

THE DEATH OF VAN BANDY

A Drama in Two Acts

by

Garret Yeats

24 Summit
Canyon, TX 79015
806-367-1856
frankgyeats@gmail.com

Cast of Characters

- CHARLES VAN BANDY: A recently deceased philanthropist. Close friend to Karl, Saul, and Phil.
- SAUL APTOWITZ: An old friend of Charles, he is co-owner and the florist of Aptowitz Flowers, where he has worked for years. He is an elderly Pole that immigrated a few years after Karl. He is a kind and often idealistic old man who has trouble with his hearing aid. He is in his seventies.
- KARL APTOWITZ: Brother of Saul, and friend of Charles. A sensible man, who deals with the finances of the flower shop. He is also an art enthusiast, and a small-time art collector. He also has serious heart troubles. Also in his seventies
- SUSAN ADLER: A young woman, unmarried, who is a close friend of Philip's. She secretly harbors an affection for him.
- PHILIP JONES: A 32-year old car-dealer who was the semi-adopted son of Charles. He is an old friend of Susan's
- JANICE JONES: The unhappy wife of Philip.
- STAGEHAND
MINISTER
LAWYER
EMPLOYEES of CHARLES VAN BANDY
LANDLORD
CUSTOMER
POLICE OFFICER

PROLOGUE

SETTING: The funeral of Charles Van Bandy. Behind the still-closed curtain a small funeral service has been prepared. There are four rows of four fold-out chairs facing away from the audience. A small urn is at back-center stage.

AT RISE: The curtain is still closed, and the lights have not fully dimmed. Behind the stage, PHILIP is sitting at the very back, SUSAN is in the middle, KARL and SAUL are at the front, the MINISTER is at the pulpit, SUSAN stands far in the back, and various EMPLOYEES are also in attendance. All the characters are frozen in place.

VAN BANDY

(From one of the front seats of the theatre, VAN BANDY goes on stage, dressed in theatre-going attire. Smiles out at the audience, grows momentarily tense at the audience's focus upon him. He is attempting to hide the physical discomfort he is in. In his hand is a cue card that he will not need to use, but has simply in case something goes awry. He walks to the very far side of the stage, and begins to address the audience.)

Yes, well, hello! If you would please conclude your conversations, we're about to get started. I suppose it would be best for me to introduce myself. I am Charles Van Bandy, and I recently passed away. I had a spinal tumor for about four years, and it finally got the better of me around July 13th or so, but that's no matter. It's all perfectly fine now, so please don't be concerned about my health, as I am fairly certain that I cannot and will not die twice. It may be unusual for the deceased to present

VAN BANDY, CONT.

his own funeral--oh my, I forgot to mention that today is my funeral, but you're likely to be clever enough to sort that sort of thing out if you're a regular theatre goer. Pat yourself on the back for being here.

(Laughs)

Regardless, as I am the eponymous character, if I remember my literary terminology correctly, I felt it apt that I be the one playing host to you this evening. There are a few people I requested be here to attend my funeral.

(The curtain rises, the lights go up on the stage. PHILIP is sitting at the very back, SUSAN is in the middle, KARL and SAUL are at the front, the MINISTER is at the pulpit, SUSAN stands far in the back, and various EMPLOYEES are also in attendance. All the characters are frozen in place. As VAN BANDY introduces them, he goes over and points them out specifically.)

This is Phil. He's like my adopted son. His mother was the only person who seemed ready to raise him, so I offered what financial help I could give him. As a result, I stepped in and became a consummate father to him. I never officially adopted him--too much paperwork and whatnot. He was always the most charming lad. He works at a car dealership, at least the last time I spoke with him a few years ago. His wife is a lovely woman, though she doesn't seem to be here. She has some line of work that keeps her on the road. I never heard much of her from Philip. They had a nice wedding, though. I've heard rumors from Saul that they aren't particularly happy anymore--that may explain why she isn't here. It's a shame if that's so. A man should always be happy with the woman he's with. Moving on, there are also my dear friends, Karl and Saul Aptowitz. They are friends of mine who immigrated to New York about the same time I moved there. I met Karl working for a Mr. Nowak, if I remember correctly, in his grocery store before I really began collecting and trading art. Saul immigrated a few years later, and they've--

(STAGEHAND enters with a chair for VAN BANDY, but waits for him to finish his sentence)

known me for quite some time.

STAGEHAND

I apologize, Mr. Van Bandy. Here is the chair you requested.

VAN BANDY

No problem.

(Pulls out money to tip STAGEHAND)

By the way, what is your name?

STAGEHAND

(STAGEHAND says her real full name)

I apologize again for taking so long with your chair. The stage manager didn't mention that we were supposed to bring one up to you until a few minutes ago, and--

VAN BANDY

No trouble, dear woman, no trouble at all. Thank you very much, Ms.

(Says STAGEHAND's real last name and hands her a twenty dollar bill)

Here is for your troubles.

(Van Bandy hands the stagehand a twenty dollar bill, and the STAGEHAND exits. VAN BANDY continues to look at her as she sets the chair on the very far side of the stage leaves, and continues talking just before he turns to face the audience again.)

VAN BANDY (CONT.)

As I was saying, Saul and Karl are good friends of mine going back decades. I helped them keep their flower shop open during some of the rough patches. I even brought little Phil to work there when he was old enough. I shared a certain love of art collecting with Karl--in fact, he was the one who first got me interested in it, and with a few lucrative buys and sales, I was able to live well from it. Karl is the financial brains behind them, though Saul is certainly the one to deal with people. They are both charming friends, and technically my brothers-in-law through my brother, who passed several years ago in a car accident. But I've considered Saul and Karl family long before any of that took place. The rest are various long-time servants and employees that I have had over the years. This woman,

(Walks over to SUSAN)

however, I have not had the pleasure of meeting.

(VAN BANDY stares at SUSAN as he tries to recognize her face)

VAN BANDY (CONT.)

Well, no matter.

(To audience)

I think that's about all the introduction you need from me for now. Feel free to visit my memorial if you need to talk to me. Take care.

(The lights fade from VAN BANDY, although he continues to sit in the chair and watches the performance, and the curtain rises)

(END SCENE)

ACT 1Scene 1

SETTING: There are some pressed flowers, but otherwise few decorations.

AT RISE: VAN BANDY's Funeral. There are few attendees. SAUL and KARL are at the very front of the funeral. SUSAN sits in the middle, but continuously glanced behind her at PHILIP, who sits in the back row. There are a few EMPLOYEES scattered about the funeral.

(MINISTER walks up to the pulpit, and addresses the attendees)

MINISTER

We are gathered to pay our respects to Charles Van Bandy, a man to whom many of us owe no small thanks. There is much to be said about him, yet I will try to be brief, so that all of you may share your thoughts, and express the impact this man has had on your lives. I'll state the obvious, so you may tell the stories we all would really want to hear about him. First and foremost, Charles Van Bandy was a philanthropist. While some spend their money on selfish pursuits, Charles was a man who chose to spend his riches helping those he cared for, preferring the treasures of heaven to those of this life. He donated money for an expansion of the library at his alma mater Iowa State, as well as the numerous scholarships he has given to those in need. He continued to work in the community through various projects, and he certainly was not afraid to do the kind of work men of his station often disdain. He donated to us at St. Andrew's so that we could expand our church to fit a growing congregation. Charles was determined to help everyone near him at least once during his long life, even going so far as to found the Van Bandy Charity Home for those who were in greatest need in the surrounding four counties. He finally passed away after a long life, though it is always tragic that one struggles to battle cancer for so long. While he gave fortunes to those in need, he

MINISTER (CONT.)

refused to seek specialists for himself. With those few short words which could not begin to describe the man Charles was, I think it would be fitting for some who were close to him to say a few words about their friendship with him. Mr. Aptowitz--I'm sorry, I meant Saul, my apologies, Karl. Saul, would you like to speak?

(SAUL does not respond)

MINISTER

Saul? Would you like to speak?

(KARL looks at SAUL. SAUL looks back and pats KARL on the shoulder supportively, not realizing the MINISTER is talking to him)

MINISTER

Saul? Oh dear, I forgot he about his hearing problem.

(A little louder)

Saul Aptowitz? Would you like to speak about Charles?

(A little louder still)

Saul?

(Quietly)

Well, this is a little embarrassing.

(Loudly, so that the rest of the characters are startled)

Saul!

KARL

(Sighs audibly. Very loudly, so that the almost-deaf SAUL can hear)

Saul!

SAUL

(Normal volume)

Yes?

KARL

(Continuing in a loud voice)

The minister wants you to talk!

SAUL

Right now? What does he need to talk about? Isn't the funeral about to start?

KARL

It has started! He wants you to talk about *Charlie!*

SAUL

Oh! Dear me, give me just a moment.

(SAUL stands up to go to the pulpit. His speech is not said vindictively, but in a very loving way)

I have known Charlie for quite some time. When we first met, he hadn't made much money yet, but he was the same Charlie before and after getting rich, and not many people have such a gift of humility nowadays. I remember how much fun he had in life. He loved wine and food and pretty women, and had more than a few romances until he was nearly fifty. It was then that the Charlie we've seen in public began to grow. We all remember him for his cheerful demeanor, but I know that he didn't leave this world unscathed by troubles. He was a complex man. While he did all those great things that Thom listed, he still had many faults, and that in itself was a part of what made him such a good man. He was often drunk, he was a womanizer, and he often disregarded his blood family. I remember when his brother Tom married Karl and I's sister Adrianna, Charlie showed up at the chapel a month late, and couldn't figure out why it was so empty five minutes before the wedding, not realizing that Adrianna and Josef had already moved into their new house.

(All laugh except PHILIP)

That was the kind of man Charlie was. He was not a good man all the time, flawed like so many of us are, but he did have the gift of an open heart. He would lend a helping hand whenever he could to those around him, and if you were in his company, you knew he never looked down upon you, never pitied you surreptitiously. He disregarded questioning what people would say of the company he kept, because he felt that if fortune had put those people near him, that that was a good enough voucher for him. He was my brother, and I love him and miss him greatly. Even though he was younger than I am, I hope that I can grow into the kind of man Charlie ended up being. I hope I can give with the same spirit he did. Offer help like he did. He was my friend, my brother, and I'll miss him something

SAUL (CONT.)

terrible. Somewhere, the angels are glad for his company. Farewell, friend. Peace be with you. Shalom.

(SAUL nods at everyone, then sits back down in his seat)

MINISTER

Thank you very much, Saul. Mr. Jones, would you like to say a few words?

PHILIP

(PHILIP stands up at the pulpit)

Charles,

(Clearly unprepared to speak)

was like a father to me. Whenever I think of my childhood, I think of the times he supported me. I think of the bright red Schwinn he bought me. I think of all the things he did to support me. That was what kept me going throughout a lot, just knowing that he supported me. His hand always guided me through a lot of the decisions I had to make. He instilled in me a love for finer things in this life, and also taught me that if I wanted them I would have to work to get them. But he also taught me restraint. I learned to have a no-nonsense attitude thanks to him, and to always know where I stand. He taught me that I should, whenever possible, pursue the things that will make me happy, but taught me that it is never money that you should seek. I learned how to present myself well, and the importance of how you do something, not just running blindly. I guess that's all I have to say about him, really. He was like a father to me, and I'm not sure who I'll turn to that could give me all the lessons he has. He was a great man, a man I idolized, and I know I'll miss him.

(PHILIP nods at the minister, then goes and sits by SUSAN. SUSAN puts her hand on PHILIP's hand)

MINISTER

Thank you, Mr. Jones. I think it's about--Oh, sorry Karl. Would you like to say a few words?

KARL

(Stands up)

Thank you, Jonathan. I am the oldest person here it seems, and I was the first to know Charlie. Back before Saul had

KARL (CONT.)

even immigrated to the country, Charles and I worked together in a small grocery store owned by a Mr. Nowiki. Mr. Nowiki was the kind of man that Charlie and I wanted to be. Mr. Nowiki was kind. He was interested in people, and was always willing to give an extra hand to someone. He wasn't afraid to work. He knew what he loved to do and did it with all the capacity he had. I've heard it said that it's a shame funerals are the place where we say all the greatest things about people that we probably should have told them in person.

(Beat)

I'm as guilty of that error as anyone. But I think that we should try to live our lives by the examples these men have set, and if we are capable of doing that, then their death does not have to have that tragic quality that those living so often give it. I hope Charles will be happy with what we are doing down here, because while I see few dry eyes, I think to grieve for a man like Charles just doesn't seem fitting. He was too filled with life, and joy, and all those qualities people look for in this world. His death seems almost miniscule in my mind compared to the way in which he lived his life. He could always make me smile, and I think he is still making me smile today, even when it is only in my memories of him.

MINISTER

Thank you, Karl, and to the rest of you who agreed to speak today on Mr. Van Bandy's passing. Now, let us pray:

(The church organ music begins to play as the congregation starts to pray silently. When the music starts, all bow their heads, and the music and lights fade)

(FADE OUT)

(END SCENE)

Scene 2

SETTING: A small reception hall. It is sparsely decorated, and there are no chairs. Characters enter from stage right, and the private room where the will is to be read is stage left.

AT RISE: The reception for VAN BANDY'S funeral. PHILIP and SUSAN are off to one side talking quietly to one another. PHILIP has a cup of punch that he sips and puts on the floor off and on throughout the scene. SAUL, KARL, and several others are center stage talking but are not initially heard.

PHILIP

Thank you for coming with me, Susan. The man meant a great deal to me, and I just felt like I needed a friend nearby.

(PHILIP puts his hand on SUSAN's shoulder)

Someone who could stay with me here for the weekend and help me with all of this.

SUSAN

I could stay a few more days, if that is what your asking me to do.

PHILIP

It would mean a lot to me. I can help pay for your stay. Perhaps we could try to have some fun.

SUSAN

What did you have in mind?

PHILIP

I know Charles wouldn't mind us having a good time. It's what he would have wanted.

SUSAN

(Pulling away slightly)
I don't think it's appropriate to speak around the dead like that, Phil.

PHILIP

(*Sincerely*)
I'm sorry Susan, I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything like that. I just meant that maybe we could go see a movie, or go to a mall or something. Something to distract me, if that's OK.

SUSAN

(*Hesitantly*)
You're sure that's not what you meant?

PHILIP

No, no, it's not what I meant. I'm sorry I offended you. It's not what I meant at all. I just thought it would be good for you and I to have a nice outing while we are here, so we can relax a little after the funeral is over.

SUSAN

Well, I haven't had a fun outing in a while. What would you want to do?

PHILIP

We'll, first we'll need to go find a hotel to stay at. It probably would be cheaper for us to find a room with two twins, if that works for you.

(*KARL comes up and pats PHILIP on the shoulder*)

--Oh! Shit! You frightened me, Karl. Sorry, I shouldn't have said that.

KARL

It doesn't bother me much. I apologize for frightening you. How are you holding up since Charlie has left us?

PHILIP

Has it been long enough for it to even really impact? He hasn't been gone very long.

KARL

Well, he won't come through the door anytime soon, unfortunately. I wouldn't say he is gone in any real sense, though, so you're quite right. As big an influence as he had, he influences the world. He has certainly saved a life before, so he has certainly saved a world or two. Charlie has done lots of good things, and he has shaped enough of those around him.

PHILIP

That's something I would have expected more out of Saul than out of you, Karl. He's the more flowery of the two of you.

KARL

Death brings out that side of people. I've lived with Saul almost my whole life, so I suppose it's no surprise that I sound like him sometimes. He practices the faith more than I do. It's part of why he acts the way he does, always talking with his head in the clouds.

PHILIP

I just figured that was because he couldn't hear anyone around him.

(Chuckle)

But I didn't know either of you practiced.

KARL

It's not a very visible practice. I suppose you could say, on my part, that while it's not apparent, it is always there. Saul has a little more trust in the faith than I do, but I reckon that we have an equal level of hope for better things to come. Being Jewish there was never considered a very public matter, so it became second nature just to keep it under wraps. Though I was always better at that than Saul was.

PHILIP

How is Saul doing?

KARL

You know Saul; he is always smiling, even when things are at their worst. He is no doubt hurting, but he'll make it seem like he's OK. He has a good perspective on things.

PHILIP

His speech was a little shocking.

KARL

You think so?

PHILIP

Well, usually when someone dies, like you said, you say nice things. You don't call them drunken womanizers, certainly. If it were my funeral, I certainly wouldn't want that to be said over my remains. I'm surprised no one else was offended by it.

KARL

Well, what he said was true though, wasn't it?

PHILIP

I think Charlie was a little more moral than that, don't you?

KARL

What Saul had to say was brutally true, and that is how Saul and Karl always were to one another: honest until it hurt. I remember Charles being very much like how Saul put it, but he was a very complex man. I think Charlie would have liked it. At least there were no lies told at his funeral.

PHILIP

But a womanizer? It's just such a negative light to put an old friend in.

KARL

It's his familiarity with Charles that allows Saul to put his words so plainly. Saul never minced words or actions. He does not have the same depth that Charles had, but Saul still has his heart. We counseled one another for decades, so it's no surprise really that Saul gave such an overview of Charlie's actions in his life.

PHILIP

Do you think Saul meant it to sound so negative?

(LAWYER enters)

KARL

I honestly don't imagine that he would slander Charley, but I'll ask him about the womanizing once he and I get back to the flat.

(Beat)

By the way, who is your lady-friend?

(SAUL, noticing that KARL has moved, walks over to join him)

PHILIP

Lady-Friend? Oh! Susan, this is Karl, and behind him is Saul. Karl, Susan.

(KARL and SUSAN greet one another. SUSAN waves at SAUL, who grins and waves back)

She agreed to come with me, you know, for support.

(PHILIP takes a sip of his cup)

KARL

Of course. How is your wife?

PHILIP

(Coughs)

She's fine, fine. How is Saul?

KARL

(Loudly)

Saul, how are you doing?

SAUL

Fine, fine. You asked me just a minute ago, though.

KARL

Philip was asking.

PHILIP

(Loudly)

How you doing, Saul?

SAUL

(Normal volume)

Well, honestly. I suppose it's a bit surprising that I'm doing well considering. It's a shame, but I think he was ready. He came into that sort of peace lucky souls find

SAUL (CONT.)

before they pass. Then it's always calm and quiet around them. You understand what I mean, Philip? About that kind of quiet living?

KARL

(Loudly)

I'm sure he does, Saul.

SAUL

Like that! Just like that! A man of few words. Quiet like Karl.

LAWYER

(Loudly, so the entire room can hear, but not as loud as needed for SAUL to hear)

Pardon me, would those who were notified that they were included in the will please come to the back room with me? He requested this be when the will was to be read. Karl, please tell Saul. Thank you.

(SAUL, KARL, PHILIP, and a few others go with the LAWYER offstage. CHARLES stands up at center stage and recites his will).

VAN BANDY

I, Charles Van Bandy, of sound mind and body, have the following gifts to those who have meant the absolute most to me. To Saul and Karl, I give one of my most prized possessions: my Van Gogh painting, Vase With Fifteen Sunflowers. As Saul has always been a care-taker of flowers, and Karl has always been an avid art collector, I know that it will be loved and cared for, and it will bring them the most pleasure. To my almost-son Philip and his lovely wife, I give a necklace and a ring. I hope they will be cherished by them, and maybe become heirlooms for his own family. I ask only one thing of you all. I know that while I have helped many people, I never did much good for improving myself. I lived, and will inevitably die, with the same vices and virtues, with little change between them. I have always found it somewhat tragic how often we forget the lessons we learn in times of sorrow. So, I ask that at this time next year, on the anniversary of my death, you all gather together to try and make sure that your lives are changed for the better after I am but a

memory. These are my final words to you all: farewell, and I love you all.

(VAN BANDY exits

(BLACK OUT)

(END SCENE)

SCENE 3

SETTING: The hotel room that SUSAN and PHILIP are staying in is off to one side. There are two twin beds with a small nightstand with plastic flowers on it.

AT RISE: Only half the stage is lit. The side opposite the hotel room is empty.

SUSAN

(Hugging PHILIP)

Are you glad that I came with you?

PHILIP

I certainly am. Janice couldn't come, and I certainly didn't want to be here by myself with no friends nearby after a funeral.

PHILIP

I'm glad we're here.

SUSAN

So, what are your plans for tonight?

PHILIP

I was actually planning on going to bed. I'm pretty exhausted from the funeral.

(SUSAN stares at PHILIP)

SUSAN

Why did you really ask me to come on this trip with you?

PHILIP

(Puzzled)

Didn't I tell you on the way up here?

SUSAN

Yeah, you told me, but it seems awfully suspicious.

PHILIP

I don't think I can handle this conversation at the moment.

SUSAN

Why else would you offer to stay in the same hotel room when you're a married man?

PHILIP

My marriage isn't really any business of yours. Janice couldn't come, but I couldn't go to this by myself. I needed someone who I could at least talk to. You and I have been friends since freshman year of college, and we've kept in touch, so I thought you would be someone who knew how much Charles meant to me, without me having to answer a bunch of questions about him. Trust me, my wife is suspicious enough of everything I do, I don't need you accusing me of things I haven't done. She almost asked me not to go to the funeral at all, but I couldn't have done it.

SUSAN

Well, now we're here. Do you want to talk?

(PHILIP sighs)

PHILIP

I just need some time to sit and think. If you want to go, that's fine with me

SUSAN

Well, we can think and reflect together at the bar. Come on. It would be best for us both to get out of here for a while.

(SUSAN pulls PHILIP towards offstage, and they exit. The lights darken momentarily, and SUSAN and PHILIP enter again, both drunk. The sound of a key fumbling to get in a lock, and SUSAN giggling offstage. SUSAN and PHILIP stumble into the room balancing off of one another. PHILIP throws his coat on the floor by the foot of the bed, with the necklace he was given inside the side pocket.)

PHILIP

I can already tell tomorrow morning will be unpleasant.

SUSAN

Well, at least you're not going to be too terribly mopey anymore tonight! It's only 10 PM. You'll have plenty of time to sleep.

PHILIP

Thanks, Susan.

(Beat)

SUSAN

I think that bartender was flirting with you.

PHILIP

I find that hard to believe. She's almost my age.

SUSAN

She was flirting with you! Her age doesn't matter.

PHILIP

Whatever you say, Susan.

SUSAN

Why shouldn't she flirt with you? You're a cute guy, after all.

PHILIP

Thanks, Susan. It's nice to hear someone say that. Janice doesn't tend to be the flattering type.

SUSAN

I'm not flattering you.

PHILIP

If you say so, Susan.

(SUSAN walks over to PHILIP and kisses him. PHILIP stares at her for a moment. SUSAN smiles, then kisses him again. The two begin kissing more passionately, until finally SUSAN pushes him away gently and lies down on one of the beds, and turns out the lamp. Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the stage, Janice's phone rings)

JANICE

Hello?

(Beat)

JANICE (CONT.)

Hi Dana! I'm doing fine, how are you?

(Beat)

Well the only reason I'm here at the house is that I had to work this Saturday and I wasn't able to go to the funeral with Philip. As far as I know he is doing OK.

(Beat)

I don't know how he feels about Charles passing. He has done a lot of stuff for us, but in all honesty, they hadn't talked for months when he passed. I think Philip is hurting some, but he isn't really talking to me very much, so I think he is letting out his grief at work, or maybe at the gym. He has been spending quite a bit of time there lately.

(Beat)

He looks really good, I think he's lost about twenty pounds so far.

(Beat)

Well, you know Philip. He cares a lot about his personal appearance. He is a businessman after all, and that can make an impact on how he is able to sell.

(Beat)

No, he still works for Ron at the car dealership.

(Beat)

It's funny, he works there, but I don't think he'd ever buy a Mitsubishi. He doesn't think they are very classy, but I wouldn't mind having one, either. He only wants the best of everything.

(Beat)

I'm not sure when he'll be back. All he really told me is that he would need a few days to cope with everything on his own.

(Beat)

Do I think he's having an affair?

(Beat. Janice looks at her watch.)

No, I've never caught him. You know what, Dana? I have to go pick up the kids. I'll talk to you later, alright?

(Hangs up the phone)

Stupid, nosy bitch.

(JANICE exits)

(BLACK OUT)

(END SCENE)

SCENE 4

SETTING: The entire stage is lit, but JANICE is no longer onstage. The same hotel room, with some of the sheets on the floor.

AT RISE: SUSAN is curled up on the bed. PHILIP has an undershirt and pajamas on. They have both recently showered

SUSAN
What are you thinking about, Philip?

PHILIP
(Caught unaware)
I'm sorry, what did you say?

SUSAN
What are you thinking about?

PHILIP
Oh, nothing in particular. I guess about the funeral today, in general.

SUSAN
Do you need to talk about it?

PHILIP
I don't think I really want to talk to you about it, honestly.

SUSAN
(Offended)
What do you mean by that?

PHILIP
I don't mean that. I meant to say I don't feel like talking about it right now. Look I've got to go out and get a smoke before I hit the sack. Do you need anything?

(PHILIP heads towards the door)

SUSAN

No, I'm fine, thanks--Actually, could you bring me a cup of ice?

PHILIP

Cup of ice? You got it. I'll be back in five minutes. I think I saw one by the front office.

(PHILIP exits. SUSAN flings herself onto the other side of the bed. She hits the pillow softly several times, then stands up)

SUSAN

I need a drink.

(SUSAN goes over to PHILIP's pants, and begins to look for change. She finds his wallet. She looks through it)

No change, no photos of family, no cash. Just a credit card and some business cards. Why do you even carry the thing around with you?

(SUSAN keeps digging through PHILIP's pockets, and finds a condom package)

Well, that's at least something descriptive. That'll come in handy when he comes back.

(Checks the back pocket, finds a slip of newspaper)

A coupon for ice cream. I should ask Phil what his favorite ice cream is. He never mentions that sort of stuff. How can you be friends with someone without knowing their favorite ice cream? It's just vulgar.

(Picks up his wallet again, finds a photo of JANICE behind his credit card.)

She's not as pretty as I am, Phil. For such a clever guy, you make bad choices.

(Continues to stare at JANICE's picture)

Why does she get to spend all her time with you, while I'm stuck being there when you two can't stand each other anymore? Why do you keep a picture of her and not of me? And why don't you have any spare change? You bring me here to have some fun, and you don't even prepare for it. No gift, no nothing! Bad choice, Phil.

(Checks another pocket, and pulls out the necklace)

Where did he get this from?

(Holds up the necklace)

Well, I'll just have a little fun with this!

(SUSAN puts the necklace on. PHILIP enters)

PHILIP

Oh, crud, I forgot to grab your--
(Sees SUSAN wearing the necklace)
what the hell are you doing?

SUSAN

What are you talking about?
(Points out the necklace)
Like my new piece?

PHILIP

Take it off.

SUSAN

Why?

PHILIP

Because it isn't for you. It is part of my inheritance,
and I'm supposed to give it to Janice.

SUSAN

Oh, I'm sorry, Philip. I didn't know.

PHILIP

Why would you be digging around in my pocket anyway? Are
you trying to rob me? What?

SUSAN

I'm sorry. I wanted change for a soda.

PHILIP

So you were going to steal from me to buy yourself a soda?

SUSAN

I thought you wouldn't miss a little spare change!

PHILIP

(Angry)

Well, you were wrong! What would make you think I'd be
happy that you were stealing change from me? I'm not free
change! Christ, I'm already paying for your hotel and all
the drinks you had at the bar.

(Beat)

PHILIP

I'm sorry. Just seeing you with that necklace on got me upset. If you want to buy yourself a soda, go ahead. I don't care. Just--don't dig through my things next time, OK? You don't have the right to do that.

SUSAN

(Visibly upset)
Could I borrow some change?

PHILIP

(Not sympathetic)
I don't have any.

SUSAN

Well, did you bring the ice, then?

PHILIP

No.

SUSAN

Would you mind--

PHILIP

I'm not your husband. Get your own damn ice.

SUSAN

Why are you so mad at me?

PHILIP

Please! Just shut up, would you? I'm paying for the hotel room, I'm the one covering all your expenses. If I wanted this conversation, I would talk to my wife, now please! Give me a little peace and quiet.

(Beat)

PHILIP

I'm going to bed. I've got to brush my teeth.
(Philip goes off stage to brush his teeth)

SUSAN

(To Philip)
Hey Philip?
(Pause. No answer)

SUSAN (CONT.)

How long have we been friends now?

PHILIP

(Walks back on stage)

What?

SUSAN

How long have we been friends now?

PHILIP

Since we first came to college. Look, I'm sorry I yelled at you like that. I guess it's pretty obvious things haven't been exactly pleasant between Janice and I. I don't need to take it out on you. You're not the one at fault there. Why did you ask how long we'd been friends?

SUSAN

I was just curious.

(PHILIP shrugs, goes back offstage to finish brushing his teeth)

SUSAN

In all that time, did you ever want to be with me?

(PHILIP spits out the toothpaste, enters)

PHILIP

You know I did for a long time.

SUSAN

Then why didn't we get together?

PHILIP

Because you didn't want to.

SUSAN

That's not how I remember it.

PHILIP

Funny, because that's how it happened.

SUSAN

Philip?

(No answer)

Would you ever admit that you love me?

SUSAN (CONT.)

(Beat)

Could you ever admit that you like me?

(PHILIP walks out slowly as if to respond to her. He stares at her for a moment, then walks off stage to continue brushing his teeth.)

(FADE OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 5

SETTING: SAUL and KARL's Flower Shop. It is a small store with a few rows of various flowers, all beautiful but not fully healthy.

AT RISE: SAUL AND KARL go into the store for the first time since the funeral.

SAUL
Looks like no one has broken in since we left.
(Smells the flowers)
Ah, good to be back in the store!

KARL
(Walks in behind him)
It's quite nice to be back after the funeral. Nice to see some life still growing.

SAUL
Very true, very true. But I suppose this one wasn't too terrible an ordeal. It was upbeat, in its own way.

KARL
I just wish you had put your hearing aid back in. That would have been convenient at the funeral. Nothing makes a man feel awkward like yelling in front of the deceased.

SAUL
I'm sure Charlie didn't hear. He wasn't particularly good at hearing things, either. Probably the only part of the funeral he could hear. He knew how much I hated to wear that thing, anyway. It's an irritant, I'm telling you. Besides, I only feel I have to wear it when we are working at the shop. It does no good to have customers yelling at you before they are even angry. Save all that pent up emotion for later if they feel they really need it.

(Chuckles. Beat)
How do you think we'll do today?

KARL
The day is always slow after we've been closed outside of normal hours. We were closed for Saturday, Sunday, and

KARL (CONT)

Monday, so chances are today, seeing as how it's a Tuesday anyway, we may get five customers.

SAUL

Maybe today will be different.

KARL

I wouldn't rely on it, but it is certainly possible.

SAUL

Optimism, Karl, I keep telling you! How long are we open today?

KARL

Until 6 PM, as always.

SAUL

That sounds good to me. What are we going to eat for lunch?

KARL

(Slightly agitated)

It's only 9 in the morning, Saul. Lunch can wait.

SAUL

Ok! I'm sorry I asked. My stomach just likes to stay informed.

(The bell rings, and CUSTOMER enters. SAUL greets him in a grandiose style)

Welcome, sir, to Aptowitz Flowers! How can I help you?

CUSTOMER

I'm just looking around for the moment.

(Begins to look at the different flowers)

SAUL

(Suddenly more timid)

Fine, fine, please take your time.

(To KARL, quietly)

I told you today would be different! We never have customers in at ten in the morning!

KARL

It's nine.

SAUL

No difference, no difference!

KARL

You may be right, Saul. I'm going to go look over the books for a while. Keep an eye on the front, would you?

SAUL

Certainly, Monsieur.

(KARL exits. SAUL leans up to see what the customer walking around is doing. SAUL tries to find a way to amuse himself, hums, twiddles his thumbs, looks out at the audience, etc., but quickly talks to CUSTOMER)

What are you looking for?

CUSTOMER

Pardon?

SAUL

You'll have to forgive me. If you don't mind me asking, are you looking for anything in particular?

CUSTOMER

Well, I'm just looking for some flowers for the wife and kid.

SAUL

A daughter?

CUSTOMER

Yes. Lucky guess.

SAUL

Not as lucky as you may think. Very few fathers buy flowers for boys.

CUSTOMER

That's true enough.

(Awkward pause)

CUSTOMER

Well, what would you recommend?

SAUL

Roses are popular. I have always liked lilies.

(Beat)

But my favorite by far are the sunflowers.

CUSTOMER

Any reason?

SAUL

For why I like the flowers?

(Mulls it over)

Well, I suppose you could say I like their cheery disposition. The lilies are always pretty. I enjoy the old story about the lilies in the field. Quite nice, quite nice. But the sunflower, ah, the sunflower. If you don't mind me waxing on a little, I like them because they are such a part of the western hemisphere, I suppose. They are native to here, and they are large and pretty. A very American flower, in a way, tall, bright, and boisterous. They remind me of an old friend. They don't fit well in most vases--they're larger-than-life.

(Chuckles)

No matter how bad my eyesight gets, I know that I can see these.

CUSTOMER

I think I the lilies and the sunflowers.

SAUL

I'll make you a deal. Buy one of them, and get the other one for free.

CUSTOMER

Seriously?

SAUL

I'm a florist. I love my flowers enough to part with them when it's time for them to go.

(Grins and pats the customer on the back)

CUSTOMER

It's a deal. I'll buy the lilies.

SAUL

Great. That will be thirty dollars.

CUSTOMER

(Hands SAUL thirty dollars)

Thank you. They will appreciate it.

SAUL

No trouble. Just tell your friends about us!

(Laughs)

I hope your wife and daughter enjoy those flowers. I grew them from seeds myself, and those were some of the best for the whole season.

CUSTOMER

Thank you, they really will love them.

(Exit)

SAUL

(To KARL)

Hey Karl! I made a sale!

(KARL enters)

KARL

How much?

SAUL

A solid thirty dollars!

KARL

What did you sell him?

SAUL

The sunflowers and the irises.

KARL

That was at least fifty dollars worth of flowers! What did you do? Give him one for free?

SAUL

He wanted them both, so I struck him a deal.

KARL

Saul! We've talked about this. You can't do that all the

KARL (CONT.)

time! Sometimes it's OK. I gave you that, but you can't do that all the time. You sold someone petunias and roses last month, and charged him a quarter of the worth! If they want both of them, tell them to come back when they've got money, or offer to give them a few of both. Please, Saul, your making life difficult for me when you do that.

SAUL

Oh, don't get so upset over it, Karl. It'll be fine.

KARL

Please, just for my sake, ask me before you do it next time.

SAUL

Fine, fine, whatever you say.

\ (SAUL pretends to turn off his hearing aid)

KARL

I wish you would sympathize with me. I'm trying my best to keep us going, and you are making my job difficult. Why isn't it making sense to you what I'm saying? Saul, are you even listening?

(Thinks SAUL turned off his hearing aid)

I don't feel like yelling for you to hear. I'm not that mad about it, anyway. I suppose you don't want any hot dogs for lunch today.

SAUL

Well, why didn't you tell me that before?

KARL

You liar! I knew you could hear me. You made a face when I told you that you made my life difficult.

SAUL

Nonsense. Allergies. All that pollen.

KARL

(Sarcastic)

Yes, yes, your allergies to pollen must be terrible if they only developed now, after years of working in a flower shop!

SAUL

(Playful)

You're so unsympathetic to my situation, Karl!

(SAUL takes out his hearing aid)

Ah, that's better. The world is more cheery now. It's so quiet.

KARL

Bah!

(KARL Exits)

SAUL

(Chuckles to himself)

You're a short-tempered fellow, Karl. A dollar is a dollar, and flowers always keep growing.

(LANDLORD enters. SAUL is facing away from the door)

LANDLORD

Saul?

(Saul does not turn around)

His hearing aid must be broken again.

(Landlord. Loudly, to Karl)

Karl!

KARL

Is that you, Gregory?

LANDLORD

Yes, and Saul took out his hearing aid again.

(KARL enters)

KARL

I apologize about that, Gregory. He does that when he doesn't want to hear me talking to him. He's a short-tempered fellow, sometimes.

LANDLORD

Yes, but a sweet man nevertheless.

(Saul turns around)

SAUL

Greg! Good to see you! How have you been? Are you interested in buying flowers for Mrs. Young?

LANDLORD

Our anniversary isn't until Tuesday, but thanks for asking. I was actually coming to talk to you both about some business.

Karl

I'll have it on the third this month. No worries.

SAUL

What can we do for you, Greg?

Karl

(Loudly)

He wants to talk about money! Turn on your hearing aid again.

SAUL

(Jocular)

Only if you promise not to be cranky at me.

Karl

(Normal voice)

I promise.

(Realizing SAUL didn't hear)

I promise you I won't be angry!

(SAUL turns on his hearing aid)

LANDLORD

Thanks for the offer on the flowers, Saul, but I need to talk to Karl about some business.

SAUL

(Laughs)

Well, we both own the place, you know. I put down half the money.

LANDLORD

I apologize Saul. You're right, it's something I should tell to both of you. Rent the past six months was all late or simply didn't show up. Now, I'm not evicting you right now, so please don't get worried. But I am starting to get worried that I will have to if your business doesn't improve soon. I know that you have had some heart trouble, Karl, but I have to pay bills, too. I gave you both a deal because you rented the business space and a flat from me, but you still aren't making the money to pay that. I would

LANDLORD (CONT.)

hate to evict the two of you, especially as you have always done your best to get the bills in on time when you have the money, and I know it isn't because of not trying, but if you don't show an improvement over the next few months, I'm going to have to evict you both.

KARL

I understand your concern, Gregory. Like I said, we'll get you the money this month, please don't worry yourselves over us.

SAUL

We actually made a sale just before you came in, didn't we Karl?

KARL

Yes. That we did. Today may be a good day. We can only wait and see what comes. Thanks for talking to us Gregory. We'll do our best to get all this squared away over the next few months. You've been good to us, and we don't want to be the weak end of the deal.

(Beat)

You're a good young man, Greg.

LANDLORD

Thank you for understanding, Karl. I know times are hard for the both of you, but I know that you two are good enough to find a way to come through. You have every time I've asked something of you. You've been here since long before I bought this building, so I know you will manage it.

KARL

No worries. Stand on me, Greg. We'll get the money to you.

(Pause)

Would you like to take some flowers home to your wife?

LANDLORD

Not today, thanks. I'll be back on Monday to get some.

(LANDLORD exits)

SAUL

Well, that was easy enough.

KARL

Did you hear even half of the conversation? We have to get him money.

SAUL

Well, like he said, we've done it before, and we can do it again. People hear these things by word of mouth, and old customers will come buying flowers like they were turning their houses into fields! Don't worry, Karl.

KARL

I'm afraid I'm a little past worry, brother.

SAUL

Why are you so upset? Your heart shouldn't be stressed. You remember the doctor.

KARL

Having a roof over my head with financial stress is less stressful on my heart than having no job and no home.

SAUL

I could go back to door-to-door flower selling. It worked back in the eighties, perhaps it could work again.

KARL

No. We tried that a few years ago, and we were nearly sued by that woman who claims you gave her hay fever. No one buys from a door-to-door salesman anymore, unless you happen to sell cookies, and have scout badges.

SAUL

Perhaps I could make food and sell it?

KARL

That wouldn't make enough money to get us anywhere. Besides, we would have to stop eating in order to sell it.

SAUL

Then how is our retirement looking?

KARL

That's not an option. You know that.

SAUL

Why not?

KARL

(Irate, but quickly exhausts himself)

You know damned well why we can't! This stupid heart of mine killed every last penny we had in savings. You don't think I've thought of all those options already? You think I sit here simply letting life run itself? Do you know why you can be so happy? Because I've sat at that desk and taken care of our financing practically dollar by dollar. We barely had enough, and now we have less than that! Don't you get it, Saul? You're not a stupid man, but you act as if you don't know a thing! We are desperate, and you stand there letting me take all the strain!

(KARL coughs, and leans against the wall. SAUL rushes over and sits him in a chair)

SAUL

You alright there, brother? You looked a little pink. I'm sorry I upset you. I haven't had much time to look at the retirement fund, and I didn't consider the medical bills. I just agreed to keep you alive, and let the chips fall where they may. I was just wanting what was best for you.

KARL

(Waves SAUL off)

Just let me breath for a moment.

SAUL

Take the time you need.

(Pause. KARL composes himself)

KARL

(Sighs. With a resigned voice)

I figured the only way we could make the money is to start selling some of my art collection.

SAUL

Why would you sell your art collection? You'd only need to sell one you have, and we'd be rich, wouldn't we?

KARL

Most of them are not expensive paintings. At least five of them are just high-quality prints. They may get us enough to live for the next few months. Maybe by then we'll be sitting a little better of compared to where we are right now. And within a few months, I may have passed on and

KARL, CONT.

then I have no need for those anyway. I can look on the Van Gogh and know that it's the finest gift I could have ever received for the collection. It was too nice of Charley to do that. That is one I will never sell.

SAUL

Don't talk about passing on, Karl. You're not that sick yet. Besides, whatever happened to the rest of Charlie's money? Didn't he leave us any?

KARL

By the time he passed away, it was just about gone. He had given it to charities, and he had some long-standing business deals he had to pay off. The rest was mostly spent on his cancer treatment and preparing for the funeral, then what was left of that was given to the scholarship fund. He spent his money well. Giving it to old men like us isn't the kind of investment he would have made.

SAUL

We do the same, don't we? We are quite sparing with purchases.

KARL

Except for your daily sales specials, we do quite well.

SAUL

It's just the kind thing to do, you know.

KARL

Your endless charity could make beggars of us, Saul.

SAUL

Helping people is no vice, Karl.

KARL

But offering things when it isn't smart can be.

(Beat)

Which reminds me, Phil wanted me to ask you something about the funeral.

SAUL

What was he wanting to know?

KARL

He thought your speech was a bit harsh, calling Charlie a womanizer.

SAUL

But he was a good man, too. He just had some flaws.

KARL

Well, I think the boy is having some guilt issues of his own accord, so that is likely why it struck him so poorly. But no matter. I need to go work on books again, and call a few people.

SAUL

(Beat)

You look better than you did.

KARL

I just got too worked up, is all. Thank you for giving me a chair.

SAUL

Well, old man, that's all I can do sometimes.

(Laughs)

When do you want to sell your paintings? Are we going to have an auction. What about the Van Gogh?

KARL

Don't be daft, Saul. There are too many reasons why I want to keep that one to even consider selling it. No, it doesn't get sold. I'll stop buying medication before I sell anything that beautiful. No, no. I have a few friends in the art circles who I've already told that if I need to sell the others, so they would have the first offer. I'll talk to them sometime.

SAUL

I suppose you have it all wrapped up. So, what's for lunch, already?

(LIGHTS FADE)

(END SCENE)

Scene 6

SETTING:

PHILIP and JANICE's living room. A living room with a small couch, a recliner, and an end table next to the couch. offstage leads to a stairwell going upstairs to a bedroom. The same day as the previous scene.

AT RISE:

PHILIP is sitting in a recliner, reading a book. JANICE enters with some chemicals to clean the kitchen, but chooses to set them down and talk to PHILIP.

JANICE

What time did you get back last night?

PHILIP

Around one or so. I didn't want to wake you.

JANICE

You woke me up anyway.

PHILIP

(Quietly)

Sorry

JANICE

You've never been a quiet one coming in.

PHILIP

I already apologized.

(Pause)

JANICE

How's that woman you went with?

PHILIP

What?

JANICE

You know, that woman.

PHILIP

Susan? You've met her before, Janice, you could at least remember her name. You make it sound like I took a hooker with me.

JANICE

You said it, not me.

PHILIP

(Irritated)

Susan is fine.

JANICE

That's it? Just fine? You went with her to a funeral, spent a lot of time with her, and she's just OK? That's all you know? I thought you two were old friends.

PHILIP

I asked you if a friend could come with me since you had to fly to Kansas to go inspect whatever it is they grow over there. I know the university puts you on a tight schedule. You said it was OK to bring a friend. I asked you if I could bring Susan, and you said it was OK. I don't know why you're interrogating me over it. It was a funeral, not a date.

JANICE

They grow a lot of things in Kansas, Phil. Let's not forget that I'm paying most of our bills, so don't trivialize what I'm doing, please. The only reason I asked about the funeral is that you seemed irritated since you got home.

PHILIP

Have I been on edge?

JANICE

I just said you are.

PHILIP

I guess I just wasn't looking forward to coming back home.

(Beat. Angrily)

All the mess at work. That, and I'm still grieving a little bit, if that's allowable, Janice.

JANICE

You've been doing well enough at work.

PHILIP

I've done well enough, considering I haven't tried to lower the standard.

JANICE

What do you mean, "lower the standard"?

PHILIP

It just seems like a lot of the guys there cut corners.

JANICE

With the hours you put in, I would say that you are certainly not one to cut corners. You're at work more than you're at home.

PHILIP

Which reminds me, I'm going to have to be out of town this weekend.

(Beat)

Business trip to Chicago.

JANICE

That's funny, because it wasn't on your calendar.

PHILIP

It kind of came up last minute. I hate that I'm having to go, but I need every break I can get. This could get me talking with the region manager, maybe get me a promotion.

JANICE

I think it's ridiculous how much they keep you out on the road.

PHILIP

It's no worse than yours, really.

JANICE

You need to find a job where they treat you better and pay you better.

PHILIP

You know that's not an option. This is the best opportunity I have, whether I really care to admit it or not, and I'd rather not work for the government, thanks.

JANICE

Well, what if I went with you on this trip? You said you'd take me on one of them sometime, and I'd like to go up to Chicago again.

PHILIP

I don't know if I can take you this time. The company wouldn't cover our expenses if we both went.

JANICE

We've got plenty of money left over from our tax return. I could meet you there! We could go out for couple of meals--not even fancy ones. It'd be great for us. You know it would be good for us; we need it.

PHILIP

What do you mean, "we need it"?

JANICE

My girlfriends said we should do things together, and I'm not working on my report this weekend.

PHILIP

So we can go out only when it's convenient to you?

JANICE

(Snidely)

Being the one of us who brings home the money that pays almost all our bills, I think that's a safe assumption.

PHILIP

If money is tight, why are you wanting to go?

JANICE

Money isn't the problem.

PHILIP

Look--I really think you should stay here for this trip.

JANICE

Why?

PHILIP

(Puts the book down)

Why don't you ever just listen to me? Isn't that how marriages are supposed to work? The man is the lord of the house?

JANICE

Maybe 200 years ago, Mr. Chauvinism.

PHILIP

Mr. Chauvinism? Did you pick that joke up from one of your witty scholar friends? I was always taught me that a man is lord of the house--that it's just a good practice. Just don't argue with me for once, please?

(Brings the book back up)

JANICE

All I'm saying is that you could consider me an equal!

PHILIP

You are! But this is my work we're talking about here! OK? Just let me go, and stay here. We'll go do something another time. Just get out of my business for once, would you?

JANICE

Put down your book and talk to me face to face, would you?

(He doesn't put the book down. Pause)

You've been an ass hole ever since you came home. I'm trying to be nice, and you are being completely unsufferable.

PHILIP

Of all people, you should know it's *insufferable*, and maybe I wouldn't be so *insufferable* if you quit being bitchy to me--

JANICE

I'm being a bitch?

PHILIP

(Hesitantly. Puts the book down)

No, you're not being a bitch. I'm sorry I said that, I just--

JANICE

(In tears)

You know what? I'm going to go out.

PHILIP

(Stands up)

Where are you going, Jan?

JANICE

Oh, so now you care when I want to go somewhere? I'm going to go get my things, and go visit my family for a little while, while you play lord of the house.

(JANICE begins to walk to the bedroom to get her things)

PHILIP

Wait! Wait! Wait!

(Grabs JANICE by the arm)

I'll stay here this weekend if that will keep you from going.

JANICE

Why, Philip?

PHILIP

Because

(Beat. Not wholly sincere)

Christ, Janice, because I want someone to watch over the house while I'm gone.

(JANICE shoves PHILIP away)

Look, I'm sorry. I'm just on edge about a lot of things, OK?

(Calmly and more sincerely)

I want you to stay here because I know you're the one consistent thing in my life, and I want you to stay here. We'll have a barbeque this weekend, just you and I. I know we've had some rough patches recently, and I haven't been easy to deal with, but I don't want to see things turn ugly between us.

JANICE

You promise?

PHILIP

Jesus, yes. I promise.

JANICE

(Suspicious)

Why did you promise that so quickly?

PHILIP

Because I want you to stay! Look, what do you want me to do?

JANICE

I want you to say something you mean for once!

(Pause)

PHILIP

A big reason I don't want you to go to your parents is because I'll leap out a window if your father has to have another one of those damn "Here's how you treat my daughter" lectures. It's like listening to my high school principal.

JANICE

(Finally has a small smile)

He is kind of overbearing, I know. I'm sorry.

PHILIP

It's OK, it's OK. I'm not mad. If you go and get ready, we'll go grab a couple of mochas. How does that sound?

JANICE

So long as you promise you'll be nice to me.

PHILIP

If I act rashly to you, you can feel free to go home. Deal?

(JANICE nods)

JANICE

I'm going to go clean up first.

(JANICE exits)

PHILIP

That's great.

(Beat)

Susan is going to absolutely go nuts because of this.

(Pulls out his cell phone, and attempts to call SUSAN. Voicemail picks up.)

Shit!

(Beat. In a mocking tone)

"Leave a message after the beep." Look, it's Phil. I'm not going to be able to make it this weekend. Things came up.

(Turns around. Hears JANICE coming)

I can't explain now. I know I promised you that we were going to meet and discuss things this weekend, and I'm sorry. I'll make it up to you. That's what friends do, right?

(Small chuckle)

I gotta go. Bye.

(Hangs up)

JANICE

Who was that?

PHILIP

Just checking my voicemail to see if I got a call from work today. I haven't checked since last night.

JANICE

It sounded like you were talking.

PHILIP

It was on loudspeaker. Look, if I'm going to be nice to you, you have to be nice to me and quit being so suspicious of everything I do. Deal?

JANICE

(Upset)

OK. Would you like to get ice cream instead? What's your favorite flavor?

PHILIP

(Shrug)

Whatever kind you get works for me.

(PHILIP kisses JANICE lightly, and they exit)

(FADE OUT)

(END SCENE)

Scene 6

SETTING: A park. The stage is nearly empty, but well lit.

AT RISE: KARL and SAUL enter, and are walking around, taking a break for lunch. SAUL is holding an iris in his hand. KARL is using a cane.

SAUL

It's not bad that we're walking slower today. It allows you to enjoy the air a bit more, wouldn't you say?

KARL

It is nice, but it doesn't excuse you getting me so riled up earlier.

SAUL

I'm sorry. I told you three times now that I am. You're an unforgiving man, Karl. It isn't good for one to be so unforgiving. It leads to an upset stomach and an upset soul.

KARL

(Sarcastically)

You're a real saint, Saul. You know that?

SAUL

You just have no joi d'vivre, Karl.

KARL

Of course I don't. I don't speak French.

SAUL

It means--

KARL

(Overlapping)

I can gather what it means, Saul.

SAUL

--joy of life. You have no joy for living. That's why your heart got the way it did.

(Beat)

SAUL (CONT.)

Look at all these women out here today. See, Karl, joy of living kept you from getting a good woman to keep you happy.

KARL

You remember what happened anytime we had a woman a little too close to Charlie, don't you?

SAUL

(Laughs)

I remember all too well. It's why I never introduced him to any of my wives. I felt like I could never trust him alone with them, as fast as that man could move.

KARL

It didn't help that you were never out with your wives to begin with.

SAUL

I was never very happy with any of them. They were all as dreary as you, and I never wanted to marry someone just like my brother. Especially Lenora. She even sounded like you.

KARL

(*In jest*)

If they are just like me, I think they were too good for you.

SAUL

Humility was always a factor, too.

KARL

I'm certainly more humble than you. I know when I can give a deal and when I can't.

SAUL

Look, Karl, it's just spreading our reputation around! Getting our name out, you know? I'm the public face of our business for a reason.

KARL

For the same reason that I'm in charge of the books. You can never make money, Saul. You're just too nice.

SAUL

No such thing as too nice.

KARL

I can't take your word for that. I have to pay to feed that never-satisfied stomach of yours.

SAUL

(Chuckling)

I'll turn off my hearing aid again if I must, Karl! Don't make this lovely day dour by proving how glum your outlook is.

KARL

Go ahead and take it out. It will save me the time of talking to someone so stubborn as you. Plus, then I can blow raspberries at you, and you'll never know.

SAUL

(Chiding)

Oh, now that wouldn't be sportsmanlike, would it? Come now, you know we are simply talking to pass the time. It will make this last a little longer before we are expected back at the shop. And honestly, how much money have we made today so far?

KARL

Nothing other than your sale. Which we would need to make another five sales in order to catch up on where I had hoped we would be by the end of the day. How are the flowers this week?

SAUL

Well, some of the newest irises are starting to look a little weak, but almost all of the roses are wonderful. I wasn't able to afford the right feed for them, so now all of them are not as bright as they were a few years ago, but a few years ago the flowers were just superb. I think they will be OK, though. I can sell them.

KARL

Why do I get the feeling you are putting that in a more than positive light than it ought to be?

SAUL

I suppose that would be on account of you knowing me, Karl.

SAUL (CONT.)

(Chuckles)

I'm a dishonest man. I'm a salesman. I put the bright side into everything.

KARL

(Chuckles)

Just make sure you're dishonest enough to make a living, Saul. Gregory isn't going to cut us a break simply because we have a cheery disposition.

(The sound of SUSAN yelling offstage begins to be heard)

But how dishonest can a man really be when he sells flowers? I've never heard of anyone who didn't trust an old florist like you.

SAUL

I suppose you could give them plastic ones and call them real. Buy them from a supermarket. That might be hard to pull off, though.

(SAUL begins to fiddle with his hearing aid)

KARL

Do you think anyone would buy that?

SAUL

Perhaps if they lived in the city, and never saw a real flower before, then maybe, I--

KARL

I wasn't being serious, Saul, but thanks for--

(Pointing towards SUSAN offstage)

Do you see that girl over there?

SAUL

I didn't bring my glasses, so no.

KARL

I think that's the woman that came with Philip to the funeral.

SAUL

What?

(KARL speaks loudly to SAUL for the rest of the scene)

KARL
Did your hearing aid go out again?

SAUL
I think it may have. Yes. It did. Confound it. I'm
blind and deaf.
(Sees someone coming)
Who is that?

KARL
It's the woman Phil is with!

SAUL
Is that his wife?

KARL
No.

SAUL
I see. Why didn't Phil tell us he was divorced? We could
have started a club.
(Begins to laugh)

KARL
He isn't.

SAUL
(Stops laughing)
Then
(Beat)
Oh my.
(Begins to try and fix his hearing aid)

SUSAN
*(Enters. She is drunk, and is yelling at a person
still off stage)*
Why do you have to be in my way? Christ!

KARL
Excuse me, madam, but may I--

SUSAN
(Turns to KARL and SAUL)
What the hell do you want?

KARL

(Taken aback)

Pardon us, madam, but could you tell us your name?

SUSAN

(Loudly, but not for SAUL's sake)

Aren't you--you are friends of Phil's, aren't you?

(KARL starts to nod his head no)

SAUL

We certainly are! You must be his new girlfriend!

(Goes to shake SUSAN's hand)

SUSAN

(Rants)

New? Who is his new woman? He took me to the funeral! He was with me that night! Don't tell me that he has another one when I am the only woman he needs! He doesn't sleep with anyone but me, understand? His wife can go to hell! I don't care what that--that--Phil says to me now, I will never touch him again for the rest of my life. That stupid bastard. You tell him next time you see him that Susan has had enough of his bullshit, and I've had just about all I can take of him, and that he takes me out to crappy restaurants and needs to get better hotel rooms.

SAUL

(Not as phased as KARL, but a little frightened)

My apologies. I didn't realize Philip was only a two-woman man. I merely meant that you are his girlfriend, after his wife, of course. Unless you were with him before.

(Beat)

I'm sorry for whatever I say incorrectly.

SUSAN

That's right! And you tell him that I am the only woman for him. He can't have two girlfriends AND a wife! That's too many.

SAUL

You said your name was Susan, correct?

SUSAN

(Normal volume)

Yes. Why do you care?

KARL

I'm sorry, you'll have to speak louder so he can hear. He's partially deaf, and his hearing aid just went out again. It's a cheap piece of junk.

SUSAN

(Loudly to SAUL)

My name is Susan.

SAUL

Well, Susan, I'm Saul Aptowitz

(BEAT)

We met at Charlie's funeral! Good to see you again, Susan!

(Saul shakes her hand gently)

Would you like to have this?

(Hands her the flower)

SUSAN

For how much?

SAUL

It's just a gift to you, that is, if the man in charge of the books approves.

KARL

(Looks at SUSAN. Beat.)

I have no problem with it at all. I think she could use a flower.

SAUL

Then consider it a gift from us to you, Susan. It looks like you need one today.

(Pause)

SUSAN

(Quietly)

Thank you.

(Loudly)

Thank you!

SAUL

Is there anything we could do for you, Susan?

SUSAN

Would you like to find a bar somewhere?

SAUL

Well, if you want a drink, we do have some wine at our flat.

KARL

(To SAUL)

I think that the last thing the young woman needs is a drink. If anything, we might want to take her back to sober up.

SUSAN

Thank you for that offer, but I don't really feel like sobering up right now. I'm fine. Really. I just say silly things when I drink. My filter turns off.

(OFFICER enters)

OFFICER

Pardon me.

(KARL becomes very nervous, and begins to feel fatigued from his weak heart)

SUSAN

(Turns around)

Oh shit.

OFFICER

I need to talk with you for a moment. How many drinks have you had this afternoon, miss?

SUSAN

I--

SAUL

Is that you, Mark Callough?

OFFICER

Saul? Is this woman causing you trouble?

SAUL

No, no. Have you yet to meet our niece? Her name is Susan.

OFFICER

I don't think I have met her, but I do need to talk to her.

(Beat)

Look, Saul, I got a call about an abusive drunk woman out here. You need to get her home, pronto. If I get another call, I'm going to have to arrest her, and I'd have to have both of you sign paperwork, too. Please get her out of here. I don't want to cause either of you any trouble.

SAUL

I certainly will, officer, I--

SUSAN

--Hey, you aren't my--

SAUL

--be quiet, Susan, your uncles are talking to the officer.

SAUL

Well, I'll get her home in one piece. Or at least as few a number pieces as we can.

KARL

Yes, I think we may need to go home soon.

SAUL

Are you alright, Karl?

KARL

I'm just still tired from our conversation earlier, is all. I think it may be best to close up the shop, and call it a day.

OFFICER

Thanks to both of you. I'm going to get going, and please tell her to keep quiet. Get feeling better, Karl. Keep a phone on you in case something happens, OK?

SAUL

Stand on me, Mark. I won't let you down.

(OFFICER exits)

KARL

Why did we just lie to him?

SAUL

We're daring like that sometimes, Karl. You remember how mischievous we were. Sometimes it just comes out. But I best get both of you home, fast.

SUSAN

Thanks for helping me out, but I'm not going home with strangers.

SAUL

Look, come with us, and I'll make you a meal. Maybe some pierogi would do you some good. Perhaps a little borsht? We'll get you something good.

SUSAN

I don't think so.

SAUL

Well, you can either do that, or you can stay here, stay drunk, and more than likely fall down.

(KARL and SAUL exit)

SUSAN

(Follows after them)

What the hell is borscht?

(SUSAN EXITS)

(FADE OUT)

(END SCENE)

Scene 7

AT RISE: KARL and SAUL's small flat. There is a couch, the Van Gogh painting hung on a wall, an old recliner, a small table with a few chairs, and a vase of flowers.

SETTING: It is raining outside. Saul and Susan are playing a game of dominoes. Susan is staring intently at the dominoes game.

KARL

(Looking outside)

Came in not a moment too soon, it would seem. That's a good way to catch something, being caught out in that sort of rain.

SAUL

Yes, but it will be good for the plants. We haven't had a decent soak in weeks.

(KARL continues to stare outside for a moment)

KARL

I noticed that you are on your last battery for your hearing aid.

SAUL

I'll buy some more next week.

SUSAN

So I can put the two here, right?

SAUL

Well, you could move it either here or on the other side right there.

(Points out where SUSAN can move)

SUSAN

What about that one in the middle?

SAUL

You could do that, I suppose. I wouldn't.

SUSAN

Why not?

SAUL

Well, you have a two. That's a four.

SUSAN

I'm not going to understand this old people game. No offense, but don't you have to be at least fifty to know how to play this?

KARL

It takes time to figure out. You have to learn a few things at a time before you start compiling the right set of rules to follow.

SUSAN

(Pause)

Thank you both for getting me out of that mess with that cop. I appreciate it.

SAUL

It's no problem, now. You're our niece, right?

(Chuckles)

SUSAN

I'm your sister if that is what you feel like calling me.

SAUL

Alright then, you are our sister.

(Beat. To KARL)

Are you alright having a sister that doesn't love spinach pierogi?

KARL

It upsets me, but I think I can manage. She at least liked the sausage ones, so that saves her from utter resentment.

(Light chuckle)

I'm going to go clean up.

(KARL exits)

SUSAN

Thank you both for the meal, and thanks for not cooking spinach. I've never liked that stuff, no matter how it's prepared.

SAUL

You're certainly welcome.

(Looks down at the board)

Well, I'm out of dominoes.

SUSAN

What does that mean?

SAUL

Well, the way that we play it, that means that I win.

SUSAN

Fair enough, I suppose. You would have had to tell me if I won.

(Looks at the time)

Thanks for letting me sober up over here.

SAUL

You were fine as soon as we put a little food in your stomach. You looked like you hadn't eaten well for a few weeks.

SUSAN

I ought to get going, though. Thanks again for letting me stay for a while.

(Stands up to leave)

SAUL

Before you go--

(Hands SUSAN a flower from a vase in the house)

Have another flower, and feel free to come by any time you feel up to it.

(Pause)

SUSAN

Do--do you think that Phil would mind if I ran by his house and talked to him about what happened last weekend?

SAUL

Phil? He's a complicated soul, just like his father Charlie.

SUSAN

Well, Charles wasn't really his father--

SAUL

Charles was more a father to Phil than you are a sister to me. Charlie just didn't want a family.

SUSAN

Why didn't Phil know that?

SAUL

Oh, Phil knows, Phil just doesn't associate Charlie as his father. The two didn't get along well for a while after Phil found out that Charlie abandoned his wife. Phil loved Charlie, but he resented what he had done to Minerva. He's the kind of man who can resolve those sorts of things well. If he is a decent man, he will at least talk to you, and that is all that you can ask.

SUSAN

Thank you. You are both good friends to keep. I can see why Charlie would have liked the two of you so much.

SAUL

Our door is always open to you, friend. We'll have to spend another afternoon like this. Any friend of Phil's is a friend to us.

(SUSAN hugs SAUL, then takes the flower and exits)

(FADE OUT)

(END SCENE)

Scene 8

SETTING:

PHIL'S house.

AT RISE:

PHILIP is sitting in a chair at his house, reading the paper. SUSAN walks up to the door, and knocks. PHILIP does not answer. SUSAN knocks again. PHILIP opens the door and SUSAN walks in.

PHILIP

(Quietly, but severe)

May I ask what you are doing in my house?

SUSAN

(Also quiet, but calm)

I want to apologize to you.

PHILIP

You didn't answer my question.

SUSAN

Yes I did. I wanted to come here and talk to you about what happened.

PHILIP

(Exasperated)

Why don't you try apologizing for coming into my home uninvited and threatening my marriage?

SUSAN

I just wanted to say that I think we can put this behind us, if you're willing to.

PHILIP

Yes, that's fine, whatever.

SUSAN

And I wanted to tell you that I am going to try and do better for our friendship. I know what happened at the hotel may not have seemed the best thing for you, but I've had feelings for you since we graduated, and--

PHILIP

(Not paying attention)
I'm glad, I'm glad. Just go, would you?

SUSAN

But I wanted to talk to you.

PHILIP

What could be so important that you couldn't have tried to call my cell phone first? Are you stupid? You can't be here. Do you even know what happens when you have an affair? Do we need to buy you a book? You don't come here. You don't belong here. If my wife comes in and asks why you're here, when she is already suspicious, she is going to get a little more than unhappy. Things are a little tense right now.

SUSAN

Do you even really care about her?

PHILIP

(Loudly)
That's not the point!

(Softly)
Shit. Susan, just go, would you? Christ, we had one night together, we were drunk. I don't think this is the place to discuss it. If you want to drink yourself blind, do it, but just don't do it here!

SUSAN

You don't care what I do?

PHILIP

(Groans)
Look, of course I care, I just don't think you realize how bad things will be for me if you don't leave before Janice walks in. You know what I'm saying? She is upset enough at me without you screwing things up for me, OK? I'm sorry I said that, if what you're wanting is an apology. Now would you just go?

SUSAN

No.

PHILIP

What?

SUSAN

I'm not leaving. I'm going to tell your wife what we've done.

PHILIP

Why? Why would you do that? Do you realize what you're going to do? My entire life is going to shit. She's the one that has all the money, and the house. You're going to make me homeless? What kind of friend are you?

(Shakes his head)

No, no. You're not going to do it.

SUSAN

Why not?

PHILIP

Because

(Beat)

Because you care about me, right? You care about what would happen to me if you were to go and tell my wife everything. We're old friends.

SUSAN

I don't care what you do, Phil. I came here trusting that you would be responsible for your actions, but you aren't. So I'll make you face them. You're as--

(The phone begins to ring)

PHILIP

Christ.

(To his wife offstage)

Get the phone, Janice. I'm busy.

SUSAN

I'm going to tell her right now. That phone call can wait.

JANICE

(To PHILIP)

Why can't you answer it?

(The phone still rings. JANICE enters in a robe)

I'm busy, too. You're not the only person in this house. What are you doing?

(Looks at SUSAN)

Can I help you?

PHILIP

(Yelling)

Go answer the damn phone!

JANICE

(Frightened by PHILIP's outburst)

Fine!

(JANICE exits)

SUSAN

I'm glad to know I'm not the only woman you choose to yell at.

(The phone stops ringing)

PHILIP

Hey, I'm an honest man. I may not have the best temper, but I'm honest. You're the one that got me drunk.

SUSAN

Then why did you agree to sleep with me?

(JANICE quickly enters)

JANICE

Phil! Karl had a heart attack!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

(END OF ACT I)

Act IIScene I

AT RISE:

The flower shop

SETTING:

SAUL and LANDLORD are standing in the flower shop. SAUL is exhausted and seems to have aged considerably. He is not smiling.

LANDLORD

How has Karl been recovering?

SAUL

We can only be thankful that the man is not dead. Had we not already been on the road, we probably would have never gotten there in time. So now we just have to wait and see. The doctors said that he has to lower the stress in his life, which of course is why I called you to meet me here. How long can you give me to move everything out?

LANDLORD

You're closing up the shop?

SAUL

With Karl's health the way it is, I don't think we have a choice. He loves this place, but it comes with too much stress and responsibility for him.

(Looks around)

I can grow flowers anywhere, and it is certainly possible to sell them door to door. Then I can give as many as I would like to anyone who asks.

LANDLORD

I hate to add to your troubles, but what about the back rent? Karl paid when he could, but you two are still several thousand behind, and I just can't afford to cut any more breaks to anyone, the economy slipping the way it is.

SAUL

There are some things we have that we can sell, make some money, and hopefully get everything paid off. I've called a few people to see what I could do.

LANDLORD

I can give you until the end of the month. Are you going to have anyone help you move all of this? I could send my son if you need some extra manpower.

SAUL

I imagine I'll be able to find someone. Thank you for asking.

LANDLORD

So how are you doing, Saul?

SAUL

I'm sorry what?

LANDLORD

(Loudly)

Is your hearing aid broken?

SAUL

No, I was just distracted. My apologies. What did you ask me?

LANDLORD

How are you doing?

SAUL

With Karl in the hospital, it was difficult to leave his side, but he said that I should go check on the house. I figured I would try to get some things done while I was out of there. Karl hates it in the hospital, and home isn't the same when he isn't there. People leave strong presences when they are men like my brother Karl, and it is easy to tell when it is missing. You understand what I mean?

LANDLORD

My grandfather was that way.

SAUL

Most grandfathers have that ability.

(Beat)

How is your wife? Did she like the flowers?

LANDLORD

She's doing well, and she loved the flowers, thank you. She's upset to hear about Karl. You already know how much she adores the both of you.

SAUL

She's a lovely woman to care so much about two old men like us.

(Takes a bouquet and hands it to the LANDLORD)

Take this to her and give her my regards, would you Greg? It would make me feel better to know that some of these flowers might make it to a decent home before they all wither.

LANDLORD

Would you like to come over and have dinner with us tonight?

SAUL

I'd be honored to, but I need to get back to the flat and start sorting what we can sell and what we can't. I deeply appreciate the offer though.

(Puts his hand on the LANDLORD'S shoulder)

You're a good man. I hope that you know that.

LANDLORD

You sure you don't need anything, Saul? Anything at all? I know I haven't given you anything easy, but I'll offer whatever I can.

SAUL

Would you happen to know any art dealers?

LANDLORD

Not that I can think of. Is there anything else I can do to you?

SAUL

Just your care for us is enough. Thank you. I think I can take care of most of this. Take care, Greg.

(LANDLORD exits. SAUL goes over to a box full of items he has already packed, and begins to try and lift it. After much groaning, he finally gives up)

SAUL Cont.

I suppose I'll just move that later.

(SAUL shuffles off stage)

(FADEOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

AT RISE: PHILIP's House

SETTING: PHILIP is walking around the living room on his cellphone, talking to SUSAN.

(Philip is talking to Susan on his cell phone)

PHIL

Hey Susie, how are you doing? Look, I just wanted to make up for what I said to you the other day. It wasn't right of me. I was just so nervous that my wife would find us out, and I really care about both of you, and--

(Beat)

Hold on, hold on, I just wanted to see if we could meet somewhere and talk. I know I haven't visited you in a while, and I wanted to try and make it up to you, you know, turn over a new leaf? Try and repair our friendship?

(Beat)

Oh, come on, Susan, all I'm asking for is one more chance. I'm glad your sobering up, and I want to prove how proud I am of you. Come on, give me a chance, Susan! We've been pals for too long to throw it away easily.

(Beat)

Ok. I'll meet you at your place at 8 on Thursday.

(JANICE enters)

Ok. Bye.

(PHILIP turns, and is surprised)

Hi Jan, what are you doing home?

JANICE

I'm home for lunch, what are you doing here?

PHILIP

Just finished talking to my boss. We're going to have a poker night.

JANICE

John plays poker?

PHILIP

Sure he does.

JANICE

What are you doing home right now? Shouldn't you be at work?

PHILIP

Business was dead, so John decided to close early today.

JANICE

Hey Philip?

PHILIP

Mmhmm?

JANICE

What was Susan doing over here?

PHILIP

Who?

JANICE

Susan.

PHILIP

She was just coming by to tell me about Karl.

JANICE

Phil?

PHILIP

(Slightly irritated)

Yes?

JANICE

Would you ever have an affair with another woman?

PHILIP

Well, I probably wouldn't have it with a man, if that's what you're asking.

JANICE

(Hurt)

No, I'm serious. Would you?

PHILIP

What kind of ridiculous question is that? No.

JANICE

If you say so, Phil.

PHILIP

Susan and I are just friends.

JANICE

It's just

(Beat)

we haven't been intimate in a few months now, and I'm beginning to wonder if you're attracted to me anymore.

PHILIP

(Hugs JANICE)

Everything is fine. I'm just getting older, I suppose. Libido isn't what it used to be.

JANICE

Well, do you blame me for it?

PHILIP

That's not a fair question to ask me. It's not you, but I know that no matter what I say, you're going to take it the wrong way. You're probably going to presume that it is you no matter how I try to defend myself to you. No, it's not you.

JANICE

I just have to wonder when you won't even look at me when we are together.

(Begins to tear up)

PHILIP

Oh Jesus. Come on. Don't get upset with me, Janice.

(Beat)

You know what? What if I bought you some flowers when I get paid this weekend, would you like that?

(JANICE nods)

Ok. I'll see you in a while. I've got to go run by the grocery store.

*(PHILIP begins to walk away, and in a second thought,
kisses JANICE, then exits)*

(FADE OUT)

(END SCENE)

Scene 3

SETTING: A small apartment with a couch, a bed, and a vase with the flowers SUSAN received from SAUL. Friday night at 8.

AT RISE: Friday. Susan is sitting on the bed in a red silk robe. PHILIP enters.

SUSAN
You're late.

PHILIP
I know, I'm sorry.

SUSAN
A day late.

PHILIP
I said I know.

SUSAN
Any reason?

PHILIP
Any reason for what?

SUSAN
Any reason why you are late?

PHILIP
Well, for starters, I had to console my wife on account of your unannounced visit, then I had to wait until she was happy with me, and I had some things to do for work. That's what kept me from coming here, and from your first reactions to me, I would say I should have stayed at work.

SUSAN
Why do you make promises you cannot keep?

(Beat)

PHILIP

Are you drunk?

SUSAN

I don't think that's important right now.

PHILIP

(Annoyed)

I thought you said you were going to try and quit drinking.

SUSAN

And I thought you said you didn't care.

PHILIP

You wanted to talk, so can we please be pleasant? I don't know how much more drama I can take.

(Beat)

So why did you want me to come here?

(Pause. No answer from SUSAN)

Alright then, I'm going to go back to the house.

(PHILIP gets up to leave)

SUSAN

(Frustrated)

Don't go.

(Beat)

I just wanted us to talk.

PHILIP

About what?

SUSAN

I just wanted to ask you why you brought me to Van Bandy's funeral with you.

PHILIP

With all the problems I'm having, that's the topic you want to discuss? No, we're not talking about that. It was a bad day for both of us, so let's talk about trying to repair our friendship, huh?

SUSAN

When will you want to talk about this?

PHILIP

Can we pretend that never happened, just for tonight? It makes life simpler. I thought we were going to have a nice time together, talk about fun times we've had in the past, do something positive, and talking about that would definitely ruin the mood.

SUSAN

When are you going to own up to anything you do?

PHILIP

I didn't do anything.

SUSAN

You slept with me the same day as Van Bandy's funeral, and you--

PHILIP

You're the one that got me drunk!

SUSAN

You brought me to a funeral. I don't think you bring someone to something like that unless there is some sort of connection.

PHILIP

I just wanted someone there to talk to!

SUSAN

Which is why we shared the same hotel room! You can't say you asked me to go with only pure intentions.

PHILIP

You never wanted to be with me in high school, so why did you try to get attention from me now? I spent years trying to get over you, and you decide on a whim that you are going to try and sleep with me by getting me drunk. The fact you're attractive to me makes no difference. I have a wife and responsibilities, and you're--

(Pause. PHILIP realizes what he was about to say)

Why are you drunk?

SUSAN

Maybe because I needed some support, and you, the only person that was in my life, wouldn't give it to me.

PHILIP

That's ridiculous, Susan. I'm not the only person in your life, and I give you lots of support--

SUSAN

When?

PHILIP

I'm here, aren't I?

SUSAN

And you're yelling at me.

PHILIP

I'll try to stop yelling at you if that will make you feel any better about the situation. You're drunk, and I hope you're not going to regret this later. I just want to be friends with you. I want to put that behind us.

SUSAN

You hope I don't regret this? Since when did you consider me worth thinking about?

PHILIP

You're my friend, of course I care about you.

SUSAN

Maybe I don't want your friendship.

PHILIP

Then why am I here? Why are we even talking about this?

SUSAN

Because we have some things to discuss. You always told me that Van Bandy wanted you to live a better life, but so far it seems like you're the same kind of womanizing--

PHILIP

I've made some mistakes, but you can't go around preaching to me like you're the paragon of virtue. I'm not sure what you think happened at the hotel, but rest assured, it's not going to happen again. There's nothing between--

SUSAN

Of course there are things happening between us, Philip. You just have to decide whether you want them or not.

PHILIP

Why should I throw away everything I've gained, for you, a girl that I liked in high school who was too busy looking everywhere else? Why should I? Why would you want me to? You had your chance, and you always turned me down.

SUSAN

I'm not suggesting you should--

PHILIP

You sure are acting that way! I've always found you attractive, and sleeping with you wasn't the worst experience ever, but it's not kosher. I'll be friends with you, but if you won't let this go, then we're done talking altogether.

(No answer from SUSAN)

I'm going. I'm tired of talking to you. Call me when you're sober.

SUSAN

You're a womanizing--

PHILIP

(Glares at SUSAN)

Get off of that, would you? You're as culpable as I am! You're too drunk to even think straight. Have you had a clear thought since the funeral?

SUSAN

Maybe not. When you care about someone, and they throw you away, it's hard not to get distraught. But you keep on trying to get close to me, be friends with me, and we aren't doing that.

PHILIP

God, you're stupid when you're drunk! You are such a dumbass.

SUSAN

(Calmly)

Are you done being belligerent?

PHILIP

(Yelling)

What do you--What do you want from me?

SUSAN

I--I don't know.

PHILIP

I don't know what you're thinking anymore, Susan. We've been friends for years, and I don't know what you're thinking anymore.

SUSAN

Would you want to be with me?

PHILIP

(Sighs)

Dear God. You're drunk, Susan, and that's the only reason you're saying it.

SUSAN

Do you love me?

PHILIP

No, but I sure do like you a hell of a lot, as a friend. I'm here to try and save our friendship. You're making passes at me because you have beer goggles on.

SUSAN

What if that's not why I'm saying it?

PHILIP

Then

(Beat)

I'd want to be with you, too, Susan, in another lifetime. It's a little too late for this one. If you had asked me ten years ago, I would have had no reservations. But hell, until this, we've gotten along well, and even now it's better than Janice constantly suspecting me of wrongdoing--which I never did, until that night, mind. It's falling apart anyway. It's all withering.

SUSAN

I love you, Philip.

PHILIP

Don't tell me that unless you're sober, Susan. If you're playing with me, you're playing a cruel trick, and I don't appreciate it. We'll meet again soon and talk, OK? I've gotta get going.

SUSAN

OK.

PHILIP

You look tired. Sleep a little, it'll help you sober up.

(SUSAN murmurs to PHILIP and quickly falls asleep)

What am I supposed to do now?

(PHILIP exits)

(FADE OUT)

(END SCENE)

Scene 4

SETTING: The flower shop. The following Monday. The last day it is open. It is almost entirely empty.

AT RISE: SAUL is looking over the records at the counter. PHILIP enters.

SAUL
Philip! How are you doing today? What brings you to our humble store?

PHILIP
I need to buy two dozen roses.

SAUL
What kind of vase will you need?

PHILIP
Actually, I'll be needing two.

SAUL
Why would you--

(Beat. SAUL stares at PHILIP)

I see. Any preference?

PHILIP
Just whatever you would think is nice.

SAUL
So, do you treat them both well?

PHILIP
Who?

SAUL
Your wife and your girlfriend.

PHILIP
She's not my girlfriend, Saul. Susan's just a friend. You know that.

SAUL

Then how did you know who I was talking about, Phil?

(Beat)

It's OK. Better men than you have fallen into that kind of sin. Why are you getting them both roses?

PHILIP

I promised Janice I'd get some for her.

(Pause)

SAUL

And what about the other dozen?

PHILIP

To make up for my mistakes.

SAUL

What color roses for her? Yellow?

PHILIP

Red

SAUL

What about for Janice?

PHILIP

White.

SAUL

That's a color of purity.

PHILIP

--And new beginnings.

SAUL

So what are you planning to do about this, Phil?

PHILIP

I wish I could tell you, Saul. What would Van Bandy have done about it?

SAUL

Charlie? Well, to be honest with you Phil, he wouldn't have done a single thing. He was a good friend, but he had all the faults that you and I have, and a few more. He had

SAUL (CONT.)

a lot of affairs over the years, as you well know, and he certainly didn't apologize for many of them. I've never had to deal with them. Relationships always broke off before I met someone new. But Charlie was a complex man. He didn't excuse his vices, but he tried to bring as much good into the world as possible to try and make amends for all the faults he did have. I'd suggest that's what you do, Phil.

(Beat)

What do you think you ought to do?

PHILIP

I'm not sure. With Janice it's always trying to make up for something I did wrong. With Susan it's trying to show her that I'm not being irresponsible by running off with her and abandoning my life. I'm trying to not make a mess of things with Janice, but I don't want to be there anymore.

SAUL

You are a more complex man than Charlie was, Phil. I'm not sure what you oughta do, but I'd recommend to use that brain of yours to figure it out.

(Grins)

You're a complex man, you are.

PHILIP

What are you saying?

SAUL

Well, it can be good or bad, depending on the situation. Take Charlie for example. With women he was a complete cad.

PHILIP

Are you calling me a cad?

SAUL

I'm not calling you anything. As I was saying, Charlie was a complicated man. If you pick out one aspect out of him, you would miss the entire picture. Sure, he had a real level of difficulty in being honest when it came to the women he dated, and it is for that reason that he never settled down: he was just too interested in them to ever stick with one for a substantial relationship. Yet, there

SAUL (CONT)

was a sense that he knew what he did was immoral, and so he did his best at first to stop it. When he realized these faults were something that were a part of him, something that could never fully removed from him, he tried to find other ways to compensate. He helped people, gave them money when he could, offered to help people when they were at their worst. That was why I was so fond of the man: despite a deep level of fault, Charlie was a good man. He didn't want to be perfect, and he listened when Karl or me would discuss his problems. His virtues didn't cancel out his vices; he simply strove to be as virtuous as he could so that no one could say that his one fault was all they could remember.

(Looks intently at PHILIP)

Susan has torn herself up over you. That much I have seen. But you've a duty to Janice regardless of your feelings towards her. I'd recommend respecting them both, and I know that's what you're trying to do, but you'll ultimately need to end one of them. Unfortunately, in this life we can't keep the world happy.

PHILIP

I never intended this to be the situation, Saul.

SAUL

We rarely plan anything that comes our way, but we have to deal with it all the same.

PHILIP

Why didn't they leave me if they are both so unhappy?

SAUL

Because you're willing to try, at the very least, to do some good.

PHILIP

I think it's safe to say I haven't done much good lately.

SAUL

Time has yet to tell.

PHILIP

It's been fourteen years since I graduated college, Saul.

SAUL

Only time will tell. So far, you've made a lot of mistakes, but I know that Susan hasn't been totally fair with you, either.

PHILIP

How much are the flowers?

SAUL

It'll be \$25.

PHILIP

(Jokingly)

No adopted-nephew discounts anymore?

SAUL

If you look at the price, you'll notice it's over half off. Going-out-of-business sale.

PHILIP

Going out of business? If you want me to come help you on the weekends, I--

SAUL

No, I'm afraid. I have family business to attend to. Karl is coming home today, and it'll take too much time to keep him healthy. I've got to go home and make a few phone calls before then.

(PHILIP starts to exit)

PHILIP

Does Karl know your closing down the flower shop?

SAUL

Some things have to wait until the proper time. Karl will find out one way or another, but right now he's not in the shape to hear about that yet, and I hope that if you see him, you won't talk to him about it.

PHILIP

I don't think Karl would be happy to know that you kept it a secret. I don't imagine he'll be patient very long. I'll certainly help you if you need me to. Why didn't you tell him? He loves this place.

SAUL

I closed his business without his knowledge because I have no other choice. You can see why this place would be bad for his health. Sometimes a complex man sometimes has to realize when he needs to try and simplify to save what he cares about most in his life. Sometimes, a complex man has to realize what their priorities are, and adjust their life to live with the things that come our way. Besides, you have enough on your plate, and we haven't been open on weekends for years.

(Pause. PHILIP begins to exit, turns around.)

PHILIP

Are you a complex man?

SAUL

(Chuckles)

Not at all, Philip. Not in the slightest.

(A phone rings)

I didn't expect him to call so soon! I gotta take this, Philip. I'll see you around.

(PHILIP nods, then exits)

SAUL

Hello?

(Beat)

Yes, Mr. Monetti. Thank you for calling. I wanted--

(Beat)

I'd rather you come by sooner if it is possible.

(Beat)

I see. Well, if you feel so rushed to see the painting, I suppose I could meet you at the flat. Here's how you get there. . .

(FADE OUT)

(END SCENE)

Scene 5

SETTING: SAUL and KARL's flat. The Van Gogh has been moved to the bedroom off stage, and the old recliner is gone.

AT RISE: SAUL and KARL enter the house. Karl is using a cane to walk around, and moves very slowly. SAUL is watching carefully over KARL.

SAUL
Welcome home! I apologize if it seems a little sparse.

KARL
No trouble at all. You made a good two-thousand from the things you sold, right?

SAUL
Twenty-one-hundred including my old recliner, and there's still some more to sell.

KARL
Not bad. It will help pay a few of the medical bills.

SAUL
We'll do what we can to get by. I decided to make some pierogi--don't worry, I'll make it healthy for your heart. You'll feel better once we give you some real food. I moved the Van Gogh into the bedroom, so you could look at it while you were in the bed.

KARL
You're a good man, Saul. Thank you for all you've done. I'm just glad you didn't think of selling the Van Gogh.

SAUL
I'm trying to hold it off until the last.

KARL
Don't even think of selling it, Saul.

SAUL
We do need to try and keep you alive, Karl.

KARL

Do we have much else to sell?

SAUL

Not too much, I'm afraid.

(Sees concern on KARL's face)

Don't worry, brother, I'll take care of everything from now on. We'll soon not have to worry about money again.

(SUSAN enters the doorway with irises in hand, smiles, and watches them)

SAUL CONT

What did the doctor say about drinking a glass of wine at meals?

KARL

God must really like me, because he said I could keep doing that so long as I stopped at one glass.

SAUL

I would have hated to drink all our wine in front of you!
(Laugh)

KARL

For that I would have never forgiven you.

SAUL

Forgive me? It would have been a noble sacrifice on my part. Do you know how many glasses of wine I would have to drink in order to finish off all of it? You'd have to thank me.

KARL

I'd thank you by throwing an empty wine bottle at your drunken head!

(Turns, and sees SUSAN standing at the door)

My apologies, Susan, please, come in!

SAUL

Susan, how are you doing, niece?

(SAUL hugs SUSAN, and SUSAN hugs KARL)

SUSAN

I heard you were out of the hospital, and thought I might bring you both some flowers.

(Hands them to KARL)

KARL

Thank you. Saul, what kind are they?

SAUL

Irises, as a matter of fact.

(To SUSAN)

That was very kind of you.

SUSAN

How are the two of you doing?

SAUL

Better!

(Beat)

KARL

As well as can be expected. How have you been?

SUSAN

I think I'm doing a lot better than I was, thank you. I just wanted to thank the two of you for how you have treated me. I know I haven't been particularly easy.

KARL

Have no worries over it, Susan. You are always welcome to spend time among us.

SAUL

(Nodding)

Certainly you are. We enjoy your presence.

SUSAN

Is there anything you need me to do?

SAUL

Yes! You must stay for dinner with us!

KARL

If you want, of course.

SUSAN

Certainly I would.

SAUL

I'm making dinner, so no worries.

SUSAN

You're trusting him in the kitchen alone? I thought you were the gourmet of the two of you.

KARL

I fear I have no other choice.

SAUL

(Laughing)

Once again the kitchen is mine!

(SAUL Exits)

KARL

Thank you again for the flowers, Susan. That was too thoughtful.

SUSAN

I thought it was the least I could do for you.

KARL

So how are things between you and Philip?

SUSAN

I don't think things are ever going to be the way they were.

KARL

Ah, so things are good then?

SUSAN

Depending on your perspective.

KARL

From your perspective?

SUSAN

Yes, I'd say things are better. I've been honest. I'm going to see what life will bring me.

KARL

Well, that leaves Phil with just one woman to worry about in his life.

SUSAN

That's not quite what I meant.

KARL

You still wish to be with him? After how harshly he has treated you?

SUSAN

The part of me that wants to be with him won't shut up about it, I'm afraid. This is just him at a bad moment. It seems we only ever see people at their worst when we're paying attention. When everything is fine, no one notices.

KARL

Human nature is fickle that way. When it comes to life, I'd recommend focusing on what you care about most, and pursuing that. Stay loyal to the ones who were first loyal to you.

(A knock is heard at the door)

Would you mind getting it Susan?

(SUSAN gets up and goes to answer the door. CUSTOMER enters)

SUSAN

May I help you?

CUSTOMER

Is Saul Aptowitz in?

SUSAN

I'm sorry, he's busy at the moment. Is there anything I can do for you?

CUSTOMER

I was wanting to talk to Saul about the Van Gogh piece he is selling.

KARL

I'm sorry, did you say a Van Gogh piece was for sale?

CUSTOMER

Yes, that's correct. I was talking to him over the phone about it, and he put a Van Gogh at a very reasonable price.

KARL

I'm sorry, but that's not for sale.

CUSTOMER

If the asking price has gone up, I'm more than comfortable paying an additional amount in order to purchase it.

(SAUL enters)

KARL

I'm the actual owner of the painting, and I stand firm that it is not for sale.

SAUL

Ah, you must be Mr. Monetti.

CUSTOMER

Yes, and you must be Mr. Aptowitz.

(SAUL and CUSTOMER shake hands)

SAUL

Would you like to look at the piece?

KARL

Saul, what the hell are you doing?

SAUL

I tried to make money however I could, but now that the business is closed--

KARL

You closed the shop?

SAUL

Could you wait outside a moment, Mr. Monetti?

CUSTOMER

I am on a very tight schedule, here.

SAUL

I'm sorry, sir, but you'll have to excuse me a moment.

CUSTOMER

If you aren't interested in selling the painting, I think I'll be on my way. This was a waste of my time. I'll mention this to--

SAUL

(Finally angry)

Just hold on one second, you impatient twit! I will sell you the painting if you would just shut up! I've got to discuss with my brother here, and your impatience is infuriating to me.

CUSTOMER

Well, that's quite enough. Thank you. Good day.
(CUSTOMER exits)

SAUL

Wait! Shit.

KARL

What the hell are you doing, Saul?

SAUL

I'm trying to help you, Karl!

KARL

Do you not remember what I said? I'm not selling it!

SAUL

We have to pay for your medication!

KARL

I don't want the medication.

SAUL

Please be reasonable with me, Karl.

KARL

Why weren't you reasonable all this time? You haven't listened to me, so now you're going to try and take away the last thing I truly own. Charlie would not know what to do if he knew I were selling it.

SAUL

Please let me try to help you, Karl.

KARL

It's not being sold! Charlie gave me that painting knowing I would have it until my dying day. Don't take away something that beautiful from me now. That's not fair!

SAUL

(With anger)

I didn't sell it! You were so hotheaded you wouldn't let me sell it!

KARL

I was hotheaded? What made you rush into selling the painting! What about our savings, and a million other things we could have done first?

SAUL

I had to pay for your medical bills from the start, Karl! All the money is already gone. I had to find another way.

KARL

Maybe I didn't want that way!

SAUL

(Upset)

Well, now we don't have an option. I tried to help, and you never let me do what I needed to, Karl. I've been doing the books while you were sick, and that's the only way. I took those responsibilities when you weren't able to.

KARL

Why didn't you ask me this first?

SAUL

I couldn't allow you to worry about anything in your state.

KARL

So you chose to take away what made me happy so I could live another few years without it?

SAUL

Yes, I did. Because I want you to live a full life while you have the chance. Now I can't help you, and it's your own fault.

KARL

(Short of breath)
My fault?

SAUL

Yes, brother. Why did you ruin your own chances?

KARL

(Exhausted)
Leave me alone, Saul. Talking to you has made me tired.
Susan, perhaps you could come by later.

SUSAN

Are you sure you want me to go?

KARL

After seeing us like this, I think it would be best if you
go out for a little walk.

SUSAN

Sure. I'll be back in a few.

(SUSAN exits. KARL locks the door behind her.)

SAUL

I'm sorry, Karl. I thought I was helping you.

KARL

Just leave me alone. I'm going to bed.

SAUL

I was just trying to help you.

KARL

You did try, and I messed it up. I'm sorry. We both made
a mistake. I'm going to the bedroom to look at my
painting.

(KARL exits)

SAUL

I was just trying to help.

*(SAUL, highly upset, begins to sob. He takes his
hearing aid, throws it on the table, sits down, and
begins to weep. SUSAN is heard knocking on the door)*

Saul!
SUSAN

(*Still weeping*)
SAUL
I was just trying to help!

SUSAN
Saul! Oh no, he must have his hearing aid out. Saul!

(*Lights begin to fade*)

Saul!

(*Lights to black*)

Saul!

(*END SCENE*)

Scene 6

SETTING: PHILIP's house

AT RISE: JANICE is sitting reading a book, when there is a knock on the door. JANICE answers the door, and SUSAN enters.

JANICE

(Immediately suspicious)
May I help you?

SUSAN

I wanted to come talk to you for a minute, if I could.

JANICE

If this is about Phil, I--

SUSAN

I don't know if you know about it, but Karl passed away last night.

JANICE

What? I didn't hear anything about that. When exactly? How?

SUSAN

He went to bed last night early, and when Saul went to bed, he went to check on him, and found that he had passed away. He had a second heart attack a few minutes after he fell asleep.

JANICE

Oh my God. I have to let Phil know.
(Yelling to offstage)
Phil!

(SUSAN looks over and sees the flowers PHILIP got for SUSAN. Nonchalant, but also hurt)

SUSAN

Nice flowers. Did Philip get them for you?

JANICE

Yes. Lovely, aren't they?

(PHILIP enters)

PHILIP
What?

JANICE
Come in here, I have something important to tell you!

PHILIP
What?

(PHILIP sees SUSAN)

Susan, what are you doing here?

JANICE
Karl passed away last night.

PHILIP
(Not paying attention)
What?

JANICE
Karl passed away.

PHILIP
When?

JANICE
Last night.

PHILIP
Oh Christ.

SUSAN
I just wanted to come by and let the two of you know.

PHILIP
When is the funeral?

SUSAN
It should be the fourth of November.

JANICE
I won't be able to go, Phil. That's when Joanne's baby is due.

(To SUSAN)

My sister wants me to be with her when she delivers her baby girl.

SUSAN

(Solemnly)

Congratulations.

PHILIP

I suppose Susan wouldn't mind going with me. You wouldn't mind, would you?

SUSAN and JANICE

No.

(Both glance at one another)

SUSAN

I--

PHILIP

--Well, I'm glad we are all in agreement here. Hey, Janice, I think the laundry is done. Would you mind grabbing it for me?

JANICE

(Reluctantly)

Sure.

(JANICE exits)

PHILIP

So what did you tell her?

SUSAN

I told her about Karl. What else was I going to tell her?

PHILIP

So we're still OK?

SUSAN

Yes, we're still OK.

PHILIP

It seems like funerals are the only times we get to spend together anymore. Too old for happy occasions, maybe. Would you mind going with me, as an old friend?

SUSAN

Maybe.

(PHILIP begins to move closer to SUSAN. Before SUSAN can react, JANICE enters)

JANICE

Phil? I've got the laundry put on the bed.

PHILIP

(Startled)

Great. I guess I'll see you then, Susan.

(PHIL and SUSAN embrace. SUSAN exits while JANICE stares intently at the two of them. PHILIP turns to JANICE)

PHILIP

Would you like to go for a walk?

(FADE OUT)

(END SCENE)

SCENE 7

SETTING: The funeral home from the first scene.

AT RISE: The funeral is about to begin. Many of the people from the first scene have returned, including EMPLOYEES of VAN BANDY. SAUL and SUSAN are at center stage. The painting hangs above KARL's urn.

SAUL

Thank you for coming, Susan.

(SUSAN hugs SAUL)

Do you think he would have liked what we've done with the painting?

SUSAN

I think he'll appreciate that it's here. It brought him so much happiness.

SAUL

I wonder if he looked at it when he passed.

SUSAN

I'm not sure. It's certainly possible.

SAUL

He was a complex man, Karl. I couldn't tell if he was smiling or frowning when I found him.

SUSAN

Complex people are hard to read sometimes.

SAUL

But they often have very good motives for what they do, I suppose.

(The MINISTER enters, and begins talking to other character in the background)

Oh good heavens, I better go.

(SAUL begins to turn around, but spins back around to SUSAN)

Susan?

(SUSAN turns)

You're a good friend.

(SAUL finds his seat at the front of the funeral. PHILIP enters. PHILIP goes up to SUSAN)

PHILIP

I've decided on what the best path is for me, Susan.

(The MINISTER, unheard, begins the funeral service)

I hope that makes everything square from before. I know what I did to you has never been square, so I'm going to try and do it now. I never said it, but I'll say it now: I do care about you. And tonight, I'll prove it to you. I'll get you roses--"

SUSAN

White roses.

PHILIP

I don't know if I could find those around here.

SUSAN

We'll talk later. I have to go take care of a friend.

PHILIP

Will I see you tonight?

(SUSAN has no response, hugs him, then goes and sits next to SAUL. She gives SAUL a light kiss on the cheek and puts her hand on his shoulder. SAUL takes her hand and pats it. PHILIP takes a seat at the back.)

MINSTER

Saul? Would you like to say a few words?

(SAUL does not hear; his hearing aid has gone out)

Saul?

(Beat)

MINISTER (CONT.)

Saul?

(SUSAN gently touches SAUL's shoulder. He nods, then rises to go onstage and speak about his brother)

SAUL

In many ways, I think my brother Karl was a lot like my recently departed friend Charlie. . .

(FADE OUT)

(CURTAIN)

(THE END)