it's been almost a year since –

Jane spots Joe's geyser.

JANE

Not again!

Jane grabs a gooseneck bedpan, fits his groin with it. Bill enters. He's wearing a vandevillian spangled suit.

BILL

Something wrong?

ALICE

What are you doing here?

Bill

It's a gig.

JANE

Hold this.

Bill holds the bedpan in place and Jane exits. Bill gives Alice the once-over. Alice responds shyly at first, then coyly.

BILL

(to Alice)

He's a power.

ALICE

Yes, he was.

BILL

This your man?

ALICE

Uh huh

BILL

He must've been something in his day.

JOE

Gimme back my ring!

BILL

Headstrong and sloppy.

ALICE

He wasn't always like that.

BILL

Yeah

Jane returns with a fresh smock. Bill helps her remove the wet one and puts the fresh one on which has cloth restraints on the sleeve, i.e., a modified straight jacket. Jane and Bill proceed to tie Joe's cuff-strings to the bedrails.

ALICE

Jane?

JANE

Yes?

ALICE

I – I'm not going out.

JANE

Don't be silly!

JOE

No, Alice. Be silly!

JANE

Everybody's expecting you!

JOE

I'm not! I'm right here!

Jane and Bill finish tying Joe's cuff-strings to the bed rail.

JANE

There! .. (to Joe) Now you behave yourself.

JOE

Do I have a choice?

JANE

You're just making things worse for yourself and others.

JOE

My my.

Jane turns to Bill.

JANE  
(begrudging)

Thanks for the hand.

BILL

Think nothing of it.

JANE

I won't. So make your peace and go.

BILL

Peace? He's the pisser!

Jane pats Joe on the shoulder and exits with Alice.

Pause.

BILL  
(to Joe)

It must be tough.

JOE

It is.

BILL

Tough as it is, if you do any more squirting, somebody's gonna tie your hose in a knot.

In a gesture of affection, Bill messes Joe's hair and exits.

JOE

Let' see. I'm in bed. I did something unconsciously, or so they think. (laughs) .. I assume they bound me .. (laughs) ... (reflects) If they could see my thoughts they wouldn't pull the plug on me (laughs) .. Or would they? .. This is strange. .. Wonder if my eyes are open like I'm staring off into the void... or closed in repose. What if they're moving all over the place out of sync. Rapid eye movements in search of objects? ..

Suddenly flashing lights and a far-off siren.

The siren becomes painfully loud.

Sudden silence. Far –off voices, indistinguishable words.

AMPLIFIED VOICE

Lift ... Easy ..

The lights dim.

Tim enters, head hanging. The lights brighten. Tim stands before Joe whose wrists aren't tied to the bedrails unbeknown to Joe. Tim sighs, bends over and whispers in Joe's ear.

TIM

The Cubs won the World Series.

JOE

(un-emotionally)

Oh boy.

TIM

(whispers again)

Your son made a million on the market.

JOE

That's fine. Now stay away from Vegas.

Tim backs off. Kate enters. She looks like she's in her ninth month of pregnancy. Tim looks at her stomach and bawls. Kate embraces him.

JOE

What's going on? ... Am I dying?

Pause.

TIM

(to Kate)

I'm destitute, Kate.

KATE

All I have is twenty dollars.

TIM

Thank you.

KATE

In my apartment. Not on me.

TIM

I'll come over.

KATE

Promise you won't eat and run?

JOE

He'll eat and run off with your wallet!

TIM

(stops crying)

OK

KATE

Wait. I'll say good-bye.

JOE

Good-bye? You haven't even gotten here!

Kate goes over to the bed. She looks down at Joe and shakes her head.

JOE

Don't pity me!

KATE

Oh, Dad.

JOE

Hold it in!

KATE

You're going to be –

TIM

Whisper in his ear.

JOE

Going to be what?

KATE

(whispers in his ear)

You're going to be a grandfather, twice, Daddy .. Any day now!

JOE

Well, isn't that -

KATE

And we're naming one after you!

JOE

Which one?

TIM

Come on, Kate. I'll miss the last race!

Kate bends over and, upon pressing her lips against Joe's forehead, there are AMPLIFIED WOODPECKING sounds. She repeats the kiss setting off another volley hollow taps..

Tim and Kate exit.

A 6-foot (totem) woodpecker appears upstage. Woodpecking sounds.

JOE

(feeling his forehead)

My head's splitting.

The Giant Woodpecker disappears. Joe rubs his wrists and realizes he's not tied down.

JOE

Time doesn't fly. It skips.

Alice enters. She's wearing the latest hairdo of a thirty-year old. She has a beauty mark on her cheek. She pats her hair in a wall mirror, then joins Joe who can't quite place her at first.

ALICE

You would have been proud of me, Joseph.

Joe cranes his neck toward her.

ALICE (cont)

At first I was so shy I sat in a corner. .. Then Jim Sacks came along and asked to see my .. teeth.

JOE

He's our dentist!

ALICE

Yes, the coincidence perked me up.. I forgot all about somebody else I was supposed to meet, and opened my mouth. He thought I was very funny and stuck out his tongue. That's all it took to go down on my knees and ask him to join me in a prayer for my husband who still couldn't open his eyes while I was having such a good time eating and sleeping and all those good things between life and death and oh God I wish he'd take me home to his house where he was a bachelor .. I – I'm too innocent to live!

JOE

Alice, control yourself!

Alice stares at Joe for 5 BEATS.

ALICE

If you won't say it I will. .(about herself) "Get out, you tramp. I never want to see you again"!

Alice pats her hair in the mirror, looks back at Joe, and exits.

Pause.

JOE

We were never close. And now this.

Jane enters. She flops in a chair.

JANE

It's been a hard night. That poor child dying and that poor mother taking her baby in her arms and jumping out the window. . It'll be in the news and we'll shudder and cry .. Why am I doing this? Working around the sick and the dying?

JOE

So you can go home and feel relieved.

JANE

What if that child would have lived? .. With all that money the mother had ..

JOE

You said she was poor!

JANE

Some people just can't take anxiety.

JOE

Oh, that kind of poor!

Pause.

JANE

(looking toward Joe)

And you just lie there.

JOE

With the weight of the world on my back.

NURSE JANE

Sometimes I'm tempted –

JOE

Don't! It says in my will - !

JANE

to pull the plug.

JOE

I'm not a bathtub! Where there's life -!

JANE

There's no hope.

Jane stands and advances on Joe.

JOE

Oh no. Stay where you are!

JANE

Your will-

JOE

Not my will. God's will! He wants me to suffer!

JANE

It .. will .. be .. fulfilled.

JOE

Fulfilled? No! I wanna stick around!

Jane reaches the bed and stares at Joe.

JOE

Look, my will is courageous but not my heart.

She raises the sheet and looks underneath.

JOE (cont)

(referring to attached catheter)

Pull that instead!

She lowers the sheet, then fiddles with the monitor.

JOE (cont)  
(thinking he's about to be unplugged)  
I – I can explain. That poor mother could've been my daughter! .. Immortal Medicine is right around the corner! .. I'd make an excellent guinea pig.

Jane descends behind the bed ..

JOE (cont)  
Uh - uh .. I'm a vegetable. A human vegetable!.. Stop! I've been mis-diagnosed!  
and rises with a REMOTE.

JANE  
Night – night.

She presses a button.

BLACKOUT.

Pause.

JOE  
Night night? .. Oh ... Not bad .. not good either.

The far-off sound of the Woodpecker.

JOE (cont)  
Just sound? .. Connect the pecks.. Can anything not be .. entirely?

A long pause.

JOE (cont)  
No! The bird with all its feathers! .. Nightmares!

A long pause.

JOE (cont)  
Anything!

Pause.

Joe groans.

Pause.

Red lights flash. Sirens blast. Joe springs a pulsating jet stream from his loins.

BLACKOUT

Lights come up on Joe, blood splattered and covered with a bloody sheet. He's petrified.

Bill sneaks in paying no attention to the mess. He's wearing a vaudevillian spangled outfit. He goes over to the bed and stares at Joe.

JOE

Uh .. uh .. I had – was in – an accident .. It – it wasn't my fault.

Bill takes a harmonica out of his jacket.

BILL

Here's what your ring bought a couple of years ago.

He proceeds to play "Hi ho fiddle dee dee/ a sailor's life for me," in Joe's face periodically.

JOE

(during the tune)

How's .. What did - .. Wasn't moving .. Just hit -

Bill stops playing, stares at Jim again.

BILL

How's that? .. I can tell it soothed you.

JOE

Clean me up!

BILL

Music makes the world go round and I'm stopping it with this mouth organ. Playing it in bars and churches and passing the hat afterwards.

JOE

Will you please remove –

BILL

Reverend Hazard runs a half-way house for down and out musicians. .. I'm being discovered there.. or maybe even here, entertaining the sick.

JOE

I'm sticky! (pulling away at bloody garment with the tips of his fingers)

Bill slaps the harmonica into his hand and spit that has been stored there flies into Joe's face. Bill proceeds to play a fast piece.

JOE (cont)

Nobody sees me .. Nobody hears me .. except myself.

Bill stops playing. He pants.

BILL

Gotta build up my wind.

JOE

Try bagpipes, you bastard!

BILL

When I open in Old Town I'm gonna tell 'em I was about to take my life. Then you were wheeled in .. and a couple hundred bedpans later it hit me.

JOE

Hit you?

BILL

If a drunk rear-ends a couple of love birds and gets away with it, then I could take your ring and nobody would know the difference.

JOE

Hit somebody?

BILL

Tsh tsh. Never knew what hit them -

JOE

That woodpecker!.

BILL

Behind the wheel wearing no pants.

JOE

A siren!

BILL

And heaped at your feet: all blood, guts and bones:

JOE

What?

BILL

Prudence Wilder ..

JOE

Prudence? .. Wilder? .. Oh.

BILL

And in came your wife. Hush hush. I covered your ass plenty.

JOE

What happened to Prudence?

BILL

It's so bad I'll have to play it.

Bill slaps the harmonica in his palm and squirts Joe in the face again. Bill proceeds to wail away almost making the harmonica talk as he ambles about the bed. Joe gets out of bed and follows Bill around.

JOE

(interpreting the music as if it was language)

Yes .. Yes? ... Speak a little more clearly .. Tell it like it is .. I can take it .. (starts crying as he accompanies the wailing harmonica)

Bill keeps playing his harmonica beyond Joe and to the empty bed, thus establishing Joe 'thinks' he's following Bill. Bill exits on-the-stroll but keeps on playing wailing music off-stage.

JOE (cont)

(clairvoyantly)(listening)

Right through ... Everything has to be .. eventually.

Joe faints.

BLACKOUT

Spotlight comes up on Alice.

ALICE

You'd like him. He's a Sox fan... He's bigger than you.. where it matters.  
Not around the waist.. and hair (gestures running her fingers through the hair of a man)  
Long black .. wavy .. curly.. wiry .. soft .. hard .. I could pet it for hours ... And he has  
brains, too. Always asking how I feel .. (squeals, then shivers with delight).

Lights come up full stage. Joe, with small sleep apnea plugs in his nose and extended hose leading to the C-PAP, is sitting up in bed. He's in a clean hospital gown. His mouth is agape listening to his wife.

ALICE (cont)

And most of all he's constantly present: I look at a chair and he's sitting there. The floor?  
He's looking up and adoring me. The wall? I'm up against it .. And the ceiling, the ceiling:  
we shoot through and into the blue .. Oooo! .. And when I'm outside and see a tree he's the  
bark and I run my hands up and down the furrows. And I shake his trunk and  
those leaves, those silver leaves: castanets in the trees: and I'm stamping twisting and  
twirling. And he's clapping and shouting olay, olay! (works herself into a pant, stops, holds  
her heart) But most of all .. I'm in love.

JOE

Alice, why are you telling me this?

ALICE

Yes, yes, yes. Alice is so so so happy after a year of mourning. And another year of dating like crazy, looking for Mister Who.

JOE

You are a slut!

Alice walks over to the bed caresses Joe's head.

ALICE

Oh, Joe, wherever you are, be at peace. Your scatterbrain, Alice, is as wise as an owl now: Who Who Who!

Jane enters.

JANE

I heard .. I'm so happy for you.

ALICE

So am I.

JANE

When's the date?

ALICE

Tomorrow. And you're my Maid of Honor.

JANE

I – I couldn't be more honored, but .. But I'm working tomorrow.

ALICE

You're off, Jane. I arranged it.

A long pause while Jane and Alice stare at each other and Joe gapes.

Alice and Jane squeal simultaneously, embrace and romp.

JOE

I've suffered enough.

Jane stops the romp.

Alice, who is it?

JANE

Bunny Howard.

ALICE

Funny Bunny?

JANE

Funny and handsome. Yes yes, I've got it all!

ALICE

Strike me dead, immediately!

JOE

Well, now I can tell you, Alice.. Alice, the wreck. The car wreck. Joe wasn't the only one in there. They found him with Prudence Wilder.

JANE

Prudence Wilder? Why that -

ALICE

Don't say it.

JANE

Prude was a dope.

ALICE

"Was" a dope?

JOE

A dope with just a couple of dumb cantaloupes .. There. I've said it!

ALICE

You've said it.

JANE

I've said it because I know. She was my best friend!

ALICE

It's over, Alice.

JANE

ALICE

I told her a lot.

JOE

Over?

ALICE

She should have known better. Joe – Joe beat me up.

JOE

I never –

ALICE

Mentally! Always putting me down.

JOE

You told Prudence that?

ALICE

And more. I – I told her about his – his bed manners.

JOE

Why you little Flamenco -

JANE

(to Alice)

The important thing is he can't hurt you any more.

JOE

Where's Prudence?!

ALICE

I know. I should let go.

JOE

If Prude is dead she should be in bed! Right here beside me! For all eternity!

Jane embraces Alice and pats her back.

JANE

There there, baby.

JOE

Baby? Mine have been a grave disappointment

ALICE

I – I don't know what it is. Just being in Joe's presence makes me want to stand on his chest and kick him.

JOE

Olay!

ALICE

Look at him: old elephant-face with a big trunk sticking out of his nose.

JANE

We'd better go.

JOE

Yeah, she's hallucinating!

Arm over Alice's shoulder, Jane assists her as they exit.

JOE

They're gone. Now I can rest in peace.

Joe slips the sleep apnea harness off his head and tosses it and the hosing so that they dangle off the side of the bed.

Tim enters. He's in bum's clothing. His head is bowed.

JOE

Hello, son.

Tim looks up and spots Joe out of his sleep apnea mask..

TIM

You're not gonna commit suicide on my watch!

Tim tries to put the harness on Joe's head, but Joe resists by making his head go slack.

TIM (cont)

Look, I know you wanna go and I don't blame you. But your will says, "Don't pull the plug!"

JOE

This isn't a plug.

TIM

"Use every means to keep me going".

JOE

Going where?

TIM

“And if I do go, dry-freeze my body and bury me in one of those bomb-proof vaults a thousand feet under”.

JOE

I said that?

TIM

“So that I can be re-constituted some day in a world free of strife and accidents”.

JOE

What an idealist.

TIM

“And if this doesn’t happen to the letter of the law, all I have is to go to one Prudence Wilder”.

JOE

(making an excuse)

Your mother’s best friend and – and somebody I go bird watching with.

TIM

You see, father, I know your will by heart.

JOE

You have a vested interest.

TIM

Yes, I do. By heart.

JOE

Where is Prude?

TIM

And if nobody pulls the plug, then we can spend some of your estate taking care of you..

JOE

Why you –

TIM

Now let me put on your mask before you pass away.

Tim tries to put the nose pincher sleep apnea mask on Joe who knocks it away.

JOE  
I won't pass away!

TIM  
Listen, old man. You're not gonna die while I'm around.

JOE  
That's sweet of you.

TIM  
Nope. You're gonna stay on track.

JOE  
That's where you've been!

TIM  
Yes, I've been keeping my eyes on the rabbit.

Bunny Howard (played by Bill) appears in white suit with rabbit ears (Canned laughter follows).

JOE  
The dog track!

TIM  
Yes, you would have been proud of me.

JOE  
I'll bet.

Alice appears in wedding dress attire for "second-time arounders".

TIM  
I was like Hamlet in the last race.

JOE  
Another long shot.

Bunny and Alice start their walk down the aisle. Piped in harmonica Wedding March music.

TIM  
Mother and that Dumb Bunny –

JOE  
Don't mention them in my presence.

TIM

coming down the aisle. And some guy, I've seen around here, was playing "Here Comes The Bride" on his harmonica. And no sooner did Mom get to the altar then she starts scratching Bunny behind the ears – (Alice scratches Bunny behind the ear) (canned laughter).

JOE

Don't!

TIM

And he – he gurgles or purrs or makes some harebrain sound – (Bunny chirps like a rabbit) (Canned laughter)

JOE

Stop it!

TIM

And then, for all of us to see, he holds up a ring of at least three carats!

Bunny holds up three carrots together in a ring by their carrot tops. (Canned laughter).

JOE

That show-off!

TIM

And goes to slip it on her finger. But I yell Ole!

Bunny goes to slip the ring of carrot tops on Alice's finger.

JOE

Good boy.

TIM

And mother starts to stamp.

Alice stamps her foot on the ground in response to Bunny's excessive clowning.

JOE

(laughs)

No!

TIM

On Bunny's toes.

Alice extends her stomping to include Bunny's toes.

JOE  
(proudly)

My son.

TIM  
Oh Dad, you should have seen him zigzag out of there. (gestures Zigzaggy getaway like a rabbit).

Bunny follows up on Tim's zigzagging gesture by zigzagging off with a limp into the dark. Spot on an exasperated Alice still stomping in place, foreshadowing her Flamenco skills (Lights out on Bunny and Alice).

JOE  
(laughs)

What's up doc?

Pause.

TIM  
I really don't know. Sometimes I imagine we're communicating. And at other times I'm like a little boy asking for the car, and I'm not no longer -

JOE  
No longer what?

TIM  
a little boy asking for the car and getting run over!

JOE  
I never -

TIM  
Run over by an abusive tongue!

Tim places his tongue between his teeth and blows a showering "raspberries" in his father's face.

TIM (cont)  
You don't know how much that hurt. More than any fist.

Joe takes a roundhouse swing at Tim and misses.

TIM (cont)  
(shouts)  
Nurse! Nurse!

JOE

Why you little sissy!

Joe takes another swing, misses and is held in a clinch as Tim presses the REMOTE for the Nurse.

TIM

Nurse!

Jane storms in. Tim is holding his father down.

TIM (cont)

He's conscious!

JANE

Let me see.

JOE

Don't touch me, you – you Maid of Honor!

Jane takes hold of Joe's chin and, with the other hand, slaps him in the face. Joe freezes.

JANE

Your father has Saint Elbow's Rage. That happens when certain patients find their surroundings disagreeable but say nothing about it. But their body reflexes still run rampant ...

Jane sniffs the air about Joe.

JANE

I'd let go of him if I were you. He just had a bowel movement.

Tim lets go of Joe and backs off.

JANE

Do you want to hear more?

JOE

No.

TIM

Y – yes.

Jane lowers the bed to the horizontal position and proceeds to clean Joe up while she relates the Saint Elbow's Legend.

JANE

Well one muggy night, a holy man, by the name of Elbow, took his old leaky sail boat out (rolls Joe over on his stomach) for a run of anchovies (pulls up Joe's gown) when the fog rolled in, thick as pea soup .. (looks at Joe's bottom with distain) .. But the saint threw his net overboard anyway (plucking tissues from the Kleenex box and wiping off Joe). And the run came .. and came .. and came .. so long and so large that it tore through the net. . (finishes wiping off Joe and pulling his gown back down over his rump) (rolls him over on his back). Completely exhausted Saint Elbow fell back on the bottom of his boat (Joe tries to sit up. Jane slaps him in the face and points a finger at him to stay down) (Joe descends) and dozed off. .. But while he was sleeping he dreamt of silver sparks lining his sail, his mast, his fore and aft, on ropes and rims –

JOE

(rises a bit)

I'm sorry. I had an accident.

JANE

(pushing him back down)

And when he awoke there they were: anchovies everywhere, singing in the fog:

(sings) "We're yours, Brother Elbow  
Catch us if you can  
The world's a wondrous place  
So eat us like Man".

Jane takes an anchovy (piece of feces) out of the sheets and eats it.

TIM

Saint Elbow's Anchovies. Amazing!

JANE

So whenever you go fishing, remember -

TIM

I will.

JANE

(sings)

Look for the chovy lining  
whenever the fog rolls in  
For someday they'll be shining:  
as salad's hairy slimy vermin

TIM

(to stop her theatrics)

I will, I will!

JANE  
(indignant)  
Well! If that's the way you want to treat an honorary maiden. (starts to leave)

TIM  
Please! Don't leave! Tell me about my mother. Is she –

JANE  
Still sleeping around? In a can of sardines!

Jane exits.

TIM  
(reflective)(takes a scratch sheet out of his back pocket)  
Oh my horses.

Tim hurries to exit.

Kate enters with a blanketed "twin" in each arm which stops him dead in his tracks.

TIM (cont)  
Haven't I told you to stay home in a closet?

Kate looks blank, then continues.

KATE  
Tracy and Joey are here to see their grandfather.

TIM  
Oh, go ahead. Make a fool of yourself.

Kate goes over to the bed where Joe is still lying horizontally.

KATE  
Father, dear, I'm here with Tracy and Joseph .. Tracy, there's Grandpa. Say hello to Pee Pee, Tracy.

JOE  
(soft voice)  
I'm not Pee Pee.

Kate bawls imitating Baby Tracy.

TIM  
Kate, go home. Baby Tracy's tired.

KATE  
Tracy's already had her nap.

TIM

Then feed her or something.

KATE

She's teething, silly.

Kate continues to bawl and whimper. Tim grabs the Blanketed Tracy out of Kate's arms and rocks "her" impatiently. Unphased, Kate continues.

KATE

And now, Daddy, here's your namesake. Say hello to Pee Pee, Joey.

JOE

I'm not Pee Pee!!!

Kate imitates a happy, cooing and giggling child. She starts raising the bed to a sitting-up position.

TIM

Good God, this is scary!

KATE

(during the bed-lift)

Oooo ooo! Look at that, Joey?

Kate sets the bundled blanket on Joe's stomach, then takes his arms and wraps them around the "baby". She sits in a chair with her other baby.

TIM

Forgive her, father. Ever since Katherine was artificially imagined, and the cad took off – (taps his temple to signal insanity)

KATE

John didn't take off. He's taking care of Timmy.

TIM

(to Joe)

Timmy. That's my namesake. A triplet.

Joe starts snoring.

TIM

Look, he's snoring!

Joe stops snoring.

JOE

I'm not snoring.

Pause. Joe goes back to snoring.

TIM

He has to be snoring.

JOE

That's not me!

Joe goes back to snoring again. Kate grows impatient, her crossed leg bobbing.

TIM

Remember how proud he was. He thought everybody was snoring except himself.

KATE

(in Joe's ear)

Father, dear, will you please stop snoring ..(shouts) You'll! Wake! The! Babies!

JOE

I (snort) have (snort) not (snort) snored. I'm (snort) just (snort) bored (2 snorts).

The "Bundled Blanket" on Joe's stomach starts to bawl, (The sounds are ventriloquized by Kate). Kate tries to take her "baby" but Joe holds on.

TIM

The visit's over, Dad .. Give Joey back.

But Joe doesn't let go.

JOE

No, I wanna see how far madness can go.

The blanket unravels as Kate and Joe pull on each end. Kate bawls in a tantrum while Joe mimics her bawling. Kate pulls harder and pulls Joe out of bed. The two resume their pulling center stage. Tim watches. Kate starts screaming. Joe screams back.

Tim, with other bundled blanket in arm, gestures to Kate, then to Joe, that a "hunch" is coming.

TIM

Tug – o – War in the eighth!

Joe and Kate let up. Tim tosses his bundled blanket toward Kate and exits running.

Joe and Kate look at each other, then drop the extended blanket. Kate walks over to the bundled blanket, opens it up, looks for a baby, wraps the blanket over her head like a mantle and starts her solemn exit. Joe faints when she passes by. He lies on the floor on the same spot where he fainted previously.

### BLACKOUT

The melancholic wail of a harmonica. A wandering figure in the semi-dark. Lights fully up on Bill, in a spangle-rimmed vaudevillian suit turning on Joe's bed light, Joe is sitting up in bed wearing his sleep apnea mask and tubing.

JOE

They keep coming in out of nowhere. And I'm stuck here like a sponge.

BILL

You're still here?

JOE

I don't wanna be.

BILL

Why don't they let you snore away.

JOE

I – I have a right to die.

BILL

You have a right to die. I suppose that's what you were trying to do when you pulled the catheter out of your pecker.

The sound of a far-off woodpecker pecking.

JOE

Please. No more suggestions.

BILL

Or after I left you last and you landed right here (points to a spot on the floor near the bed) on your head, so I've been told.

JOE

Not there (points to the area where Joe did fall, in the eyes of the audience). Over there. Twice!

BILL

Then not letting go of your daughter when she tried to leave. Very sad.

JOE

I have another interpretation. Kate belongs in here, not me!

BILL

When someone kisses you good-bye you shouldn't hold on with all your prehensile strength.

JOE

I was only attempting to separate Katherine from her illusions. You see –

Bill removes the sleep apnea mask from Joe's face.

BILL

No, I don't see why somebody doesn't pinch your nostrils and your lips together at the same time.

Bill pinches Joe's nostrils closed, then his mouth. After an uncomfortably long time, Joe slaps Bill's hand away.

BILL (cont)

A natural reflex .. But consider this. I'm sleeping with your wife.

Bill slaps the harmonica in his palm and the "spit" flies at Joe.

Bill wails "Your Cheatin Heart" on the harmonica. However, the woodpecker's pecking keeps interrupting. Bill goes to the window and throws his harmonica at the bird .. Off-stage sound effects of a harmonica whirling through the air and a bird falling out of the leaves when hit. Joe starts slipping out of the bed head first. Bill runs and catches Joe just before his dangling head touches the floor. Bill slides him back into bed.

BILL

What is it with your types? You get your heart set on a spot, and come hell or high water, you're gonna end it there.

JOE

You slept with my wife.

BILL

Yes, then and there.

JOE

How is she?

BILL

Not bad. Not bad at all.

JOE

When we were together we were remarkable.

BILL

It's not even a sin. I've always maintained, those doing it have gone crazy.

JOE

Coupling just so: the sensible breaking the sense-barrier.

BILL

Why would anyone cast himself off the side of a bed and expect pinheaded accuracy?

JOE

Are we talking about intercourse?

BILL

I don't know where you're coming from but the edge of a bed isn't the ledge of a skyscraper.

JOE

Are we in touch?

BILL

You have high hopes, brother. But I have your wife. Now what are you gonna do about that?

JOE

Fall out of bed.

Joe falls off the other side of the bed. Bill doesn't catch him. Bill looks down upon Joe.

BILL

You do hear me. I had a sneaking suspicion –

Bill lifts Joe into bed. But Joe falls on top of Bill. Bill fights his way out of the tangle.

BILL (cont)

I never sleep with anything. I just keep going .. out the door. Women'll paw you to death with retractable claws.

JOE

That's Alice.

BILL

But we shouldn't go from the universal to the peculiar.

JOE

Nor from those who are particular about their fingernails.

Pause.

BILL

(shouting in Joe's ear)(removes a contract from his pocket)(now using bizarre ways to fake out a coma patient)

(loud) I Have Not Slept With Alice Gill, .. (soft) Unless you sign here, I will..it's an Irrevocable Trust. Above the dotted line, brother!

JOE

I am not your –

BILL

Sign or I'll make your wife think she's in heaven!

Bill burrows a pen into Joe's fist and places the point above the dotted line.

BILL

(as if hypnotizing Joseph)

You are Joseph Gill?

JOE

(gritting teeth)

I am Joseph Gill. (not under hypnosis) I didn't say that.

BILL

(trance-like)(imitation)

I am signing up for the draft.

JOE

Who me?

BILL

(enunciating)(guiding Bill's writing)

Joseph Gill.

JOE

I consciously object.

Bill takes the Irrevocable Trust out of Joe's hand.

BILL (cont)

(waves the document to the audience)

Let it be known, under the State of Delaware, I, Joseph Gill bequeath, on the second day of March, two ought ought five, six hundred thousand dollars to "Harmonicas Around the World".

JOE

I don't have that kind of money.

Bill helps Joe out of bed.

JOE (cont)

And even if I had –

BILL

Ah, you're mumbling! That's a good sign. .. Now let's walk about a bit. It'll be good for your bedsores.

Bill slings Joe's arm over his shoulder and walks him about. Joe flops about in Bill's arms, occasionally grabbing Bill to hold on.

BILL

That's it .. Steady .. You're a champ!

(sings)

I walk alone  
but to tell you the truth  
I'm not lonely  
I don't mind being lonely  
as long as you are lonely too.

JOE

Where's Prudence?

BILL

(sings)

The moon was all aglow  
The stars were in your eyes  
the night that you told me  
those little white lies.

Joe falters. Bill sweeps him up in his arms and carries him to the threshold of the window where he kisses him on the eye...

BILL (cont)

Bye.

and tries to chuck him out the window. But Joe grabs the window frame, hooks a leg around the sill and hangs on Bill's neck for dear life .. and in a "prehensile, unconscious" way.

Jane enters.

JANE

What, may I ask, are you doing?

BILL

Trying to rehab an old patient of mine .. And – and since he won't go out, I thought the next best thing would be to let him stare out the window.

JANE

Let him go.

Bill lets Joe go. Joe falls to his knees, his chest draped over the sill.

JANE

Come here.

BILL

Yes, mam.

Bill joins Jane docilely.

JANE

Since you've become a big star, you owe me.

Jane hands Bill a pen. She turns around and bends over.

JANE (cont)

The left gluteus maximus.

Bill hesitates, never signs but keeps the pen.

Joe spots something out the window.

JOE

(like calling a bird)

Prudy? .. Prudy?... (high voice) Prudy, Prudy, Prudy?

JANE

Do you hear what I hear?

BILL

Not exactly. But let me guess.

JOE

(high voice)

Prudy Prudy Prudy?

BILL

Birdy, birdy. He's calling a dead pecker.

JANE

It's Prudence Wilder!

Joe steps one leg over the sill. Jane charges, pulls Joe back.

JANE (cont)

(to Bill)

Give me a hand, Big Shot!

Bill joins Jane and they put Joe back to bed.

JANE (cont)

Twice he falls out of bed on his head. Is it any wonder?

Jane lies down next to Joe. She starts petting his head.

BILL

No, it's no wonder. He simply misses his mistress.

JANE

(skeptical) I see .. Then why are you in this hospital?

BILL

To entertain the troops.

JANE

Wrong hospital... Now, get!

BILL

Get what?

JANE

Out!

BILL

(hand inside coat pocket)

I'm gonna do a little enlightening. .. I haven't been or am a Big Shot,  
(withdraws a long eggplant) I'm a shooting star.

JANE

Remember the big stink I made when Joseph's ring went missing? Well, stick around here  
and you'll end up taking a lie detector test.

Bill looks at the eggplant, is momentarily shocked that it's not a gun, and exits sheepishly.  
Jane resumes petting Joe's head.

JANE

Nice Joey .. (stops petting) Did I say nice? .. Naughty Joey. Getting smashed with another person.

JOE

We never had a drop.

JANE

The Organ of Corti hanging on the clavicle; the jaw impaling the pelvis; the breast exposed and the heart still throbbing - .. In other words, you were caught in a compromising position...

JOE

We were picnicking inside. Inside a car!

JANE

Still, Joseph, you've been a patient of mine so long that I feel like crawling into bed with you till death do us part.

Jane holds Joe's face between her palms. Joe tries to peel her hands away, but can't. Her thumb slips into his mouth. He bites it off. She waves good-bye with four fingers of a bloody hand, and exits. Joe chews unconsciously, grimaces then spits out a bloody thumb. (Obviously the audience is seeing what Joe imagines.)

A long pause.

Joe finds guilt in the void. He plucks tissues from the box, gets out of bed, picks up the thumb with the tissues and throws them in the wastebasket. Then he pours a glass of water, goes to the window, takes a swig, gargles, and spits outside. He repeats this action until his mouth is clean. He wipes his mouth on the curtain and returns to bed.

JOE

I move about. How? Who knows? .. If only they'd see what I see .. Wherever my mind is, my body thinks it goes ..(eyes closed) Maybe my eyes aren't open and I'm seeing what I think or believe what was said.. I'm having a breakdown!.. Why am I being kept alive? .. I – I'm a machine in a ghost .. Put an end to this thing!

BLACKOUT

JOE (cont)

No .. I didn't mean - .. Give me another chance! .. Anything but this! .. Anything!!

Suddenly a Spotlight (Stage Right). In it a man-sized woodpecker appears. He minced-steps from left to right and right to left... until he finds a "spot" in the void in front of him. Then, with his huge red head, he pecks (far-away volume).

A second Spotlight (Stage Left) appears with Joe in it. He's wearing a checkerboard suit coat opened with a shirt and tie underneath. However, nothing's below his waist except shirrtails.

Joe peers at the Giant Woodpecker who pecks, stops, pecks. Joe looks down and discovers he's wearing no pants. He covers his groin with a shirrtail. He looks straight ahead .. into the void.

Prudence (played by Kate) appears Center Stage. She's hugely endowed. She's sitting at one end of a car's entire front seat. She's in a beige or black top(or black knit suit) and a beige or black ski mask with red ringed eye region. A picnic basket is on the other end of the front seat.

Prudence removes a long tapered pepper from her ear region (slight-of-hand) as if taking off an earring. She holds it up.

#### AMPLIFIED VOICE

The Organ of Corti.

She drops the pepper into the basket (amplified sound).

#### SILENCE

Joe starts driving, i.e., gestures with both hands on the "wheel".

The Woodpecker raps (far off volume).

Prudence crows her shoulder and removes a stalk of celery from her neck. She holds it up.

#### AMPLIFIED VOICE

The clavicle.

She snaps the stalk in two and drops it into the basket (amplified sound). Joe turns the wheel. The Woodpecker raps (far-off volume) and leans with Joe's "wheel-turning".

Prudence opens her wrapped skirt and removes a pear from between her thighs. She holds it up.

#### AMPLIFIED VOICE

The Pelvis..

Joe turns the "wheel". The Woodpecker raps (far-off volume) and leans.

Prudence raises her other hand to the same level as the pear. She spreads her thumb from the rest of her fingers, thus simulating a jaw.

### AMPLIFIED VOICE

The jaw.

She flexes the “jaw/thumb” a couple of times, then envelopes the pear with the “jaw” and drops the pear from the “jaw” into the basket (amplified sound).

Joe turns the “wheel” and the Woodpecker raps a little louder.

Prudence reaches into her chest region and removes half a cantaloupe. She looks at it curiously, rotating it and revealing its fleshy inside with the seeded webbing already scooped out.

### AMPLIFIED VOICE

The breast exposed.

She raises her other hand, opens it and reveals a strawberry.

### AMPLIFIED VOICE

and the heart .. still .. (moves the fingered strawberry like a throbbing heartbeat) throbbing.

Prudence places the strawberry in the scooped-out cantaloupe, kneels on her end of the car seat and lowers the strawberry-in-cantaloupe into the basket as if she were serving her master breakfast.

An almost uncomfortable silence ...

Prudence wipes her palms off on her flanks, then plunges her head into the basket.

The Woodpecker raps as loud as a jackhammer.

Joe’s arms fall to his sides.

Rump in the air, Prudence makes rutting noises in the basket. The Woodpecker jackhammers.

Joe raises his arm slowly and points to the “beyond”.

Her head still rutting into the basket, Prudence’s leg hooks over the top of the car seat.

A sudden jolt of Prudence’s and Joe’s bodies.

Flashing red lights. Prudence rolls off the back of the carseat and on to the floor. At the same time Joe collapses in a withering point. (All in slow motion).

### BLACKOUT

Soft sweet funeral parlor music. Lights come up on a vertical frame with Joe standing up in it, still in suit coat, shirt and tie but wearing nothing below the waist. This “abstract” of a coffin is about 6 feet off the floor. Joe’s eyes are closed in repose. Downstage Center is an empty horizontal coffin with frills and white padding inside. The lower half-lid of the horizontal coffin is closed. (Note: the actors are to play the scene as if Joe is in the empty horizontal coffin). (If the actor Joe isn’t acrobatic, then he should play the scene on a shelf upstage and simulate movements of swinging, flying, swimming, running and slow motion walking within a vertical frame).

Tim and Kate stroll in solemnly. Tim and Kate are dressed in black. However Tim’s pants are of checkerboard pattern. Kate is cradling “something” in her arms wrapped in a black blanket. (Occasionally, we will get a peak at what this “something” might be). Tim and Kate stand before the downstage coffin. They stare down at the open top-half of the coffin. Joe starts to snore from on high (amplified sound), then stops.

TIM

(looking down upon the downstage coffin)  
He looks so peaceful.

Kate purrs like a cat and pets a cowled black head in blanket. Joe snores, stops.

TIM (cont)

I’m glad I had the opportunity to tell him that the Sox won the World Series.. (takes a coin out of his pocket, kisses it and places it at the head of the coffin).

Joe snores. Kate purrs.

Bill and Alice enter dressed in white wedding apparel. Alice’s veil is down. Bill starts to play Malegna. Alice breaks into a Flamenco but gets hold of herself when Kate gives her the discouraging eye. Then Alice whacks Bill with her fan (first seen during the dance) which stops his playing.

KATE

My heart is breaking.

Kate takes a bite out of a strawberry and casts the remaining half away.

TIM

(on the QT)(to Kate)  
Don’t say anything. We’re invited to the reception.

Bill and Alice line up on the opposite side of the downstage coffin. They lean their heads fondly against each other. Kate barks like a baby seal.

TIM (cont)

(on QT)(to Kate)  
Don’t be sarcastic.

Kate growls.

TIM (cont)  
(to Alice)

You know Kate. She's always hated veils.

Kate covers the cowed black head of the "Something", inverts it and opens the other end of the bundled blanket and we get a glimpse of a flipper flapping. Tim quickly covers the "Something" up.

ALICE  
(veiled)

I have nothing to hide.

Alice lifts her veil revealing a gaudy face, i.e., extra long eyelashes, cupid-painted lips, etc. Alice hitches up her breasts, then bends over to kiss the corpse. However, she does a double take, picks up the coin, kisses it and places it in her bodice.

TIM

Mother, that was my last dollar!

Kate quells Tim by handing him the bundled "Something", then reaches over the downstage coffin and takes a swipe at her mother. Tim pulls Kate back and places the bundled "Something" back in her arms.

TIM

Remember, Kate. You're a mother, too.

ALICE  
(haughty)

I should say

BILL  
(in compliance)

So should I.

Pause.

Bill tries to reach down Alice's bodice. She whacks his hand with a fan, then opens the fan and rapidly cools her face coquettishly.

Kate opens the bundle from a different angle. The tentacle of an octopus falls out.

Joe snores from above, stutter-snores, clears his throat, then stops making noises.

Jane enters dressed in a Daughters-of-the-Poor habit with its winged headpiece. Her arms are folded within her sleeves. She glides in minced steps, bows to the upstage abstract coffin above, then glides to the downstage coffin. Everybody backs off. She stands at the head of the coffin and bows her head. Joe snores. She raises her head to heaven. Joe snores again.

ALICE  
(whispering)

Who's that?

BILL  
(whispering)

Same person who took care of your ex. Only she's traded in her uniform for a habit.

Jane removes her headpiece revealing a bald head. Joe's snoring turns to deep breathing. Jane runs her hand down the side of the coffin, always looking up for guidance. Joe's breathing grows heavier. She lifts the lower half-lid, smiles faintly at the audience, lowers the half-lid back gently on its hinges, lifts one leg over the rim and DIVES IN.

The passion is horrendous: bucking, bashing and thrashing with the Invisible Corpse. Such necrophilic activity "below" jostles Joe-in-his-coffin "above".

JOE  
(from jostled coffin on high)

Hey!

Bill, Alice, and Tim have no other recourse than to slam both half lids down over Jane. But that doesn't stop Jane who keeps bucking the lids up.

JOE (cont)  
(from on high)

Hey!

The upstage coffin frame is now swinging from side to side on its cables. Joe lets out orgasmic noises.

Kate accidentally drops the "Something" out of the blanket. The "Something" has a cat's head and dog's body, except for octopus tentacles growing out of its sides, and flipper feet.

The "Something" scurries about on the floor. Kate chases after it trying to recapture it with her blanket. But it rears up its "tail" like a scorpion. Kate backs off but Alice runs by, grabs it, throws it into the coffin and jumps on the lids to keep them down.

The horizontal and vertical coffins come to rest.

10 BEATS OF SILENCE. (For a non-acrobatic Joe, he lets the vertical rectangle fall flat on the shelf's floor so he's standing in the middle of it.

The Half-lid flies back on its hinges. Jane sits up slowly .. with the "Something" perched on her head, its tentacles tied in a bow underneath her chin.

JANE

I loved the man .. inside and out .. More than any body .. Told him fabulous stories to keep him going ..We understood,we understand.Not just here and now but there and then!

Bill wails a few notes on his harmonica.

JANE (cont)

Please. You'll only make things feel better.

Bill stops wailing.

Kate wraps the blanket around her shoulders. Slowly she twists. She scratches, stands and is overcome by a deep itch. She tears off the infested blanket, rolls on the floor, and freezes in an awkward, catatonic position.

JANE (cont)

(after the long fact)(as if upstaged)

Please. Don't interrupt.

Pause.

TIM

Kate, you're ill. We'll get help.

JANE

(to Tim)

You're also interrupting.

Pause.

Alice starts fanning herself nervously.

JANE (cont)

No breeze, please.

Alice stops fanning.

JOE

(observing Tim below)

Oh my son. You're wearing my pants. Breathe through them in memories of me.

(A non-acrobatic Joe kneels within the frame which is flat on the shelf's floor).

JANE

(vaguely hearing Joe's voice)

Hmmm

Pause.

JANE (cont)

Joseph came to my hospital a total mess .. with bits and pieces of another woman all over him.

ALICE

I'm happy now. I forgive.

Jane raises a finger to her lips.

JANE

Shhh

Joe starts swinging in his swing-like coffin frame. (Non-acrobatic Joe rocks on his haunches).

JANE

Her name was Prudence. She was a Wild One.

JOE

That she was.

JANE

An ecologically pure being

JOE

Couldn't have put it more so.

JANE

But she lacked one thing.

JOE

Never!

JANE

Never did she have to live with – with a human being who suffered three years, three years of what must have been unconscious agony in the midst of passive resistance... But no, oh no. Not at the end. He couldn't wear the mask any longer .. And so, just short of his fourth year, he passed .. from Sleep Apnea.

Joe snores.

JANE (cont)  
It's not my fault!

Joe snorts, then stops snoring altogether.  
Tim undergoes a sudden hunch.

TIM  
Wild One in the Third!

Tim runs to Alice and tries to reach down her bodice for the coin but she stops him.

JANE  
(without seeing where Tim is)  
.. Stay where you are!

TIM  
(gestures phooey at Alice, not Jane)  
Aw –

Tim starts to return to his chair.

JANE  
Very well. Go.

TIM  
Go?

Pause.

JANE  
Once upon a vacation, Saint Elbow went out to sea.

Tim starts to “go”. (Non-acrobatic Joe starts to curl up).

JANE (cont)  
The anchovies were running .. and I wanted to crawl into bed with a fish who couldn't even swim!

TIM  
(deciding to stop by Bill on his way out) I hear you have my father's will?

BILL  
As a matter of fact I do.

Bill stands to confront Tim.

BILL (cont)  
And it's all going to HAW.

TIM  
Haw?

BILL  
Harmonicas Around the World: Haw Haw

Tim reaches into his pocket, pulls out a slip of paper and hands it to Bill.

TIM  
Fifth National has just informed me that you have over drawn .. HAW HAW HAW!

Bill slashes Tim's cheek with his harmonica. Tim feels his cheek, looks at his palm and collapses.

ALICE  
In the face of a horrible accident, can't we calm down?

Eve Everybody calms down except Joe who keeps swinging in his coffin. (Non-acrobatic Joe is now in fetal position).

JANE (cont)  
And so I did .. (starts to untie the tentacles under her chin) crawl.. (standing) crawl into the deep, deep –

Jane is now standing up inside the horizontal coffin.

KATE  
GRRRR –

JANE  
(like the sea)  
Shhh –

Kate's gurring dies down.

JANE  
(like running water) Shhh. Up to the side of him.

Joe swings higher and starts laughing. Kate starts crawling toward Tim.

JANE (cont)  
Touching him.. warming him ..

Jane presses the “Something” to her stomach.

JANE (cont)  
Flipping and flopping him –

Jane flips and flops a tentacle. (Non-acrobatic Joe raises a side of the frame and fiddles with it).

Kate starts to help Tim off the floor.

JANE (cont)  
Shh ... Shh .

Bill plays a couple of notes on his harmonica.

JANE  
Shhhh!

Bill gives Jane a hostile look, then lowers Alice’s veil.

JANE (cont)  
Shhh

Bill takes Alice’s hand ... Kate wraps the shawl around Tim’s shoulders.

JANE  
Shhh

and Kate and Tim, Bill and Alice start exiting.

JANE (cont)  
Washing .. and scrubbing .. and turning him over ...

Kate and Tim and Bill and Alice exit in procession.

JANE (cont)  
And wiping .. and pinching –

Jane giggles. Joe swings higher and laughs. (Non-acrobatic Joe gurgle-giggles like a baby).

JANE  
him.

Jane takes hold of the front-half of the coffin lid.

JOE  
(swinging)  
Weee!  
JANE  
(laughing)  
Down here with me, my Little Anchovie!

(Non-acrobatic Joe, on the flat of his back makes random stretch movements of his limbs like a neonate).

The coffin frame flies apart. Jane pulls the coffin lid over her.

(The coffin frame doesn't fly apart if non-acrobatic Joe is the actor).

Joe swims, runs, leaps and does a somersault in the air. He tugs and plays on the cables, eventually taking on the gestures of a baby on his back, his limbs stretching at random. (Note: It doesn't matter if the audience sees cables or not). The Giant Woodpecker appears.

Far – off rapping resounds.

The lights turn blue. Darker and darker blue .. to a -

BLACKOUT

The faint rapping resides.

THE END

