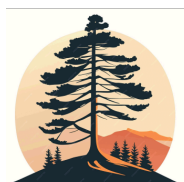


These
Altered
Days



**EVERGREEN
PLAYS**

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These Altered Days

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THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MUST APPEAR ON ALL PAPER AND DIGITAL PROGRAMS, PRINTING, AND ADVERTISING:

1. The full title: These Altered Days
2. Writing credit: By Steve Lyons
3. In addition to the above, the program must include: “Produced by special arrangement with Evergreen Plays, Bellingham, WA”

Characters:

The Older: Male, 40's
The Younger: Male, 20's.
The Child (Nonspeaking part.): Male, 4 - 7 years old.

Set and Prop Requirements:

Single living room/kitchen set with two trick props: a refrigerator with a back that opens, and snow that falls from the sky. Other props include a dog, (perhaps a live puppy) and black and white photos on the wall (perhaps taken from scenes in the play). The rest of the prop/set requirements are standard. Lighting plays an important part near the end of the play, perhaps using a scrim. Sound requirements are minimal.

Directors are encouraged to enhance the dream landscape of this play.

Running Time: 65 minutes. Single continuous scene, no intermission.

Setting: Living room/kitchen area. A front door is seen, with a mail slot in it. The room is in disarray. Tattered couch. Bags and boxes stacked against a wall. Hole in the sheet rock, made by hitting the wall. Four or five music boxes spread around apartment. These music boxes must all play the same tune. Photos, many black and white, are on walls. These photos may reflect scenes that take place in the play.

In memory of my brother, Gregory Michael Lyons

ON RISE: THE OLDER is on stage somewhere, probably asleep under a pile of blankets on the couch. THE CHILD is also somewhere on stage, unseen.

THE YOUNGER (O.S.) I can't believe it.

I Can Not believe it.

(YOUNGER enters but not thru door.)

My God. What happened to my place?
VANDALIZED.

Great... yep... great.

DAMN IT.

I CAN NOT BELIEVE IT!

(YOUNGER walks around room, disgusted)

What kind of... nut...

(notices a photo on the wall)

wrecks your house and then hangs black and white. limited edition, palladium prints on your walls.

(removes photo from wall, sits, admiring photo)

This guy is good.

My cameras!

(Runs to closet.)

(Inside closet) Where are my cameras!

(exiting closet)

I'm calling the police.

(Notices other things that are out of whack)

These people are totally...

What else...

Jesus, I CAN NOT BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING!

(Mail slot in front door opens and mail is dropped through. **THE OLDER** stirs, gets up, ambles to the front door and gathers up the mail, ignoring **YOUNGER**.)

What the hell...

What are you doing?

(**THE OLDER** goes over to the stack of boxes and bags, searches around for the correct bag, throws the mail in, unopened. Returns to where he had been.)

GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!

(**THE YOUNGER** grabs a knife from the kitchen. Raises it to strike.)

I'm warning you...

Get out of my house.

THE OLDER: This is an apartment.

THE YOUNGER: Get out of my house!

THE OLDER: This is my apartment.

THE YOUNGER: You stole my cameras.

THE OLDER: Impossible.

THE YOUNGER: I'm giving you to the count of ten.

(OLDER curls up to go back
to sleep)

You are out of your mind.

THE OLDER: No. I am out of your mind. Or perhaps, you
are out of my--

THE YOUNGER: SHUT UP!

THE OLDER: Look at me.

(pause)

Well...

THE YOUNGER: Well, what?

THE OLDER: Look around your apartment.

THE YOUNGER: I've looked.

THE OLDER: Not enough.

THE YOUNGER: I'm counting to ten.

THE OLDER: Good, then I'll take it from eleven to twenty,
then it's back to you. Okay go.

THE YOUNGER: You're dead man.

THE OLDER: I should be so lucky.

(THE YOUNGER plunges the
knife into the couch.)

THE YOUNGER: SHUT UP!

THE OLDER: Look around.

THE YOUNGER: I've looked. Now I'm calling the police.

(THE YOUNGER goes for the phone, notices calendar on the wall. THE OLDER goes to the kitchen to fix a drink for the younger.)

Get out of my kitchen.

THE OLDER: My kitchen.

THE YOUNGER: This is too weird. What did you do with my calendar?

THE OLDER: Yours was out of date.

Won't you sit down?

THE YOUNGER: (OLDER hands drink to YOUNGER, who doesn't sit.)

Who are you, man?

THE OLDER: Wanna guess?

THE YOUNGER: (pause) You give me the creeps. How did you get in here?

THE OLDER: Used my key. How did you get in?

THE YOUNGER: I... I don't remember.

(THE YOUNGER looks around a bit more. THE OLDER watches him.)

THE OLDER: By the way, you want to call the police, go ahead.

In fact, call whoever you want here's the phone book.

THE YOUNGER: You sure are cocky.

(YOUNGER stares at phone book.)

THE OLDER: Something the matter?

THE YOUNGER: You are messin' with me, man.

THE OLDER: Well, you know what they say.

THE YOUNGER: (no reply)

THE OLDER: You got a problem?

THE YOUNGER: What do they say?

THE OLDER: What rhymes with reason?

THE YOUNGER: My father used to say that.

THE OLDER: So did mine.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) What did you do with my phone book?

THE OLDER: Probably threw it out along with your calendar.

THE YOUNGER: (no reply)

THE OLDER: So what's up with you these days?

THE YOUNGER: (no reply)

THE OLDER: Like your drink? I fixed it just the way you like it.

THE YOUNGER: (no reply)

THE OLDER: I upset you?

THE YOUNGER: Yes.

THE OLDER: Good.

THE YOUNGER: Who are you, man?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: You're crazy aren't you?

THE OLDER: I think you know exactly who I am.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) You look like my dad.

THE OLDER: So I've been told.

So what were you up to before dropping in on me?

THE YOUNGER: Having a nightmare apparently.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: I don't remember.

THE OLDER: Out partying?

THE YOUNGER: Yes! Yes, I was celebrating!

THE OLDER: I bet.

THE YOUNGER: Victory for George W. Bush.

THE OLDER: What! You never

THE YOUNGER: This is the final nail in the coffin of the right wing.

THE OLDER: Oh yes, now I

THE YOUNGER: Best thing that ever happened to the country. The election of Bush is the

OLDER / YOUNGER: (together) catalyst that will ignite the left.

THE OLDER: Right. So is this the first time or second time?

(THE YOUNGER spews his drink)

First.... Sorry.

THE YOUNGER: (sputtering) What!

THE OLDER: I'm really sorry, I shouldn't

THE YOUNGER: Second time! Bush gets reelected?!? Is that what you're saying?

(YOUNGER sloshes down
drink.)

THE OLDER: Don't worry. There's nothing George W Bush
can do to you that you aren't better at doing to
yourself.

THE YOUNGER: Get out.

THE OLDER: Okay, fine. Hey, that's what I've been trying
to do for years.

(prepares to leave)

Listen, there's a frozen dinner in the fridge. Here
are the keys. Had the locks changed about ten
times since you were here. Dental appointment
scheduled for next Thursday. You're workin' swing
shift tonight. Don't forget.

(OLDER exits.

The YOUNGER walks around
apartment, inspecting
things)

THE YOUNGER: What a nut case.

Shooee, you had me goin' there for a minute, you
really did.

(THE OLDER reenters)

What are you doing back
here?

THE OLDER: I have no where to go.

THE YOUNGER: Then you've arrived.

THE OLDER: I don't think this will work. You and I can't
just switch places.

THE YOUNGER: Look, you want me to believe that you're, like, the Ghost of Christmas Future, right?

THE OLDER: Right.

THE YOUNGER: So you are me, only in the future.

THE OLDER: Correct.

THE YOUNGER: That doesn't make much sense, does it?

THE OLDER: At night, as you admire a starlit sky, you are admiring light that was created long before you were born. That doesn't make sense either, but it is true.

THE YOUNGER: Well, if you are me, it is easy enough to prove. You wouldn't mind answering a few questions?

THE OLDER: Ask away. That's what we did last time.

THE YOUNGER: Last time?

THE OLDER: Last time we got together like this.

THE YOUNGER: We have never gotten together like this.

THE OLDER: We have, but you were a few years older.

THE YOUNGER: So, in your past, you have spoken to me in my future?

THE OLDER: Now that one is a bit more confusing, I admit.

THE YOUNGER: I think we can clear this all up. I'm just going to ask a few questions.

THE OLDER: (OLDER lits up a cigarette) Ask away.

(YOUNGER stares at
cigarette, aghast)

THE YOUNGER: What are you doing?

THE OLDER: (pause) Smokin'.

THE YOUNGER: No, I don't mean "What are you doing" I mean "What the hell are you doing."

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: When did you take that up? Do you ever read the side of the box, smart guy?

(OLDER slowly looks at the side of the cigarette box, sets box back down.)

Well...

THE OLDER: (pause) They don't have that on the side of the box anymore.

THE YOUNGER: What!

THE OLDER: Congress abolished the office of the Surgeon General.

THE YOUNGER: Oh brother. Okay, so I'm going to ask you a few questions.

THE OLDER: (indicates "ask away.")

THE YOUNGER: (YOUNGER grabs music box)

Who gave me this?

THE OLDER: Your mother.

THE YOUNGER: Ha! Sorry, wrong answer, Bub. If you are who you are pretending to be, you would have known that the right answer is "Aunt Clara."

THE OLDER: Aunt Clara is your mother.

THE YOUNGER: That doesn't make much sense, does it?

THE OLDER: What rhymes with reason?

THE YOUNGER: When Dad said that, it use to really irritate me. It's even more irritating coming from you.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: Okay, I'll give you one more chance.

(YOUNGER gets the knife he had earlier)

Name my favorite thing in the whole world?

THE OLDER: Gin & tonic with a twist of lime.

THE YOUNGER: No that's not what I mean.

THE OLDER: Cocoa.

THE YOUNGER: No, no, I mean before. You know, as a kid.

THE OLDER: Oh.

THE YOUNGER: And it is not lime, it's lemon.

THE OLDER: Have you tried it with a twist of lime?

THE YOUNGER: Yeah, I didn't like it.

THE OLDER: That will change, it's what you use all the time now.

THE YOUNGER: Okay, okay. Look, what was my favorite thing in the whole world as a kid.

THE OLDER: This a test?

THE YOUNGER: Yeah, this is a test.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: I'm counting down from five.... If you can't answer by the time I get to one, you're just a vandal and I put this knife down your throat. Okay? Five, four, three, two

THE OLDER: Cedric.

(YOUNGER puts knife
through couch.)

STOP STABBING MY COUCH!

THE YOUNGER: Damn you. Anyone could have known about Cedric. That was common knowledge.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: How did Cedric die?

THE OLDER: Mike, come on.

THE YOUNGER: How did Cedric die?

THE OLDER: I'm done taking your test.

THE YOUNGER: How did Cedric die asshole?

THE OLDER: (pause) Dad...

THE YOUNGER: Okay okay. I know.

THE OLDER: And I know.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) None of this makes sense. Now wait a minute, I'm engaged to Julie. We're moving into a new place after we get married.

Look at this place. Same old place. And I strongly suspect you live alone. No Julie. Same place. Ergo. You're just an undigested piece of pudding. No. No. You are pudding that I haven't even swallowed yet. You are still swilling around in my mouth.

(YOUNGER turns from Older
and spits.)

There. You are gone.

(YOUNGER peeks back at
where Older was sitting.
Older is indeed still there.)

WHERE'S JULIE!

What happened to the new place we were going to get?

THE OLDER: (pause) You know I can't tell you.

THE YOUNGER: Where is she! Is Julie... did she die?

THE OLDER: (pause) I haven't seen Julie for... many, many years.

THE YOUNGER: Did . . . did she leave you?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: You messed up my relationship with Julie.

THE OLDER: The relationship is the same as it ever was.

THE YOUNGER: "Same as it ever was"? You just said you haven't seen her for years.

THE OLDER: Yeah.

(YOUNGER thinks about this a moment, then shakes his head, disgusted)

THE YOUNGER: man...

(YOUNGER takes a good look at The Older. Approaches Older.)

THE OLDER: What are you doing?

THE YOUNGER: Man, this is what I look like in twenty years. Incredible.

Your... skin. It's... loose. Maybe that's why Julie left you. I mean look at you. You've gone all... old. You really need to take better care of yourself.

(YOUNGER sits.)

God, I need a refill.

(YOUNGER raises his glass)

You joining me?

THE OLDER: Sure.

(OLDER prepares a drink for himself and the Younger)

THE YOUNGER: You said you were working swing shift.

THE OLDER: That is correct sir.

THE YOUNGER: Good. Good. A little respect. I like that.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: So where are you working?

THE OLDER: Same.

THE YOUNGER: Same?

THE OLDER: Same place you're working.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) What year is it?

THE OLDER: It's later than you think.

THE YOUNGER: (goes over to calendar)

Is this thing real.

THE OLDER: Unfortunately.

THE YOUNGER: And you're still working at the Food Mart?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: That was only temporary until I got a few gallery shows together.

What about the galleries? Have you published anywhere?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: My god, the Food Mart. Well, at least you can't still be working the receiving dock anymore. What an awful job that is.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER : So... what... what are you doing there now?

THE OLDER: Same.

(YOUNGER turns red in the face with anger. Gulps down drink.)

THE YOUNGER: You're still workin' the receiving dock at Food Mart after twenty years!

This... This isn't what happens to me.

You aren't... receiving dock at Food Mart.

THE OLDERV(no reply)

THE YOUNGER: You screwed up the relationship with Julie. I mean, what have you amounted to? How about gallery shows? Like... like the "Shore" series. That was really promising. But you just gave up on it.

THE OLDER: No. No, I finished it

THE YOUNGER: You finished it?? You finished the "Shore" series?

THE OLDER: Yeah.

THE YOUNGER: Where is it?

THE OLDER: In my portfolio, in the closet.

THE YOUNGER: Man oh man. Mind if I...

(indicates closet)

THE OLDER: Knock yourself out.

THE YOUNGER: (YOUNGER goes toward closet. Notices hole punched in the wall.)

This... you?

THE OLDER: I have a fragile relationship with... moods.

(YOUNGER goes into closet.)

THE YOUNGER: (from within closet) I can't believe it.

(YOUNGER comes out with a piece of redwood burl.)

My god, how long's it been?

THE OLDER: I'm going to make that into a table.

THE YOUNGER: This has been in the closet now for what, twenty years?

THE OLDER: All I need to do is sand it, Varathan it, and get a glass top for it.

THE YOUNGER: That's all you needed to do twenty years ago!

(YOUNGER returns burl to closet.)

(from within closet) Ah. Here we go.

(YOUNGER comes out of closet with a portfolio case. Thumbing through photos in portfolio)

So. Look at all this stuff.

(holding up a photo from Shore series) Now this one I've already taken... this is incredible.

THE OLDER: Yeah.

THE YOUNGER: Mike, this is really good.

THE OLDER: Michael.

THE YOUNGER: What?

THE OLDER: Michael. I... I go by Michael now.

THE YOUNGER: Whoa. Sure, MICHAEL... whatever.

So, you had a lot of shows?

THE OLDER: Oh... not really.

THE YOUNGER: Come on, don't be modest. I mean, this stuff is great.

(Continuing to shuffle
through photos)

Hey, this is down at the pier. Really striking contrast between the shadow of the pilings and the sunlight on the water. Nice. Nice.

Wait.

(holding up a color print)

So what is this?

THE OLDER: That's taken at the

THE YOUNGER: Color?

THE OLDER: Yeah, I had a period where I really got into

THE YOUNGER: Color! You are working in color?

THE OLDER: Yeah, for a while there I

THE YOUNGER: I thought you were a photographer!

THE OLDER: I know, I know.

THE YOUNGER: Here, let me serve you a glass of perfectly chilled Chablis while you admire my COLOR photographs.

THE OLDER: What can I say?

THE YOUNGER: What a slut.

(pause) Actually, it's pretty good.

THE YOUNGER: So, how many shows have you had?

THE OLDER: Well, um... none.

THE YOUNGER: (long pause) None? But... but this "Shore" series. This must have generated a lot interest.

(no response)

Well, did you at least apply for the NEA grant?

THE OLDER: Oh yes, I did do that I guess. Yeah. Applied fifteen years ago.

THE YOUNGER: And... what happened?

THE OLDER: What?

THE YOUNGER: (exasperated) The grant. Did I get the NEA grant?

(THE OLDER gets up, goes over to bags, searches around.)

THE OLDER: What year did I say again?

THE YOUNGER: (despondent) Fifteen years ago.

(THE OLDER shuffles through bags. Finds one. Pours out a bunch of unopened mail. Shuffles through unopened mail. Finds a letter. Opens it.)

THE OLDER: "Dear Sir / Madame"

THE YOUNGER: Rejected.

THE OLDER: "This was our biggest year yet for grant applications in the photography category."

THE YOUNGER: You lost man.

THE OLDER: "With over 500 photographers applying for our few grants, competition was stiff. The judges were impressed by the number of excellent photos this year."

THE YOUNGER: Okay, got it.

THE OLDER: "We regret to inform you that your application was not selected. Thank you for your interest in our contest and we wish you the best of luck in your future photography pursuits."

THE YOUNGER: Okay.

THE OLDER: "Sincerely, "

THE YOUNGER: Right.

THE OLDER: "The National Endowment for the Arts"

THE YOUNGER: You lost.

THE OLDER: (pause) Nice letter though.

THE YOUNGER: So, that's it? Nearly 25 years of photography and this is what you have to show for it?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: This is so depressing. It's like you are uninvolved in your own life.

(The YOUNGER gets up)

THE OLDER: What are you doing?

THE YOUNGER: (finds phone book. Flips through pages)

S... Ste...

THE OLDER: Who you gonna call?

THE YOUNGER: Here we go. The Steinhart Gallery. Mrs. Steinhart was always very encouraging. Have you shown her my portfolio?

THE OLDER: My portfolio.

THE YOUNGER: Have you shown her our portfolio?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: Look, I'm going to set up an appointment for you.

(looking for phone)

You're like a fine Cabernet, so polite. In this business, you got to be intrusive, like a gin and tonic.

Where's your phone?

THE OLDER: There.

(YOUNGER picks up phone.
It's a smart phone.)

THE YOUNGER: (pause) This?

Where are the buttons?

THE OLDER: Put the phone down, please.

(YOUNGER puts phone to
ear)

THE YOUNGER: This doesn't work.

THE OLDER: Put the phone down, please.

THE YOUNGER: Now, come on

THE OLDER: Look, my portfolio is not ready to show to anybody.

THE YOUNGER: What do you mean!?! Our stuff is incredible.

THE OLDER: I'm not done with it. I just want to round it out with a few more shots.

THE YOUNGER: So when do you expect to be done with these other shots?

THE OLDER: (pause) Well, it's not as easy as that. You don't just

THE YOUNGER: How often do you work in the dark room?

THE OLDER: Oh, I don't know. I... you know

THE YOUNGER: When did you last even touch your camera?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: So, you still using the Nikon?

THE OLDER: (pause) No. I... I sold the Nikon.

THE YOUNGER: So, what do you have now?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: Let me ask you a simple question big shot. Just a simple yes/no question. Do you even own a camera?

(no response. THE YOUNGER puts his hands to his face, sighs.)

THE OLDER: Look, you want a suggestion? Get a different hobby.

THE YOUNGER: This is more than a hobby for me, you know that.

(shaking his head in disbelief)

You have completely screwed up my life, man.

THE OLDER: Maybe you could find a less expensive way to express yourself...

THE YOUNGER: Man, I can't believe that you are such a miserable failure.

THE OLDER: ... Maybe something involving yarn.

THE YOUNGER: I mean, this stuff is great and it just sits in your closet.

(pause)

How can you allow all this talent to just atrophy? Photography defined who I was. I... you... you were a photographer. Now, now you are just, what? An aging lowlife on the receiving dock at Food Mart?

Remember the effect Ansel Adams' photography used to have on you?

THE OLDER: Ansel Adams. Yeah.

THE YOUNGER: His photos used to give you erections.

THE OLDER: Oh that is not true.

(YOUNGER gives a look)

Well, yeah, his picture of Half Dome. But that happens to everybody.

THE YOUNGER: You were on fire, man. How can that passion just be drained from you? I mean, look at your stuff. Look at it.

What is that Confucius saying?

THE OLDER: Which Confucius saying?

THE YOUNGER: The one Mom would say.

THE OLDER: (pause) "A common man marvels at uncommon things. A wise man marvels at the common place."

THE YOUNGER: Right. You see. You are the wise man marveling at the common place. You then share your sense of wonder with others, through your photos. You can coax beauty out of a discarded tire.

Yours is a rare gift Mike.

THE OLDER: Michael.

THE YOUNGER: You don't just take pictures of things, you take portraits. You catch a... a tire, a tire in the act of being itself, and transform that act into a thing of beauty. No one who has seen your work will ever look at a tire the same way. You celebrate the mundane. People need to find beauty in the mundane, because that is what they are surrounded by. The world needs you, Michael.

THE OLDER: None of it matters anymore.

THE YOUNGER: It matters to me.

The reason you don't get recognition is you aren't trying hard enough. You aren't trying hard enough because you are spineless.

THE OLDER: It makes no difference...

THE YOUNGER: Here I launch this career, only to have it locked into geocentric orbit around the gravity of your miserable life.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: They did this to you. The art world did this to you.

(YOUNGER grabs a magazine off the table)

Look. Look at these photos in Life Magazine. I... I sent photos to Life Magazine. Really good photos.

(shuffles through the portfolio)

Remember? The photo I took at the beach. Where is it? That lobster peaking out from an old boot? Fabulous shot. Everything Life Magazine represents was there in that one shot. Where is it?? Don't tell me you lost that photo, I'll kill you.

Remember that photo shoot? That lobster was absolutely regal. Like he knew that he could inspire great art if he felt like it. He backs up into that boot like a valet parking a Porsche. He sets his antennae just so, poses and smiles and then BAM, I give him my F-stop surprise. Having done his job, he exits the boot and with the swagger of a sailor, slips back into the ocean. Wow. What a lobster.

That shot was just as good as any photo this rag publishes. No, better.

The photo editor wouldn't even return my phone calls. I called every week for months. Nothing. Nada. It's humiliating to keep calling like that. I mean, look, rejection I can take. At least with rejection there is an acknowledgment that I exist. But to not even ... Editor just sits there, like some French Champagne, so self satisfied.

So, so whose phone call does he return? Can you tell me that? You want to help me out Futureboy, then you tell me this one thing. How does one get the photo editor of Life Magazine to return a phone call?

And while you are at it, answer a more basic question. How does anybody ever get anything accomplished ever? I'm not talking about accomplishing getting a job at Food Mart and then staying there for twenty-five years. I'm talking about accomplishing something that makes a difference. Makes a little splash.

I mean, is there anybody, anywhere in the world saying "Here, let me help you make a difference in the world by doing something radical like returning your phone call."

Maybe, maybe it's who you know, like having your daddy on the board of directors.

THE OLDER: Well, maybe it's --

THE YOUNGER: Oh shut up! You don't know the answer or else you wouldn't be wasting away as some wretched, unknown, drunkard.

(Pause)

I... I have so much to give, so much to share. So much life. So much joy.

(to the world) I WANT TO SHARE MY JOY WITH YOU,
(pause) assholes.

(addressing Older again)

And then, if after sufficient groveling, if they do publish me I get, what? One hundred dollars. I mean, I'm practically donating to these guys talent

that has taken years to develop. And what have they done? What have they done? Daddy's on the board... Who are they to judge my photography? These assholes probably judge haiku by counting the number of syllables.

(pause)

I don't know, maybe I don't have talent. Maybe

THE OLDER: Mike, you have a lot

THE YOUNGER: DON'T YOU DARE TRY TO COMFORT ME!

(pause)

God, I get a glimpse of the what lays ahead and all I see is misery. Is there anything, anything at all to look forward too?

THE OLDER: (pause) You know Beanie Babies?

THE YOUNGER: Yeah. I hate 'em.

THE OLDER: They aren't popular anymore.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) It's a little something, I suppose.

(sighs)

THE OLDER: Look, I need to ask you something.

THE YOUNGER: (Indicates "ask.")

THE OLDER: You said George W Bush was just elected.

THE YOUNGER: Yeah.

THE OLDER: So, you... you haven't met Zachary yet.

THE YOUNGER: Zachary? Who's Zachary?

THE OLDER: (sigh of relief) Look. You must listen to me, this is very important.

(THE CHILD runs out from under table or somehow appears, holding a puppy.)

YOUNGER: Cedric!

(THE CHILD backs away from them, protectively holding the puppy. CHILD then turns and runs quickly offstage.)

Hey! That's Cedric.

(YOUNGER begins to run after Child.)

THE OLDER: Stop!

THE YOUNGER: Hey, come back here.

THE OLDER: STOP! Leave him alone.

THE YOUNGER: He took Cedric!

THE OLDER: He took everything.

THE YOUNGER: Who is he?

THE OLDER: He is your death.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) My death? Oh come on.

THE OLDER: So, you don't know who that is.

THE YOUNGER: It's Cedric!

THE OLDER: No, the boy. You don't know who that boy is?

THE YOUNGER: No.

THE OLDER: That is Zachary.

THE YOUNGER: But, he was holding Cedric wasn't he? That really was Cedric!

THE OLDER: Yes.

THE YOUNGER: My God, you have Cedric!

THE OLDER: He has Cedric.

THE YOUNGER: Cedric belongs to me.

THE OLDER: Cedric belongs to him now.

THE YOUNGER: Well, we'll see about that.

THE OLDER: Look, it is extremely important that you listen to me.

Here, here, sit...

THE YOUNGER: But--

THE OLDER: Just sit. Just relax a second.

(YOUNGER complies)

Good, good. Now.

(OLDER removes all alcohol from table.)

THE YOUNGER: Wait, I'm still working on th

THE OLDER: Let's switch. How about some cocoa, Michael?

(OLDER Goes to kitchen.)

THE YOUNGER: Mike.

(They each smile, perhaps the only such moment between them.)

THE OLDER: Mike. How about some cocoa?

(OLDER empties glasses down sink.)

THE YOUNGER: I was happy with my gin and tonic.

(OLDER gets the cocoa)

Hey you moved where you keep the cocoa mix.

Wow, moved the cocoa mix. See, you are capable of radical change.

(YOUNGER looks at letter from National Endowment for the Arts. Picks letter up.)

THE OLDER: Wait, don't

(YOUNGER shoos him away.)

That's not...

(YOUNGER continues reading. OLDER is uncomfortable. YOUNGER puts down letter, looks at OLDER. A moment.)

THE YOUNGER: You lied to me.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: I... I don't get it. Why...

(reading from letter) "Dear Mr. Lockwood"

THE OLDER: I know what it says.

THE YOUNGER: "We have tried unsuccessfully to contact you by phone, perhaps this letter will reach you."

THE OLDER: Look, you don't have to

THE YOUNGER: "This was our biggest year yet for grant applications in the photography category. With over 500 photographers applying for our few grants, competition was stiff. The judges were impressed by the number of excellent photos this

year. However, the judges found your photo 'Boot With Lobster,' "

really had a surge of creativity when you named that one, eh?

"the judges found your photo 'Boot With Lobster,' to exude a spirit of joy"

YES, someone noticed!

"a spirit of joy that leaps from the photo. We are pleased to inform you that you have been awarded a \$10,000 grant. Please fill out and return the enclosed form to receive the award."

(pause)

I assume this is the form they are referring to.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: I can't help but notice it isn't filled out.

Even when you win you're a loser. I just don't understand why... why you lied to me.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: You are screwing up everything. The National Endowment for the Arts, Michael.

THE OLDER: Winning that grant doesn't change anything.

THE YOUNGER: Well yeah, with the form still sitting in this envelope it don't.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: (pause) At least now I know where my photo is. It's gathering dust in the basement of the National Endowment for the Arts, thanks to you.

(OLDER takes two teacups and saucers to table and sits down.)

THE OLDER: Look, I don't know how much more time we have.

THE YOUNGER: Ten thousand dollars. Maybe I can call them and tell them I was temporarily being represented by a worm but I'm back now and –

THE OLDER: Forget the National Endowment for the Arts. Would you listen to me!

THE YOUNGER: (pause) I bet the cocoa is ready.

(THE CHILD pops up from behind counter, gets the pan of cocoa)

Oh, look! My death is going to serve us hot cocoa. How pleasant.

(The pot is filled with nuts and bolts. THE CHILD loudly pours the contents of the pot into each teacup, shattering each teacup.

THE CHILD tops off the heap of broken cups and nuts and bolts with a squirt from a can of whipped cream. THE CHILD exits)

THE YOUNGER: (pause) That little boy... bothers me.

Have you adopted him or something?

THE OLDER: Yeah. Yeah, I guess you could say I've adopted him.

THE YOUNGER: So who is he really?

THE OLDER: I told you. He is your de

THE YOUNGER: Oh come on. He's just some little kid.

THE OLDER: The day you meet him, you die.

THE YOUNGER: You're just trying to scare me.

THE OLDER: Yes, I am trying to scare you.

THE YOUNGER: You wanna know what scares me? What scares me is you have Cedric under the same roof as you, but you let some little twerp take her from you.

THE OLDER: So, you want to keep Cedric out of the hands of that kid?

THE YOUNGER: Cedric is mine.

(The refrigerator door drifts open. THE CHILD is inside, holding Cedric.)

THE OLDER: Okay. I can help you, but you have got to trust me.

THE YOUNGER: Well, I don't know...

THE OLDER: You've got to listen to me. You've got to do exactly as I say.

THE YOUNGER: I don't like the sound of this.

THE OLDER: See that bottle over there.

THE YOUNGER: Yeah.

THE OLDER: Never touch it again.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) If drinking bothers you, then stop. Don't ask me to do it for you.

(The refrigerator door drifts closed.)

THE OLDER: What I do no longer matters. What you do does.

THE YOUNGER: NO. What you do does matter Michael. It matters to me.

THE OLDER: I... I know. I'm sorry.

THE YOUNGER: Yeah, yeah.

THE OLDER: I've disappointed you. I'm--

THE YOUNGER: Save it.

(pause) I suppose you would like me to say "Oh that's okay. I understand." But I don't understand. And it's not okay.

THE OLDER: I'm sorry.

THE YOUNGER: Oh you're sorry. But you aren't sorry enough to do anything about it. I'm ashamed even being related to you, let alone being the same person. What happened? What happened to you?

(Lawn mower starts up offstage. THE CHILD comes out pushing the lawn mower. Pushes the lawnmower around the living room. Pushes lawn mower to OLDER. Holds out hand for payment. OLDER pays child, CHILD pushes lawn mower offstage.)

You paid him? You paid him? For what? The living room didn't even NEED to be mowed.

(YOUNGER begins to get up)

I'm gonna get your money back.

THE OLDER: STOP. Don't you dare touch him.

THE YOUNGER: You are pathetic, do you know that? It's like your life is ruled by your inner bunny slope.

(sighs, shakes his head)

Being here is very disturbing. I feel like I'm going to explode.

THE OLDER: Maybe you need to go to the bathroom.

THE YOUNGER: Actually, (indicates bathroom) you mind?

THE OLDER: (indicates he can use it)

THE YOUNGER: (Going off to bathroom) What am I doing, asking you if I can use the bathroom in my own home?

(YOUNGER exits to bathroom. We hear bathroom sounds, water etc. OLDER busies himself with something)

(pause)

THE YOUNGER (OS) : (through bathroom door) Do you believe in God?

THE OLDER: What?

THE YOUNGER (OS) : I say, do you believe in God?

THE OLDER: I'm not going to talk about God while you are

THE YOUNGER (OS) : What?

THE OLDER: (pause) Are you standing up or sitting down?

THE YOUNGER: Standing up.

THE OLDER: (satisfied by this response) Do I believe in God?

THE YOUNGER: Yeah.

THE OLDER: Do you want the short answer or long answer?

THE YOUNGER: Short answer.

(Sound of toilet flush.)

THE OLDER: The short answer is no.

(YOUNGER returns from bathroom)

THE YOUNGER: What's the long answer?

THE OLDER: The long answer is yes.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) Same with me.

THE OLDER: Excuse me.

(OLDER goes toward bathroom)

THE YOUNGER: Say, what happened to the mirror in the bathroom?

THE OLDER: Took it down.

THE YOUNGER: But

THE OLDER: Make yourself at home.

(OLDER enters bathroom. YOUNGER looks around a bit. Opens refrigerator. Opens freezer. Gets out a carton of ice cream. Gets out bowl, spoon. Sits at table. CHILD appears, maybe from behind couch,

coldly stares at YOUNGER while bouncing ball. Rhythmic bouncing of ball continues until CHILD leaves. YOUNGER stares back at child, continuing his preparations. OLDER exits bathroom. OLDER sees child, and follows his gaze to the Younger.)

THE OLDER: STOP! Put it back.

THE YOUNGER: What's wrong?

THE OLDER: Don't touch it.

THE YOUNGER: Come on

THE OLDER: That doesn't belong to you, put it back.

THE YOUNGER: Like I say. What's yours is

THE OLDER: It doesn't belong to me.

THE YOUNGER: So what... it's... his?

(OLDER grabs carton from the Younger, returns it forcefully to freezer)

THE OLDER: Yes.

THE YOUNGER: He has got you wrapped around his finger.

(YOUNGER going to refrigerator)

Well I'm going to put an end to this.

(YOUNGER opens freezer, removes carton)

The thankless little brat ought to be willing to share his strawberry ice cream.

THE OLDER: It's not strawberry ice cream.

THE YOUNGER: What--

(CHILD stops bouncing ball.)

THE OLDER: It's bloody snow, okay?

(OLDER grabs it and returns it to freezer. CHILD disappears)

It's a pound of bloody snow.

Don't mess around like that.

THE YOUNGER: Disgusting. Throw it out for God's sake.

Why do you allow some kid to keep bloody snow in your refrigerator? I swear that kid is a real... sicko.

THE OLDER: What rhymes with reason?

THE YOUNGER: Number one, that little twerp has you wrapped around his finger and you are too much of a weenie to do anything about it.

Number two, I don't give a damn what rhymes with reason, okay?

THE OLDER: (sighs)

THE YOUNGER: Why don't we talk about something different? We just been sitting around talking about you. You haven't asked me a thing about me.

THE OLDER: Well, it seems a little awkward. I mean, I know most of it.

THE YOUNGER: Well maybe you do, maybe you don't. Maybe you've forgotten.

THE OLDER: Okay, so what you up to these days?

THE YOUNGER: Well, I just started a new program.

THE OLDER: Program?! You are in a program! That's great! I don't remember that.

THE YOUNGER: Yeah, the two year photography program out at the community college. You mean you don't re--

THE OLDER: Oh, I was hoping you meant

THE YOUNGER: I know what you thought I meant. I don't need that sort of a program.

THE OLDER: Mike, you need a program. Why don't you try AA or... something. Anything. Do something.

THE YOUNGER: That stuff is for people who have lost control.

THE OLDER: Mike, please... .

THE YOUNGER: Oh, "Mike please" yourself. Look at you. You got no right to tell me how to conduct myself.

THE OLDER: Mike, wouldn't you like to escape the depression?

THE YOUNGER: Depression? I'm not depressed. Or at least I wasn't until I met up with you.

THE OLDER: You're not depressed?

THE YOUNGER: No.

THE OLDER: Well, let me ask you something. What did you do for your last vacation?

THE YOUNGER: I... I don't trust the shape of your question.

THE OLDER: I'm sure you don't, because I have the advantage here... I know you, you don't know me. So... what did you do for your last vacation?

THE YOUNGER: (no reply)

THE OLDER: You slept.

THE YOUNGER: I was tired.

THE OLDER: You spent nearly two weeks in bed.

THE YOUNGER: That is not entirely true.

THE OLDER: Ah yes, you would get out of bed occasionally... to go to the bathroom or attempt suicide.

THE YOUNGER: Oh come on, I was doing all kinds of stuff at home... catching up on my reading and

THE OLDER: Mike, Mike, I was there, okay? I know what you did... . "Reading." The closest you came to reading was... masturbating... and frankly they aren't even really all that close.

THE YOUNGER: I was going through a rough time with Julie and –

THE OLDER: I want to help you.

THE YOUNGER: (screams) I don't need your help.

THE OLDER: Look, think of me as an older brother giving you brotherly advice. You always wanted a brother

THE YOUNGER: A younger brother.

THE OLDER: Someone to look up to.

THE YOUNGER: Someone I could beat up.

THE OLDER: So just think of me as that older brother.

THE YOUNGER: (pause) I feel things very deeply. I think that is good, not bad. When life is depressing the only sane response is to be depressed. Anyway, my mood is my muse. You aren't going to rob me of my artistic source.

THE OLDER: Artistic source? You think that staying in bed all day because you can't think of a reason to get up propels you to artistic heights??

THE YOUNGER: Well, yeah, I do. I think my tormented soul gives me a certain... depth.

THE OLDER: The depth of a coffin.

THE YOUNGER: Look at all the great artists that used depression as an inspiration. Dorothy Parker, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Robert Schumann, Virginia Woolf, Vincent Van Gogh.

THE OLDER: But Mike, these people weren't great artists because they were depressed. They were depressed because they were in the arts.

(YOUNGER sighs)

It's a totally dismal field to be in. Van Gogh was depressed because everyone was sitting around listening to Johann Strauss and going to Monet openings and he couldn't get a gallery to even look at his stuff. No wonder he shot himself.

And photography is worse, because not only are you rejected all the time, but it costs a fortune just to get rejected. Do you know how much I've spent on dark room equipment, lenses, developing, lights?

THE YOUNGER: (no reply)

THE OLDER: Well, a lot.

THE YOUNGER: Let me get this straight. You want me to quit photography?

THE OLDER: I think it would help.

THE YOUNGER: Help?

THE OLDER: You use art to justify being miserable. To justify drinking.

THE YOUNGER: You would steal from me the only thing that makes me... You quit, right?

THE OLDER: Not exactly.

THE YOUNGER: So you're still taking photos?

THE OLDER: Oh that. No, I stopped photography.

THE YOUNGER: But you're a complete drunk, right?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

(CHILD pops up by table with photos, unseen by OLDER and YOUNGER.)

THE YOUNGER: You haven't exactly thought this through, Futureboy.

THE OLDER: (pause) I give up.

(pause) Here you have the chance of a lifetime. The chance to see the future. And I am reaching back to you and I am saying to you: "I have one piece of advice." But you are too stubborn... and you are too arrogant, to listen to the advice.

(CHILD reveals big pair of scissors.)

THE YOUNGER: Because I don't need your kind of advice, Michael.

(OLDER sighs)

(CHILD begins cutting up photos.)

Look. A... a pebble whirling through space is unnoticed until it meets the earth's atmosphere. It meets a little resistance, the air, and it just keeps right on going. And so becomes a spectacular shooting star, lighting up the night sky. But your advice to the pebble is "You are going to experience a little resistance here, better turn around. Forget about lighting up the sky." I mean, what if that pebble took your advice?

THE OLDER: It would still exist.

(pause) Mike, something horrible is going to happen if you continue to drink.

THE YOUNGER: What?

THE OLDER: I... don't know why, but I cannot tell you what. It doesn't work. It has to come from inside you.

(YOUNGER notices what child is doing. Jumps up.)

THE YOUNGER: STOP!

(CHILD runs, exits.
YOUNGER takes off after him.)

You, son of a --

(YOUNGER stops at table where photos are. Slowly picks up destroyed photos.)

I... hate... him.

I hate him.

(YOUNGER nearly in tears)

Look. Look at what he has done.

THE OLDER: Yes, look at what he has done.

THE YOUNGER: Aren't you going to do anything? Are you just going to let him get away with this behavior?

He has to be punished. And if you are too weak to-

THE OLDER: Don't you dare.

THE YOUNGER: You aren't doing him any favors by letting him walk all over you. What if our parents had been like that.

THE OLDER: Well, it probably wouldn't be much wo--

THE YOUNGER: Does Mom know you live like this? Has she seen this place? Has she met your little friend?

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: Is her phone number the same? Maybe I should call her. Tell her that it's not her fault.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: Mom has an inner light that she passed on to me. I still feel it shining.

THE OLDER: (sigh of frustration.)

THE YOUNGER: But the light has gone out in you.

THE OLDER: Her insanity shines in both of us.

THE YOUNGER: Insanity? Mom is crazy, man, but not insane. Crazy in a good way, not like you.

THE OLDER: Crazy in a good way, huh? Like what?

THE YOUNGER: Like all the mischief she and Aunt Clara used to get into. Those two were always so wild. They were like a couple of teenagers.

THE OLDER: Yeah, I guess people thought we had a pretty cool mom.

THE YOUNGER: Like, remember when she and Aunt Clara went out for breakfast in Miami?

THE OLDER: Sure, I still got the postcards they sent us.

THE YOUNGER: Really?! You've got the postcards! I thought they were lost. Would you mind?

THE OLDER: Sure.

(OLDER gets up and goes through bags)

THE YOUNGER: So, remember, Mom and Aunt Clara go out for breakfast in Miami and afterwards they decide to drive up the coast to Palm Beach.

THE OLDER: Yeah. They had to buy swimming suits and towels.

THE YOUNGER: And while at the beach Clara learns that there is going to be a launch at Cape Canaveral the next morning.

THE OLDER: So they call up their old school chum Sarah over in Fort Pierce.

THE YOUNGER: Buy a few overnight things. Spend the night at Sarah's and then the three of them go on up to Cape Canaveral the next morning.

THE OLDER: (laughing) Then old Sarah gets to talking about Cape Hatteras.

THE YOUNGER: You still got the postcard mom sent from Cape Hatteras?

(THE OLDER dumps a bunch of postcards and letters out of the bag.)

THE YOUNGER: Hey, great. You saved them. You're a sentimental asshole.

Hey, here it is! "Greetings from Cape Hatteras" It's so funny. Picture of a huge hurricane ravaging the place.

THE OLDER: They get half-price tickets to "The King and I" on Broadway.

THE YOUNGER: Where did they finally end up?

THE OLDER: Remember the postcard from Quebec?

THE YOUNGER: (laughing) That's right. God, I just love it. Wow! Here it is. Here's the postcard from Quebec.

What chutzpah, eh? Go out for breakfast in Miami and end up in Canada. That's our heritage, that's the sort of genes we got.

I often wonder what happened to Aunt Clara.

THE OLDER: Aunt Clara?

THE YOUNGER: Yeah. I just wonder if she's still around.

THE OLDER: Aunt Clara? So, you really don't know?

THE YOUNGER: Well I know she wasn't really our aunt. Just an old high school chum of mom's.

THE OLDER: You haven't figured it out yet.

THE YOUNGER: Figured what out?

THE OLDER: Aunt Clara is your mother.

THE YOUNGER: Oh, that's brilliant. But Dad said he never met Aunt Clara. So we must have a different father as well, huh?

THE OLDER: No.

THE YOUNGER: Oh, got it. Aunt Clara is my mother. Dad is my father. Dad never met my mother.

THE OLDER: Aunt Clara doesn't exist.

THE YOUNGER: Oh okay, that clears up the confusion. Dad never met my mother because my mother doesn't exist.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

(YOUNGER shuffles through cards)

THE YOUNGER: Hey, here's the birthday card Aunt Clara sent when she sent the music box.

(reading card) "Your mother has told me so much about you. You are the apple of her eye. I hope you can visit me here in Florida sometime. Be good. Love, Aunt Clara"

(pause)

"The apple of her eye." I had never heard that expression before.

I notice you still have the music box she sent.

THE OLDER: You ever look at the post mark on the envelope of that card?

THE YOUNGER: (YOUNGER looks) Yeah, so.

THE OLDER: That wasn't mailed from Florida.

THE YOUNGER: Maybe she gave it to Mom to mail. So?

THE OLDER: Here. Look. Here's the one from Cape Hatteras. Same postmark. They were all mailed from our town.

THE YOUNGER: That's just the post office. They screwed up.

THE OLDER: The cards and letters from Aunt Clara were all mailed from our town. The cards and letters from Mom when she was visiting Aunt Clara in Florida were all mailed from our town.

THE YOUNGER: So based on this Aunt Clara is our mother and Aunt Clara doesn't exist?

THE OLDER: Yes.

THE YOUNGER: (irritated)

THE OLDER: Mom would go away for long stretches. But not to visit Aunt Clara.

THE YOUNGER: Well, no wonder. It's always traumatic for a woman to visit the mother of her children.

THE OLDER: You ever meet Aunt Clara?

THE YOUNGER: Well, no, of course not. She lived down in Florida. So what. I never met John Kennedy but that don't mean he never existed.

Hey, here's the one she sent from New York, with the picture of Broadway.

THE OLDER: Look at the post--

THE YOUNGER: SHUT UP!

THE OLDER: Aunt Clara's handwriting is exactly

THE YOUNGER: Shut up!

THE OLDER: There is no Aunt Clara, mom and dad just made up Aunt Clara.

THE YOUNGER: (YOUNGER ripping up card) Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

(YOUNGER puts his head on table, covers his ears)

THE OLDER: (pause) Mom had a very serious problem Mike. You and I have that same problem. Aunt Clara would help her some. But Aunt Clara was a psychiatrist by the name of Dr. Kessler. He wasn't in Florida. He was a physician in the psych unit of the medical center.

THE YOUNGER: That's a lie.

THE OLDER: I'm sorry. I thought you had figured that out by now.

THE YOUNGER: This, this is crazy man. Are you nuts?

THE OLDER: YES. That's what I've been trying to tell you! We both are.

THE YOUNGER: No, I'm okay, you're nuts.

THE OLDER: No, the difference between us is I know I'm nuts.

THE YOUNGER: Look, Mom held down a job, supported the family.

THE OLDER: She didn't have a job.

THE YOUNGER: What are you talking about? She had a homebased business the entire time I was growing up.

THE OLDER: Oh yes. The bookkeeping business.

THE YOUNGER: Yes. The bookkeeping business.

THE OLDER: Her office in the den.

THE YOUNGER: Yes.

(OLDER stares at younger.
A moment.)

What?

THE OLDER: She would spend a lot of time there in her office in the den.

THE YOUNGER: Yes. Yes, she would spend a lot of time there in her office in the den.

(Another moment. The
YOUNGER is fuming.)

THE OLDER: And in her office in den, did you ever see--

THE YOUNGER: Oh screw you.

THE OLDER: a desk

THE YOUNGER: I hate you

THE OLDER: A typewriter

THE YOUNGER: SHUT UP!

(A moment)

Just last week I told someone that story about mom and Aunt Clara going out for breakfast and ending up in Canada three weeks later.

THE OLDER: It's a good story.

THE YOUNGER: I was proud of that story.

THE OLDER: It's a story to be proud of.

THE YOUNGER: But, it's... It's a lie isn't it?

THE OLDER: Many good stories are.

THE YOUNGER: I cannot believe it. Mom lied to me.

THE OLDER: Last week would you have told the story about your mom staying in a mental institution?

THE YOUNGER: (no reply)

THE OLDER: It's a lovely story. It comes from a rich history of family mythology.

THE YOUNGER: I'll never tell it again.

THE OLDER: Too bad. I tell that story often.

THE YOUNGER: You've grown rather comfortable with lies.

(pause)

So... Dad too, huh. He knew it was all a lie.

THE OLDER: Neither one of them wanted to lie to you.

THE YOUNGER: Dad I can see lying, but Mom?

THE OLDER: I'm sure that Daddy wished things were different, just like Mom. It must have been painful to have a child that you wanted to protect and yet-

THE YOUNGER: Wanted to protect?

THE OLDER: Yeah, wanted to protect us from--

THE YOUNGER: From what Michael?

THE OLDER: I'm sure Daddy struggled with how to--

THE YOUNGER: Struggled with what? Michael, Dad was a monster. I mean, are you going to try to tell me

THE OLDER: He wasn't a

THE YOUNGER: A monster! Look, just look at Cedric. How could anybody harm such a--

THE OLDER: He didn't do it on purpose.

THE YOUNGER: I WAS THERE!! I was there Mike... you were there. Or maybe you've become too old to remember.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: Cedric and I were playing our game with the rocking chair. Remember? Dad and Mom were having yet another argument in the kitchen. Remember? He walks in, mad as hell. Starts screaming about the damn dog and kicks Cedric across the room. Didn't do it on purpose. Bullshit.

THE OLDER: He was under a lot of stress.

THE YOUNGER: Oh spare me.

THE OLDER: He wasn't thinking.

THE YOUNGER: He showed absolutely no remorse. None.

THE OLDER: Well, its hard to show remorse when your wife is chasing you with a knife.

THE YOUNGER: I picked Cedric up. She was quivering, breathing. Then she stopped quivering. She stopped breathing.

(pause)

That day changed me forever.

THE OLDER: (pause) I know...

THE YOUNGER: I wanted mom to catch him. I wanted mom to put that knife through him. Mom stood up for Cedric.

THE OLDER: Yes but-

THE YOUNGER: YES BUT NOTHING! You are one big "yes but."

THE OLDER: Mike

THE YOUNGER: THE MOMENT MOM STOOD UP FOR CEDRIC WAS THE HAPPIEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: Nobody's ever...

THE OLDER: Yes... I know.

THE YOUNGER: done anything like that for me again.

I was nine years old Mike. Okay. He never once, not once said

THE OLDER: He tried to but--

THE YOUNGER: NOT ONCE

THE OLDER: You wouldn't let him get near enough to--

THE YOUNGER: HE KILLED HIM!! Maybe I was next.

THE OLDER: Oh don't be ridic--

THE YOUNGER: Maybe... If I was in the wrong place when he was in the wrong mood...

(YOUNGER kicks something)

(A moment)

It was a relief when she finally divorced him.

THE OLDER: Mom didn't divorce him. He divorced her--

THE YOUNGER: Mom kicked him out after he killed Cedric.

THE OLDER: Dad moved out because he couldn't take it anymore.

THE YOUNGER: And then she filed for divorce.

THE OLDER: He filed for divorce.

THE YOUNGER: Man, you've really marinated your brain in gin and tonic, haven't you? You have forgotten everything.

THE OLDER: I have the divorce papers.

THE YOUNGER: I don't care. I don't care what some piece of paper says. I was there.

THE OLDER: I could show you the papers. I got copies from the county recorders off--

THE YOUNGER: I WAS THERE! Okay.

You could show me the papers. I don't need some legal paper to document my history for me. I know.

Daddy killed Cedric, Mommy divorced him. Simple. Okay?

THE OLDER: Bu--

(THE YOUNGER holds up his hands, indicating STOP)

He--

(THE YOUNGER again stops THE OLDER)

THE YOUNGER: Simple.

You're all confused. You talk like you been in therapy or something?

THE OLDER: I've worked on this in counseling, yes.

THE YOUNGER: Counseling, ha. You need an exorcist, not a therapist. You need someone to expel that worm that has wrapped itself around your soul.

THE OLDER: You could benefit from counseling yourself.

THE YOUNGER: Oh really? Benefit as much as you have?

(YOUNGER grabs the pack of cigarettes on the table, looks at side of box.)

They didn't abolish...

(Throws it down, looks at Older in disgust.)

THE OLDER: There is help for people like us. In our inner stew, the seasoning is not quite right, that's all. But those spices can be adjusted. You just need someone who knows what they're doing to give it the taste test and adjust the seasoning.

THE YOUNGER: So, you had your seasoning adjusted?

THE OLDER: Um, well, no.

THE YOUNGER: But it will help me huh? A few pills will adjust some chemical imbalance and I will be fine? That what you think?

THE OLDER: You drink because you are depressed. You are depressed because of some chemical imbalance, yes.

THE YOUNGER: If I am depressed it is because I am scared by the world. It has nothing to do with chemical imbalance. It has to do with the fact that the world is scary. You wanna push pills, give 'em to the world, leave me alone.

THE OLDER: You are filled with self loathing. Don't you

THE YOUNGER: I am not filled with self loathing.

THE OLDER: (softly) I am.

THE YOUNGER: Well, you should be. You are a loathsome person. Be proud of your self-awareness.

THE OLDER: There are professionals who can help you feel better. I can give you some names and

THE YOUNGER: You want me to, like, what, check into a clinic?!?

THE OLDER: It might help you.

THE YOUNGER: (sighs)

THE OLDER: I bet you'd meet lots of women.

THE YOUNGER: (sighs)

THE OLDER: Don't do it for me. Do it because it would have made your mother happy.

THE YOUNGER: What do you mean, "would have"?

THE OLDER: You know, that it would make Mom happy.

THE YOUNGER: You said "would have"... Like the past tense.

THE OLDER: (no reply)

THE YOUNGER: Like how you would refer to something that no longer exists.

THE OLDER: I'm sorry.

(pause) Mom was in one of her up phases. Stopped taking her medications. She stepped off the twelfth story--

THE YOUNGER: Stop it

THE OLDER: of a downtown apartment--

THE YOUNGER: No

THE OLDER: Building.

THE YOUNGER: Lies and gin dribbling down your chin.

THE OLDER: I'm sorry. Mike, you got to belly up to your genetic heritage, and deal with it. If you do not ...

THE YOUNGER: I... I feel so lost.

THE OLDER: Yeah, well, just triangulate off of Mom, Dad, and that bottle. That will give you your approximate location.

THE YOUNGER: I want to leave here.

THE OLDER: Not until you promise.

THE YOUNGER: Leave me alone.

THE OLDER: Not until you promise.

THE YOUNGER: Something is pulling me.

THE OLDER: You are not going to change, are you? You think you are just fine.

THE YOUNGER: I do not want to be here anymore.

THE OLDER: ANSWER ME!

THE YOUNGER: This place smells of death and ozone.

THE OLDER: Promise me you will change.

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: You haven't learned.

(CHILD enters, skipping rope.)

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: You are not going to change are you?

(OLDER gets knife from earlier)

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: No... no... I... I can't let you do that.

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: Tell me you will change.

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: HAVE YOU LEARNED ANYTHING?!?

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: I can't let you do that. You have not learned.

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: I know what happens. You would be better dead.

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: I am going to kill you Mike.

(CHILD stops skipping rope.
Swings rope over a beam.)

THE YOUNGER: That would be suicide.

(Free end of the skipping
rope dangles seductively,
revealing a hanging noose.

CHILD stares at OLDER.)

THE OLDER: (pause) Yes... that would be suicide.

(CHILD disappears)

THE YOUNGER: (YOUNGER begins to drift into
background)

I am going back.

I am going back.

(OLDER is speaking to
where Younger had been,
facing audience. YOUNGER
continues to drift into
background behind Older.)

THE OLDER: I can not let you do that.

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: You would be better dead.

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: Stop saying that. Listen to me.

THE YOUNGER: I am going back.

THE OLDER: YOU WOULD BE BETTER--

THE YOUNGER: I am-

(OLDER stabs into the air
where Younger had been)

THE OLDER: DEAD!

(OLDER stabs him again.)

DEAD!

DIE YOU BASTARD.

(OLDER repeatedly stabs air
where his vision of Younger
is. YOUNGER just watches.)

DIE! DIE! DIE!

(OLDER throws knife on
floor. OLDER collapses in a
heap.)

die... die... just... die. Why don't you just die?

I stabbed you.

THE YOUNGER: Yes.

THE OLDER: I felt the knife pierce your heart.

THE YOUNGER: Direct hit.

THE OLDER: But...

THE YOUNGER: But if you kill me, then you no longer exist.

If you don't exist, then you can't kill me.

THE OLDER: But...

THE YOUNGER: And we are right back where we started.

THE OLDER: But...

THE YOUNGER: You can't change the past.

THE OLDER: But...

THE YOUNGER: You can't influence me at all.

THE OLDER: But...

THE YOUNGER: Only I can influence you. You see, I can't use your helpful career tips. I can't use your helpful personality tips. I can't use your helpful personal lifestyle tips. And you know the really terrible thing that is going to happen? It is going to happen.

THE OLDER: No.

THE YOUNGER: It is going to happen.

THE OLDER: Go away.

THE YOUNGER: You said I had the opportunity of a lifetime. To glimpse the future. To learn something from it.

THE OLDER: Leave me alone.

THE YOUNGER: You have wasted our time together trying to change me. It's too bad. Instead of changing the past, you might find it more productive to change the future.

THE OLDER: What rhymes with reason?

THE YOUNGER: All those years of hearing Dad say that, and I finally get it.

THE OLDER: What rhymes with reason?

THE YOUNGER: I know the answer.

THE OLDER: Go away.

THE YOUNGER: The answer is "no it doesn't."

THE OLDER: What rhymes with reason?

THE YOUNGER: No. No it does not.

(OLDER struggles to his feet)

“What” does not rhyme with “reason.” It is so easy to mistake a statement, for a question.

(OLDER grabs a music box, winds it up, it plays. Snow begins to gently fall in background.)

THE OLDER: No.

THE YOUNGER: I am the past. I am a statement.

(OLDER grabs another music box, winds it up. It plays.)

THE OLDER: No.

THE YOUNGER: You are the future. You are a question.

THE OLDER: Go away.

(OLDER is winding up music boxes, creating a cacophony of sound.)

THE YOUNGER: A question... capable of different answers.

(YOUNGER is fading away into the snow falling in the background, perhaps behind a scrim. Lights are fading. Car headlights are illuminating the falling snow)

THE OLDER: Go now.

THE YOUNGER: A question... capable of different answers.

THE OLDER: He is waiting for you...

THE YOUNGER: ...different answers.

THE OLDER: ...caught in the headlights.

(YOUNGER is immersed now in gently falling snow illuminated by headlights. YOUNGER bends down to view body in the snow. It is the CHILD.

OLDER bends down, mirroring the movements of the younger.)

Remember, the snow.

(YOUNGER cradles limp body of child. OLDER does likewise with his invisible child.)

The snow.

A pound.

For him.

To keep.

Forever.

(YOUNGER looks frightened. He is torn between the boy and wanting to run. He is glancing left and right. Did anybody see?

OLDER no longer mirrors
Younger, but instead
continues to cradle his
"child.")

You're scared. You're scared. I know you are. I know. But you just sit with him now.

(Lights fading on YOUNGER,
as he lays child back on the
snow. Older continues to
cradle his invisible child.)

Yes, just relax. Hold him. Keep holding him. Talk to him. The hearing's the last thing to go. He needs you now. Keep talking to him.

(YOUNGER, scared, runs
offstage.)

Keep holding him. It will be okay. You would never run. No. Because you know, if you run, he will follow you. You would never leave him to die alone, in the snow. In the snow. Alone. That would be unspeakably cruel, wouldn't it? Yes. So, we'll just wait now, for the police. Yes, it's better. It's better to be caught by the police. Than to be caught... by yourself.

(Stage is now dark except
for one spot on Older, and
one spot on the dangling
noose.

Music boxes fade to silence.

OLDER struggles to feet.
Shaking, OLDER picks up
bottle. Begins to take a
swig. Stops himself. Goes

to sink. Begins to dramatically tip the bottle into the sink, but stops himself as just a bit of the liquid begins to pour out. He is torn. Shaking. He can't do it. He puts the bottle down.

OLDER looks at noose.

Leaving the bottle behind, he goes to the noose, considers it. Reaches for the noose.

A single music box begins to play. Spot up slowly on THE CHILD, who is now in Older's world, with music box in hand. CHILD stares at Older.

Moment.

OLDER goes to child, Kneels before him, bows his head. OLDER does not touch child. CHILD slowly reaches out, places his hand on OLDER. Tableau. Fade to black as music box fades to silence.)

END OF PLAY