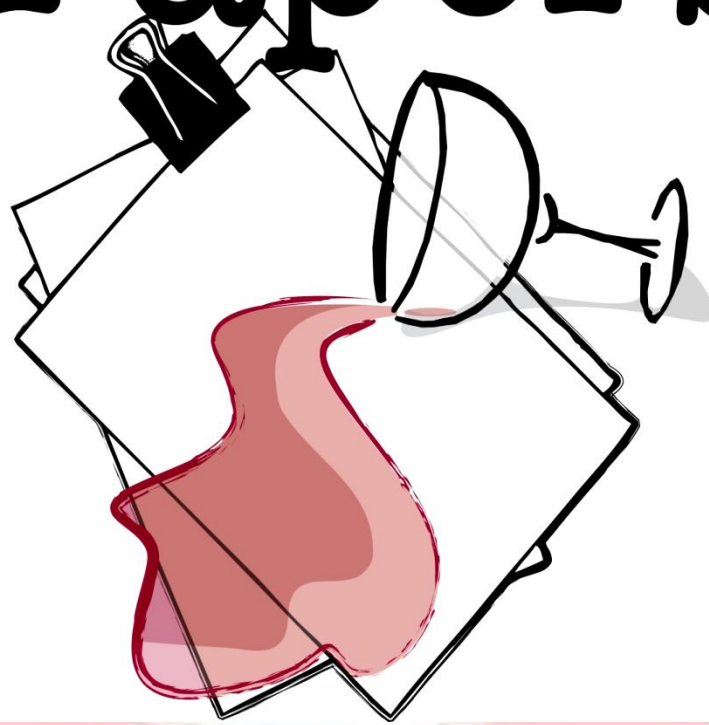


The Papers



A Comedy In Two Acts

**Written by:
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Peggy Ruttles A Middle-Aged Woman
 Harvey Her Husband
 Darlene Peggy's Sister
 Mr. Belkin An Attorney
 Rev. McCreedy The Baptist Church Pastor
 Lois Gray The Elder Mr. Ruttles' Aged Secretary
 Donnie Gray Her Drug Addict Son
 Rosa The Busy Body Neighbor
 Charlotte Harvey's Cousin
 Mr. Parsons Funeral Home Director
 Police Officer
 Various Mourners

THE SETTING

Act 1, Scene 1

The Living Room of Harvey and Peggy's Home
Friday Afternoon

Act 1, Scene 2

The Living Room of Harvey and Peggy's Home
Late Friday Afternoon

Act 1, Scene 3

The Living Room of Harvey and Peggy's Home
Friday Evening

INTERMISSION

Act 2, Scene 1

The Living Room of Harvey and Peggy's Home
Saturday Morning

Act 2, Scene 2

The Chapel of Parsons Funeral Home
Saturday Afternoon

Act 1

Scene 1

Curtain opens to reveal a large living room. It is decorated modestly with a large, overstuffed couch just right of center. To the left of the couch is a small table and matching chair. There is a desk and built-in bookcase in the upstage left corner with a small office chair. On the side wall beside the bookcase hangs a small decorative mirror. The bookcase is overflowing with books, magazines, pictures and knick knacks. Upstage right is a staircase which leads to a landing and bedroom door which opens to offstage right. In front of the staircase is a small table with a telephone and a small, straight back chair beside it. There are two doors. The door stage right leads to an unseen kitchen and the door stage left leads outside. There is a large window upstage of the outside door. A street scene is visible through the partially drawn curtains.

PEGGY RUTTLES, a middle aged woman, is standing below the stairs talking on the phone. She is tall and angular with short gray hair and is wearing a lime green pantsuit, apparently expecting company. She is talking excitedly on the telephone when the curtain rises.

PEGGY. Yep, the old man finally died. Yesterday about four o'clock. Yes, he had been suffering a mighty long time, but so have we. While he was up there in that mansion on the hill living in the lap of luxury, me and Harvey have been trying to make do in this dump. I don't know why the old man wouldn't share any of his money with Harvey. It's not like Harvey ever asked for any. Oh, I told him that he should march right up there and demand that the old man give us what we deserve. I begged him, even threatened to leave him if he didn't. But you know Harvey. Too afraid to speak up. (she walks over and looks at herself in the mirror, adjusting her hair.) I have given him my life, Darlene. My

youth, my beauty. All gone now! You think that he could have put his foot down and made the old man cough up some dough. But no! Well, Harvey doesn't know it, but if it wasn't for the money, I would have been gone years ago. I could do better than a two bedroom stucco house at the end of some stinking cul de sac. I used to tell Harvey, go ask the old man for a new car, or a vacation home.. something. And I'm sure Harvey would crawl on his hands and knees in front of the old man, begging for money. But the old Grinch would always send him away, empty handed. Yes, Harvey did work for him. Twenty-five long years pushing a pencil down at his father's shoe factory. What? Oh, I don't know how much the old geezer was worth. Even Harvey didn't know all the pots the old man had his fingers into. But you can bet one thing. He was rich. He had a chauffeur and limousine- even his own private jet. But Harvey says that after his mother died, the old man just lost interest in everything, even the money. So why didn't he give it to us? I mean, you've seen our house. We could have used it! But no, the greedy old geezer just sat on it like Scrooge. You could look up to his house on the hill and every light in the place would be blazing at all hours of the night. Apparently, the old man never slept. What happens now? Well, now me and Harvey finally get what we deserve. A little taste of the good life. No more scrimping by, cutting coupons and eating Rice-a-Roni. It's lobster and caviar from now on. Sure, I'm sure? Harvey is the old man's only living relative, except for his old dorky cousin, Charlotte. So unless he left it all to the Moonies or something, Harvey will inherit the whole thing. I don't know how much. It could be millions, hundreds of millions! Enough to buy a yacht, a home in Greece, new furs and jewelry for me. Just think, Darlene, little Peggy from the wrong side of the tracks is going to be a millionairess! Well, we'll find out soon enough. Harvey and the old man's lawyer are on the way over here right now to go over the details of the estate. I'm so excited! Maybe he'll even have a check with him when he gets here! Yes, of course I'll share some of it with you. You are my only sister, aren't you?

The sound of a car approaching the house is heard.

PEGGY. Listen, I've got to go. Harvey and the lawyer just drove up. I'll call you after he's gone. I'm know, I'm so excited. I'm about to be rich! Bye.

Peggy hangs up the phone, rushes to the mirror and checks her make-up and then approaches the door. HARVEY RUTTLES, her husband and a tall man dressed in a dark business suit enter. HARVEY is rather short, thin and looks beaten by life. He is wearing a plain gray sweater and dark slacks. As soon as HARVEY enters, PEGGY pulls him out of the way as she rushes to greet the lawyer.

HARVEY. Peggy, I'd like for you to meet my father's attorney, Mr. Belkin.

PEGGY. Welcome to our humble home. We are so happy to have you here.

MR. BELKIN. It's a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Ruttles.

PEGGY. Oh, please call me Peggy. Mrs. Ruttles is so formal. And we're all friends here, sharing good news... and bad. You do have good news for us, don't you?

MR. BELKIN. *(patting his briefcase)* I think so. Shall we?

HARVEY. Yes, please come have a seat.

HARVEY moves towards the chair and begins to sit. Before he can sit down, PEGGY rushes over and pushes him out of the way.

PEGGY. Oh, Mr. Belkin, please take the chair. It's much more comfortable.

MR. BELKIN. *(MR. BELKIN looks nervously at HARVEY, who gestures for him to sit?) He reluctantly sits slowly in the chair while HARVEY takes a seat on the couch)* Alright, thank you.

PEGGY. Can I get you something to drink? Coffee, tea, a soft drink?

MR. BELKIN. Coffee would be fine. Black.

PEGGY. Coming right up.

HARVEY. I'd like a....

PEGGY exits quickly, ignoring HARVEY. The two men eye each other and attempt to make small talk.

MR. BELKIN. You have a beautiful home.

HARVEY. Thank you. Peggy does a good job.

MR. BELKIN. Harvey, you know that I've been your father attorney for more than thirty years.

HARVEY. I know. My Dad used to say *(imitating his father's voice)* "If you want the best legal advice, hire the best lawyers, Belkin & Belkin.."

MR. BELKIN. Yes, well, I've always wanted to ask you, why did you turn down your father's fortune? I mean, he offered to give you a trust fund, buy you and Peggy a luxurious home, send you on vacations around the world. After your mother died, your father was a broken man. Did you know that he used to tell me that after her car accident, he never packed up a single one of her things. He would leave the lights on all night hoping that the body they found in the wreckage wasn't really hers. That maybe she was wandering around somewhere out there, with just amnesia. And one day, maybe she would see the lights and finally come home. Your father loved you and would have gladly given you every penny if you have just taken it.

HARVEY. Mr. Belkin, I know my father loved me. He loved me so much that when I told him that I wanted to make my fortunes on my own, just like he did, he understood. He gave me a job at the shoe factory, let me start on the loading dock and work my way up. No special treatment. No trust funds or fancy vacations. I didn't want to be a success just because I was the boss' son. I wanted to do it on my own and he respected that.

MR. BELKIN. Well, all that is about to change. *(He pats his briefcase.)* You know he left it all to you. More money than you could spend in ten lifetimes.

HARVEY. I figured as much. I'm just a little afraid to tell Peggy. I always known that she only married me for the money. She never knew that my father offered to give it all to me for years and I always said no. I'm afraid that when she finally gets her hands on all that money, she'll go crazy.

MR. BELKIN. Now, Harvey, I'm sure you can ease her gently into your new lifestyle.

HARVEY. Well, that's the thing, Mr. Belkin. I don't want a new lifestyle. I don't want to live in the big mansion on a hill, drive a Lamborghini or have a private jet. I'm happy with things just the way they are. Can't we put the money in a trust fund somewhere and not tell her?

MR. BELKIN. Well, Harvey, your father's final wishes were specifically that his will be read out loud to the public at his memorial service. She'll know by this time tomorrow, so you might as well tell her now.

PEGGY enters carrying a tray with two coffee cups. She hands one to MR. BELKIN and keeps the other for herself, again ignoring HARVEY.

PEGGY. Tell me what?

MR. BELKIN. Well, Peggy, I was just about to tell Harvey the specifics of his father's will.

PEGGY. Yes, I did hear that there was a will. But you know, money's not that important to me and Harvey. All we need is each other, right Harvey?

HARVEY. Yes, dear. Why don't you have a seat. Mr. Belkin was just about to go over the details with us.

PEGGY sets the tray down on the table, comes around and takes a seat next to HARVEY. MR. BELKIN opens his briefcase and pulls out a stack of papers.

MR. BELKIN. Well, as you know, Harvey, your father was a very successful businessman with quite a diversified portfolio. *(he shuffles through the papers as he speaks)* There was the shoe factory, of course. The carpet mill, the steel refinery and the import/export business he bought before you were born.

HARVEY. Yes, I knew about all those.

MR. BELKIN. *(shuffling through more files and handing some papers to HARVEY as he speaks)* I know, but your father also had many other business investments. There was a string of strip malls he owned throughout the Midwest, the housing developments in Northern California, the insurance company and the car dealerships.

HARVEY. Strip malls?

PEGGY. *(blurting out)* So, how much was he worth?

HARVEY. Peggy! I'm sorry, Mr. Belkin, we're both just a little anxious.

MR. BELKIN. I understand. This is big news. Harvey, your father was one of the most successful businessmen in America. During his life, he amassed a vast fortune. And you being his only child will inherit all of it.

PEGGY. How much?

HARVEY bristles again at her brashness

MR. BELKIN. All total, a little over \$200 million.

PEGGY is so shocked, she drops her coffee cup on the floor. She makes no effort to clean it up.

HARVEY. I'm sorry, did you say \$200 million?

MR. BELKIN. Yes. *(looking up the figure)* Actually \$201,759,312 as of nine o'clock this morning.

PEGGY. *(she finally recovers and bends over to pick up the broken pieces of the cup)* Two hundred million dollars? We're going to be worth two hundred million dollars?

MR. BELKIN. Not you, my dear. Harvey. You see, he is the only one named as beneficiary. The money goes straight to Harvey. Of course, being his spouse, you would receive any proceeds remaining in the event that Harvey was to proceed you in death.

PEGGY. Two hundred million dollars. *(she turns to HARVEY)* Two hundred million dollars. *(she then turns to MR. BELKIN)* Two hundred million dollars!

PEGGY jumps up in her excitement and runs to MR. BELKIN, hugging him around the neck as she chants "\$200 million" over and over again. She stops suddenly and then speaks to MR. BELKIN matter of factually.

PEGGY. So, do you have a check with you now? Can we get it today?

MR. BELKIN. Oh, no, my dear. Mr. Ruttles instructed me that the money would pass to his heir at the end of his memorial service when his Last Will & Testament was read out loud and Harvey signs the inheritance papers. Until then, it's in a trust fund, just waiting.

PEGGY. Oh. Well, I guess we can wait another day, can't we Harvey?

HARVEY. Yes, dear. I think we'll be able to manage to survive another day.

MR. BELKIN. *(he rises and gathers his papers, stuffing them back into his briefcase)* Well, I know that you have a lot of details to work out before the Memorial Service tomorrow so I'll be going. Again, my deepest condolences. Thank you for the coffee. *(he crosses towards the door, HARVEY stands and PEGGY follows)*

PEGGY. Oh, you're quite welcome. I'm sure now that we have moved up quite considerably on the social ladder, we will be seeing you around the Yacht Club.

MR. BELKIN. Oh, I'm not a member of the Yacht Club. Don't like water, I'm afraid. Until tomorrow...

MR. BELKIN begins to exit and, just before closing the door, HARVEY reaches into his pocket and pulls out an envelope which he hands to the attorney.

HARVEY. Mr. Belkin? I just have one small request for the Memorial Service.

MR. BELKIN. Certainly. I'll take care of it.

MR. BELKIN exits and HARVEY closes the door. When he turns around, PEGGY is grinning at him from across the room. After a moment, she runs into HARVEY's arms. As she talks, HARVEY squats down and picks up the dropped coffee cup, then crosses and picks up the tray that PEGGY brought into the room.

PEGGY. Two hundred million dollars! Did you hear what he said, Harvey? We just inherited two hundred million dollars. We're rich. The richest people in town, maybe even the whole state.

HARVEY. We're not rich yet, Peggy. Mr. Belkin said we get nothing until after the will is read in public and who knows what's in it.

PEGGY. Ah, poo! You're his only living relative.

HARVEY. Besides Charlotte.

PEGGY. Yeah, whatever. You're his son, for goodness sake! You worked for him. Ran one of his companies while he sat up there in that big house. You deserve that money. You've earned it. We both have, living like commoners here in this shack while your father wallpapered his bathroom in hundred dollar bills.

HARVEY. I like our life, Peggy. And I like our house. I never wanted my father's money. All I've ever wanted was a quiet life. I'm not even sure I want to keep it.

HARVEY crosses and exits into the kitchen. Not believing her ears, PEGGY follows him, talking to him through the door.

PEGGY. What!?! Are you kidding me? You're not sure if you want to keep it? Did you hear what Mr. Belkin said? Two hundred million dollars, Harvey. Two hundred million. That's enough money to buy everything we've ever wanted. New cars, a new house. Two new houses. With that kind of money, we can finally buy membership in that snooty Yacht Club. I can't wait to see the look on the faces of all those snobs when we drive up to the Yacht Club in our new Rolls-Royce.. or maybe a Bentley. Which one is more expensive?

HARVEY re-enters with a rag and begins to wipe up the spilled coffee.

HARVEY. I don't know...

PEGGY. Doesn't matter. We'll buy one of each. The looks on their faces when we walk through the doors of the Yacht Club, the richest couple in town...

HARVEY. Now, wait a minute, Peggy. *(he stands)* We don't need to be rushing into anything. Now is not the time to just go crazy.

PEGGY. You're right, Harvey. Now is the time to celebrate!

PEGGY snatches the rag away from HARVEY, then turns and rushes into the kitchen. After a moment, she re-enters with a champagne bottle, glasses and hor'dourves on a tray.

PEGGY. I've been saving this for a special occasion and I would have to say that two hundred million dollars qualifies as special occasion.

PEGGY pours champagne into the two glasses, serves HARVEY and then proposes a toast.

PEGGY. To the good life, Harvey. After all those years of scrimping and saving, driving a ten year old car, buying our clothes off the clearance rack, we are about to cash in. *(they toast, HARVEY rather reluctantly)* Try the prosciutto. It's imported.

HARVEY takes a small piece of meat from the tray offered by PEGGY, smells it and puts it in his mouth while PEGGY crosses behind the couch, pacing and talking excitedly.

PEGGY. Oh, the old man thought he could take that money to his grave. Well, we outlasted him, didn't we Harvey? And things are about to change around here. I'll call the movers and we'll start moving into the old man's mansion tomorrow afternoon. Soon, we'll be looking down our noses at everyone, just like he did.

PEGGY is pacing while she is talking, not noticing that HARVEY has begun to choke on his prosciutto. She continues to pace and talk animatedly while HARVEY holds his throat, then tries to get her attention. His face turns red and he finally slides off the couch onto the floor where he lies motionless.

PEGGY. Oh, Harvey, we can finally take that trip to Europe. On the Queen Mary II. Or maybe a cruise around the world. I'll buy diamonds and furs in every port and you'll learn how to play polo. The world is our oyster and we're going to eat it. Oh, it's so exciting, isn't it, Harvey. Harvey?

PEGGY stops walking and looks towards the couch. Not seeing HARVEY, she steps around the couch, spying him on the floor.

PEGGY. Harvey? Are you okay? Harvey?

PEGGY rushes to his side and shakes HARVEY's lifeless body.

PEGGY. Harvey? What's the matter? Are you asleep? Harvey, wake up. Harvey!

PEGGY bends down and listens to HARVEY's chest and then checks to see if he's breathing. HARVEY is obviously dead.

PEGGY. Oh, no. Harvey, you're okay. You just drank your champagne a little too fast. Everything's going to be okay. I'll get you some water.

PEGGY rushes out of the room and returns with a glass of water. She picks up HARVEY's head, puts it in her lap and tries to make him drink. Instead, the water just dribbles down his face and chin.

PEGGY. Here, have a little sip of water, Harvey. That'll make you feel better. Come on, just a little. *(She stops, realizing it's hopeless)* Oh, my God. No, Harvey! You're going to inherit two hundred million dollars tomorrow. You can't be dead. At least not until tomorrow. *(she shakes him)* Come on now, stop playing around. This isn't funny. Wake up, Harvey!

PEGGY shakes HARVEY violently again, causing a piece of ham to fly from his mouth and hit the floor. At the sight, she stops shaking him and looks down at HARVEY incredulously.

PEGGY. You choked on the ham? The stupid imported ham that I had to drive all over town to find? Oh, my God, what am I going to do? I've got to do something. Call someone. I know, Darlene. She'll know what to do.

PEGGY drops HARVEY's head loudly on the floor and rushes back to the telephone. She picks up the phone, looks over at HARVEY one more time to make sure he's really dead, and then dials.

PEGGY. Darlene, it's Peggy. Something bad has happened. No, we got the money. It's not that. It's Harvey. We were celebrating, drinking champagne and that Italian ham you said I should buy when Harvey....

Harvey. He choked! No, he didn't choke up, he choked! As in 'choked to death.' I don't know. He's just laying there, not moving or anything. Of course I checked to see if he was breathing. Do you think if he was over there breathing and listening to me talk to you on the phone that I would say he choked to death. He's dead, Darlene. I mean, really dead. What do you mean, did I kill him? No, I didn't kill him. Yes, I am the one who fed him the ham, but it ain't like I held him down and tried to force the entire thing down his throat. He ate a little piece no bigger than a thimble, and plopped down dead. What am I going to do? Well, think of something! Okay, I'll try to calm down. You just get over here. Harvey's dead, Darlene. Harvey's dead!! Okay, I'll stop screaming. You just get your ass over here right now!

PEGGY hangs up the phone and slowly walks back over to where HARVEY is lying on the floor. She sits on the couch slowly, then looks down at HARVEY.

PEGGY. Does this mean we aren't going to join the Yacht Club?

BLACKOUT

ACT 1
SCENE 2

When curtain rises, PEGGY is pacing nervously behind the couch. She has placed a table cloth over HARVEY who is still lying lifeless on the floor. The door bell rings and she rushes over to answer it. PEGGY opens the door. Her sister, DARLENE, is standing on the landing, attempting to hide a bucket of chicken behind her back. She is slightly overweight, her hair is uncombed and she is wearing a stained warm-up suit. She is eating a drumstick when the door opens.

PEGGY. It's about time you got here. It's been thirty minutes.

DARLENE enters, still hiding her chicken bucket.

DARLENE. I had to get dressed.

PEGGY. Wait a minute! Is that a bucket of fried chicken? You stopped to get food?

DARLENE. I was hungry!

PEGGY. *(she crosses to the small table and picks up the tray of food)* Well, here, have some prosciutto. Harvey sure did seem to like it!

DARLENE. Very funny. *(Darlene reaches into the bucket and pulls out another drumstick)* I saved you a drumstick.

PEGGY snatches the drumstick away from her and throws it back into the bucket.

PEGGY. My God, Darlene. How can you eat at a time like this?

DARLENE. I get hungry when I'm nervous. So, where is he?

PEGGY. Oh, I don't know, Darlene. Maybe that big lump over there on the floor might be Harvey.

DARLENE sees HARVEY's body, covered with a cloth, and walks slowly over to peer at it.

DARLENE. Are you sure he's dead?

PEGGY. Well, he hasn't gotten up in the last half hour. Heck, he didn't even move when he smelled the Kentucky Fried Chicken, so I'd say that pretty much proves that he's dead.

DARLENE. Let's just check to make sure.

DARLENE slowly lifts the sheet and looks under it. When she sees the condition of the body, she screams and falls back on the couch spilling her bucket of chicken.

DARLENE. My, God! He looks dead!

PEGGY. You think? What did you expect him to look like?

DARLENE. I don't know. I didn't expect him to look so.... so...dead. I mean, I knew he was dead. I just didn't expect him to look so.... you know, dead. Oh, my God! *(she jumps up)* Harvey is dead! This is terrible! We've got to call someone.

DARLENE picks up the chicken pieces, sets the bucket on the couch, crosses over and picks up the phone. PEGGY follows her.

PEGGY. No!

DARLENE. What do you mean no? There's a dead body in your living room. You have to call the police or a fireman or something. *(she begins to dial)*

PEGGY. Darlene, if we let anybody know about this, I will lose the money!

DARLENE. There's not enough money in the world that will keep me in this house one more minute with a dead body. *(she continues to dial)*

PEGGY. Two hundred million dollars!

DARLENE stops dialing and looks at PEGGY with amazement.

DARLENE. I'm sorry. What did you say?

PEGGY. Two hundred million dollars. That's how much the old man left Harvey. Two hundred million dollars. But, I can't touch it. The attorney says that Harvey has to go to the reading of the will tomorrow and sign the papers. If he doesn't sign, there is no money. And if you make that call to the police, we will lose every penny.

DARLENE. Two hundred million dollars? American dollars? *(she is torn about what to do, but then starts dialing again)* No, it doesn't matter how much money there is. I am not going to jail.

PEGGY. I'll give you part of it!

At this, DARLENE stops dialing again.

DARLENE. How much?

PEGGY. I don't know? Some of it!

DARLENE. Half!

PEGGY. What?!

DARLENE. I want half.

PEGGY. No. I'm not giving you a hundred million dollars just to hang up the phone.

DARLENE. When the police find out that you didn't report a dead body, things will look a little suspicious.

PEGGY. What do you mean.. suspicious?

DARLENE. I mean, who knows why you didn't report Harvey's death for two days? Maybe because you were trying to hide evidence of a crime... oh, I don't know... maybe MURDER!

PEGGY. I did NOT murder Harvey. He choked. Choked on a stupid piece of ham.

DARLENE. The police won't know that for sure.. at least not for a few days. In the meantime, they'll arrest you, and me probably, and put us both in jail. Jail, Peggy! Where they'll finger print us, take our mug shots

and make us put on those hideous orange jump suits. You know I look terrible in orange. I am a winter and orange is definitely not in my color palette.

PEGGY. *(she thinks about it for a moment, looks over at Harvey and then back at DARLENE)* Twenty percent.

DARLENE. Forty.

PEGGY. Thirty percent.

DARLENE. Thirty-five.

PEGGY. Thirty-three and a third. And that's my final offer.

DARLENE looks at the phone in her hand, at PEGGY, back at the phone. She reaches out to shake PEGGY's hand.

DARLENE. Deal. Shake and say it. Say if I help you, you'll give me a third of everything.

PEGGY. Well, not until you hang up that phone. *(DARLENE slowly hangs up the phone. PEGGY reaches out to shake.)* Okay, you'll get a third.

They both turn and look at HARVEY's body for a long moment.

DARLENE. So, what do we do now?

PEGGY. Now, we think.

DARLENE. Think?

PEGGY. Yes, Darlene, we think. *(she paces around room)* If we want to get our hands on that two hundred million dollars, we've got to convince people that Harvey is still alive.

DARLENE. And exactly how are we going to do that?

PEGGY. I don't know just yet. Let me think.

PEGGY continues to pace around the room. DARLENE watches her for a moment, then looks at HARVEY's body sadly.

DARLENE. Aren't you even little sad that Harvey is dead?

PEGGY. Yes, I'm sad. Sad that I married him thinking that because his Daddy was rich, he would be too. I'm sad that I never got to go to Paris. Sad that I had to drive a ten year old minivan. A minivan, Darlene!

DARLENE. Okay, calm down.

PEGGY. I'm sad that the only piece of jewelry Harvey ever gave me was this cheap engagement ring. *(shows it to Darlene)* Can you even see the diamond in there?

DARLENE. Well, no...

PEGGY. That's because it's not a diamond. It's a cubic zirconium. Harvey said it was a lot cheaper and you couldn't tell.

DARLENE. Well, that's true. Sometimes late at night, I see them on the Home Shopping Network...

PEGGY. I can tell! I'm tired of being cheap, Darlene. Not having enough money to buy a decent pair of shoes. Having to drive the same rusty old minivan year after year. Not being invited to the Captain's Ball at the Yacht Club. Well, today, I'm through being cheap. And tomorrow, I'm cashing in.

DARLENE. Okay, sorry I asked.

PEGGY goes back to pacing while DARLENE watches.

DARLENE. So, what's the plan?

PEGGY. The plan is, Harvey is not dead.

DARLENE. Well, yeah he is. Look at him.

PEGGY. Darlene, Harvey is not dead. Because if Harvey is dead, I don't get my two hundred million dollars. If Harvey is dead, I don't get my diamonds and furs. If Harvey's dead, I don't get my trip around the world. And if Harvey is dead, YOU don't get sixty six million dollars.

DARLENE. *(she pauses a second, then looks at HARVEY)* You know, you're right, Peggy. Harvey is definitely NOT dead.

PEGGY. That's right. No matter who calls or comes over here, Harvey is very much alive. He's just overcome with grief and doesn't feel like talking very much.

DARLENE. But what if...

PEGGY. No buts. Harvey is not dead and if we want to get our hands on that two hundred million dollars, we've got to convince everybody that he's still alive. At least until after the memorial service. Now help me get him up.

PEGGY and DARLENE cross to HARVEY's body, then bend over to pick him up.

PEGGY. Grab him by the shoulders.

DARLENE. I'm trying. He's heavy.

DARLENE manages to pick up HARVEY's head and shoulders, then loses her grip and his head hits the floor with a thud.

DARLENE. Sorry, Harvey.

PEGGY. Just put your hands under his armpits and pick him up.

DARLENE. He's slippery. And I've got chicken grease all over my hands.

PEGGY. Sweet Lord. Just come get his feet, I'll do the head. *(They switch places, bumping into each other as they cross.)* Okay, here we go. 1.. 2.. 3... lift.

They groan with effort but manage to get him on the couch where HARVEY promptly falls over on his side, lifeless.

DARLENE. Oh, that looks natural. He doesn't look dead at all.

PEGGY. Shut up. Help me sit him up.

DARLENE grabs HARVEY's left arm and pulls him to an upright position.

DARLENE. Much better. But he still looks dead.

PEGGY. Uh, ah.. Harvey is not dead, remember?

DARLENE. I didn't say he *was* dead. I just said he *looks* dead.

PEGGY. No he doesn't. He looks like the.... the grieving son. What would the grieving son be wearing?

DARLENE. Black.

PEGGY. No, I mean. What would he have on that would convince people that he is overcome with grief?

DARLENE. Sunglasses. To hide his red, swollen eyes.

PEGGY. I've got some in my purse.

PEGGY rushes over to the desk and retrieves a pair of large, very feminine sunglasses covered with beads and rhinestones. She crosses back to the couch and puts them on HARVEY.

PEGGY. There. How does that look?

DARLENE. Fine... if he were Jennifer Lopez. But I don't think that's the look we're going for.

PEGGY. Well, have you got a better suggestion?

DARLENE. Do you want him to look like the grieving son or Jackie Onassis after plastic surgery? Where does Harvey keep his stuff.

PEGGY. In the top drawer of the desk.

DARLENE crosses back to the desk, opens the top drawer and rummages around for a moment. She comes back and puts a pair of men's sunglasses on HARVEY and a corncob pipe in his mouth.

DARLENE. Much better. It says, I'm sad but also quite dapper.

PEGGY. Good grief. Harvey doesn't smoke. That would be a dead giveaway. Give me that.

PEGGY snatches the pipe out of HARVEY's mouth and puts it in her pocket. She then reaches down and crosses HARVEY's legs and arranges his arms so that he appears to be lounging.

PEGGY. Now that looks more normal. Sorta'.

DARLENE. Okay, we've got him looking good, how are we going to make him talk.

PEGGY. Talk? We're not going to make him talk. He's dead.

DARLENE. *(wagging her finger reproachfully)* Uh, uh, uh. Harvey is not dead, remember? Let me try.

DARLENE sits down beside HARVEY and puts her arm around him casually, stroking his cheek with her fingers.

DARLENE. Okay, ask me something.

PEGGY. Darlene!

DARLENE. Do it!

PEGGY. Okay. How are you, Harvey?

DARLENE. *(disguising her voice to sound like a man and trying to not move her lips, Darlene sounds more like a chipmunk than a person)* Fine, how are you?

PEGGY. My, what big teeth you have, Grandma.

DARLENE. Better to eat you with... *(she realizes that PEGGY is making fun of her)* Okay, so it won't work. It was worth a try.

PEGGY. We just have to do our best to keep him out of sight....

PEGGY crosses to window and quickly closes the curtains.

PEGGY. And if someone does show up, we make them leave as fast as possible. Okay?

DARLENE. Okay.

PEGGY. Alright. Let's just sit and catch our breath.

PEGGY crosses to couch and sits on the other side of HARVEY. After a moment, DARLENE breaks the silence.

DARLENE. *(so soft, she is barely heard)* I kinda' liked Harvey. *(she gets no response from PEGGY, so she continues)* You know, one time I saw him at the grocery store. It was when I was out of work last summer. Remember that? Well, I was in there buying a buggy full of macaroni and cheese and when I turned the corner, there was Harvey. He said you weren't feeling very well and he was doing the grocery shopping. We talked, you know, about the weather and stuff. How things were going down at the shoe factory. I was expecting him to be boring and stupid, 'cause that's what you always said about him. But he wasn't. He acted like he really cared about me. He listened to me talk about losing my job, about how the doctor told me to stop eating so much junk food and how upset I was that me and Cecil had just broken up. I mean, he really listened to me, Peggy. Nobody ever listens to what I have to say. But that day in the grocery store, Harvey made me feel like I was the most important person in the world. We walked together and talked all the way out to the parking lot and then Harvey did something I'll never forget. He loaded HIS groceries into my car. I tried to stop him, but he just said I looked like I needed them more than you guys did. And he was right. I hadn't a piece of fruit in nearly a month. I thought I was getting scurvy. He took my bags of macaroni and cheese and ramen noodles, got in his car and as he was driving away, he rolled down his window and said, "See ya', Sis." I never told you about it because, well, I could tell you two didn't get along very well. I just wanted you to know that Harvey really was a nice guy. And I'm going to miss him.

There's a moment of silence while the two sisters sit on the couch looking at each other. It seems as if PEGGY is about to cry. But, then she breaks out in laughter.

PEGGY. That's the biggest load of baloney I've ever heard. You sure it was Harvey? Because the Harvey I knew didn't spend one penny on anything he didn't have to. He was so tight, he squeaked when he

walked. I don't know how many times I asked him to march right up there to Daddy's big mansion on the hill and demand that he give Harvey a raise. And you know what Harvey said? He said we had plenty of money. He said that we didn't go lacking for anything. Go lacking for anything? I tell you what I was lacking. I was lacking designer clothes. I was lacking a sports car. I was lacking getting my nails done every week. That's what I was lacking. Harvey wasn't generous. He was frugal, miserly and selfish. We could have had all those things, if he had just asked for them.

DARLENE. Maybe Harvey thought happiness didn't come from how much money you had. Look at his father. He was loaded and he didn't seem very happy.

PEGGY. Oh, that old bag enjoyed his money alright. He enjoyed dangling it where everyone could see but not touch it. That's what he enjoyed. And whoever said money couldn't buy happiness obviously didn't have any. Because the things that would make me happy cost money. Lots of it. And I intend to get it. So stop trying to convince yourself that old Harvey here was a saint. If we want to walk away from the next twenty four hours with more money that we can ever spend, then we can't go getting all sappy about 'poor' little Harvey. Okay? Okay, Darlene?

DARLENE. Okay....

They sit for a few more minutes. Then Darlene picks up the bucket of chicken.

DARLENE. I'm hungry. You want some chicken. *(Just as she pulls out a drumstick, the doorbell ring. DARLENE drops the bucket and yells)*

Oh my God. Someone's at the door. What are we going to do?

PEGGY. We're going to stay calm and do exactly what I said. Harvey is suffering from deep grief and can't talk. Whoever that is, we're going to get rid of them as fast as we can. *(The doorbell rings again)* See who it is.

DARLENE crosses to the window, parts the curtains a little and looks out.

DARLENE. It's a guy in a black suit.

PEGGY. What's he doing?

DARLENE. He's just standing there. Wait. He's reaching for... the doorbell.

The doorbell rings again, several times in a row.

PEGGY. *(calling towards the door)* Who is it?

REV. MCCREEDY. It's Reverend McCreedy.

DARLENE. Who's that?

PEGGY. It's the pastor from down at the Baptist Church.

DARLENE. Is he that guy that yells a lot on the radio?

PEGGY. Yes, the shoe factory is one of the sponsors of his radio program.

DARLENE. Is that why he's here?

PEGGY. I don't know. *(calling towards the door)* Just a minute, Reverend. *(to Darlene)* Okay, act naturally. You're just here consoling your grieving sister and brother-in-law over the loss of their beloved father. We'll answer his questions and get rid of him as fast as possible.

The doorbell rings again.

REV. MCCREEDY:.. Is everything alright, Sister Peggy?

PEGGY. Yes, Reverend. Just a minute. *(to Darlene)* Okay, I'm going to sit by Harvey, and you answer the door.

PEGGY crosses and stands in front of the couch next to HARVEY, smoothing her clothes and adjusting her hair.

PEGGY. Okay, let him in.

DARLENE opens the door and REV. MCCREEDY steps in. He's a large man dressed in a dark suit with a very 'loud' tie and matching pocket scarf. He's carrying a large, well-worn Bible in one hand and a handkerchief in the other which he constantly uses to wipe the sweat from his forehead.

REV. MCCREEDY. Good afternoon, Brother Harvey and Sister Peggy.

PEGGY. Good afternoon, Reverend. May I introduce you to my sister, Darlene Gibson.

DARLENE. Pleased to meet you, Rev. McCreedy.

REV. MCCREEDY turns and shakes hands vigorously with DARLENE.

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, just call me Rev. Billy. Everybody does. It's nice to make your acquaintance, Darlene. I don't believe I've ever seen you in church. Where do you attend, sister?

DARLENE. Well, I.. uh.. attend an on-line church.

REV. MCCREEDY. On-line church? I don't believe I've ever heard of one of those. You are faithful, aren't you?

DARLENE. Oh, yes sir. I double click on Jesus every Sunday morning.

REV. MCCREEDY. Double click... uh huh.. well, bless you sister.

PEGGY. Reverend, why don't you sit down.

REV. MCCREEDY. Thank you, sister Ruttles. *(sitting in chair)* I just wanted to come by and express my deepest condolences to you and Harvey during this very difficult time. Mr. Cyrus was a great man, a pillar of the community, a servant of the Lord. He will be sorely missed, Harvey.

There is a moment of silence as REV. MCCREEDY looks at HARVEY, then at PEGGY.

REV. MCCREEDY. Harvey, are you alright?

PEGGY. Oh, yes. He's fine, Reverend. But you know, it's been a real shock and he's.. well, he's just overcome with grief.

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, I understand. I surely do. Grief is a heavy burden, but the Lord is walking right beside you all the way, Harvey. Ah, why is he wearing those sunglasses?

PEGGY. It's the crying, Reverend. Every since we got the news, Harvey has been bawling like a baby.

REV. MCCREEDY. Well, I understand. It's okay to cry, Harvey. Our Lord Jesus liked to have a good cry every now and then. *(opening his Bible to find the verse)* Says right here in John 11:35, "Jesus wept." If the Lord did it, I reckon it's okay for you to do it, Harvey. Just let it on out, brother. Don't be ashamed.

They all turn to look at HARVEY who is unmoving on the couch.

PEGGY. Thank you, but I believe he's all cried out, Reverend Billy.

REV. MCCREEDY. Well, alright. Listen, before I go any further, would you mind if I led us in prayer?

PEGGY. Oh, yes, Reverend. Please do.

REV. MCCREEDY. Let's bow our heads. Dear Lord, we come to you in this time of grief, knowing that you are our comforter.

During the prayer, PEGGY and DARLENE exchange a look of fear that REV. MCCREEDY is beginning to catch on. DARLENE makes hand motions behind the Reverend's back for PEGGY to make adjustments to HARVEY. PEGGY quickly adjusts HARVEY's arm, putting it on the back of the couch and crosses his legs. When REV. MCCREEDY finishes his prayer, HARVEY appears to be more relaxed.

REV. MCCREEDY. Lord, bless our brother and sisters in their time of grief. Show them, Lord, that you are with them, walking down this difficult road. *(REV. MCCREEDY begins to get very animated, as if he is preaching)* Yes, Lord.. you know what it's like to have those near you

turn their backs on you, Lord. Oh, yes Lord, there are those among us, even right here in our community, who look to other means to deal with their grief and misery. Drugs, alcohol, pornography, massage parlors... all dens of iniquity for the godless heathen that walk the streets of our fair city. But not Harvey and Peggy, Lord. You know that they are good church folk.. and tithers, Lord. And Sister Darlene, well bless her, Lord, she's attending church in the virtual world, wherever that is. Well, anyway, bless them, Lord, and most of all, let them show kindness and charity to others during this time as well, Lord. We pray all these in the name of Jesus. Amen.

PEGGY & DARLENE. Amen.

REV. MCCREEDY. Now, the main reason I stopped by today, Harvey, is to discuss with you the details of the funeral.

PEGGY. Oh, Harvey's father decided not to have a church funeral.

REV. MCCREEDY. Is that true, Harvey?

PEGGY. Oh, yes. It said so in his will.

REV. MCCREEDY. Then, what may I ask, are the arrangements?

PEGGY. There will be a Memorial Service at the funeral home tomorrow at 2 o'clock.

REV. MCCREEDY. Uh, huh...

DARLENE. *(attempting to help PEGGY, she rushes over behind the couch)* That's what he wanted. Something small, short and to the point.

REV. MCCREEDY. And what is the point of skipping a church funeral, Sister Darlene?

DARLENE. Well, I... uh...

REV. MCCREEDY. I guess they don't do much teaching on how to have a proper Christian funeral at that on-line church of yours, do they?

DARLENE. Well...

PEGGY. That's what Daddy Ruttles wanted, and that's what Harvey is going to give him. Ain't that right Harvey?

When there is not response, DARLENE, who is standing behind HARVEY reaches over and uses her hand to tilt HARVEY's head back and forth as if nodding.

PEGGY. Now, if you don't mind, we have a lot of planning to...

REV. MCCREEDY. *(interrupting)* And who is going to conduct this "Memorial Service" tomorrow? I hope a man of the cloth.

PEGGY. Well, me and Harvey haven't really discussed it yet.

REV. MCCREEDY. Well, just let me check my calendar. *(pulls out a small appointment book from his breast pocket and flips through the pages)* I have a counseling session in the morning at 10... the Andersons.. he's been cheating again, you know. And then I have to give the opening prayer for the ribbon cutting at the new Cracker Barrel over on Route 32 at noon. But I should be finished by 2. *(pulls out a pen and writes on a page)* I'll be glad to conduct the Memorial Service.

PEGGY. Well, that would be... ah...

DARLENE. That would be fine...

PEGGY. Yes, fine... look, Harvey is so pleased.

They all look at HARVEY who has not changed positions or expressions.

REV. MCCREEDY. *(opening his Bible)* Yes, I can see that. You look very peaceful, Harvey. Now, I thought I would start with the reading of Psalms 23, one of my personal favorites. Then maybe tell the story of how Lazarus was raised from the dead. Then, share the Roman Road of Salvation, just in case there's any heathens in attendance. And then, I'll wrap it up with one of my special prayers that recall Paul's conversion on the Road to Damascus and how Mary Magdalene was a harlot.

PEGGY. You know, Reverend, that may be a little over the top.

DARLENE. Yeah, over the top.

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, really? And how would the pastor of your internet church do it, Sister Darlene. Would he boot up his mouse, download a picture of Jesus and fax over a prayer?

DARLENE. Well...

REV. MCCREEDY. No, I think that if preaching the Word from the good old King James Version of the Bible was good enough for Jesus, it ought to be good enough for Cyrus Ruttles.

PEGGY. Well, I guess...

REV. MCCREEDY. Good, it's settled then. I'll hurry up my blessing on the Cracker Barrel, have me a couple of pieces of chicken fried steak and be at the funeral home in plenty of time to summon the angels to escort Brother Cyrus to his heavenly reward by two.

PEGGY. Okay.. *(she begins to stand)* well, now that its settle, we have a lot of...

REV. MCCREEDY. *(interrupting)* Sister Peggy, I wonder if you might allow me a moment to discuss another matter of grave importance with you and Harvey while I'm here.

DARLENE has moved back behind the couch again. PEGGY looks over at her and HARVEY.

PEGGY. Well, Harvey is in such a state of mourning. Maybe another time...

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, this won't take long, I promise.

PEGGY. Well, okay... *(she sits back on the couch)*

REV. MCCREEDY. Over the past few years, every since your dear saint of a mother died, Harvey, your father has entered the doors of our humble chapel with less and less frequency. Some people say that because of his terrible loss, he couldn't bring himself to return to the sanctuary where he and your mother were married and that he had defected over to the Presbyterians. Nonetheless, me and the deacons knew that in his state of mind, he was not long in this world. So, we started drawing up plans, in the event that he felt charitable enough to mention the Baptist Church in his will.

PEGGY. Reverend, the will hasn't even been read yet.

REV. MCCREEDY. I know that, but one of our dear ladies of the church works down at Belkin and Belkin and just happened to let it slip at our Wednesday night prayer and healing service that she recently typed up Mr. Cyrus' will and that he left a substantial amount of money to you, Harvey.

PEGGY. Reverend Billy, I don't think it's appropriate to...

REV. MCCREEDY. I know it's none of my business and what Sister Hazel did is probably illegal and all. I just figured being your pastor would allow me to discuss intimate and private matters with you, just like your attorney, right?

PEGGY. Well...

REV. MCCREEDY. Just tell me. Is it true, Harvey, that you inherited *(voice quivers with excitement)*.... two hundred million dollars?

PEGGY. Reverend, that really is none of your business.

REV. MCCREEDY. I'm sorry if I stepped a little bit over the line, Sister. I just want to show you and Harvey something before I go. Something for you to pray about and consider.

REV. MCCREEDY reaches into the his coat pocket and miraculously pulls out a full set of folded blueprints. While is is wrangling them out of his pocket, PEGGY pushes HARVEY off her with enough force, that if it weren't for DARLENE reaching out to stop him, HARVEY would have flopped over the right arm of the couch.

REV. MCCREEDY. *(spreading open the blueprints for PEGGY and HARVEY to see and stepping behind the couch)* We call it the Cyrus Rutles Memorial Family Life Center. Isn't it beautiful?

PEGGY & DARLENE. Sure.. yes *(ad lib agreements)*

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, this new building will change our community.

The Reverend reaches into his pocket and pulls out a long retractable pointer which he extends and uses to point out features on the blueprints.

REV. MCCREEDY. As you can see, it will have a complete gymnasium and recreation center. With separate changing facilities for the boys and girls, naturally. Over here is the commercial kitchen, complete with a dual temperature deep fryer. One side will have Sunday School rooms, a nursery, and Geriatric Pilates Center for our senior citizens. And upstairs.. oh, this is where it gets great, there will be a brand new suite of offices for me featuring real mahogany paneling. One of our deacons is in the lumber business and said he can get that for us real cheap. There will be a separate room for my private counseling sessions with real mother-of-pearl built-in tissue dispensers, my own personal bathroom complete with a whirlpool tub and, I asked for this to be added since my knees are so bad, a private elevator that opens up right next to my desk. What do you think?

PEGGY. Well, Reverend.... me and Harvey are really taken aback. Right, Harvey? Why he's absolutely lost for words.

REV. MCCREEDY. I'm right there with you, brother. When I first saw these plans, I was dumbstruck myself. I felt like I had absolutely died and gone to heaven. You ever felt that way, brother?

DARLENE. More than you can imagine.

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, this new facility is going to be a great monument to the Lord. So, can we count on you to make the Cyrus Ruttles Family Life Center a reality?

PEGGY. I don't know, Reverend. How much does something like this cost?

REV. MCCREEDY. Well, we've got a couple of contractors in our church and Bobby Joe Johnson has all those dump trucks... All told, we should be able to finish if for about.. ah, ten million dollars?

PEGGY & DARLENE. Ten million dollars?

REV. MCCREEDY. Well, we can make some changes to cut costs.

(he pulls out a marker and starts modifying the plans as he speaks) We could go with pine paneling instead of mahogany. I've always said that we should give our best to the Lord. But we could manage without the mahogany and that would save a bundle. And the old folks don't need

to do Pilates anyway, not with their brittle old bones. A few cuts here and there and we can probably open the doors for about..... how about.... eight million dollars?

PEGGY. Well, Reverend Billy. Harvey and I really need some time to digest all this and talk about it.

REV. MCCREEDY. *(beginning to fold up the blueprints and put them back in his coat)* Absolutely, I understand. Please take your time and talk. Just remember, our Lord Jesus fed the five thousand with just a two fish and five loaves of bread, but unless that little Jewish fellow hadn't shared his lunch, there would have been a whole bunch of hungry folks at his tent revival.

DARLENE. Huh?

PEGGY. *(she stands, indicating that it is time for to walk REV.*

MCCREEDY leave) Yes, Reverend. We'll consider it prayerfully.

REV. MCCREEDY. That's all I ask. *(he stands)* Well, it was nice meeting you, Sister Darlene. Fax an email to your pastor and tell him to keep preaching the Word.... or typing it, or whatever he does. And I will see you and Harvey at the funeral home tomorrow, Peggy. Bye, Harvey. *(PEGGY and REV. MCCREEDY walk to the door. She opens the door for him. Before exiting, REV. MCCREEDY turns and talks under his breath to PEGGY)* You know, from the way he looks, maybe you ought to consider getting Harvey some grief counseling. *(pulling out his calendar)* Let's see.. I have a healing session at 3 for poor old Cybil Clements hemorrhoids.... But I believe I can work him in next Thursday at four. Shall I pencil you in?

PEGGY. I'll call you, Reverend.

REV. MCCREEDY. You do that, Sister. Chin up, Harvey. As the Good Book says, this too shall pass.

REV. MCCREEDY exits. PEGGY closes the door, leaning against it.

DARLENE. Well, that settles it. We are going to prison.

PEGGY. Oh, shut up Darlene. *(crosses back to couch)* Reverend Billy didn't suspect a thing.

PEGGY bends to adjust HARVEY back to a sitting position.

DARLENE helps.

DARLENE. Only because the wind bag is so full of himself, it's a wonder he doesn't bump into furniture when he walks.

PEGGY. Oh, Darlene... he means well.

DARLENE. And I didn't appreciate him criticizing my church, either.

PEGGY. Did you seriously expect him to believe that you are going to an on-line church every week?

DARLENE. Yes, I go. I log on every Sunday.

PEGGY. Oh, really? Which book of the Bible did last Sunday's sermon come out of.

DARLENE. I don't know. One of those little books in the Old Testament that's hard to pronounce. Hagar, I think.

PEGGY. Darlene, Hagar is a comic strip, not a book in the Bible. And you trying to convince Reverend Billy how faithful you are just made him more suspicious.

DARLENE. Well, suspicious or not, this thing ain't gonna' work. There is no way anyone at the memorial service tomorrow is going to believe that old Harvey here is still alive.

PEGGY. Well, it can work and it will work. Because if it doesn't, then I don't get my two hundred million dollars. And you don't get your third.

DARLENE. And Reverend Billy Bob doesn't get his Family Detention Center...

PEGGY. Family Life Center! *(sitting)* You know, maybe giving a little of the money to charity isn't such a bad idea. Maybe being a little philanthropic around town will make people think of me a little like Bill Gates. He has his Gates Foundation. Maybe I could start me a Ruttles Foundation.

DARLENE. Sounds like the name of a concrete company. And who are you fooling, Peggy? You ain't going to share a dime of that money with anybody. If I didn't have you by the short hairs, you wouldn't have even given me any.

PEGGY. I'm just saying that maybe softening up my image a little is what we need to make the shock of both Cyrus and Harvey's death a little more... palatable.

DARLENE. I tell you what I need. I need a drink. Where's the liquor?

PEGGY. You know Harvey doesn't drink. *(they both catch her faux pas and look at HARVEY)* I mean, didn't drink. Besides, you've got to keep a clear head if we are going to pull this off. Now come over here and help me move Harvey around a little. If we don't, he's going to stiffen up so bad, we won't be able to move him at all tomorrow.

DARLENE. Well, alright. But if it wasn't for my thirty three and third percent, you'd be dragging Harvey's dead ass around by yourself.

DARLENE crosses to couch, sits on the other side of HARVEY and helps PEGGY move his limbs around. They continue to move his arms, legs and head in odd positions while they talk.

DARLENE. You know, you ought to have that Hazel woman from down at the church arrested. She has no business telling people what's in your father-in-law's will.

PEGGY. Well, Darlene. Now is probably not a good time to be bringing attention to ourselves by going to court, if you know what I mean.

DARLENE. So now that she's told the Reverend, what's to keep her from spreading the word about Harvey's inheritance all over town. I promise you, Peggy, that when word gets out that Harvey just inherited two hundred million dollars, people are going start passing through here like Grand Central Station. And one of them is going to notice that old Harvey here just ain't kicking as high as he used to.

PEGGY. We'll be alright. We'll turn off the lights, pull the shades and pretend that nobody's home. Help me get him up and walk him a little so his legs don't stiffen up.

The two women lift HARVEY under the arms, swing his arms around their necks and 'walk' him around the living room. (DIRECTORS NOTE: If carrying HARVEY is too difficult for the actors, the previous line could be cut and the actors could remain on the couch. See below for the edit.)

DARLENE. And here's another thing. What if someone pops up tomorrow, a long lost relative or an unknown child that Cyrus fathered overseas and challenges the will. What are we going to do then?

PEGGY. There are no long lost relatives. I went down to the library and did a genealogy study. Harvey is his only living relative. *(DARLENE stops in reaction to this line)* Okay, his only... relative. I checked, double-checked and triple-checked. Nobody is coming forward to claim part of the money.

DARLENE. Oh, yeah? What about that cousin of Harvey's? She's a long lost relative.

PEGGY. You mean Charlotte?

DARLENE. Yeah, Charlotte.

PEGGY. She doesn't care about money. She runs an orphanage, youth camp or something like that over in Kirkland. All she cares about is taking care of those snotty little kids. She calls it her 'ministry.'

DARLENE. But it could happen. She could show up at the memorial service and when Harvey starts stinking or foaming at the mouth, or whatever dead people do after a day of sitting around, she and everyone else will know. And the money will pass to the next living relative. And that's her!

PEGGY. Will you stop being so paranoid. Nothing's going to happen. We're practically home free! *(Possible Edit if the actors have not 'walked' HARVEY's body during the previous lines: Now help me get him up and walk him so his legs don't stiffen up.)*

They are passing by the front of the couch when suddenly, the door bell rings. It surprises the women so badly, they drop HARVEY onto the couch and he bounces off onto the floor. EDIT: If the actors have not been walking HARVEY, they could just stand up with him and immediately drop his body back on the couch at the sound of the doorbell.

DARLENE. Home free, huh? What did I tell you? The beggars have arrived!

PEGGY. Well, don't just stand there. Help me get him back on the couch.

They pick HARVEY up and 'throw' him on the couch, where he once again flops over on his side.

PEGGY. Good grief, you clumsy idiot. Straighten him up.

DARLENE. Me clumsy? You're the one who dropped him.

The doorbell rings again. PEGGY yells towards the door.

PEGGY. Just a minute! (to DARLENE) Come on, Darlene, help me..

DARLENE grabs HARVEY's arms and pulls. HARVEY promptly rolls off the couch and lands face first on the floor with a loud crash.

LOIS. (calling through the door) Is everything okay in there?

PEGGY. Everything's fine. Just a minute. Good grief, Darlene... can't you be more careful!!

DARLENE. Well, it ain't like we're going to kill him.

PEGGY. Get him on the couch... NOW!!!

They pick up the body again and set HARVEY clumsily in the center of the couch. After making sure that HARVEY isn't going anywhere, PEGGY crosses to answer the door. She looks back towards DARLENE to make sure everything is okay before opening door.

PEGGY. Ready?

DARLENE. Ready!

PEGGY opens the door and finds LOIS GRAY, a middle aged woman standing on the porch. LOIS is wearing a plain dress, practical shoes and is carrying a large handbag. She is obviously quite nervous.

LOIS. Hello, Mrs. Ruttles. I'm Lois Gray. May I come in?

PEGGY. Lois? Do I know you?

LOIS. I was Mr. Cyrus Ruttles' secretary. We met at the company picnic two summers ago?

PEGGY. Yes, Lois. Now is not such a good time....

LOIS pushes past PEGGY and rushes over to the couch where she awkwardly hugs HARVEY.

LOIS. Oh, Mr. Harvey. I am so sorry for your loss. Your father was a very kind man.

When HARVEY doesn't respond, she steps back, a little shaken.

LOIS. *(to Peggy)* Is he okay? He seems mighty cold. Is he sick? And why is he wearing those glasses?

DARLENE. He's overcome with grief.

PEGGY. Harvey has been crying ever since he got the news of his father's death. He put on those glasses to protect his red, swollen eyes.

DARLENE. Yeah, it's terrible!

LOIS steps towards DARLENE and extends her hand.

LOIS. I don't believe we've met. I'm Lois Gray. I was the late Mr. Ruttles' personal secretary for more than forty years. *(she steps back towards PEGGY)* I too am taking his loss rather terribly, I'm afraid. Ah, may I sit?

PEGGY. Certainly, certainly.

LOIS sits on the couch next to HARVEY.

PEGGY. Wouldn't you rather sit in the chair? It's much more comfortable.

LOIS. No, no. This is fine, right next to Harvey. We've known each other for a long time, haven't we Harvey?

She waits for a response from HARVEY while DARLENE and PEGGY flash warning glances to each other.

LOIS. That's okay. I know seeing me at this time only brings back a flood of memories. You don't have to say anything. *(she pats him affectionately on the knee)* Harvey and I go way back. I remember when he was a little boy, he would come up to the office to visit his father and would spend most of the time playing under my desk. You remember that Harvey?

PEGGY. *(trying to draw LOIS's attention from HARVEY)* I never knew that Harvey used to accompany his father to work at the factory.

LOIS. Oh, yes. He loved it there. The noise, the smell of the leather and shoe dyes. Shoe making has been in his blood since the day Harvey was born. Isn't that right, Harvey? *(she looks at him for just a second and then continues on)* Oh, I remember that day right before me and Mr. Ruttles moved to our new corporate office when you whispered to me not to tell your Daddy, but you'd work at the factory even if didn't pay you. You told me that what made you really happy was knowing

that one of the pairs of shoes you made that day would one day be worn by someone when they walked their daughter down the aisle, or paced the hallway outside of the delivery room while their first baby was being born, or at the funeral of one of their parents. Well, that day is here, Harvey. That day is finally here.

LOIS reaches into her purse, pulls out a large handkerchief and blows her nose loudly.

LOIS. I'm so, sorry. I didn't come here to add to your grief.

PEGGY. Oh, that's quite alright, Mrs. Gray.

LOIS. Please call me Lois.

PEGGY. Okay... ah, Lois. Me and Harvey really appreciate you stopping by, but we have a lot of plans that have to be made. So, if you don't mind...

LOIS. I understand, I understand. I didn't mean to impose. It's just that, well, I was wondering if there was any mention of me in the will?

DARLENE. Oh, Lord.

PEGGY. In the will?

LOIS. I know it's not my place to be nosy and all, but my friend Clara works for Mr. Ruttles' old law firm, Belkin & Belkin and she told me that she didn't think I was in the will. Which really surprised me, you know.

PEGGY. Surprised you? Why?

LOIS. Well, because after Mr. Ruttles got sick and all, he told me not to worry about a thing. He would make sure I was taken care of.

DARLENE. I'm sorry, taken care of?

LOIS. Yes, he promised me that after he was gone, I would never have to work again. He said that I'd been like one of the family for all those years and that family always watched out for each other. So, naturally it surprised me when Clara said she looked all through the will and didn't find me mentioned anywhere.

PEGGY. Well, Lois, the reading of the will won't be until tomorrow at the end of the Memorial Service and then we'll find out if you're in there.

PEGGY stands to indicate that the conversation is over, but LOIS interrupts her.

LOIS. Oh, it's not for me. Oh, no, no. I would never think of asking for anything for myself. I can get along just fine on my small Social Security check. No, it's my son, Donnie. The Good Lord gave me a handful when he gave me that boy. He has some special needs, you know. No, if Mr. Ruttles did leave me anything in his will, it won't go to me, it will all go to my poor boy. You remember Donnie, don't you Harvey? *(Harvey doesn't respond)* Sure you do. The day Donnie was born, I knew there was something a little wrong with that boy. It's been a struggle raising him all these years all by myself, but with your Daddy's help, we made it.

DARLENE. *(Now curious)* Single mother? Was Mr. Gray in an accident or something?

LOIS. No, no.... the only accident was me agreeing to reproduce with such a loser. Donnie started acting really crazy when he was about three. Lloyd insisted that he was possessed by the Devil.. wanted me to call an exorcist or witch doctor or something. When I wouldn't, well, Lloyd just up and left. We never saw him again. It's been just me and Donnie all these years.

PEGGY. *(reaching to take LOIS by the arm and lead her to the door)* Well, I sure hope things work out... now if you'll excuse...

LOIS. *(interrupting)* Yes, your father was good to us, Harvey. Helping me find a special school for Donnie. And later on when he started the drinking and the drugging, helping me pay for Donnie's rehab. If it hadn't been for your father, Harvey, poor Donnie would have never made it through this last treatment program. He flunked out of the first three, but I kept praying and, praise Jesus, I think this fourth one

has done the trick. After all these years, I've finally gotten my sweet little boy back and now, well, all we have is each other.

DARLENE. Where is Donnie now?

LOIS. He's out in the car. *(she gets up and goes to the window, looks out)* Oh, he's still technically on house arrest, so he can only stay in the house or ride in the car with me. No visits, no bad influences. That's how my boy is going to get through this.

LOIS suddenly goes to the door, opens it and yells out.

LOIS. Donnie, roll that window up. Right now. And are you smoking? Is that smoke? Throw it out! Throw out that cigarette right now! Now roll up that window and keep it up! *(closes the door and turns back to PEGGY and DARLENE, resuming her sweet disposition)* Yes, I know that somewhere under the scars and tattoos is my sweet little boy. He just needs some time. And it was all possible because of your Daddy's good heart, Harvey. *(crosses back towards couch)* Harvey, tell them about that time you caught Donnie in the back of the factory drinking shoe dye? This is a funny one. Go ahead, tell it, Harvey.

LOIS grabs HARVEY by the arm and holds his hand. Seeing this, PEGGY and DARLENE panic. DARLENE immediately tries to draw away LOIS's attention.

DARLENE. *(standing)* Miss Lois, ah... how about some coffee?

LOIS. Huh?

DARLENE. Yeah, I think I'm going to brew a pot of good, hot coffee. Wouldn't you like some, Lois?

LOIS. Well, I...

PEGGY. *(catching on and standing)*

Good idea. Lois, how about a hot cup of coffee and maybe a piece of pie? We've got lots of pie.

LOIS. Oh, I don't want to impose. I'm just happy to sit right here with Harvey and reminisce about old times.

LOIS begins to move back to her spot on the couch, but PEGGY takes her by the arm and leads her to the kitchen.

PEGGY. Oh, it's no trouble. No trouble at all. Let's go have a cup of coffee and we can talk some more about the will.

LOIS. Well, okay. If you insist. Bye, Harvey. Such a sweet man and always so quiet.

The three women exit into the kitchen, leaving HARVEY sitting alone on the couch. After a few moments, noise can be heard from the front porch, the door slowly opens and Donnie sticks his head in. Donnie is a tall, gangling man in his mid-30's who is very nervous and jittery. He is wearing blue jeans, a flannel shirt with the sleeves cut off and work boots.

DONNIE. Mom? Hey, Mom, it's getting hot out there in the car. Mom?

When there is no answer, DONNIE steps slowly into the room.

DONNIE. Hey, man. What's up? You see an old lady come through here? *(he looks around and when he sees that he's alone with HARVEY, he becomes more bold)* You must be Harvey? Haven't seen you in a while. Listen, dude, before my Mom comes back in, you wouldn't happen to have anything to drink around here, would you? I mean, I could really use a good stiff drink right now. *(when he doesn't get an answer, DONNIE starts looking around the room)* Come on, man. Just a little shot of some Jack, Wild Turkey, Black Label... heck, a good cough syrup would do me. All I need is just one good drink. Nobody will have to know and then I'll get out of your hair and go back to the car. You must have some around here somewhere. No?

When DONNIE gets no response from HARVEY, he stops searching. He walks over to the couch.

DONNIE. Come on, man. Help out a brother, won't you? My Mom is driving me nuts with this house arrest stuff and I need a stiff one, if you know what I mean. Look, if I get caught, I promise I won't rat you out. I'll say I just found it and had a drink behind your back. Come on, man. I am hurting. That old bitch turned the house upside down while I was in my last rehab and there ain't so much as a cough drop in that place. You know what's it like to have to listen to that old bag talk all day without having a buzz on?

DONNIE finally gives up, crosses and sits next to HARVEY on the couch.

DONNIE. Listen, I was real sorry to hear about your Dad, man. Old man Rutles was a pretty cool old dude. Even when I was going crazy, setting stuff on fire, getting kicked out of school and all, he was always nice to me and my Mom. Trying to help us out. Sent me off to private schools and rehab. He used to always tell me, "Donnie, you're a good man on the inside. You just don't know it yet." Yeah, he was a real cool old dude. *(he pauses and studies HARVEY for a moment)* Hey man, you sure you're okay? I mean, they must have put you on some heavy duty stuff. I can hardly see you breathing. What they put you on? Oxycontin? Vicodin? Whatever it is, it's got you shaken and baked, doesn't it? *(leans closer to HARVEY)* Listen man, I could really use a couple of those pills you're on. The old lady thinks I've completely kicked the booze and the pills cold turkey, and I'm trying, but every now and then, I just need a little something to take the edge off. You know what I'm talking about? *(he gets no response from HARVEY)* Exactly, exactly. So, listen man. If you could spare just a couple of them Oxies, I would really appreciate it. *(when he still gets no response from HARVEY, DONNIE begins to get a little angry)* Oh, I see. You're just

going keep them all to yourself? Well, I know you got some on you and I really need them, dude, so give them up.

DONNIE looks around, then reaches over and begins looking through HARVEY's pockets.

DONNIE. Come on, man. All I need is a couple of 'em. I know you got some on you.

In the process of searching HARVEY's pockets, DONNIE pulls on the body and it falls over towards him. He is so shocked, he pulls on HARVEY and they both fall on the floor in front of the couch- HARVEY lying squarely on top of DONNIE who now panics.

DONNIE. Get off me, dude. Hey, man, get off! Mom.... Mom!

DONNIE struggles to free himself. Hearing the noise, the three women rush in from the kitchen.

LOIS. Donnie! Get off Harvey!

DONNIE. I'm not on him, Mom. He's on me!

PEGGY and DARLENE rush over and pull HARVEY off DONNIE. As the two women put HARVEY back on the couch, DONNIE jumps up, quite rattled.

DONNIE. I was just sitting there, minding my own business when the dude jumped on me. Man, what is your problem? All I wanted was just a couple of those pills. I wasn't going to take your whole bottle.

LOIS. Donnie Gray, were you looking for drugs on Mr. Harvey?

DONNIE. No, Mom. I was...

LOIS. Harvey is a good, respectable man. He doesn't have any drugs on him.

DONNIE. But look at the dude, Mom. He's wasted. All I wanted was a couple.

LOIS. Donnie, get back in the car right now.

DONNIE. But, Mom...

LOIS. NOW!!

LOIS starts beating DONNIE with her purse as they cross towards the door. DONNIE exits and LOIS turns back towards the women.

LOIS. I am so sorry, Harvey. He's never done anything like this before. Donnie is a good boy. Really, he is. Now you see why that money is so important to us. Donnie needs his treatments or I don't know what he'll do next. Well, I'm sorry again. I'll just be going now. *(she crosses towards door and turns back)* When did you say the reading of the will was again?

PEGGY. Tomorrow at the end of the Memorial Service.

LOIS. Well, I am sorry again. I guess I'll just see you folks at the service. *(she screams at DONNIE as she exits)* Donnie, roll up that window. Roll it up. And is that another cigarette? I see the smoke, Donnie. I see it! Somebody's going to be in time-out when we get home.

The door closes and the two women stand looking at each other. PEGGY bends down to straighten HARVEY's clothes and hair as DARLENE crosses and looks out the window.

DARLENE. Boy, that was close.

PEGGY. You're not kidding.

DARLENE walks over to help PEGGY with HARVEY.

DARLENE. When she reached down and hugged him, I thought for sure the gig was up. What would we have done if she noticed a little more than just how cold Harvey is?

PEGGY. Well, I guess we could have taken her out back and buried her in the back yard.

DARLENE. What??!!

PEGGY. I'm just playing. We ain't got to worry about crazy old Lois. The only thing she cares about it taking care of her pitiful son. She sat right here on this couch, next to a dead man, and didn't notice a thing. Did she act like she even suspected that Harvey might be dead?

DARLENE. No..

PEGGY. Exactly. Harvey could have burst into flames and all she would have said was, "Boy, it's hot in here. Now where's my money?"

DARLENE. You think she's going to give us a problem over the will?

PEGGY. She can't. Mr. Belkin himself said that the only person mentioned in the will by name was Harvey. I don't care what old Cyrus promised her, she ain't getting a dime.

They continue to straighten HARVEY and the couch.

DARLENE breaks the silence.

DARLENE. You don't think that after Harvey's mother died that her and Mr. Cyrus were.. you know?

PEGGY. Ooo! No, I don't think that! The only thing that old man was interested in putting his greedy hands on was a big stack of money- not shriveled up old Lois Gray.

DARLENE. But you know, it could be possible. I mean, what if they were lovers, and there's a secret provision in the will that says that when Harvey dies, the money goes to his lover... Lois.

PEGGY. There ain't no secret provision. That money is Harvey's. And after tomorrow, the money will be mine.

DARLENE. And mine.

PEGGY. Yes, Darlene. And yours.

DARLENE. But what if they do an autopsy? Then they'll know Harvey has been dead for two days.

PEGGY. Would you stop with the 'what ifs.' Nothing is going to happen. We're going to figure out a way to get Harvey to sign those papers tomorrow and then we'll be rich. End of story.

DARLENE. Yeah, I've been wondering about that signing the papers thing. Any ideas on how we're going to pull that off?

PEGGY. I'm still working on it. I'm sure it will come to me.

The phone rings and DARLENE answers it.

DARLENE. Hello. No, I, uh.. he, uh... hold on just a minute.

DARLENE puts her hand over the phone receiver and speaks to PEGGY in a loud whisper.

DARLENE. It's the funeral home. They want to speak to Harvey.

PEGGY. Tell them he can't come to the phone right now. He's in the bathroom.

DARLENE. *(speaking into phone)* I'm sorry but Harvey can't make it to the phone right now. Yes, I see. Well, I don't know. *(to PEGGY)*

Harvey's father is about to be cremated and they need Harvey to come down and pick out an urn.

PEGGY. Tell them he'll have to call back later.

DARLENE. He'll have to call you back later. He has.. ah, diarrhea.

PEGGY. Darlene!

DARLENE. *(to Peggy in a loud whisper)* I didn't know what to say.

(speaking back in phone) Oh, no. I don't think that is a good idea.

(to Peggy) They want to come over here and show Harvey all the urn samples so he can pick out one and they can order it and have it here by tomorrow.

PEGGY. *(crossing to phone)* Here, let me talk to them. *(in phone)*

Hello, this is Harvey's wife, Peggy Ruttles. No, I'm sorry, he can't come to the telephone right now. I think he ate something that didn't agree with him. Yes, I understand you're under a deadline. No, no.. don't come here. I'll come right over and pick out one. Yes, I'm sure Harvey won't mind. Just give me a few moments and I'll be right there. Yes,

okay. Bye. *(hangs up the phone)* Well, I've got to go down to the funeral home for a few minutes.

PEGGY goes up the desk and picks up her purse.

PEGGY. You'll need to stay here and keep an eye on Harvey while I'm gone.

DARLENE. *(turns and looks at HARVEY)* Keep an eye on him. What are you expecting him to do? Go into the kitchen and make himself a bologna sandwich?

PEGGY. *(coming back downstairs, putting on her coat)* No, just watch him and make sure nothing happens while I'm gone.

PEGGY digs in her purse to retrieve her keys and crosses to door.

DARLENE follows.

DARLENE. Nothing happens? What do you expect is going to happen?

PEGGY. Just keep the door and curtains closed. I'll be right back.

PEGGY exits and DARLENE closes the door. She crosses and makes sure the curtains are closed. DARLENE turns slowly and looks at HARVEY.

DARLENE. *(talking to herself)* Okay, Darlene. You can do this. All you have to do is keep an eye on the dead guy for a few minutes. Nothing creepy about that.

There's a sound of a horn from the driveway as PEGGY drives away. The sound startles DARLENE and she screams and jumps.

DARLENE. Everything's cool. It's just Harvey. Just Harvey. Just Harvey's lifeless, decaying body sitting over there on the couch. Dead. Deep breaths. He's not going to hurt you. Unless he's not really dead. Unless he's been faking it all this time and when you turn your back, he

gets up off of that couch and starts moving slowly towards you, with his arms outstretched like a mummy, moaning and groaning.

DARLENE goes to the window and looks out.

DARLENE. Okay, Peggy. You've been gone long enough. Just pick one out and come on back. So I don't have to sit alone in the living room with your creepy dead husband.

She paces back and forth for a moment and then grabs her chicken bucket and slowly approaches the couch.

DARLENE. Okay, Harvey. I'm just going to sit right here and eat me a piece of Kentucky Fried Chicken. You just stay on your side of the couch and I'll stay on mine.

DARLENE sits on the couch, as far from HARVEY as she can. After a moment, she looks at HARVEY and then the chicken bucket, then reaches in and pulls out a drumstick. She leans over and puts the drumstick in HARVEY's right hand and props it on his knee.

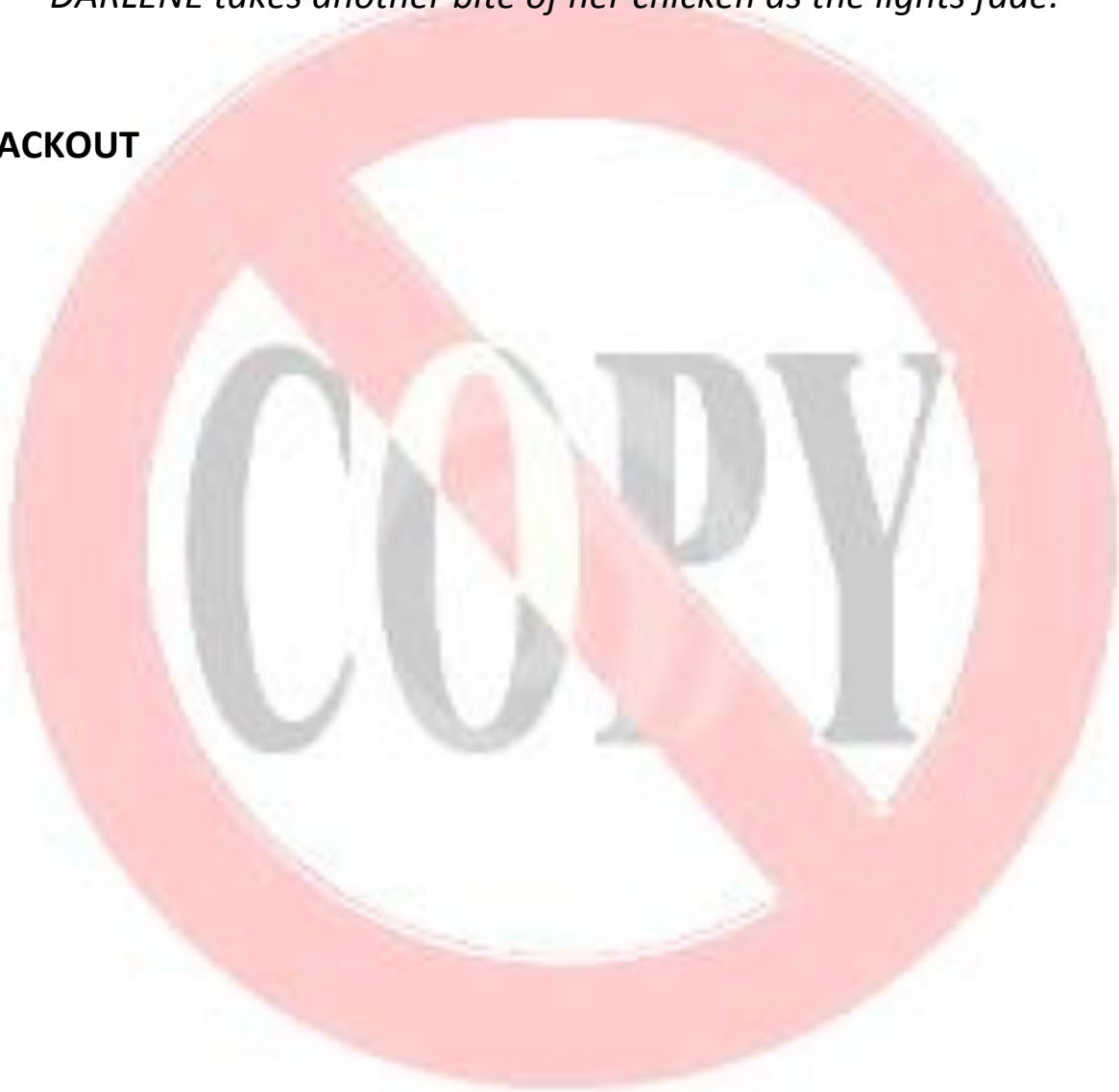
DARLENE. Well, if we're going to spend the afternoon together, we might as well enjoy our chicken.

DARLENE gets her own piece of chicken out of the bucket, sets the bucket aside and uses the drumstick to propose a 'toast' to HARVEY.

DARLENE. Here's to inheriting two hundred million dollars. (she takes a bite and looks at HARVEY) Don't be bashful, Harvey. Eat up, because unless they got a KFC in heaven, this is definitely the last time you'll get to enjoy the Colonel's Eleven Herbs and Spices.

DARLENE takes another bite of her chicken as the lights fade.

BLACKOUT



Act 1

Scene 3

It is later in the same evening, as indicated by the shadows outside. The lights come up to reveal DARLENE and HARVEY on the couch. HARVEY is in the same position, sitting upright and DARLENE is curled up on the couch with her head in HARVEY's lap, snoring softly. There are empty potato chips bags and candy bar wrappers scattered around the couch. The empty Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket lies nearby with a few chicken bones scattered on the floor. After a moment, the door opens and PEGGY steps into the room. She sees the mess and yells to wake up DARLENE.

PEGGY. Darlene!

DARLENE. Wh..wh.. What? *(realizing she's in HARVEY's lap, sits up quickly)* Nothing happened. I swear!

PEGGY. I know nothing happened, Darlene. Harvey's dead. *(walking over to couch and picking up an empty chips bag)* But what have you been doing? Look at this mess!

DARLENE. I.. I got hungry.

PEGGY. You got hungry? What if someone had come by? The front door was unlocked. They could have walked right in here and seen you and Harvey snuggling together on the couch. Then what, Darlene?

DARLENE. We were not snuggling. Anyway, I didn't expect you to be gone so long. You said you would be right back.

PEGGY. It took a little bit longer to pick out the urn and fill out the paper work than I thought.

DARLENE. It took that long to pick out a jar?

PEGGY. Not a jar. A 'sacred receptacle' for the old coot's final remains. Then I had to fill out all the paper work for cremating the body and arranging for the memorial service. They said that since I wasn't the

next of kin, I couldn't authorize anything. So, I had to convince the funeral director that Harvey was ill and could not be disturbed. God, they were stubborn.

DARLENE. But, you take care of everything? Harvey doesn't have to go down there?

PEGGY. No. It's funny how being rich seems to help one break the rules.

DARLENE. They've heard about the two hundred million dollars, too, huh?

PEGGY. Yep. They said that since Harvey and I are such important local citizens, they could make some exceptions. Now that's the kind of respect I deserve. Help me get this mess cleaned up.

DARLENE gets up, brushes the chips off her shirt and picks up the empty bags and wrappers which she puts in a trash can under the desk. PEGGY goes into the kitchen.

PEGGY. *(calling from kitchen)* Did anyone call while I was gone?

DARLENE:. Nope. It's been dead quiet.

PEGGY comes back into the room with a broom and dustpan.

PEGGY. Very funny. *(she bends over and starts to brush crumbs off HARVEY)* What's that smell?

DARLENE. I don't smell anything.

PEGGY. Over here. Get a whiff of this.

DARLENE bends over HARVEY and inhales deeply.

DARLENE. What is that? The chicken.

PEGGY. It's Harvey! Oh, my God. He's starting to stink!

DARLENE. Smells like rotten meat.

PEGGY. What do you think he is, Darlene. A vegetable. Of course it's rotten meat. It's Harvey. He's rotting.

DARLENE. What are we going to do? That smell will be a dead... I mean, an obvious giveaway tomorrow.

PEGGY. Go see if you can find some perfume or something.

DARLENE rushes into the kitchen while PEGGY fans HARVEY and holds her nose. After a moment, DARLENE comes back in with a can of Lysol. She rushes over and sprays it all over HARVEY.

PEGGY. What is that?

DARLENE. *(looking at can)* Baby Fresh Lysol. That ought to cover up the stink!

PEGGY. *(taking can away from DARLENE)* I said perfume, Darlene. Perfume! Lysol is not perfume!

DARLENE. Well, it's all I could find. And he smells better, doesn't he?

PEGGY. Good God, Darlene. How are we going to explain why Harvey smells like the inside of a diaper pail?

DARLENE. He likes children?

PEGGY. You are such an idiot. No wonder everybody in town thinks you're such a loser.

DARLENE. Well, at least I didn't marry someone I didn't love.

PEGGY. What?

DARLENE. You told me yourself on your wedding day that you couldn't stand Harvey. That the thought of his clumsy hands all over you just made you nauseous. And I said, 'then why are you marrying him?' And you said because of the money. Harvey came from money and one day that money was going to be yours.

PEGGY. And it's going to be mine... if we can just get through tomorrow.

DARLENE. Well, at least Harvey will smell baby fresh.

DARLENE sprays HARVEY with the Lysol can one more time, turns and storms off into the kitchen.

PEGGY. Perfect.

PEGGY continues to clean up the empty food containers. As she picks up some of the trash on the couch beside HARVEY, she suddenly stops.

PEGGY. Darlene, have you noticed that Harvey looks a little... pale?

DARLENE. *(coming back into the room)* Pale?

PEGGY. Yeah. Come over here. Look at him in the light. He's gotten, I don't know, whiter since I left. What did you do to him?

DARLENE. Nothing. What do you mean, what did I do to him?

PEGGY. What did you guys do while I was gone, besides eat enough snacks to get you through several Super Bowls?

DARLENE. Nothing. I swear I didn't touch him.

PEGGY. Well, something happened Darlene. When I left, Harvey looked like he was just sitting there, watching TV. And when I get back he looks.... well, dead.

DARLENE. Maybe we ought to have him on ice. You think he would fit in the refrigerator?

PEGGY. The refrigerator?

DARLENE. We could take all the food and shelves out and kind of stuff him in there until tomorrow. That way not only would he keep from getting any more white... and stinky... but if any more people come over, they wouldn't be able to get up close to him and notice that he's... well, passed.

PEGGY. And what happens tomorrow when we pry him out of the refrigerator and take him to sign the papers? What then, Darlene? He'll be so stiff, we'd never get him straight again. No, we've got to think of something else.

They pace and think for a minute, then DARLENE blurts out.

DARLENE. Makeup!

PEGGY. What?

DARLENE. You know I took that cosmetology course over at the Tech School?

PEGGY. Yeah?

DARLENE. Well, one of the things we studied was "Natural Makeup for the Natural Woman." I remember because it was the first time Suzy Bartlett, you know that tramp that works down at the diner... well, it was the first time I ever saw Suzy when she didn't look like a hooker.

PEGGY. You want to put makeup on Harvey?

DARLENE. Have you got a better idea?

PEGGY. But Harvey is a man, Darlene. Not a 'natural woman.'

DARLENE. It don't matter. The techniques we learned can be applied to anyone, man or woman. Let me go get my makeup kit out of the car.

DARLENE exits. PEGGY sits down beside HARVEY on the couch.

PEGGY. She's right, you know, Harvey. I didn't love you. Oh, I faked it real good for all these years. But all I was really interested in was the money. If you had just demanded that your Daddy give you what was rightfully yours, things would have been different. I might have even learned to love you, Harvey. Maybe. But it's too late now. I'm still here and you're sitting there stinking like a can of bad tuna and looking as pale as one of those Goth kids that hang around at the mall. We could have had the world, Harvey, if you hadn't been so damn stingy. Well, I guess I'll have to spend it without you.

DARLENE comes back in with her handbag. She crosses over to the chair and dumps the contents into the seat of the chair.

DARLENE. I knew I brought my makeup bag. Here it is. Now, our teacher said that the object of "Natural Makeup for the Natural Woman" was to make it look like you weren't actually wearing makeup at all.

PEGGY. Well, considering that Harvey is neither a woman or alive at the moment, getting a 'natural' look might not be that easy. I hope this works.

DARLENE. It'll work. Stand back.

DARLENE steps in front of HARVEY, takes off his sunglasses, bends down and starts applying makeup, talking to herself. PEGGY stands close beside her, blocking the audience's view of HARVEY.

DARLENE. Okay, we start with a foundation. I'm thinking 'Suntan' ought to give Harvey that 'just got off the beach' look.

PEGGY. Just got off the beach? We live 600 miles from the Atlantic, Darlene.

DARLENE. Well, would you rather him look like one of the Addams Family or David Hasselhoff from Baywatch? Okay, now a little blush, to bring out his high, Nordic cheekbones.

PEGGY:. Harvey's Irish.

DARLENE. Whatever. Miss Pyles, that was our instructor, said that it always helps to accentuate your natural beauty and Harvey has always had very striking cheekbones, so we're bringing them out. Okay, now a little mascara.

PEGGY. He's wearing sunglasses, Darlene!

DARLENE. Okay, I guess we can skip that. Maybe a touch of eye shadow. Harvey looks like a "Summer" so, I think blue ought out to bring out the color of his eyes. Just in case. And a little lipstick.. something demure... like frosted pink. You know, Miss Pyles was a showgirl in Vegas once, before she became a Cosmetology Instructor at the Tech School.

PEGGY. Well, when this is all over, I'll do my best to get Harvey a try-out for the Rockettes.

DARLENE. There. All finished.

DARLENE and PEGGY step back, revealing HARVEY's horribly gaudy makeup.

PEGGY. Oh my God, Darlene. He looks like a... a drag queen.

DARLENE. No, he doesn't. It's supposed to look that way. Miss Pyles says there's no such thing as natural beauty. We are supposed to use our cosmetological skills to bring beauty to the everyday housewife, making her look like one of the classic beauties.... Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe...

PEGGY. Phyllis Diller. He looks terrible, Darlene.

DARLENE. Okay, maybe it is a bit too much.

PEGGY. You think?

DARLENE. Okay, I'll wipe it off and start over. *(she exits to the kitchen, talking to herself)* Maybe I'll try Miss Pyles' specialty, "A Night at the Oscars." That should look better...

PEGGY. Sorry, Harvey.

The doorbell rings, followed by a knock on the door. PEGGY rushes over and peeks out the window.

ROSA. Harvey and Peggy. Are y'all in there?

PEGGY. *(in a loud whisper)* Hurry up, Darlene. It's Miss Rosa from across the street!

DARLENE rushes in from the kitchen carrying a wet towel.

PEGGY. Wipe it off! Quick! *(turning towards the door)* Just a minute, Miss Rosa. *(back to DARLENE)* Get that lipstick off him. All we need is for nosy old Miss Rosa to start telling everyone that Harvey is a transvestite.

ROSA. Is everything okay, sweetie. Do I need to call 911?

PEGGY. No, just a minute. We're not dressed.

DARLENE. Okay, it's off!

DARLENE quickly puts HARVEY's sunglasses back on as PEGGY crosses to the door and lets in Rosa, the elderly neighborhood busybody. She's wearing a house dress and has her hair up in curlers. She's carrying a pie dish.

PEGGY. Come in, Miss Rosa. I'm sorry to keep you waiting.

ROSA. That's quite alright, dear. I heard the terrible news about Harvey's father and thought I would come over pay my condolences. *(ROSA walks over to the couch and leans down to HARVEY.)*

I am so sorry about the passing of your father, Harvey. He was a such a dear man. Him and your mother both were saints. I thought you might be hungry, so I baked you a sweet potato pie, your favorite.

PEGGY rushes over and takes the pie from Rosa and hands it to DARLENE.

PEGGY. Thank you so much, Miss Rosa. You remember my sister, Darlene?

ROSA. *(holding out her hand)* Oh yes. How are you Darlene? Are you still looking for work?

DARLENE. How did you know I was out of work?

PEGGY. Oh, Miss Rosa knows everything that goes on in this town, don't you Miss Rosa?

ROSA. Well, I do have my little network of spies. *(she laughs and PEGGY and DARLENE join her nervously)* By the way, the inspection tag on your car has expired, dear. And you might want to check the air pressure on the rear driver's side tire. It noticed it looked a little low when I crossed the street.

DARLENE. Thank you, Miss Rosa.

ROSA. Don't mention it, dear. Just doing my civic duty.

ROSA sits on the couch next to HARVEY.

ROSA. Anyway, I heard the news about Mr. Cyrus and thought that I would....

ROSA stops suddenly, noticing the smeared makeup on HARVEY.

ROSA. Harvey, are you wearing makeup?

PEGGY grabs the towel from DARLENE and rushes over behind the couch to wipe HARVEY's face.

PEGGY. Oh, no. Harvey has been so overwhelmed with grief since the news of his father's passing that he's cried so much until his face is raw.

ROSA. But that looks like eye shadow? And is Harvey wearing lipstick?

DARLENE. We just got through eating Popsicles.

ROSA. That is not Popsicle. That's lipstick. What's going on here. Is there something I need to know about?

PEGGY looks at DARLENE and then at ROSA and then crosses up stage left, away from the couch.

PEGGY. Miss Rosa, if I was to tell you a secret, do you think you could keep it to yourself.

ROSA is intrigued and follows PEGGY.

ROSA. Oh, sure Peggy. You know me. My lips are sealed. I simply abhor gossip.

DARLENE. What?

PEGGY. Harvey has had some sort of a breakdown.

ROSA. A breakdown? Is that why he's wearing those sunglasses? What's wrong with him?

PEGGY. Well, you know how hard he took the death of his mother?

ROSA. Yes. She and I were in the garden club together. Such a sweet lady. Her death was so tragic.

PEGGY. Well, now that he has lost his father, whom he loved so much, Harvey just couldn't take it anymore. This morning, I woke up and noticed Harvey wasn't in bed. So, I looked around and found him lying on the floor of the bathroom. Just lying there, obviously in a state of total despair. He was.. oh, maybe I shouldn't be telling you this.

ROSA. Oh, dear, you can tell Miss Rosa. Your secrets are safe with me.

PEGGY. Well, he was trying on my panty hose.

ROSA. Oh my. *(She looks at Harvey suspiciously.)* And the lipstick?

PEGGY. That, too. I'm afraid Harvey has had some sort of mental break. The sudden death of his father has brought the grief of losing his mother flooding back. It's almost as if he is trying to transform himself into his mother in an effort to properly grieve the loss of her husband.

ROSA. Grief Transference... I saw that on Oprah.

PEGGY. Well, I just don't know what I'm going to do.

ROSA. Oh, you poor dear.

PEGGY. All I know is that Harvey must attend that Memorial Service tomorrow, even if it's in a dress, for, you know.... closure.

ROSA. I understand.

PEGGY. And after that, we are going away somewhere so that Harvey can get some professional help... and hopefully, one day, my precious husband will come back to me.

ROSA. *(she returns to the couch and puts her arm around HARVEY and hugs him)* You poor dear. Your life has been so tragic. So terrible.

(to PEGGY) Can he hear me?

PEGGY. Yes, I believe he can.

ROSA. Oh Harvey, you will recover and you'll see. Life will go on. I saw the very thing happen to a man on the Springer Show one time.

Terrible. Poor thing saw his shiatsu get run over by a lawn mower and didn't talk for seven years. Seven years. Just sat on the couch in his basement in his underwear and stared off into space. Just like Harvey here.

DARLENE. I'm sure everything is going to be alright. Harvey is so loved, he'll come around.

PEGGY. But not before we take our trip, right Darlene?

ROSA. You're going with them?

DARLENE. Well, ah... yes. I thought I would help Peggy out, since Harvey has such a long road to recovery.

ROSA. Well, aren't you two just angels. By the way, he's real cold. Maybe you should get him a blanket, Darlene.

DARLENE goes upstairs to retrieve a blanket while ROSA speaks to PEGGY in a loud whisper.

ROSA. I didn't want to say anything in front of Darlene, but doesn't she smell a little funny? Like disinfectant.

PEGGY. Yes, she's been trying to earn a little extra money cleaning bathrooms at the bus station part time.

ROSA. Poor dear. You know, I heard that boyfriend of hers, Cecil Peters, gave her the chlamydia. How's she doing with that?

PEGGY. I don't know... I...

DARLENE re-enters the room and ROSA doesn't go any further with her gossip.

ROSA. Ah, it was just a nasty rumor anyway... forget I mentioned it.

DARLENE hands the blanket to ROSA who wraps it around HARVEY's shoulders.

ROSA. Thank you, dear. Here you go, Harvey. You should warm up quick now. *(she turns and faces PEGGY and pulls a cell phone from the pocket of her dress)* You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to get on the phone with the ladies in my church and tell them all about Harvey's condition. We'll mobilize our prayer chain and start the

Casserole Brigade. In just a couple of hours you'll have people swarming all over this place, bringing food and praying for Harvey's deliverance from the bonds of despair.

PEGGY & DARLENE. NO!!

ROSA looks puzzled.

PEGGY. What we mean is.. well, what Harvey really needs is rest. Peace and quiet. No food. No visitors. Just some time to come to grips with the tragic loss of his beloved father. You understand, don't you?

ROSA. Yes, I do, dear. When my Charles broke his hip last year, he told me not to call the Casserole Brigade to his house. All he needed for his recovery was to sit on the couch, watch football and drink beer. He's not much of a church goer.

PEGGY. Speaking of which. Didn't Charles use a wheelchair to get around in after his surgery?

ROSA. Yes he did. Bought it down at Central City Drugs. You know, I heard that their pharmacist was caught selling pain pills to some boy who just got out of rehab..... *(trying to remember)* Donnie something... ah, just a rumor. Anyway, that thing sure came in handy.

PEGGY. Well, would you mind if we borrowed it. Just in case Harvey is still in shock and needs to use it for the Memorial Service tomorrow.

ROSA. Absolutely, dear. *(she stands to leave)* I'll have Charles bring it over right away.

PEGGY. No, that's alright. We don't need it right now. Darlene will come over and pick it up in the morning before we leave for the funeral home.

ROSA and PEGGY look over at DARLENE who just shrugs.

DARLENE. Sure...

ROSA. Well, I better be getting back over to the house. Charles gets real ornery if I don't have his dinner ready on time. *(she walks to the*

door, followed by PEGGY, then turns and calls to HARVEY in a loud voice) You take care of yourself, Harvey. I'll be praying for you.

PEGGY. Thank you so much, Miss Rosa. I don't know what we'd do without you.

ROSA. You're welcome. By the way, you might want to wipe off that lipstick before any more company gets here. Lord knows you don't want people talking your business all over town.

PEGGY. I'll take care of it right away.

DARLENE. Bye, Miss Rosa.

ROSA. Bye, dear. That stuff will clear up before you know it. Just don't forget to take your medicine.

ROSA exits and PEGGY closes the door behind her. She turns back to look at DARLENE who is looking at her perplexed.

DARLENE. My medicine?

PEGGY. Nothing.

DARLENE. *(She begins to wipe the rest of the makeup off of HARVEY's face)* Why'd you tell her that Harvey was wearing your panty hose?

PEGGY. I don't know. I had to make up something. She was beginning to suspect that there was something wrong with Harvey besides just depression.

DARLENE. But panty hose? And wearing your lipstick? You could have made up something a little less.... weird.

PEGGY. What did you want me to say?

DARLENE. I don't know, but telling the biggest gossip in town that your husband is a comatose cross-dresser seemed a little too far over the line. I bet that old blabber mouth is over there on the phone right now calling the ladies in her garden club and sharing the entire conversation, word for word.

PEGGY. Oh, Darlene. Miss Rosa's not that bad.

DARLENE. Not that bad? Do you know what she said about me after me and Cecil broke up last year?

PEGGY. What?

DARLENE. She told all the ladies down at the Cut-n-Curl that the reason Cecil dumped me was because I gave him VD. Can you believe that? Now every time I try to make an appointment to get my hair cut, the ladies at the Cut-n-Curl are suddenly booked solid.

PEGGY. So, she likes to gossip. What do you want me to do about it? Go over and cut her telephone lines? Tie her and Charles up and keep them hostage in the basement?

DARLENE. No... just try to keep the comments about Harvey being a transvestite to yourself, okay?

PEGGY. Okay, okay. Listen, it's getting late and I'm ready for bed. I got a feeling that tomorrow is going to be a busy day, what with us trying to convince everyone that Harvey is still in the land of the living and all.

DARLENE. Yeah, I've been thinking about that. How exactly are we going to pull that little trick off anyway?

PEGGY crosses and sits in the chair.

PEGGY. Well, all we have to do is get him to the funeral home without anyone noticing he can't walk.

DARLENE. In the wheelchair?

PEGGY. Yes. If we get there early enough, we can tell the funeral director that Harvey wants a few minutes alone with his father before he opens up the room to everyone.

DARLENE. *(sitting on couch next to Harvey)* That ought to work. Good idea. But what about having Harvey sign the papers?

PEGGY. Well, we're going to have to create some type of diversion.

DARLENE. Diversion?

PEGGY. Yes, if people aren't looking at Harvey when it comes time to sign, they'll never know he didn't do it.

DARLENE. Then who is?

PEGGY. Me.

DARLENE. You?

PEGGY. I learned to sign his name years ago.

DARLENE. You forged his signature?

PEGGY. No, I just signed his name... when he was, ah..... you know.. unavailable. And that's exactly what I'm going to do tomorrow.

DARLENE. That's stealing, Peggy.

PEGGY. You want your third or not?

DARLENE. Yes, but not if I have to break the law.

PEGGY. You don't think concealing a dead body and defacing it with cheap ass Cover Girl make-up is against the law?

DARLENE. Hey!

PEGGY. All I'm saying is that if we want to get that money, we're going to have to bend a few rules, okay?

DARLENE. Okay. So how exactly are you going to distract people and forge his signature?

PEGGY. I'm not. You are.

DARLENE. Me?

PEGGY. Yes, Darlene. You. If I create a diversion, everybody will be staring right at me. How can I sign Harvey's name if every eye in the room is on me? You'll have to do it.

DARLENE. Okay, you've obviously been thinking about this, so what do you want me to do.

PEGGY. Well, it's got to be dramatic. I think you should set your hair on fire.

DARLENE. What?

PEGGY. Set your hair on fire.

DARLENE. No way. You know how long it took me to get my highlights to look like this. Since I've been banned from of the Cut-n-Curl, I had to let Barbara Sue down at the Hair Flair have a go at it. It took that klutz six weeks to make it look natural. I ain't setting it on fire.

PEGGY. Okay, then take your shirt off.

DARLENE. Take my.. are you crazy?

PEGGY. Oh please. It ain't like you haven't done it before. Remember the prom? You had no trouble whipping the girls out for a little impromptu performance then.

DARLENE. I was seventeen and drunk!

PEGGY. Well, now you're all grown up and doing a little encore performance is worth sixty million dollars.

DARLENE. I am not taking off my shirt. Not even for sixty six million dollars.

PEGGY gets up and paces while she thinks.

PEGGY. I got it! Right before Harvey has to sign, you slip out and call in a bomb threat. In the commotion, I could sign the papers and nobody would even notice. By the time everybody found out it was a false alarm, we'd be home free.

DARLENE. That might work.

PEGGY. Of course it will work. You'll call in the bomb threat and everyone will have to evacuate. No witnesses. Problem solved.

DARLENE. And I don't have to take off my shirt?

PEGGY. Nope.

DARLENE. Good. The girls aren't as stage-ready as they were in the 12th grade, if you know what I mean.

PEGGY. Okay, well now that that's settled, I'm going to bed. Tomorrow is going to be long day and I need my rest. Good night.

PEGGY starts to go up the stairs. DARLENE stands and starts to follow her to the landing.

DARLENE. But what about Harvey?

PEGGY. What do you mean?

DARLENE. We can't just leave him alone down here all by himself.

PEGGY. Why? You think he's going to get up and go for a drive?

DARLENE. No, but isn't it a little disrespectful to leave him... all alone?

PEGGY. Disrespectful? I'll tell you what is disrespectful. Putting blue eye shadow and lipstick on a dead guy. That was disrespectful. No, Darlene, if he didn't speak up while you were doing that, I don't think he's going to say much about us going to bed without him. *(PEGGY continues up the stairs.)*

DARLENE. Well, maybe one of us should sit up with him.

PEGGY. Sit up with him? Why?

DARLENE. I don't know. That's just what you're supposed to do. Sit up with the dead.

PEGGY. *(beginning to go up the stairs)* I tell you what, Darlene. Be my guest. Sit up with him. Read him a bedtime story. Paint his toenails. Do whatever you want, but I'm pooped out and I'm going to bed. Goodnight!

PEGGY exits into the bedroom, leaving DARLENE standing and looking at HARVEY. She slowly walks over and sits beside him.

DARLENE:. Well, I guess it's you and me, Harvey. Slide over. *(she sits awkwardly for a moment before continuing)* You know, Peggy's not that bad of a person. Sure, she's just greedy. And a little self-centered. *(she looks over at HARVEY)* Okay, you're right. A lot self-centered. But she can't really help it. Ever since we were little kids, all Peggy has always talked about was one day having fancy new clothes, furs, diamonds, living in a mansion. I guess you were her way of getting all that, Harvey. *(she pauses for a long moment)* Okay, stop looking at me like that. I know you deserved better. You know, If I was your wife, I would have loved you and taken proper care of you. Oh yes, I would have been waiting for you by the door when you got home every day. *(she starts to stroke his arm seductively, then his chest)* I would have given you something to come home to, if you know what I mean. You'd open up that door after a long day at the shoe factory and there I'd be, waiting for you in a little red negligee. Oh, I would be a naughty girl. You'd like that, wouldn't you, Harvey. Naughty Little Darlene. I wouldn't

ignore your needs like Peggy did. Oh no, I'd sit you down on this couch and make you feel like a man.

DARLENE is beginning to get excited. She stands up and straddles HARVEY, facing him. She grabs his shoulder, swinging her hair wildly.

DARLENE. Oh, yeah. I'd start out with a little show. Make you want it. Show you that there was a tigress waiting for you when you got home. Put on a little music and show you some of my moves. *(she gets off HARVEY, turns around and starts to give him a 'lap dance' while she hums music.)* Oh, yeah. You'd like that, wouldn't you, Harvey? Naughty Little Darlene giving you a little show.

DARLENE continues to dance for HARVEY, humming to herself. After a few seconds, the upstairs door opens and PEGGY steps out onto the landing in her bathrobe. Seeing DARLENE dancing for HARVEY, she screams.

PEGGY. Darlene! What the hell are you doing?

Suddenly embarrassed, DARLENE jumps away from HARVEY and gets control of herself.

DARLENE. Nothing. Nothing happened.

PEGGY. Have you no shame, Darlene? He's dead. Stop shaking your ass in his face and come to bed.

DARLENE. Sorry, I got bored.

PEGGY. Just come to bed. You're going to be a millionaire this time tomorrow. Why not try to spend your last few hours of poverty with some dignity.

DARLENE. Okay. Goodnight, Harvey.

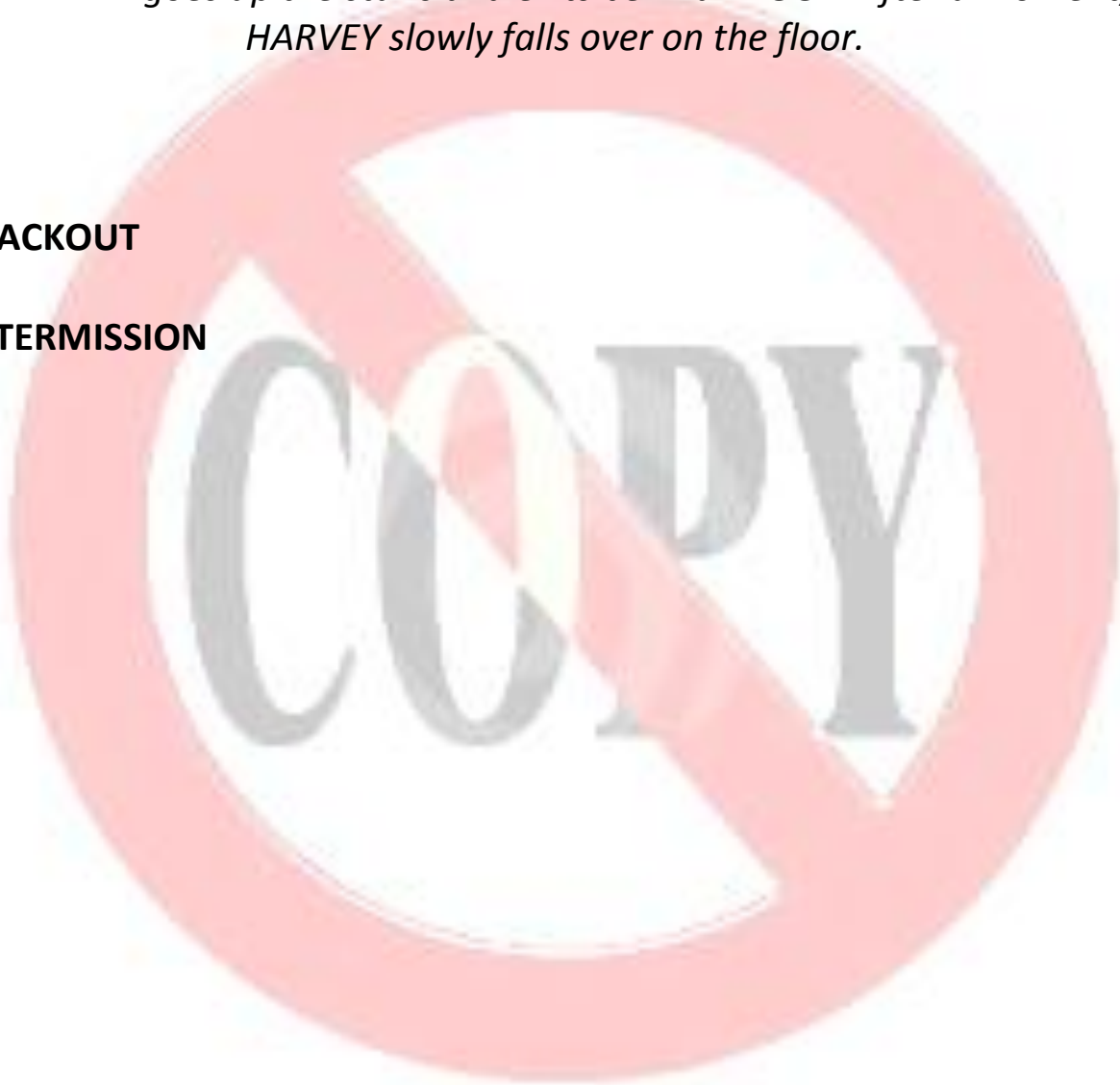
She passes by HARVEY, she trails her fingers across HARVEY's shoulders, then leans down, pulls him towards her and whispers.

DARLENE. Naughty boy.

DARLENE goes up the stairs and exits behind PEGGY. After a moment, HARVEY slowly falls over on the floor.

BLACKOUT

INTERMISSION



Act 2

Scene 1

When the curtain opens, it is the next morning. Everything is exactly as it was the night before. HARVEY is still slumped over on the floor, out of sight from the upstairs landing. After a moment, the upstairs door opens and DARLENE enters slowly. Since she 'slept over', she is still wearing the same clothes as last night and is rubbing her eyes, obviously just waking up. She looks around for a moment and then looks at the couch. Not being able to see HARVEY immediately, she rushes back into the bedroom.

DARLENE. He's gone! Peggy, he's gone!

PEGGY and DARLENE come rushing out of the upstairs bedroom. PEGGY is dressed in a nightgown and has just awakened.

PEGGY. Who? What?

DARLENE. Harvey! He's gone!

PEGGY pushes past DARLENE and rushes down the stairs. DARLENE stays on the landing, afraid to move.

DARLENE. You don't think that maybe he wasn't really dead, do you?

PEGGY reaches down and lifts HARVEY back into a sitting position against the front of the couch.

PEGGY. No, I think Harvey is still very much dead. And quite pale and stinky, I might add. Come help me get him back the couch.

DARLENE, relieved, comes down the stairs into the living room. She crosses to the couch beside PEGGY and they move HARVEY back to the center of the couch.

DARLENE. Oh, thank God. For a minute there, I thought that maybe he snapped out of it during the night and wandered away. Thank goodness he's still with us.

PEGGY. I wouldn't exactly say that Harvey is still 'with us' Darlene. But thank God his two hundred million dollar body is still right here.

DARLENE. Well, today's the big day. Are you ready for this?

PEGGY. As ready as I'll ever be. I could hardly sleep last night thinking about it.

DARLENE. Dreamed about what?

PEGGY. Being rich. *(she dances around the room a little and plops down in the chair)* Wearing the finest clothes. Getting a new Rolls-Royce just to match the color of my shoes. Dining in the world's finest restaurants, eating lobster, veal, caviar.

DARLENE. Yuck!

PEGGY. You better get used to it, Darlene. In just a few hours, we'll be multi-millionaires. Anything we want, we can have.

DARLENE. Well, what I want is some scrambled eggs. *(she starts to cross to kitchen)* Want anything?

PEGGY. No, I'm too excited to eat.

DARLENE. Okay. Just keep an eye on Harvey. He's a slippery joker.

DARLENE exits to kitchen and PEGGY looks over at HARVEY. After a moment, she yells into the kitchen.

PEGGY. Hurry up, Darlene. He gives me creeps. *(PEGGY crosses over and sits by HARVEY. Her weight on the couch causes HARVEY's head to turn towards her, but PEGGY ignores it.)* You know, I'm real sorry things turned out like this, Harvey. But it's your own fault. The one time I splurge a little on fancy food, you go and choke on it. *(the stress is*

finally beginning to get to PEGGY and she scowls at HARVEY) Don't look at me like that. I didn't mean to kill you, you know. All I was trying to do was help us celebrate our good fortune. I said stop looking at me like you're better than me. Like I'm doing something wrong. I'm just doing what you should have done years ago. Getting what is mine! Stop looking at me, Harvey! *(PEGGY reaches over and turns HARVEY's head in the other direction, then crosses her arms and stewes for moment. Finally, she looks over at HARVEY.)* Oh, so now you're ignoring me. You were always good at that, weren't you, Harvey? Ignoring my needs. Did it ever occur to you that maybe I wanted something a little better than this, huh? That it didn't take much to please me. That you could have made me happy if you just tried a little harder. Are you listening to me, Harvey? Harvey? *(PEGGY reaches over and turns HARVEY's head back to her)* Listen to me when I talk to you, you stingy bastard! That's right. Look me in the eye and tell me I deserve to have it all. Go ahead. Tell me! Tell me!

PEGGY starts to beat on HARVEY's chest, knocking him backwards, and shouting at him. In response to the noise, DARLENE runs in, holding a coffee cup in her hand.

DARLENE. Hey, hey! What are you doing, Peggy?

PEGGY. The stingy old buzzard won't stop looking at me. Trying to make me feel guilty for taking his money. Stop it, Harvey. Stop!!

DARLENE. *(she rushes over and pulls PEGGY off of HARVEY)* Okay, okay. I think he heard you. Stop looking at her, Harvey. *(she moves his head back to center)* There. Are you happy now. He's stopped.

PEGGY. *(she gets up and crosses left)* No, I'm not happy. I won't be happy until we have packed our bags, cashed our check and left this crappy little town forever.

DARLENE. We're really leaving?

PEGGY. Yes, Darlene. We're really leaving. The longer we stick around, the more people will start asking questions. And do you want to try to

explain why we waited two days to report my husband was dead? Why we kept him sitting up the couch, dressed and ready to meet the neighbors? Why you gave him a freakin' lap dance, for heaven's sake? DARLENE. Hey, I was bored.

PEGGY. You were bored? You were bored? Well, what's going to happen the next time you get bored, Darlene? Are you going to try to add some spice to your life by driving down to the Police Station and telling them how we concealed a dead body and embezzled two hundred million dollars from the estate.

DARLENE Well...

PEGGY. That's why we're leaving town. We're going to go to that Memorial Service, get our check and leave the country.

DARLENE. But what about all our friends?

PEGGY. We'll buy new ones. Now, I'm going upstairs and changing clothes. I've got to look as innocent as the pure driven snow today and that ain't going to be easy dragging my dead husband behind me.

PEGGY goes upstairs to change and DARLENE sits on the couch next to HARVEY. She straightens his posture and clothes from where PEGGY had beaten him.

DARLENE. Sorry about all this, Harvey. I won't let Peggy just run off and leave you. We'll make sure you have a proper burial with a nice casket and flowers. And then we'll leave. *(she yells up to PEGGY)* Peg! Harvey is starting to get a little stiff.

PEGGY. *(from offstage)* What do you mean, stiff?

DARLENE. I mean stiff. As in, rigor mortise stiff. He's arm won't bend.

PEGGY. Well, maybe he slept on it funny. Harvey used to always complain about being stiff in the morning.

DARLENE. This ain't from sleeping on it funny. This is from being dead. It won't move.

PEGGY exits the bedroom door, standing on the landing and buttoning her skirt.

PEGGY. Both of his arms?

DARLENE. *(she tries to bend his arms and both are completely stiff)*
Yep?

PEGGY. Well, try harder.

DARLENE. If I try any harder, I'm going to break them off and how would we explain that at the Memorial Service?

PEGGY comes down the stairs. She had changed into a black funeral dress.

PEGGY. Okay, okay. Let's get him upstairs. We've got to change him into his suit for the funeral anyway. And find you something to wear besides sweat clothes. Come on and help me.

PEGGY and DARLENE lift HARVEY off the couch. He is stuck in a seating position and they struggle to carry him around the end of the couch and to the stairs.

DARLENE. God, he's heavy.

PEGGY. Yeah. I've been after Harvey to lose some weight. His cholesterol was way too high. I guess we won't have to worry about that anymore.

As they approach the bottom of the stairs, DARLENE trips and they drop HARVEY on the floor behind the couch.

PEGGY. Darlene!

They both stand there, looking at him for a moment.

DARLENE. Hey, look at that. His arms do bend.

PEGGY. They're not supposed to bend in that direction, Darlene! Here help me.

PEGGY and DARLENE bend over and make adjustments to HARVEY, unseen behind the couch.

PEGGY. Turn it the other way. The thumb goes on top, Darlene.

DARLENE. Oh, sorry.

PEGGY. Come on, get him up.

The women lift HARVEY off the floor. He is no longer in a sitting position and is easier to carry. They begin to carry his body up the stairs, DARLENE going first.

PEGGY. Okay, careful. *(They bang HARVEY's head on the stair rail)*
Careful!

DARLENE. Sorry. *(she bends down at HARVEY)* You alright, Harvey?
(she looks at PEGGY) He says he didn't feel a thing.

PEGGY. Just get him up the stairs.

As they reach the landing, the doorbell rings, startling PEGGY so much, she drops her end of the body.

DARLENE. Now, who's being careful?

PEGGY. *(picking up HARVEY's feet quickly)*

Oh, shut up. Just get him into the bedroom and get started changing him into his blue suit. I'll see who it is at the door and get rid of them.

DARLENE. Okay, just hurry.

PEGGY and DARLENE move the body into the bedroom. PEGGY comes out, leaving the door open slightly and goes to answer the front door. The doorbell rings again, just as she opens the door. Standing on the

porch is HARVEY's cousin, CHARLOTTE. She is a pretty young woman, dressed in a black dress. She's carrying a small bouquet of flowers.

PEGGY. Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. Hey, Peggy. Long time, no see. Can I come in?

PEGGY. Ah, sure.

PEGGY opens the door wider and CHARLOTTE enters, handing the flowers to PEGGY.

CHARLOTTE. These are for you and Harvey.

PEGGY. Well, thank you. What are you doing here? I mean... how did you find out?

CHARLOTTE. Uncle Cyrus was a very important man. I may live out in the middle of nowhere, but we do have TV.

PEGGY. I'm sorry.. what I meant was...

CHARLOTTE. I know what you meant. Showing up on your doorstep, unannounced is a little surprising. After all it's been ten years since you saw me last. I didn't mean to intrude. I just wanted to stop by and tell Harvey how sorry I was to hear about his father. *(Charlotte looks around)* Where is he?

PEGGY. Who?

CHARLOTTE. Harvey? Is he here?

PEGGY. Oh, ah... no, he had to go out for a moment. Ah, why don't you sit down.

CHARLOTTE. Thank you.

PEGGY puts the flowers in a vase on the desk and CHARLOTTE sits on the couch. They look at each other uncomfortably for a moment.

PEGGY. Can I get you something? Coffee?

CHARLOTTE. No, I'm fine. I'll just wait for a few minutes for Harvey to return, if you don't mind.

PEGGY. Well.. I don't think....

There's a loud noise from upstairs and DARLENE yells from the bedroom.

DARLENE. Peggy? I need some help.

CHARLOTTE. Who's that?

PEGGY. Oh, that? Ah... that's my sister, Darlene.

DARLENE. Can you come up here?

PEGGY. Yes, Darlene. In just a moment.

CHARLOTTE. Do you need to go?

PEGGY. No, she's okay. So, how have you been? Still running your daycare center?

CHARLOTTE. Orphanage. Not a daycare. It's an orphanage. We're providing a home for 142 children now.

PEGGY. How wonderful.

CHARLOTTE. That's really the reason why I'm here.

PEGGY. What do you mean?

CHARLOTTE. To thank Harvey.

PEGGY. Thank Harvey?

CHARLOTTE. Yes. Oh, you don't know.

PEGGY. Know what?

CHARLOTTE. It was Harvey that helped pay for everything.

PEGGY. Pay for everything? I don't understand.

CHARLOTTE. Well, years ago, I felt like God was telling me to open a home for unwanted kids. But I didn't have any money. So, I called Harvey and he went to Uncle Cyrus. They sent me the money to buy the home, the beds, the clothing, everything.

PEGGY. They what??

CHARLOTTE. Harvey said that whatever I needed, just ask. He was so generous. If it wasn't for Harvey, all of those kids would be out on the street right now.

PEGGY. Why, that lying...

DARLENE. Peggy, I can't get Harvey's pants off.

CHARLOTTE. I thought you said that Harvey wasn't here.

PEGGY. Well... I thought he wasn't.

DARLENE. Okay. I got off the pants. But his underwear is NOT coming off. Harvey is way too stiff.

CHARLOTTE. What is going on up there? What is she doing to him?

PEGGY. Nothing. That's just a little game that Harvey and Darlene like to play.

CHARLOTTE. They play a game where they take off each other's underwear? What kind of game is that?

PEGGY. Ah... hide and seek.

CHARLOTTE. What?

DARLENE. I think I got it. He's legs are stuck together. I'm going to have to pry them apart.

CHARLOTTE. Peggy? What are they doing up there?

PEGGY. It's nothing, just some good clean fun. Darlene is just trying to cheer him up a little.

CHARLOTTE. By prying his legs apart and pulling off his underwear?

DARLENE. My God. Did you know that Harvey has this huge mole on his butt? *(DARLENE enters holding HARVEY'S underwear in one hand)* Have you seen that? *(she sees Charlotte)* Oh... hi?

PEGGY. Darlene, this is Harvey's cousin, Charlotte.

DARLENE comes down the stairs as CHARLOTTE and PEGGY stand. DARLENE comes around the front of the couch as CHARLOTTE sticks out her hand to shake. DARLENE extends the hand with the underwear, and then quickly throws it over her shoulder onto the stairs.

DARLENE. Oh, ah... nice to meet you.

CHARLOTTE. Me, too.

PEGGY. I was just telling Charlotte here about how you were helping Harvey get a little de-stressed by playing some games with him upstairs.

DARLENE. Games?

PEGGY. Hide and seek.

DARLENE. Oh, yeah. Harvey's been really taking the death of his father hard. I was just trying to uplift his spirits a little.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, I could tell. *(she sits and the other women join her)*
So, ah, is Harvey okay?

PEGGY. Oh, yes. He's fine.

DARLENE. Never better.

PEGGY. Alive and kicking.

DARLENE. Happy as a clam.

PEGGY. Fit as a fiddle!

CHARLOTTE. That's very odd. Harvey is so sensitive, I would have thought that losing his father would be quite devastating for him. Ever since I've known Harvey, he's always been so sensitive and incredibly generous.

DARLENE. Generous? Peggy, I thought you said that Harvey was.. I mean, *is* so stingy he made you reuse coffee filters?

PEGGY. Well, I... ah...

CHARLOTTE. Harvey stingy? No way. Harvey is one of the kindest, most generous people I've ever known. Whenever we needed something for the orphanage, all I had to do is call him and it would be sitting on the doorstep the next morning.

DARLENE. Orphanage? Did I miss something?

CHARLOTTE. Oh, I'm sorry. You didn't hear my story about how Harvey and Uncle Cyrus sent me all the money I needed to build my home for unwanted children. And how Harvey sends me a check every single month.

DARLENE. He's been sending you money every month?

CHARLOTTE. Yes. That's why I'm here. I just wanted to stop by before the Memorial Service and thank him for his generosity. Do you think that you could get him to come downstairs.

PEGGY. Ah, I'll go see if he's up to it. He's pretty broken up, you know.

PEGGY stands and goes upstairs.

DARLENE. So, you run an orphanage.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, for unwanted children.

CHARLOTTE slides over next to DARLENE, reaches into her purse and pulls out a small photo album which she hands to DARLENE. As she shares the story, DARLENE starts to get angry, not believing what she's hearing.

CHARLOTTE. I used to be an emergency room nurse and came in contact with so many homeless and unwanted children. My heart would just break for them, so a few years ago, I gave up my job, used my life savings and, with Harvey's help, built the orphanage. We have 142 kids now. But it was Harvey that really saved those kids.

PEGGY. *(appearing on the landing)* Ah, I don't think he can come down right now.

CHARLOTTE gets up and heads for the stairs. DARLENE sits on the couch, steaming.

CHARLOTTE. That's okay. I'll just run up and tell him how sorry I am for his loss and then be on my way.

PEGGY. I don't think that's a good idea.

CHARLOTTE. Why? Is he okay?

PEGGY. Oh, yes.. he's just...

DARLENE. *(now upset, she snarls loudly)* He's naked!

CHARLOTTE. Oh, I forgot. Hide and seek. Well, I guess I can just talk to him at the Memorial Service.

PEGGY. I think that is best.

PEGGY begins to lead CHARLOTTE towards the door.

CHARLOTTE. Okay. Just tell him that I stopped by and that I'll talk to him at the Memorial Service.

PEGGY. Okay, Charlotte. I'll tell him.

CHARLOTTE goes through the door and then turns back.

CHARLOTTE. And tell him thank you. Tell him that I haven't said that nearly enough over the past several years. Harvey is the kindest, most generous person I have ever known and I'm proud to be his cousin.

PEGGY. Bye, Charlotte.

PEGGY closes the door, turns around and sees DARLENE on the couch with her arms crossed angrily.

PEGGY. What?

DARLENE. Harvey is stingy? Harvey is mean? Well, that stingy, mean guy has been personally funding an orphanage for 142 kids, Peggy. A hundred and forty two! Does that sound stingy to you?

PEGGY. I didn't know...

DARLENE. *(standing)* And Charlotte? You said that she was a bitter old woman that ran a trashy daycare center. Well, she's not bitter, she's not old and and she runs an orphanage for 142 children. A hundred and forty two!

PEGGY. Okay.. so I bent the truth a little. What she is is a bloodsucker.

DARLENE. *(crossing towards PEGGY)* Bloodsucker? She's makes Mother Teresa look like a cocktail waitress. And all these stories about Harvey being stingy and cheap? All lies.

PEGGY. Okay, so maybe he was generous to some people.

DARLENE. Just not to you. And that's why you killed him.

PEGGY. What?

DARLENE. *(approaching PEGGY, who backs up towards the door)* How do I know that your story about him choking on an hor d'ourve wasn't

just a lie you used to get me over here to help you? And now I could be an accessory to murder.

PEGGY. Darlene!

DARLENE. (*wagging her finger in PEGGY's face*) Have you told me anything that's the truth?

PEGGY. (*crossing in front of couch to escape DARLENE's advances*)

Yes, Darlene. Harvey was stingy... with me. How was I supposed to know he was sending money to fund Charlotte's little homeless shelter. And he did choke to death on a piece of ham. I swear. Now, you could call the Police and turn me in, but remember, if they arrest me, they'll arrest you too. Or, you could help me go up to the bedroom and finish getting Harvey dressed for the service. And make a sixty six million dollar deposit into your checking account this afternoon. Which will it be, Darlene.

DARLENE. You would really turn me in?

PEGGY. I'm not going to jail for something I didn't do. But if I do go, you're going with me. So either call them, or shut up and come help me.

DARLENE pauses to think what to do. She looks at the phone and then at PEGGY, and back again. Finally, she takes a step towards PEGGY.

DARLENE. If I keep helping you do this, I want more money.

PEGGY:. What?

DARLENE. Let's just call it an incentive to keep my mouth shut.

PEGGY. How much?

DARLENE. Fifty percent?

PEGGY. Half? No way. Forty.

DARLENE. Forty five.

PEGGY thinks for a moment, then extends her hand to DARLENE and they shake.

PEGGY. Deal. Now come help me put Harvey's pants back on.

The two women go up the stairs and into the bedroom.

DARLENE. I was serious about that mole on his butt. It's huge.

While they are upstairs changing HARVEY's clothes, there is a knock on the door and the neighbor, ROSA, enters pushing a wheelchair.

ROSA. Yoo-hoo. Peggy? Are you home? I brought over Charles' wheelchair. Hello?

From upstairs, the voices of PEGGY and DARLENE can be heard.

PEGGY. Pull on it.

DARLENE. I am pulling on it.

PEGGY. You're not going to be able to get his underwear on unless you pull on it.

ROSA. *(walking towards the bottom of the stairs)* Peggy? Is that you, dear? What are you doing up there?

PEGGY. You've got it caught in his zipper?

DARLENE. Well, move it out of the way.

PEGGY. Hey, watch it. That's my finger!

ROSA slowly begins to walk up the stairs towards the voices.

ROSA. Peggy? Are you alright?

PEGGY enters, holding a belt in one hand.

PEGGY. Oh, Miss Rosa. I didn't hear you come in.

ROSA. I knocked, dear. I just wanted to run the wheelchair over. Is Harvey feeling any better?

PEGGY. *(coming down the stairs)*

I'm afraid not. He actually seems to be a little worse. I'm afraid Harvey can't even dress himself.

DARLENE. *(from upstairs)* It keeps popping out, Peggy. What do I do?

PEGGY. *(to ROSA)* Excuse me. *(to DARLENE)* Ah, Darlene. Miss Rosa is here. She brought the wheelchair.

DARLENE. *(coming out of the bedroom carrying a shoe)* Oh, hi Miss Rosa. I was just ah... helping Harvey pick out a tie.

ROSA. Uh-huh. I've never heard it put that way, but who am I to judge these new fangled 'open' relationships?

PEGGY. *(moving down stairs)* Ah, thank you so much, Miss Rosa. The wheelchair will be a big help in getting poor Harvey to his dear father's funeral. He is so broken up over the death. Why, he hasn't spoken a word since this morning.

ROSA. Yes, it's a shock, I'm sure. I remember when poor Edsel Lemming's father died. You know him, don't you dear?

PEGGY. No, I don't believe I do.

ROSA. Lives over on Piedmont Drive. Used to raise the most beautiful miniature poodles. Had a mole on the side of his nose that looked just like a Milk Dud. Anyway, his wife died a couple of years ago and poor Edsel was so distraught that he moved into the basement of their house and stayed there for a whole year. Now, I don't want to spread gossip, but I've heard that Edsel got so hungry down there that he ate every one of those little poodles. And then used their little hides to make himself a fur coat. But that's just hearsay. You know me. I never listen to gossip.

PEGGY. Well, I'm sure that Harvey will snap out of it long before he starts eating dogs.

DARLENE. Yeah, they don't even have a dog. Did that guy eat cats? Cause they do have a cat.

ROSA. I don't know, dear. Just keep an eye on him. If he starts acting strange, make sure you call the doctor.

PEGGY. Oh, I'm sure Harvey will be okay. After the funeral is over.

ROSA. *(crossing towards the door)* Well, you just let me know if you need anything else, dear. I'll see you at the service.

PEGGY. We will. Thank you again.

PEGGY closes the door behind ROSA and heads back up the stairs towards DARLENE.

DARLENE. You don't think Harvey would eat a dog, do you?

PEGGY. No, Darlene. I think Harvey's dog-eating days are behind him now. Let's get him down here and into that wheelchair. *(The two women exit into the bedroom)* Okay, grab his feet. And try not to drop him this time. That's the only blue suit Harvey owns and I don't want to put a rip in it.

DARLENE. Sorry. Ever since I got out of the grave-robbing business, I've been a little rusty with my body moving skills.

PEGGY and DARLENE come out of the bedroom, carrying HARVEY. They begin to descend down the stairs. Just as they make the turn in the staircase, DARLENE's grip slips and HARVEY tumbles down the stairs. At the precise same time, the front door opens and ROSA steps into the living room.

ROSA:

Oh, Peggy. I almost forgot to bring you the seat cushion... I'll just lay it...Oh, my God. Harvey! Are you alright?

ROSA rushes over to where HARVEY is laying and bends down to check on him.

ROSA. Harvey? Can you hear me, Harvey? Har... oh, my God. He's dead. And he's cold. *(she stands slowly and points at DARLENE)*

How long has he been dead? Did you do this to him?

DARLENE. Not me! She's the one who killed him.

PEGGY. What?

ROSA. You killed Harvey?

PEGGY rushes down the stairs to MISS ROSA.

PEGGY. No, Miss Rosa. This is not what it looks like.

ROSA. Not what it looks like? Just as I come through the door, I see you and your sister throw Harvey's dead body down the stairs. Exactly what is it supposed to look like?

PEGGY. Harvey died peacefully from natural causes.

DARLENE. He choked to death on a piece of ham.

ROSA. What?

PEGGY. A piece of ham.... it was imported.

ROSA. When?

PEGGY. Yesterday.

ROSA. Yesterday? You mean the entire time the preacher was here? Mr. Cyrus' old secretary and her drugged out son were here? The entire time I was here, he was dead?

DARLENE. How'd you know all those people were here?

ROSA. Oh, I see everything in this neighborhood, Missy. People try to close their curtains and turn off their lights to conceal their wickedness, but they can't hide. Oh, no. Miss Rosa sees all their dirty little secrets.

PEGGY. You've been spying on us?

ROSA. Not spying. Keeping a neighborhood watch. For crime. Things like, oh I don't know... MURDERING YOUR HUSBAND!

PEGGY. I didn't murder Harvey. I just need to make people believe that he's alive until the Memorial Service is over.

ROSA. Why?

DARLENE. Because if she don't, she doesn't get any of the money. Not one cent.

PEGGY. After taxes, Two hundred million dollars, Miss Rosa. But only if Harvey signs the papers.

ROSA. So, you murdered him for his money? I've got to call the cops.

ROSA reaches into the pocket of her dress and pulls out a cell phone. She begins to dial when PEGGY rushes over, grabs ROSA from behind, pinning her arms to her side.

PEGGY. Grab the phone, Darlene.

DARLENE. What?

PEGGY. The phone! The phone! We can't let her call the police.

ROSA. Peggy, what do you think you're doing?

PEGGY. I can't let you call the police, Miss Rosa. I've waited all these years to get that money and I'm not going to let some old busy body keep me from spending it. *(to Darlene)* Darlene, run into the kitchen. There's a roll of duct tape in the drawer by the sink. And a rope in the broom closet. Bring them in here.

DARLENE exits as ROSA begin to struggle in PEGGY's grip.

ROSA. What are you going to do to me?

PEGGY. I'm just going to keep you from calling the police. At least until me and Darlene have our money and are safely out of the country.

ROSA. Please don't kill me. I don't want Charles to move into the basement and start eating our pets.

PEGGY. I'm not going to kill you, you old coot. Just shut you up for a while. *(yelling into kitchen)* Darlene, hurry up with that rope.

DARLENE rushes back into the room, carrying a roll of duct tape and rope.

PEGGY. Okay, put a piece of tape over her mouth, Darlene.

DARLENE tears off a piece of tape and tapes ROSA's mouth shut

DARLENE. I think we should whack her.

ROSA mumbles "No" as the tape is put over her mouth.

PEGGY. Darlene!

DARLENE. The old witch deserves it. Who knows how many years she's been spying on you and Harvey. And her telling people all over town that I have VD. Just look at my hair, Miss Rosa! Because of you, I had to find another hair stylist and it looks awful!

ROSA mumbles "No" and shakes her head violently.

PEGGY. Darlene, she's my neighbor. We're not going to kill her. Use that rope to tie her up good and tight.

DARLENE. (*wrapping the rope around ROSA*) We could kill her and then after the funeral we could bring Harvey back here and stage it to look like a lover's suicide pact.

ROSA begins to get very terrified at the mention of DARLENE's plan and looks pleadingly at PEGGY.

PEGGY. Shut up, Darlene!

DARLENE. Yeah, we could make it look like Harvey and Rosa had been lovers behind your back for years. After the funeral, she stormed over here demanding some of the money and when he refused, she pulled out a knife and stabbed him to death. Then, turned the knife on herself. Naturally, if Harvey is murdered by the crazy neighbor lady, you and I would be off the hook and you would inherit the whole two hundred million.

PEGGY. We are not going to murder Miss Rosa, Darlene. Or make it look like her and Harvey were lovers. How would that make *me* look? My husband running around on me with a dried up old prune like Rosa.

At this, ROSA turns to PEGGY and gives her a murderous glare.

PEGGY. No, we're going to tie her to the chair where she'll stay until we're in the clear. After you call in your fake bomb threat, I'm going to sign Harvey's name, we'll get our money and get out of the country. *(she moves ROSA over and sits her down in the armchair)* Use the rest of the rope to tie her to the chair.

DARLENE begins to wrap the rope around the chair as she continues to speak.

DARLENE. But what happens when she gets free.

PEGGY. By then we'll be long gone, hopefully living in a country with no extradition treaties, drinking champagne and eating caviar.

DARLENE. I still think we should whack her.

At this, ROSA looks wildly from DARLENE to PEGGY, pleading with her eyes.

PEGGY. We are not going to 'whack' her. Just leave her with a story that she'll be able to talk about for years. Okay, that's good. Help me get Harvey into the wheelchair.

As DARLENE passes by ROSA's chair, she makes a stabbing motion with her hand and ROSA screams loudly behind the tape.

PEGGY. Leave her alone, Darlene. She won't be able to stop us now. Come on, help me get him up.

The two women awkwardly stand HARVEY to his feet, carrying him around the front of the couch. Just before they reach ROSA, they trip and drop HARVEY who falls face down into ROSA's lap. She screams wildly and tries to wiggle away.

DARLENE. Look at that. I told you they were lovers.

PEGGY. Stop fooling around, Darlene and get the wheelchair over here. *(she crosses to the chair and lifts HARVEY off of ROSA's lap)* Sorry, Rosa. I promise, we're not going to hurt you. You just stay here for a couple of hours and me and Darlene will be gone and out of your hair for good.

DARLENE rolls the chair behind HARVEY and leans over ROSA.

DARLENE. But try to follow us, though, and we'll have no other choice but to 'whack' you.

PEGGY. Darlene, you have got to stop watching reruns of *The Sopranos*. Come on, get him in the chair. There. He looks real peaceful sitting there in his new blue suit. Doesn't he, Rosa? *(ROSA nods her head in agreement furiously)* Now remember, you just stay here and be quiet and nothing bad will happen. But if you try to get out of those ropes and go to the police, well, I just don't know if I'll be able to hold Darlene back.

DARLENE makes a stabbing motion again and ROSA once again cries in terror.

PEGGY. Come on, Darlene. We've got papers to sign.

They roll HARVEY through the door, closing it behind them. ROSA sits still in her chair for a moment, looking around terrified. She starts to struggle against the ropes as the lights dim to black.

BLACK OUT

ACT 2
SCENE 2

Lights come up to reveal the interior of a funeral home. The walls are made from dark paneling with stained glass windows on each side.

There is one door, opening down stage left. The room is sparsely decorated with folding chairs arranged in neat rows. There is a small podium down stage right and in beside it is a table with a small wooden urn which holds the ashes of Cyrus Ruttlles. There is slow organ music playing softly in the background. After a moment, the door opens and PEGGY enters pushing HARVEY in a wheelchair. DARLENE follows close behind. They are both dressed in black and PEGGY is wearing a dark lace veil which is pulled down over her face.

DARLENE. Well, this is nice. Isn't this nice, Peggy.

PEGGY. Yes, it's real nice, Darlene. Harvey would have approved.

DARLENE. Hey, maybe we could have his funeral here.

PEGGY. Yeah, Darlene. Right before they haul us off to prison. You idiot, we will be long gone by the time Harvey gets buried. We have to stick to the plan, Darlene. The plan.

DARLENE. Me calling in the bomb threat?

PEGGY. Yes. Remember, when Mr. Belkin gets to the part where Harvey has to sign the papers, you'll slip out, call the funeral home and tell them that you've planted a bomb somewhere in the building. As folks start to run out, I'll quickly sign Harvey's name to the papers. Before folks realize what happened, the \$200 million dollars will be sitting safely in our Swiss bank account and we'll be long gone.

DARLENE. You have a Swiss bank account?

PEGGY. No, but it must not be that hard to get one. Especially if you have two hundred million dollars. Now help me get Harvey situated.

They roll the wheelchair over and move one of the chairs that's a few spaces from the table, rolling HARVEY's wheelchair into the space. PEGGY sits in the chair to HARVEY's right and DARLENE sits to his left. They sit in silence for a few awkward moments and then DARLENE speaks.

DARLENE. Where is everyone?

PEGGY. I told the funeral director that we wanted a few minutes alone for Harvey to say 'goodbye' to his father. I didn't want a bunch of people in here watching us rolling him around. Just in case something happened.

DARLENE. Good idea. So, you want to say anything before the crowds get here.

PEGGY. Say what?

DARLENE. I don't know. Some final words before we bury your father in law and run off with your dead husband's money. Something for closure.

PEGGY. Closure?

DARLENE. Yes, Peggy. You know, someday when you're laying on a beach somewhere, drinking margaritas, you might actually feel a little smidgen of guilt over this whole deal. Don't you want to just get a few things off your chest? Try to make peace with Harvey and his Dad before you run off with their money?

PEGGY. Oh, alright.

PEGGY gets up and paces the room, thinking for a moment. She lifts the veil from her face and looks over at the urn.

PEGGY. Well, Cyrus, this is the end of the line for me and you. I remember when we met. I was trying to earn a little extra money, waitressing for the caterer that did your big annual Christmas Party. I remember driving up to that big house up on the hill all excited. I had always looked up there when I was a kid and wondered what the inside

would look like. And here I was about to step inside. Anyway, I saw you hobnobbing with all the bankers and attorneys and thought how great it must be to have so much money. To be able to afford a forty foot long table set with fine china and crystal. That's when I started hating you. *(she reaches the table and picks up the urn, carrying it with her as she speaks)* Not because you were mean. You were actually pretty nice to me. No, I hated you because you had all the things I would never have. *(she begins to shake the urn)* The big fine house, the fancy cars, the exotic trips around the world. Those things should have been mine. Mine, Cyrus! Mine!

She shakes the urn so violently that the lids slides off and some of the ashes spill to the floor in the aisle between the chairs.

DARLENE. *(getting up, rushing over and taking the urn away from PEGGY)* Easy, Peggy. We don't want people wondering why Harvey decided to spread his father's ashes right here in the chapel of Parson's Funeral Home.

PEGGY. Sorry. I just get so angry when I think about that day. Because that's the day I also met Harvey.

DARLENE. Oh, really? You never told me that.

PEGGY. Yep, I was serving the soup course when this young man came walking into the dining room. He was wearing jeans and a college sweatshirt and I remember Cyrus telling him to have a seat, his dinner was getting cold. Harvey wasn't very handsome, but he wasn't ugly either. I mean, I didn't get nauseated looking at him. So, I started thinking while I served the soup that one day this young college kid would inherit all this. One day, he'll be just as rich as his old man. And the girl that caught him would be able to have anything she ever wanted.

DARLENE. So, what'd you do?

PEGGY. Well, all through dinner, I watched Harvey. Listening to bits and pieces of his conversation. I heard him tell some old coot that he

was enjoying his first year at college, but was having trouble finding a girl. Apparently, they didn't think he was very handsome. And he was right. Anyway, after dinner, I waited until everyone was gone, then I sneaked up to Harvey's room, and slipped inside.

DARLENE. What?

PEGGY. Oh, yeah. I did things to Harvey that night that made his head spin. From that moment on, he couldn't think of anything else but me. Six months later, I told him that I was pregnant and he asked me to marry him immediately. I wasn't really pregnant. I had been told by the doctor that I couldn't even get pregnant.

DARLENE. Peggy, that's horrible.

PEGGY returns to her seat and sits beside HARVEY.

PEGGY. No it wasn't. It was me doing what I had to do to get what I wanted. And what I wanted was the old man's money. It was the only way for me to get out of the trailer park, Darlene.

PEGGY pauses for a moment and looks at HARVEY. Her tone softens as she speaks to him.

PEGGY. I tried, Harvey. I really did. Maybe I could have loved you if you weren't so... cheap and stingy. I'm sorry it had to end this way. Sorry I tricked you into spending your miserable life with someone who didn't love you back.

DARLENE, listening to her sister's confession, begins to tear up and sniffle.

DARLENE. Ah, Peggy. That was beautiful. I'm sure Harvey forgives you. Don't you Harvey?

PEGGY. Forgives me? Who cares if he forgives me. *(she gets up and paces towards the door)* I didn't come here to get absolution for my

past sins, Darlene. I came here to get paid. That's what this is all about for me. After all these years, I'm finally getting what I deserve. When I sign those papers, I'll finally get what I dreamed about that night at Cyrus' Christmas Party. Starting today, I'll be the one eating off fine china and drinking from crystal goblets. So, don't expect me to get all mushy. This ain't about grief. It's about vengeance. *(PEGGY collects herself briefly)* Now, what do you say let's get this party started.

PEGGY walks to the door, pulls the veil back over her face and works up a few fake tears before opening the door and calling to the funeral director.

PEGGY. We're ready now.

The funeral director, MR. PARSONS, enters and walks with PEGGY across the room. He's dressed in a dark suit and is very somber.

PEGGY. *(crying)* It's so hard for me and Harvey seeing Daddy Ruttle like this. Poor Harvey is so stricken, he can't even speak.

MR. PARSONS. And he doesn't have to. Rest assured that Parsons Funeral Home will do everything we can to help you in your time of loss.

PEGGY. Thank you, Mr. Parsons. Just, please make it quick. I don't know how much of this me and poor Harvey can take.

MR. PARSONS. I'll inform the other mourners that we are about to start the service.

MR. PARSONS exits and PEGGY takes her seat next to HARVEY. DARLENE looks at her, stunned.

DARLENE. And the Oscar goes to...

PEGGY. I'd like to thank the academy...

PEGGY laughs as DARLENE shakes her head sadly. After a moment, the mourners begin filing into the room. Lois and Donnie enter behind a couple of mourners, acknowledge PEGGY and then go around the back of the chairs, up the aisle. LOIS is dressed in a dark dress and hat, complete with dark veil and DONNIE is wearing the same outfit as before- only he has added a wide, gaudy tie for the funeral. They stop in the aisle behind PEGGY and admire the urn.

LOIS. What a beautiful urn. Don't you think so, Donnie.

DONNIE. Yeah, whatever.

LOIS. *(turning to HARVEY and PEGGY)* You did a wonderful job picking out an appropriate urn for his ashes, Mr. Harvey. *(she waits for a response which doesn't come)* I said, you picked out a...

PEGGY. *(interrupting and putting her arm around HARVEY)* I'm sorry, Lois. Harvey is just overwrought with grief. He can't really talk right now.

LOIS. I understand. I do. It's been hard on all us. Even Donnie.

They look back at DONNIE who is busy cleaning one of his ears with his keys.

DONNIE. What?

LOIS. Nothing, Donnie. *(to PEGGY)* My Donnie has always been strong. He hides his grief so well. Do you mind if I say a few words to Mr. Cyrus before the service starts?

PEGGY. Not at all, Lois. Go ahead.

LOIS steps up to the table and addresses the urn.

LOIS. Well, Mr. Cyrus. I guess this is it. I knew they day would come when one of us would attend the other's funeral. Frankly, I always thought I would go first. But, alas, that day has come and here we are. Me in black and you in... well, in wood.

LOIS is temporarily overcome with emotion, pulls a handkerchief from you purse, pulls back her veil and blows her nose in it loudly. While she is speaking, DONNIE, who has been looking around the room suddenly notices the ashes on the floor. While LOIS continues to talk to CYRUS, DONNIE bends down and studies the powder. He dabs a little on his finger, lifting it to his nose and smelling it. While LOIS continues to speak to the urn, he looks around to see if anyone is watching him, then pulls a straw from his rear pocket, bends over and makes the motion of sniffing the powder up one nostril.

LOIS. Oh, Mr. Cyrus. I just want to thank you for being such a good boss, and a good friend. If it wasn't for you, my Donnie would have spent his life behind bars. But, because of your generosity, he is now a fine young man, a law abiding citizen, a....

PEGGY tugs at LOIS's arm and points towards DONNIE who is 'snorting' the ashes from the floor. LOIS screams then rushes over to DONNIE, trying to pull him off the floor. He struggles with her to take one last snort.

LOIS. Donnie, what is God's name are you doing? Stop that this instant!
DONNIE. But this is high quality blow, Ma. *(he holds the straw out to her)* Here. Try a snort!

LOIS. *(hitting DONNIE with her purse)* Donnie Gray! Have you no respect for the dead.. or his grieving family? Put that away and get in your seat right now!

DONNIE. But, Mom.

LOIS. NOW!

LOIS hits DONNIE with her purse and he gets up and stumbles to his seat, behind PEGGY. LOIS turns to HARVEY and apologizes and then sits on DONNIE's right, hitting him again with her purse.

LOIS. I'm so sorry, Harvey. Donnie really is a good boy. He just slips a little sometimes.

PEGGY. We understand. We're praying for him.

LOIS. Thank you, Peggy.

A few more mourners enter and take their seats, including CHARLOTTE, who is carrying a red rose in one hand and a handkerchief in the other. She crosses to HARVEY and hugs him for a moment. She releases him and HARVEY briefly tilts toward PEGGY, who catches him as CHARLOTTE crosses to the table with the urn.

CHARLOTTE. I am so sorry, Harvey. Uncle Cyrus was a great man. *(she turns towards the urn, speaking to it)* I never had to chance to thank you for all you did for my orphanage, Uncle Cyrus, but without you those children would have been put out on the street. You and Harvey were the most generous people I have ever met. I'm sorry I didn't come see you as much as I should have after Aunt Virginia died. But I loved her, too, and visiting the house just brought back so many memories that were too hard for me to face. I will miss you, Uncle Cyrus. *(she places the rose next to the urn)* Rest in peace. You deserve it.

CHARLOTTE takes a seat as MR. BELKIN enters. PEGGY sees him and rushes over to talk to him before he can take a seat. She lifts her veil and talks to him in a soft voice.

PEGGY. Mr. Belkin. Thank you so much for coming early for the Memorial Service.

MR. BELKIN. Of course, Peggy. Cyrus was my biggest client and one of my oldest friends. I just wish I could have done more to repay him for all his kindness he showed towards me and my family all these years.

PEGGY . Thank you for those kind words. Ah.. did you bring the will?

MR. BELKIN: *(reaching into his pocket and pulling out an envelope)*
Right here. As you know, Cyrus specifically asked me to read the will and have it signed by Harvey at the close of the Memorial Service.

PEGGY. Yes, I know. Ah... did you also bring the check?

MR. BELKIN. The check?

PEGGY. The check. For two hundred million dollars?

MR. BELKIN. Oh, the inheritance settlement. Don't worry, everything has been taken care of.

MR. BELKIN begins to cross to be seated, but PEGGY stops him.

PEGGY. I'm sure it has. It's just that, well, as you can see, Harvey is taking the death quite hard. He hasn't been himself since we got the news and I'm afraid that if we stay around after the funeral, well, the extra stress will just be devastating. That's why we will be leaving on an extended vacation immediately after he signs the paper, so that Harvey can get away and get back to his normal self.

MR. BELKIN. Leaving immediately after the service? Harvey never mentioned that to me.

PEGGY. Well, he didn't know that all this would affect him so severely.

MR. BELKIN. I understand. I'm sure that the bank will be willing to transfer funds to any international bank that you choose. *(he looks over at HARVEY)* Harvey does look quite pale. What is that young man doing to him?

They look over and see that DONNIE has leaned over the seat and is attempting to search HARVEY's pockets for drugs. LOIS has her back to him as she talks to another mourner sitting next to her.

PEGGY. Donnie! Stop that!

At the sound of DONNIE's name, LOIS snaps around and begins to beat DONNIE with her purse. PEGGY rushes over and catches HARVEY as he begins to tip forward in his seat.

LOIS. Donnie! What is wrong with you? Are you insane?

DONNIE. Look at him, Ma. He must have something on him. Look how stoned he is. I just need a couple of those pills. To help me with... my... my grief!

LOIS whacks DONNIE's head with her purse and he screams out in pain.

LOIS. I'm going to give you some grief if you don't sit down and shut up. I am so sorry, Harvey.

PEGGY. *(sitting by HARVEY)* It's okay. We're all upset. We understand.

MR. BELKIN, who has witnessed this entire exchange slowly takes his seat across the aisle from DARLENE. As he sits, the door flings open and REV. MCCREEDY rushes in. He is eating a large ham biscuit wrapped in a napkin as he enters. Seeing that the crowd has already gathered, he quickly rushes over the PEGGY and HARVEY.

REV. MCCREEDY. I am so sorry that I'm late. The ribbon cutting at the Cracker Barrel ran a little longer than I expected and then they started handing out these free ham biscuits.. you haven't started without me, have you?

PEGGY. No, Reverend. We're ready to go. Just, please keep it brief. Poor Harvey is quite distraught.

REV. MCCREEDY. I can see that. My, my... he does look pale. We'll get started right away.

REV. MCCREEDY turns and rushes to the podium. He takes another bite of his biscuit, then stashes it in one of his coat pockets, reaches into

another pocket and pulls out his notes and a small Bible. He clears his throat and immediately assumes a somber funeral tone.

REV. MCCREEDY. Dear brothers and sisters. We are gathered here today to pay our last respects to our brother, Cyrus Rutles. Before we begin, would you please join me as we bow in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we come to you with heavy hearts, mourning the loss of our dear brother and committing him back into your loving arms.

As REV. MCCREEDY begins to pray, DONNIE once again reaches forward and starts to search through HARVEY's pockets. The motion and noise draws the attention of LOIS who interrupts the prayer by yelling at DONNIE and starting a fresh new round of beatings.

LOIS. Donnie! Stop that!

DONNIE. All I need is a just a couple, Mom. Oww!

REV. MCCREEDY. *(as the altercation ends, REV. MCCREEDY clears his throat and continues)* Lord, bless all those who have come to this place to pay their last respects. Even those among us came to satisfy their own sinful lusts.

LOIS. *(hitting DONNIE with her purse again)* He's talking about you, fool!

REV. MCCREEDY. Yes, Lord, I know you look down upon us and you see both the righteous and the sinner. Have mercy on us, Lord, and let us use this occasion to contemplate our own day of final judgment. Amen and Amen.

Everyone mumbles "Amen" except for DONNIE who says "whatever." Everyone looks at him and REV. MCCREEDY clears his throat and continues.

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, my brothers and sisters, I have spent the last two days in pain. Yes, pain, my beloved. Oh, not a physical pain, dear

brethren. Oh, no. It is the pain of losing such a dear friend as Cyrus Ruttles. Just as Jesus wept at the news of Lazarus's' death, I too have experienced great emotional agony at the news that my brother, Cyrus, has gone to his final reward. I've thought about how to honor a man that showed such kindness and charity to those around him. And, after much prayer and fasting, the Lord has revealed to me that the only way to honor a man of such greatness is by... *(he reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out the plans for this church expansion and opens them for the crowd to see)*. ..using this opportunity to announce the launching of the Cyrus Ruttles Memorial Family Life Center.

PEGGY puts her head in her hands and shakes it back and forth, not believing what she is hearing.

REV. MCCREEDY. Yes, through the generosity of Brother Cyrus' estate, the expansion at our church will finally become a reality. If you look closely, you'll be able to see the the recreation center, the Geriatric Pilates Center.... and of course, my new office suite. Yes, brothers and sisters, this building will be a testament to Brother Cyrus' legacy when the doors next summer, and I just want to say thank you to his son, Harvey, for his commitment to making this dream come true.

(REV. MCCREEDY applauds and the other mourners join him in a light and uncomfortable round of applause) Now, where was I? Oh yes, before I conclude my remarks, I would like to read Brother Cyrus' favorite passage of scripture. Psalms 23. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he...."

PEGGY. *(interrupting)* Yes, Reverend. Do you think you might could pick it up a little? Harvey is just so grief stricken, I don't know how much more of this he's going to be able to take.

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, yes, Sister Ruttles. *(he holds up the plans)* If anyone else would like to take a closer look at our plans for the new Family Life Center, you can see me after the service. And don't forget that you can still make a contribution to the building fund and get your

name printed on the scoreboard of the new basketball court. Well, then. Ah, Amen!

REV. MCCREEDY rolls up the plans and puts them back into his pocket and then takes a seat next to CHARLOTTE on the front row. He looks around to see if anyone is watching then takes the ham biscuit out of his pocket and begins eating again.

PEGGY. Mr. Belkin?

MR. BELKIN, who has been caught up in watching the REVEREND's performance, gathers his papers and walks to the podium.

MR. BELKIN. Yes, ah, thank you for those heartfelt words, Reverend. For those of you who do not know me, I am Lawrence Belkin of the law offices of Belkin & Belkin. My firm represented Mr. Ruttle throughout his business career and assisted him in the preparation of his Last Will & Testament. Now, before I begin to read the stipulations in Mr. Ruttle's will, I would just like to say how Cyrus was more than a client.. he was a true friend.. why, I recall the day he.....

PEGGY. *(Interrupting)* Yes, yes. I am sure you were squash partners, fraternity brothers and all that. But can we just get on with the reading of the will? All this reminiscing is just so painful for Harvey. Just look at him. He's completely dumbstruck.

MR. BELKIN is taken aback by this and pauses. He takes the envelope containing the will from his coat pocket and begins to open it.

MR. BELKIN. Very well then. Just let me say that Belkin & Belkin extends our deepest sympathies to you, Harvey. And Peggy.

PEGGY. Thank you. The will?

MR. BELKIN. Yes. The following is the Last Will and Testament of Mr. Cyrus Ruttles, executed in my presence, signed and notarized. Mr. Ruttles asked me to read it word for word, just as he dictated it. *(he clears his throat and begins to read)* Dear friends and family. Thank you for gathering together to celebrate my life on this Earth. I do not wish this to be a long, drawn out service that goes on and on about all of my worldly accomplishments. I lived and died and in the process, tried to leave the world a little wealthier in the process...

Both PEGGY and REV. MCCREEDY say a hearty 'Amen' in response to this last statement.

MR. BELKIN. Yes.. well, ah. Let's continue. I'll keep this Last Will & Testament brief and to the point. Most of the people in this room are here because they are waiting anxiously to see how much money I am going to leave them. Well, I hate to disappoint everyone, but I'm not leaving any money to anyone...

PEGGY. *(jumping to her feet)* What?

DONNIE also jumps up and looks at his mother.

DONNIE. I thought you said that old dude left us a bunch of money, Mom.

LOIS. Donnie, sit down.

DONNIE. But, I put on a tie.

LOIS. Donnie!

DONNIE. You said if I would stay clean and sober, maybe old Mr. Cyrus would leave us something in his will. Well, he ain't left us nothing, so the deal is off.

DONNIE rips off his 'clip-on' tie and throws it to the floor, then reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a pint of whiskey. He takes a long pull on the bottle, then sits down, mumbling under his breath.

REV. MCCREEDY. Son, liquor is the Devil's potion.

DONNIE. Oh, shut up and eat your biscuit, Reverend.

LOIS. Donnie! He's a preacher!

REV. MCCREEDY. That's alright, Sister Lois. We'll keep praying...

PEGGY. Wait a minute there, Mr. Belkin. Did you say that Cyrus didn't leave anything to anyone?

MR. BELKIN. If you will allow me to continue.. I'm not leaving my money to anyone... except my son, Harvey.

PEGGY. (PEGGY sits slowly, visibly shaken) Thank God.

MR. BELKIN. I know a lot of you think that what I am most proud of is my financial empire. Well, you couldn't be more wrong. What I am most proud of is my son. Harvey, a father could not ask for a better person to carry on his legacy than you. I just want you know that I am proud of you, Harvey. Even though you could have had anything you wanted if you just asked, you preferred to make it on your own. After your mother died, I just didn't care about the money any more. I offered to sign over my fortune to you... just give it to you, but every time I offered, you just said no.

PEGGY. What? (*she stands up and glares at HARVEY*)

MR. BELKIN. I imagine that that little revelation has caught Peggy by surprise. All those years, she has accused me of being greedy and not willing to share my fortune with you. Well, now you know, Peggy. Harvey didn't get my money *not* because I wouldn't give it to him, but because he didn't want it. What do you think of that? (PEGGY crosses her arms and sits down angrily) The only request that I make of you, Harvey, is that you continue to help your sweet cousin, Charlotte, and that wonderful orphanage of hers. Well, that's about all. I just hope that all of you will learn the lesson that I did during my time on this Earth. Happiness doesn't come from what you make. It comes from what you give.

REV. MCCREEDY. Amen!

MR. BELKIN. Signed Cyrus Ruttles.

MR. BELKIN pauses for a moment, then folds the will, puts it back in the envelope and returns it to his pocket.

MR. BELKIN. Well, that's it, folks. At the close of business yesterday, Mr. Ruttle's estate was valued at approximately \$203 million. As the sole heir, Harvey, you'll inherit all of it. Congratulations! Now all that is left to do is sign the papers which I have right here.

MR. BELKIN comes around the front of the table and starts laying papers out for HARVEY to sign. While he is doing this, PEGGY motions to DARLENE to go call in the bomb threat. DARLENE says 'excuse me', gets up and crosses quickly to behind the door, pulling out her cell phone and dialing.

MR. BELKIN. *(extending an elaborate fountain pen to HARVEY)* Now, Harvey. If you'll just sign here...

PEGGY looks over at DARLENE frantically. DARLENE has the phone to her face and is beginning to talk softly, cupping her hand over the receiver, when the door suddenly bursts open nearly knocking her down. Through the door comes ROSA. She still has the rope wrapped around her waist and duct tape attached to her wrists and cheek.

ROSA. Stop the funeral! He's dead!

The entire congregation gasps with shock at her appearance.

MR. BELKIN. Excuse me, madam. Of course he's dead!

ROSA. Not him. *(she points at HARVEY with her taped hands)* Him!

REV. MCCREEDY. What?

PEGGY jumps up and runs over to ROSA, trying to push her back through the door.

PEGGY. Ah, Miss Rosa. Thank you for coming, but this is a private service. Just run on home and I'll check on you later.

ROSA. Harvey is as dead as a doornail. Check him, Reverend.

REV. MCCREEDY stands and slowly approaches HARVEY.

PEGGY. Reverend. Please. Have some respect for the deceased.

ROSA. Harvey is the one who is deceased. Just look at him.

PEGGY & DARLENE. No!

REV. MCCREEDY steps up to HARVEY, pats him on the shoulder and HARVEY falls forward onto the floor. There is a commotion as everyone jumps up in horror. REV. MCCREEDY is so shaken, he stumbles back and falls over a chair, nearly dropping his ham biscuit. PEGGY rushes forward, picks up HARVEY and attempts to put him back in his chair.

PEGGY. He is not dead! He's just sick from grief.

ROSA. Harvey is not sick. He's dead!

PEGGY. Now, Miss Rosa. I didn't want to have to tell this to everyone, but you've left me no choice. Earlier today, Miss Rosa came over to the house and said that if we didn't give her a million dollars, she would come the funeral and attempt to disrupt Harvey signing the papers. That's why Darlene had to tie her up.

DARLENE. What? That's not true.

PEGGY. Yes, Miss Rosa has been planning this for years, just waiting for her chance to cash in on Harvey's fortune.

ROSA. That is not true. They tied me up because I caught them doing unspeakable things to Harvey's dead body. It was awful.

PEGGY. What is awful is you thinking that you can come here and slander us in front of our friends with lies and accusations.

ROSA. That's not true! Have any of you known me to ever say anything about anyone that is untrue?

The crowd, all knowing ROSA's reputation as a gossip, mumble yes, including REV. MCCREEDY.

REV. MCCREEDY. Well, Sister Rosa, you did say I was stealing money from the collection plate to pay for hair implants.

LOIS. You told everyone that Donnie was Mr. Cyrus' love child.

DONNIE. I am?

LOIS. No, Donnie. You're not. It was a lie.

DARLENE. You told the ladies at the Cut-n-Curl that I had VD!

DONNIE. You have VD? What kind?

DARLENE. I don't have VD!

DONNIE. Yeah, those little yellow pills really get rid of it fast, don't they?

DARLENE. I never *had* VD!

DONNIE. You don't have to be ashamed. I had it. Twice. No big deal.

At this, everyone around DONNIE backs up a few steps.

LOIS. Shut up, Donnie!

ROSA. Okay, so I've told a few fibs over the years. But now I'm telling the truth. Harvey Ruttles is dead!

CHARLOTTE. *(she steps forward)* Please. Allow me. I am a registered nurse.

Against PEGGY's protest, CHARLOTTE steps up to HARVEY and takes his pulse. After a moment, she sighs and sits in the chair to his left and begins to cry.

Charlotte. She's right. He's dead. Oh, poor Harvey.

There is another commotion as people attempt to scramble away from the dead body.

MR. BELKIN. *(calls to the funeral director)* Mr. Parsons? Please call the authorities.

MR. PARSONS. Yes sir. *(he exits)*

PEGGY. But.. but.. tell them the truth, Darlene. Harvey is okay. He just took a lot of sleeping pills, for his nerves. He's just asleep, that's all. Tell, them Darlene. Tell them!

Everyone looks at DARLENE who steps forward.

DARLENE. It's over, Peggy. We can't keep this up any longer. *(she faces MR. BELKIN)* Harvey has been dead since yesterday morning. He choked on a piece of imported ham.

REV. MCCREEDY. I'm sorry. What?

DARLENE. A piece of ham, Reverend. He choked to death on a piece of ham.

At this, REV. MCCREEDY looks at the ham biscuit in his hand, chokes briefly on the food in his mouth, then, swallows hard and puts it back in his pocket.

DONNIE. *(laughs)* You're next, fatso!

LOIS. Shut up, Donnie.

DARLENE. Peggy called me right after it happened. I told her we had to call the police, but she said no. She told me that if I would help her conceal Harvey's death that she would give me a third of the inheritance. I should have said no. But, I've been out of work. And well, sixty six million dollars is a lot of money and I just lost my head.

PEGGY. *(still desperately trying to keep up the ruse, she rushes to Harvey and hugs him close)* That's not true! I never promised to give her any of the money. Darlene has always been jealous of me and Harvey. She's making all this up. All she wants is the money.

As PEGGY slowly strokes HARVEY's head, babbling to herself, a uniformed policeman and MR. PARSONS enter. DARLENE offers her hands which are quickly cuffed by the officer. The policeman then crosses to PEGGY and tears her away from HARVEY, putting her in handcuffs. He begins to lead the women towards the door.

PEGGY. Take your hands off of me! Do you know who I am? I'm Peggy Ruttle and me and my husband are worth two hundred million dollars.
MR. BELKIN. *(raising his voice above the disruption)* Well, that's not exactly true.

Everyone stops and looks at MR. BELKIN.

MR. BELKIN. There is something else. *(he pulls another envelope from his pocket)* HARVEY gave me this letter yesterday and asked me to read it immediately after the signing of the will. Hold on just a minute, officer. I think Peggy is going to want to hear this. *(he opens the envelope and pulls out a single sheet of paper, then begins to read)*
I, Harvey Ruttle, being of sound mind do make the following amendment to be read upon the execution of my father's will. I have always been uncomfortable around money. Unlike my wife, I have no desire to travel the world or own a fleet of fancy cars. All I've ever wanted was a simple life. And keeping this money would make that impossible. Sorry, Peggy. My father's money would ruin our lives. So, I hereby bequeath all of the money left to me in my father's will to my cousin, Charlotte.

PEGGY. What?

CHARLOTTE. What?

PEGGY breaks away from the policeman and rushes towards CHARLOTTE as she screams.

PEGGY. No, that money is mine.. mine!

The policeman grabs PEGGY and drags her back towards the door as she continues to scream.

CHARLOTTE. You mean, it's mine. All of it?

MR. BELKIN. Yes, Charlotte. Two hundred and three million dollars. All for you and the orphanage.

PEGGY screams and tries to break free of the policeman's grip.

MR. BELKIN. You can take them away now, officer.

PEGGY and DARLENE are led from the room. PEGGY continues to scream while DARLENE just cries softly.

PEGGY. That's my money. My money! I want my money! I want my money!

The mourners begin to file out of the room slowly. REV. MCCREEDY approaches CHARLOTTE and pulls out his blueprints.

REV. MCCREEDY. I can see it now. In big letters across the front. The Charlotte Ruttles Family Life Center. Oh, it will be a sight to behold. Think about it. Here's my card. Let's have lunch later this week, okay?

CHARLOTTE. Okay, Reverend.

REV. MCCREEDY. Oh, bless you, Sister Charlotte. *(he begins to exit)*
A saint I tell you. A real saint...

LOIS approaches CHARLOTTE timidly. While she talks to CHARLOTTE, DONNIE thinks that no one is watching and he begins to dig through HARVEY's pockets once again.

LOIS. Charlotte, I don't believe we've ever met. I'm Lois Gray. I was Mr. Cyrus' secretary for over forty years. Did he ever happen to mention that he promised to take care of me and Donnie after he passed.

CHARLOTTE. Don't worry, Lois. I'll make sure you and Donnie have everything you need. I'm sure that's what both Uncle Cyrus and Harvey would have wanted.

LOIS. Oh, thank you, my dear. Thank you so much. *(she notices DONNIE riffling through HARVEY's pockets, runs over to him and begins to beat him with her purse)* Donnie Gray! How dare you desecrate the dead! You are nothing a good for nothing bum, just like your father. When we get you home, you are going right back into rehab. *(she continues to beat him with her purse as they cross towards the door)*

DONNIE. All I want is one of those pills, Mom.

LOIS. He's not high, Donnie. He's dead. Just like you're going to be if you don't get your ass out in that car right now. *(they exit)*

A moment passes and then MR. BELKIN grabs up all the papers and crosses towards CHARLOTTE.

MR. BELKIN. Well, Miss Ruttles. We have a lot of papers to sign back at my office. Shall we?

CHARLOTTE. *(she starts to leave with MR. BELKIN, then turns back)*

Mr. Belkin, do you mind if I have just a moment alone with Harvey?

MR. BELKIN. Not at all, my dear. I'll just wait for you in the lobby.

MR. BELKIN exits and CHARLOTTE walks over and sits beside HARVEY.

CHARLOTTE. I just wanted to tell you thank you, Harvey. If it wasn't for you and your father, I would have never been able to help all those poor children. And now this. I don't know what to say. Thank you. When you get to heaven, give this to your father for me.

She lean over and kisses him timidly on the cheek, knocking him a little off balance.

CHARLOTTE. Rest in peace, Harvey.

CHARLOTTE gets up slowly and crosses towards the door, hen exits. HARVEY sways back and forth for a moment in the empty room, then topples over onto the floor. Lights slowly fade to black.

THE END

