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Publisher and Editor

Pedro R. Monge-Rafuls

Design

Pedro Monge-Rafuls

Walter Ventosilla

Translations

Lorenzo Mans

Special Thanks to

Virginia Arrea

José A. Escarpenter

Virginia Moore

Play Transcripts

Miguel Falquez-Certain

Ari Gutman

OLLANTAY

Theater Magazine

P.O. Box 720449

Jackson Heights,

NY 11372-0449

E-mail

OLLANTAYTM@AOL.COM

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Back Cover

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Dos importantes teatristas **2**

Two Playwrights. In Memoriam **5**

Manuel Martín, Jr. Photo. **6**

José Corrales. Photo. **7**

English

Manuel Martín: My Memories On His Life / Van Clyde Labriola **23**

PLAY: *Peter Pan's Maiden Flight* by Manuel Martín Jr. **73**

Bibliography: Manuel Martín / Lilian Manzur, Patrisha Miller **105**

Photo Essay **112**

Obituary **126**

Reminiscence Regarding José Corrales / Evan Senreich **137**

Breaking the Silence with *Las hetairas habaneras* / Gail Bulman **141**

Spanish

¿Una Biografía? / Manuel Martín, Jr. **8**

Un cubano neoyorkino. Entrevista / Jesús Barquet **10**

Aproximaciones al teatro de M. Martín / José A. Escarpenter **29**

Sanguivin en U. C.: Pluralidad en el exilio / Lourdes Betanzos **36**

Sanguivin en U. C.: Estado de sitio / Matías Montes Huidobro **49**

Rita and Bessie: Tránsito final / Yara González-Montes **62**

Reportaje gráfico **112**

Vitalismo y subversión en José Corrales / Pedro M. Barreda **152**

La incompleta comunicativa en *El vestido rojo* / Jorge Febles **159**

OBRA: *El vestido rojo* de José Corrales **173**

Bibliografía del teatro de Corrales / Pedro Monge Rafuls **191**

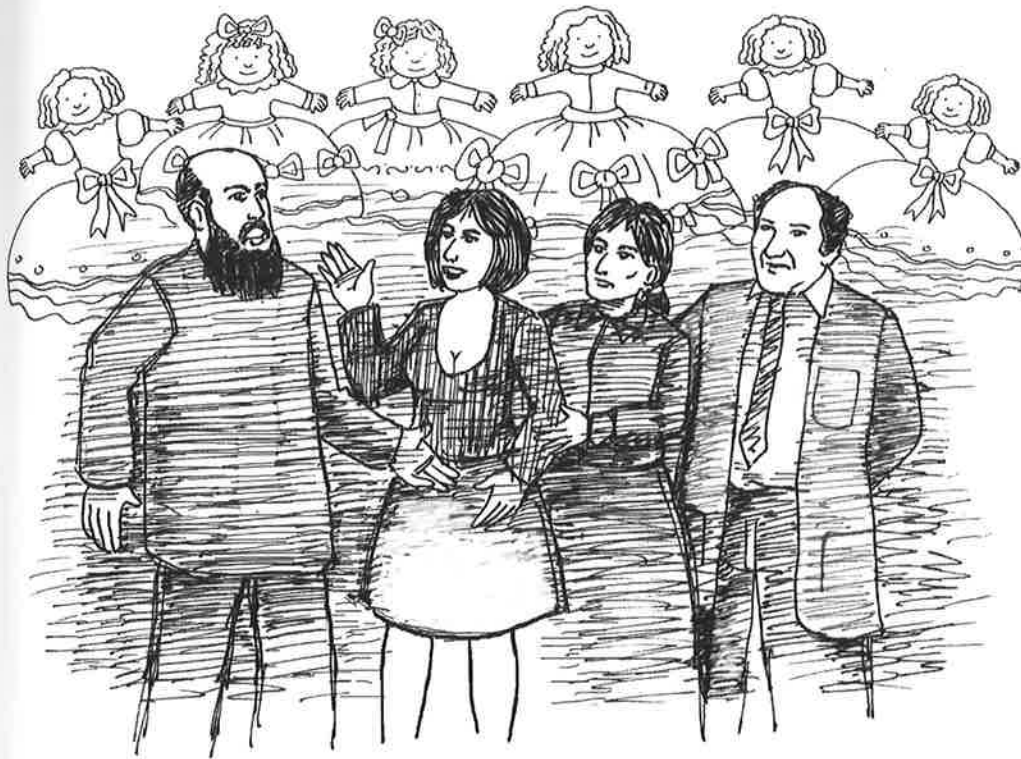
Obituario **195**

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PETER PAN'S MAIDEN FLIGHT

Manuel Martín, Jr.



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Deprived of you, I shall live a life of pain and
sorrow. And you in another world altogether
will never again see your mother with your dear,
dear eyes.

—Euripides' *Medea*

Drawing: Walter Ventosilla

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CHARAC

MANDY. *A man in his late sixties. A handsome man with a beard that is reminiscent of Van Winkle.*

SANDY. *Mandy's mother. A handsome woman in her late sixties. A handsome woman with a voice that could convince a monk to suicide.*

FRAPPE. *Mandy's sister. A handsome woman in her late thirties. A sweet, social alcoholic with a intellect handsome man.*

TODDY. *A man in his late thirties. A handsome, adaptable man whose age still preserves a*

THE S

The set should be of a simplicity: white screens and wheels so they can be removed from stage and where slides can be used when required. A pyramid of light decorated with a sculpture, dolls, quilts, which also hold Mandy's funeral urn. Through the end of the play only to be left on it.

TIM

Present and past in

SCENE

A living room of a fashionable west of a semicircle of chairs. Upstage center the construction in the

CHARACTERS

MANDY. *A man in his late forties. He is thin, bald, extremely fair and sports a beard that is reminiscent of Rip Van Winkle.*

SANDY. *Mandy's mother. She is in her late sixties. A handsome and monumental woman with a cantankerous voice that could drive a Buddhist monk to suicide.*

FRAPPE. *Mandy's sister. She is in her late thirties. A sweet, dependent, social alcoholic with a tendency to collect handsome men.*

TODDY. *A man in his fifties. He is a serviceable, adaptable man who at his age still preserves a boyish charm.*

THE SET

The set should be of oriental design and simplicity: white screens mounted on wheels so they can be moved around the stage and where slides can be projected when required. A pyramid-like construction decorated with designs, paintings, sculptures, dolls, quilts, candles and which also hold Mandy's photograph and a funeral urn. Throughout the play, objects are removed from the pyramid and at the end of the play only the funeral urn will be left on it.

TIME

Present and past interwoven.

SCENE ONE

A living room of an apartment in the fashionable west eighties. There is a semicircle of chairs center stage. Upstage center there is an altar-like construction in the shape of a pyra-

mid. This pyramid is decorated with MANDY's paintings, sculptures, dolls, quilts and objects of art. In a prominent place lies a funeral urn and behind it, MANDY's photograph. This pyramid will remain in the same place for the entire duration of the play. FRAPPE is standing stage left. SANDY and TODDY, flanked by life-size puppets, are seated stage right. There is a dining table, covered with a white lace tablecloth situated downstage right. A flower arrangement, fruit, sandwiches, bottles of wine and all the necessary utensils, make the table a perfect picture for a House Beautiful magazine.

FRAPPE. *(To TODDY.)* Toddy, you may begin the ceremony.

TODDY stands up and moves in front of the pyramid. HE takes a long match, strikes it, then kneels and lights one of the candles. HE gets up and returns to his seat.

FRAPPE. *(To SANDY.)* Mother, it's your turn. *(SANDY does not move.)* Mother!

SANDY stands up slowly and moves in front of the pyramid. SHE cries softly as SHE kneels and lights a candle. TODDY stands up, helps SANDY to get up and leads her back to her seat. FRAPPE moves in front of the pyramid and almost falls as SHE tries to light a candle. Evidently, SHE had been drinking. SHE gets up with great effort.

FRAPPE. The guests may now light their candles.

SANDY and TODDY get up and pick up the life-size puppets. THEY move them in front of the pyramid and

make them kneel and go through the motions of lighting the candles.

FRAPPE. Now, we may dance.

FRAPPE pushes the button of a tape recorder and the music of "Old Lisbon" begins to play. SANDY, TODDY and FRAPPE, each lift a life-size puppet and begin to dance. MANDY wearing pajamas enters upstage center. HE moves downstage and addresses the audience. He is invisible to everyone in the room.

MANDY. I'll be damned! It hasn't been a week and they are already throwing a party. Well, I guess I don't count anymore... (*Surveys the table.*) They chose the wrong plates. My mother alone is a case, but if you let her team with my sister, well, what's the use... No control... I have absolutely no power... (*Checks the table again.*) Paper napkins! How could they've fallen so low! (*PAUSE.*) My mother is a woman of absolutely no taste. A good and joyless woman, but no taste. (*PAUSE.*) Once you are not part of the living, you can't even count on your memory. (*Points to SANDY and FRAPPE.*) I hope those two get their act together. They have no idea of the value of my stage designs. I don't want my exquisite pieces sold to the wrong bidders. I would like all of them to go to the right people.

The music stops. SANDY, TODDY and FRAPPE return the life-size puppets to the chairs. THEY move in front of the table. SANDY begins to serve the buffet.

SANDY. We mustn't waste time. Toddy, you must get together with Frappe

and make a list of Mandy's friends as soon as possible.

FRAPPE. That isn't going to be difficult. Short list!

TODDY. Frappe!

SANDY. Oh, we mustn't idealize Mandy because he's gone. My son was indeed difficult.

FRAPPE. Shall we say impossible?

SANDY. Okay, impossible.

TODDY. He was a perfectionist.

SANDY. You've always been so sweet... Some grapes?

TODDY. No, thank you.

FRAPPE picks up a bottle of wine from the table and begins to pour it into a wine glass.

SANDY. (*To FRAPPE.*) Don't you think you've had enough?

FRAPPE. This is only my second glass.

SANDY. Your second glass in the house. How many did you have on your way to pick up the ashes?

FRAPPE. Mother!

SANDY. (*To FRAPPE.*) Bring some food to the guests. (*To TODDY.*) We must get in touch with Moochie and Poochie.

TODDY. What for?

FRAPPE. (*As SHE takes two plates to the guests.*) Oh, those stiff queens!

SANDY. I know they would like to buy some of this stuff.

MANDY rushes and stands next to SANDY.

MANDY. Moochie and Poochie my friends. And please, don't objects *d'art*--"stuff".

SANDY. (*To TODDY.*) Did you ything?

TODDY. No, you were saying ochie and Poochie wanted some of Mandy's stuff.

MANDY. "Stuff" again!

SANDY. Right! The peaches i lad are delicious. (*Pause.*) I j zed that after all we suffer ggle in life we end up in a ca ches in heavy syrup.

TODDY. What?

SANDY. When we went to th home to make the arrange the cremation, the agent sh with great delight the urn ashes. Most of them were t a large can of peaches in hea When I emptied a can of p the salad I thought about don't we keep the cans money in the future?

MANDY. (*To the audience.*) man is absolutely insane!

SANDY. Do you think that M a little mad?

TODDY. Why?

FRAPPE returns to the table e diately pours herself and of wine.

SANDY. (*To FRAPPE.*) Mov to the studio. (*FRAPPE t table backstage.*) Just a At the end, you know. P was his illness...

SCENE TWO

MANDY. Moochie and Poochie weren't my friends. And please, don't call my objects *d'art*—"stuff".

SANDY. (To TODDY.) Did you say anything?

TODDY. No, you were saying that Moochie and Poochie wanted to buy some of Mandy's stuff.

MANDY. "Stuff" again!

SANDY. Right! The peaches in the salad are delicious. (Pause.) I just realized that after all we suffer and struggle in life we end up in a can of peaches in heavy syrup.

TODDY. What?

SANDY. When we went to the funeral home to make the arrangements for the cremation, the agent showed me with great delight the urns for the ashes. Most of them were the size of a large can of peaches in heavy syrup. When I emptied a can of peaches in the salad I thought about it. Why don't we keep the cans and save money in the future?

MANDY. (To the audience.) This woman is absolutely insane!

SANDY. Do you think that Mandy was a little mad?

TODDY. Why?

FRAPPE returns to the table and immediately pours herself another glass of wine.

SANDY. (To FRAPPE.) Move the table to the studio. (FRAPPE wheels the table backstage.) Just a little mad. At the end, you know. Probably, it was his illness...

Lights fade out. A spotlight illuminates MANDY. HE wears a bathrobe. A doorbell rings. MANDY stands downstage center. SANDY stands stage right in front of an imaginary door. The doorbell rings again.

SANDY. Mandy, I know you are there. (Pause.) Please, open that door! (Pause.) Mandy! It's your mother!

MANDY. (Does not open the door.) Sandy, go away.

SANDY. Don't call me Sandy. This is your mother. And you have only one mother.

MANDY. Thank God for that!

SANDY. Mandy! Open up, I know you have been ill. I want to see you. Then, I'll go.

MANDY. Have I sent for you?

SANDY. No...

MANDY. I will never visit anyone who has not requested my presence.

SANDY. Mandy, I spent all night in the airport trying to catch the first plane to New York, and you refuse to open the fucking door!

MANDY. Sandy, the neighbors are going to be upset if you keep screaming obscenities at my front door. Go away!

SANDY. I'm tired. I want to see you. After I've seen you I'll go, I promise.

MANDY. Once I let you in, you'll never get out. Your last visit lasted six months.

SANDY. Mandy, are you going to let your mother stand in the hallway all night?

MANDY. No, because I'm going to call the police and you will be taken away for disturbing the peace.

SANDY. Son, I know you aren't capable of doing that to your mother.

MANDY. You wanna bet?

SANDY. If you are ill, there is only one person who could take care of you. I have done it many times. After all, I know you better than anyone else. Even better than yourself. I was the one who gave you life, and...

MANDY. And I'm not going to let you take it away, Sandy!

SANDY. Alright! I'm leaving.

MANDY. Good!

SANDY. This is something you're going to regret the rest of your life.

MANDY. Fly away, Angel of Guilt!

Lights fade out. A spotlight illuminates SANDY who is standing downstage center.

SANDY. (To the audience.) I have given up everything for the welfare of my children. How come they turned out to be so...so...unruly and ungrateful. Yes, ungrateful. Where did I go wrong? Where did they go wrong, because they too are responsible. Oh, it's so easy to blame mothers. We are all possessive, selfish and cruel. (Pause.) I can't deny that I have been a little aggressive...

A spotlight illuminates MANDY who is standing downstage left.

MANDY. (To the audience.) Aggressive? She's a regular bulldozer!

SANDY. (To the audience.) You see,

this is what you get when you give your everything and keep nothing for yourself.

MANDY. (To the audience.) Beware of the gifts of the wicked.

SANDY. (To MANDY.) Don't underrate your mother. She can be a good friend but a dangerous enemy.

Lights fade out.

SCENE THREE

Lights fade in on MANDY who is now thirteen and sitting upstage right writing a letter.

MANDY. (Reading the letter as HE writes.) I can't believe I am writing this letter from a foreign country. My group arrived in the afternoon and I heard that many more teenagers my own age are arriving daily. Do not worry about me. I haven't seen that much of the place but it just looks like a summer camp. The priests have been kind but a little impatient. I already miss you, little Frappe, and of course Keekee. I know that we'll be soon together again. Love and kisses to all, but especially to you my dearest, from your son, Mandy.

Lights fade out on MANDY and fade in on SANDY who is standing downstage left.

SANDY. (To the audience.) I didn't have a choice. How do you think I felt. But it was the only way out. Keekee and I, Keekee is the man I married after I became a widow, had just been released from jail. They caught us posting subversive propaganda against the gov-

ernment. The only way out of the country was to go to a summer camp. I was thirteen. But I guess it was such a bad time. You know I exaggerate and Mandy was so spoiled. My sisters Coo and Too-Too were never on him. I guess it was to be the first orphan. I trusted the organization for the care of flying Mandy and I sent him away.

SCENE FOUR

Lights fade out on SANDY in on MANDY who is sitting at the drafting table and is standing next to him in the stage area.

TODDY. Don't you think you should call your mother?

MANDY. No. Not yet.

TODDY. Why not? She's my mother.

MANDY. She's my mother. She wants to run the whole show.

TODDY. Someone has to and get this apartment.

MANDY. The apartment is mine.

TODDY. I think your mother has told you that you didn't let her rent the last time she was here.

MANDY. She never found a magpie. Keeps all her things in storage.

TODDY. Mandy! She's my mother!

MANDY. And?

ernment. The only way to get Mandy out of the country was to send him alone to a summer camp. He was only thirteen. But I guess he didn't have such a bad time. You know kids always exaggerate and Mandy was always so spoiled. My sisters Zoo-Zoo, Coo-Coo and Too-Too really did a number on him. I guess it was a big deal to be the first orphan of the family. I trusted the organization that took care of flying Mandy out of the country and I sent him away.

SCENE FOUR

Lights fade out on SANDY, and fade in on MANDY who is sitting in front of the drafting table and TODDY who is standing next to him on the center stage area.

TODDY. Don't you think you should call your mother?

MANDY. No. Not yet.

TODDY. Why not? She's your mother.

MANDY. She's my mother and always wants to run the whole show.

TODDY. Someone has to be in charge and get this apartment in order.

MANDY. The apartment is fine the way it is.

TODDY. I think your mother has forgotten that you didn't let her in the apartment the last time she was here.

MANDY. She never forgets. She's like a magpie. Keeps all the injuries in storage.

TODDY. Mandy! She is your mother.

MANDY. And?

TODDY. Well, you are very ill and you need her.

MANDY scratches the drawing with great force.

MANDY. Yes, I'm ill and NO, I don't need her.

TODDY. Have you ever thought that maybe she needs you?

MANDY. She never needed anyone. She wants to be needed.

TODDY. What's so bad about that?

MANDY. Nothing, do you want to be her next victim? Get your neck ready.

TODDY. I'm not her son.

MANDY. I can tell...

MANDY begins to draw again.

TODDY. How are you going to manage from now on?

MANDY. The same way I have managed up to this point. I'll always manage.

TODDY. Do you want me to call her?

MANDY. Why should you get mixed up in this mess?

TODDY. Because, I'm your friend and I care. And I think you need help.

MANDY. *(Looking into TODDY's eyes.)* And you think my mother is the only one I can turn to?

TODDY. *(Not convinced of what HE is saying.)* I guess not.

MANDY. Would you accompany me to the hospital tomorrow?

TODDY. Sure, you can count on me.

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE FIVE

Lights fade in on center stage. FRAPPE rolls the dining table in and begins to set the dishes and silverware. MANDY comes in and places a chair stage right. TODDY enters with a chair and places it stage left. THEY both sit simultaneously.

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) Why don't you use the red plates?

FRAPPE. Do you want the red plates? You must be in an incendiary mood this evening.

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) How did you guess?

FRAPPE. (As SHE leaves stage right.) I can hear the fire engine when it's coming...

TODDY. Your sister has such a sweet disposition.

MANDY. Wait 'til she has the third glass of wine.

FRAPPE. (As SHE enters with the red plates.) Are you talking about me? I heard the word wine.

MANDY. You heard me. (Pause.) What time are you leaving tomorrow?

FRAPPE. (SHE begins to set the plates on the table.) Eight A.M. (Pause.) I think mother should come and stay with you.

MANDY. No.

FRAPPE. (Sits down.) Just for a while until you recuperate from the operation.

MANDY. No.

TODDY. (To MANDY.) I think you should consider it.

MANDY. (To TODDY.) I have considered it. Sandy would be my last resort.

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) Right now, she is your only resort.

TODDY moves restlessly in his chair.

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) Why don't we change the subject?

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) Any particular subject?

MANDY. Men. Aren't they a second priority on your list?

FRAPPE. You are right! At least I know my priorities. (Pause.) Men were first on your list. (Pause.) 'Til you've got sick.

TODDY. (Nervously.) Can we change the subject again?

FRAPPE. (To TODDY.) Why? Didn't Mandy suggest the priority subject?

MANDY. (To FRAPPE as HE begins to eat.) I agree. (To TODDY.) My sister could enlighten you about the garden of delights.

FRAPPE. (To TODDY.) At least I have never tried to steal anyone's boyfriend. Probably Mandy can enlighten you about that subject.

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) Shall we talk about it during dinner?

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) Why not? (To TODDY.) Wouldn't you like to have dessert before the main course?

TODDY. (Nervously.) Not really...

FRAPPE. Come on, Toddy. Have you lost your sweet tooth?

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) Alright, alright! (To TODDY.) Once, while we

were vacationing to discovered that I was with her fiancé.

FRAPPE. (To MANDY and TODDY.) Do you have an affair?

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) No, you use the vocabulary.

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) You're a teacher.

TODDY. Please! Can we have peace?

FRAPPE. (To TODDY.) Toddy finishes his story.

MANDY. (To TODDY.) What about the end of the vacation?

FRAPPE. And?

MANDY. (To TODDY.) My fiancé left with her.

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) What a situation!

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) I'm satisfied?

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) Utterly satisfied. (To TODDY.) Would you like to have dessert?

Lights slowly fade.

SCENE

A spotlight fades in on MANDY who is standing downstage reading a letter.

MANDY. (Reading.) I don't know if you'll get my last letter. I'm so glad and little Frappe was

were vacationing together, my sister discovered that I was having an affair with her fiancé.

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) An affair? (To TODDY.) Do you call a quickie an affair?

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) Do you know that you use the vocabulary of gay men?

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) I had a good teacher.

TODDY. Please! Can we have dinner in peace?

FRAPPE. (To TODDY.) Not until Mandy finishes his story.

MANDY. (To TODDY.) Well, that was the end of the vacation, and...

FRAPPE. And?

MANDY. (To TODDY.) And her fucking fiancé left with her.

FRAPPE. (To MANDY.) Poor competition!

MANDY. (To FRAPPE.) Now, are you satisfied?

FRAPPE. (To MANDY as SHE gets up.) Utterly satisfied. (To TODDY.) Now, would you like to have the real dessert?

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE SIX

A spotlight fades in on MANDY, who is standing downstage left. HE is reading a letter.

MANDY. (Reading.) Dearest Mommy: I don't know if you have received my last letter. I'm so glad that you, Keekee and little Frappe were able to leave the

country without encountering any problems. I hope you'll be able to reach your final destination so I will be able to join you. I've tried to be patient, but things are really bad in this so called "summer camp". We have been forced to work in the fields, and they pay us only two dollars weekly. If we are late to report to our work in the kitchen, we are deducted twenty-five cents every two minutes. Some of the kids stay in bed and report sick. But, sometimes when we are really sick no one believes us. One of my classmates almost died of an asthma attack because the teachers thought he was faking it. Please answer me and tell me when you are leaving, so I'll be able to join you. Love to Frappe and Keekee and to you, I send thousands of kisses and a warm embrace. Your son, Mandy. P.S. I hope I don't have to spend my fourteenth birthday in this horrible place.

Spotlight fades out on MANDY and fades in on SANDY who is standing downstage left.

SANDY. (Reading a letter.) Dearest Son: I've just returned from the travel agency. I'll join you next Sunday about nine p.m. You don't have to pick me up at the airport. I know you're not feeling well and anyway, that would be a waste of money. Everything is forgotten. Don't even think about it. I can stay with you indefinitely, I mean until you get better. I have nothing important to report. I've just filed the papers for a divorce. Keekee wanted to hump me at all times and in different places of the apartment. I guess I'm too old to be treated as a sex object. I have

joined a Buddhist group. I quit the Yoga classes and the transcendental meditation group. Your sister doesn't want to join Alcoholic Anonymous. She is going out with a black gardener—according to her, light mulatto—I would call him black, I hope Kee-kee doesn't find out. I'm so glad I can join you celebrate your forty-fourth birthday. Love and kisses from you mother, Sandy.

SCENE SEVEN

Lights fade in on SANDY who's center stage and is opening cardboard boxes packed with Victorian dolls.

SANDY. Toddy! Frappe! Is that all?

FRAPPE and TODDY come in dragging a large cardboard box.

TODDY. I think this is the last one.

FRAPPE. (To SANDY.) May I take a break?

SANDY. Not yet. There's a lot of work ahead of us. (*Opens one of the cardboard boxes and takes out a doll.*) Why do you think he kept so many in boxes?

FRAPPE. Mandy collected everything.

TODDY. He was planning to open a store. But never found the right partner.

SANDY. Never found a partner in business, never found a partner in life.

FRAPPE. (To SANDY.) We all have our problems.

SANDY. Frappe, get me a pad. We must price everything. (*FRAPPE leaves the room and comes back with the pad.*)

Toddy, how much do you think these dolls are worth?

TODDY. How would I know? I never owned a Victorian doll.

FRAPPE. Maybe fifty bucks...

MANDY comes in stage right. HE is invisible to everyone on stage.

SANDY. (To FRAPPE.) Nooo! Maybe one hundred...

MANDY. (To the audience.) Never leave unpriced goods to the non-connoisseurs.

TODDY. (*Opening another cardboard box.*) Another Victorian doll.

SANDY. He was insatiable. Insatiable for dolls, are books, for knick-knacks, old toys, artifacts...

FRAPPE. (*Laughing.*) He would pick up from a garbage can anything, I mean anything that attracted his eye.

MANDY. (To the audience.) Not anything. I loved to recycle discarded material. What do they know!

TODDY. Do you think that he lacked anything emotionally?

MANDY. (To the audience.) Pure Freudian bull...

SANDY. (To TODDY.) Yes, he lacked common sense.

MANDY. (To the audience.) Look who's talking. Miss search-for-peace—while she drives everybody crazy.

FRAPPE. (*Opening another cardboard box.*) More Victorian dolls. My brother must have had a fixation for that period.

MANDY. (*To the audience*) educated opinion.

SANDY. We'll price them at a hundred each.

FRAPPE and TODDY, the price on pieces of paper begins to scotch-tape top of the cardboard box.

FRAPPE. Don't you think?

SANDY. This is a bargain. do you know about Vi-

FRAPPE. That's true. I know much about the finer (To SANDY.) I don't think. I'm taking a break.

SANDY and TODDY, the cardboard boxes of FRAPPE pours some water. MANDY looks into the caresses the hair of TODDY. HE then leaves. FRAPPE the audience.

FRAPPE. I could never tell and make them pretty. Mandy did. When I was always used me as a father his creations. He always that I was clumsy. (Pause) asked me if I wanted. He'd dress me up and but to do it. That's the Never asked your opinion assumed that you enjoyed things that he enjoyed like being a mouse in the story, you follow somebody is going to lead you. Mandy was always a attention because of all created. He took character afraid of how out-

MANDY. (*To the audience.*) Another educated opinion.

SANDY. We'll price them at one hundred each.

FRAPPE and TODDY begin to write the price on pieces of paper. SANDY begins to scotch-tape the prices on top of the cardboard boxes.

FRAPPE. Don't you think it's too much?

SANDY. This is a bargain. Anyway what do you know about Victorian dolls?

FRAPPE. That's true. I never knew that much about the finer things in life. (*To SANDY.*) I don't care what you think. I'm taking a break.

SANDY and TODDY begin to take the cardboard boxes out of the room. FRAPPE pours some wine in a glass. MANDY looks into the boxes and caresses the hair of one of the dolls. HE then leaves. FRAPPE speaks to the audience.

FRAPPE. I could never transform things and make them pretty, the way that Mandy did. When I was little, Mandy always used me as a fashion model for his creations. He always complained that I was clumsy. (*Pause.*) He never asked me if I wanted to be a model. He'd dress me up and I had no choice but to do it. That's the way he was. Never asked your opinion and always assumed that you enjoyed the same things that he enjoyed doing. It was like being a mouse in the Pied Piper story, you follow someone that probably is going to lead you into disaster. Mandy was always the center of attention because of all of the things he created. He took chances and was never afraid of how outlandish his ideas

were. I just followed him, but was never able to match anything he did, not even the way I placed the sheep in his Nativity sets. He always changed them and make them look like they were, you know, in perspective, like a handsome Christmas card. (*Pauses while she sips wine.*) When I grew up, I had two things that Mandy couldn't match, my being a woman and the attraction men felt for me. Although he never said it, he felt at a disadvantage about those two simple basic things. (*Smiles and takes another sip of wine.*) If you wait long enough, life gives you a chance to get even.

Lights fade out.

SCENE EIGHT

Lights fade in on MANDY who is center stage sitting on the table that now serves as a bed. TODDY sits stage left and SANDY, dressed in a nurse's outfit sits stage right.

MANDY. (*Opens his shirt and points at a contraption very close to his heart area. Several patches cover different areas of his chest and a small plastic tube is inserted on his forearm so HE can be injected intravenously when necessary.*) I can regulate the amount of morphine I need when pain becomes unbearable. If pain is persistent I can press this button and, *voila!* More morphine goes in. (*Looks at SANDY and TODDY so see their reaction.*) Don't you think this is a fabulous invention? And everything is done in the privacy of your home.

TODDY. (*In a shy manner.*) Is there any danger of an overdose?

SANDY. Yes, how do you know it isn't too much?

MANDY. No need to worry. (*Points to a digital clock-like machine attached to a metal post.*) This clock will automatically stop the excess going in. (*Pause.*) Well, what do you think?

TODDY. (*Not very enthusiastic.*) I assume it's okay...

SANDY. As long as I don't have to keep track of anything...

MANDY. (*To SANDY.*) I wouldn't impose any additional work on your heavy schedule. But don't forget that nurses are trained to sacrifice everything for minimal reward. (*To TODDY.*) Do you like Sandy's nurse's uniform? (*TODDY nods his head affirmatively.*) I purchased it especially for her, so she never forgets her station in this house.

TODDY. Mandy, please...

SANDY. (*Laughs.*) My son has a macabre sense of humor.

MANDY. Macabre and absolutely necessary. (*To SANDY.*) Do you think you remember how to change my bandages?

SANDY. I think I can manage.

MANDY. (*Moves to other side of the bed and removes his pants with his back to the audience.*) Let's see. (*To TODDY.*) Would you like to see the wound?

TODDY. (*With little enthusiasm.*) Why not.

TODDY moves around the bed and stands up upstage left. SANDY takes gauze, cotton and a bottle of

antiseptic, kneels down in front of MANDY and begins to treat the wound. SHE is not seen from the audience.

SANDY. Oh, it's beautiful. (*To MANDY.*) You are healing marvelously.

MANDY. Thank you. (*Jumps with pain.*) What are you doing?

SANDY. Oh, I'm so sorry. (*Pause.*) Nurse's error...

TODDY moves downstage center. SANDY keeps nursing MANDY's wound.

TODDY. (*To the audience.*) The wound was immense, like a vermilion crater, loaded with viscous magma ready to explode and overflow his body, his mother, the bed, the entire room. There was an unbearable stench that very soon would become almost familiar and that no one in the apartment would dare discuss. Mandy showed his wound and medical paraphernalia with the same pride and interest as if they were infinite originals of "The Martyrdom of San Sebastian." Have you ever felt the guilt of repulsion?

SCENE NINE

SANDY rolls the dining table over to center stage. SHE sets the table and brings two dishes, one is placed stage right and the other stage left so SANDY and MANDY would have to face each other.

SANDY. (*As SHE places the chairs.*) Mandy! Dinner is served. (*Pause.*) Mandy! Dinner will get cold. (*Pause.*) Mandy! How long do I have to wait?

MANDY enters slowly. HE has little energy.

MANDY. (*As HE screams so loud?*)

SANDY. I'm so sorry a maid that can a ner is served."

MANDY. (*Playing plate.*) Oh, Sandy to buy you the n

SANDY. Don't call

MANDY. (*Still plate on his plate.*) Is

SANDY. Yes, it is. I

MANDY. (*Now is thing on his plate*

SANDY. Mandy! wrong with the t

MANDY. (*Makes What did you pu*

SANDY. All great potatoes, noodl added a can of c

MANDY. A can of (*Pause.*) No wor

SANDY. Anything of broccoli?

MANDY. No, the with cream of br from scratch. B millions of time ything that com

SANDY. (*Gets up Well, I clean, I c what do I get in*

MANDY and SA Nothing!

SANDY. Yes, ma se.) But what c

MANDY. (As HE sits down.) Must you scream so loud?

SANDY. I'm so sorry but we don't have a maid that can announce: "Sir, dinner is served."

MANDY. (Playing with the food on his plate.) Oh, Sandy, I'm sorry I forgot to buy you the maid's outfit.

SANDY. Don't call me Sandy!

MANDY. (Still playing with the food on his plate.) Isn't that your name?

SANDY. Yes, it is. But I'm your mother.

MANDY. (Now is looking for something on his plate.) Not my choice.

SANDY. Mandy! (Pause.) Anything wrong with the food?

MANDY. (Makes the face of disgust..) What did you put in it?

SANDY. All great ingredients: chicken, potatoes, noodles and at the end I added a can of cream of broccoli.

MANDY. A can of cream of broccoli... (Pause.) No wonder.

SANDY. Anything wrong with cream of broccoli?

MANDY. No, there is nothing wrong with cream of broccoli if you make it from scratch. But haven't I told you millions of times that I don't eat anything that comes out of a can?

SANDY. (Gets up in a violent mood.) Well, I clean, I cook, I nurse you. And what do I get in return?

MANDY and SANDY. (Together.) Nothing!

SANDY. Yes, make fun of me. (Pause.) But what do you do all day?

Sleep! And when you wake up you push the button in the morphine dispenser and back to never-never land!

MANDY. Sandy, I'm in terrible pain...

SANDY. You never had any tolerance for pain. How can you get better if you sleep all day and don't eat? You've got to eat!

MANDY. (Gets up and throws the dish full of food across the room.) No, I don't have to eat, and yes I'm going to sleep away whatever life I have left. Sleep, so I can escape not from the pain, but from you! Escape from the fact that I had to depend on the last person I wanted to depend on for help.

SANDY. Why do you hate me so?

MANDY. Here we go again. (Pause.) Sandy, I don't have the energy to enumerate the reasons.

SANDY. Would the list be so long?

MANDY. (As HE leaves the room.) I'm going back to bed.

SANDY. (Kneels to pick up the food and dish on the floor.) Go back to never-never land and I hope you never return!

Lights fade out.

SCENE TEN

Lights fade in on MANDY who is standing downstage right. HE is reading a letter.

MANDY. Dearest mother: You've got to get me out of here. The situation in the camp is unbearable. Our gym teacher who was trying to measure his physical strength with one of my

classmates really hurt him badly. The boy during lunch break smashed a sugar bowl and tried to stab the teacher with a piece of broken glass. Some of the people who manage this place deal with us as if we were dogs. Please, do get me out of here. I can't wait to join you, my dear little Frappe and Keekee so we can again become a family. Please, do something, I need you and miss you terribly. Your loving son, Mandy. P.S. I'm sorry that you had to move out of the apartment because Frappe kept peeing on the mattress. The landlord was really a savage to throw all of you out with no previous notice. Don't worry, this is the price that we exiles have to pay when we are forced to leave our countries. Do you like the new apartment?

Lights fade out on MANDY and fade in on SANDY who is wearing an elegant pink nightgown. SHE runs in circles trying to get away from MANDY who chases her.

SANDY. Mandy get away from me! You had one too many...

MANDY. *(Still chasing SANDY.)* How could you spill a Bloody Mary on the brand new dress I bought you? Pig! You are nothing but a pig!

SANDY. *(Trying to get away from MANDY.)* I'll pay for the cleaner's bill...

MANDY. You'll have to pay with your life! You embarrassed me in front of my friends. Opening night at the Paris Opera. You miserable woman.

SANDY. *(Stops and faces MANDY.)* Oh, I'm so sorry that I was the cause of your embarrassment. What about you?

Couldn't you celebrate without getting drunk? I may have spilled a drink on my dress, but you had caviar all over your beard, talk about pigs!

MANDY *grabs SANDY by the neck and tries to choke her.*

MANDY. I detest you! I never hated anyone so much in my entire life!

SANDY. *(Trying to release herself from MANDY.)* Mandy, let go!

MANDY. *(Still trying to choke SANDY.)* No, I won't let you go. You've got to pay for all the harm you've done to me.

SANDY. *(Still trying to release herself from MANDY.)* You are mad! What kind of harm could your mother do to you?

MANDY. There are only two things you can do with a woman who never shuts up: you either kill her or fuck her!

MANDY tries to kiss SANDY. SANDY pushes him away and finally releases herself from MANDY.

SANDY. You are disgusting. Both of my children aren't worthy of a mother like me. I don't want you to call me mother ever again.

MANDY. *(As HE slowly falls to his knees from both the effects of liquor and emotion.)* From now on I call you Sandy. Sandy! Sandy!

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE ELEVEN

A spotlight illuminates MANDY and TODDY who are sitting center stage. MANDY holds a T.V. remote con-

trol on his right hand ching television. He of the Holocaust an screen up stage ce restless.

TODDY. *(After a long think watching thi you any good?*

MANDY. Yes, it does.

TODDY. Wouldn't it b something lighter? Pe

MANDY. I don't ident Not right now...

TODDY. *(After a long identify with scene caust?*

MANDY. Yes, I do.

TODDY. Isn't it a little bid?

MANDY. Why?

TODDY. Why? How c unexplainable?

MANDY. Well, you yo trying to find an an

TODDY. An answer?

MANDY. An answer?

TODDY. Do you think comparable to the Jews in concentrat

MANDY. *(Unbutton opens it to reveal look familiar? (Par iliar to me.*

TODDY. I can't und

MANDY. You will ne derstand me. You

trol on his right hand. THEY are watching television. Horrifying images of the Holocaust are projected on a screen up stage center. TODDY is restless.

TODDY. *(After a long pause.)* Do you think watching this program does you any good?

MANDY. Yes, it does.

TODDY. Wouldn't it be better to watch something lighter? Perhaps a musical...

MANDY. I don't identify with musicals. Not right now...

TODDY. *(After a long pause.)* And you identify with scenes from the Holocaust?

MANDY. Yes, I do.

TODDY. Isn't it a little... *(Pause.)* morbid?

MANDY. Why?

TODDY. Why? How can you explain the unexplainable?

MANDY. Well, you yourself said it. I'm trying to find an answer myself.

TODDY. An answer?

MANDY. An answer to my own pain.

TODDY. Do you think your own pain is comparable to the pain suffered by Jews in concentration camps?

MANDY. *(Unbuttons his shirt and opens it to reveal his chest.)* Does it look familiar? *(Pause.)* It looks familiar to me.

TODDY. I can't understand you.

MANDY. You will never be able to understand me. You would if you had

small radioactive explosions... you know like small H-bombs exploding all over your body. It's like being cremated alive. *(Points at the imaginary television screen.)* They would have understood me. I understand them.

TODDY. Don't you think it's a little arrogant to measure your pain with their pain?

MANDY. Why? Mine is as great. It is probably going to last longer.

TODDY. But most of them knew they were going to die. There was no salvation.

MANDY. They didn't know that. Not that many survived.

TODDY. You are going to survive.

MANDY. *(Pats TODDY on his hand.)* You're such an optimist. You would put Pollyanna to shame.

SANDY's voice is heard backstage.

SANDY'S VOICE. Dinner is served!

MANDY. Now we must face the firing squad!

MANDY stretches his right arm and presses the button on the T.V. remote control. Lights fade out rapidly.

SCENE TWELVE

Lights fade in on MANDY, who is sitting stage left on the bed sewing a quilt. SANDY is sitting on a chair stage right and TODDY is sitting opposite SANDY stage left.

TODDY. *(After a long pause.)* Your mother and I would like to have a heart to heart talk with you.

MANDY. (*Looks at SANDY and then at TODDY.*) Whose idea was it?

SANDY. We both thought that...

MANDY. I understand...go ahead, tell me.

TODDY. Well, your mother and I thought that one of these days, when you get a little energy, well... perhaps you could help us to organize your studio.

MANDY. (*Stops sewing and looks intensely into TODDY's eyes.*) Organize the studio. What for?

SANDY. No one knows better than you what you want to do with everything in the studio. (*Pause.*) Do you want to sell some of the paintings? (*Pause.*) Or perhaps you would like to tell us what to do with your theatre designs. We don't want to do anything that will upset you...

MANDY. (*Goes back to his sewing.*) Well, well... (*Pause.*) I'll take the necessary steps when I consider it necessary. Right now I barely have the energy to lift the needle.

SANDY. (*Gets up.*) Everything in this house is left for the next day. Procrastination! Pure and simple procrastination!

MANDY. Sandy, sit down! (*Pause.*) Do you remember the story you told me about uncle Tee-Tee?

SANDY. (*As SHE sits down.*) Which story?

MANDY. The one when he was on his deathbed for a month...

SANDY. Oh, yes. That one. (*Pause.*) Toddy will enjoy this one. Well, my

uncle Tee-Tee was agonizing and he called all of his children and with a weak and trembling voice told them that the end was near and he was ready to depart on the final journey.

MANDY. Go on. (*To TODDY.*) The story gets better.

SANDY. Well, all of our relatives cried and carried on for a week. They mourned him because Tee-Tee was always very proper and punctual and assumed that if he said he was leaving, he was leaving. But, three months later Tee-Tee was still agonizing and... and... (*SANDY and MANDY burst into laughter, TODDY joins them.*) All of our relatives began to look very upset because Tee-Tee was over-staying his welcome, and...and... (*SANDY and MANDY burst into laughter again. TODDY is now very serious.*) He refused to die!

MANDY. (*To TODDY.*) Sometimes I wonder if I'm becoming like uncle Tee-Tee. (*Laughs, but now in a sad manner.*) I wouldn't like to stay too long at the party.

SANDY. Mandy, we never meant to...

MANDY. Oh, I know...

TODDY. Mandy, we have been trying so hard to reach you. But, it's so hard to follow someone who has already entered a dark and unknown world. We are willing to fight, if you are willing to fight this battle with us... I don't know about your mother, but I'm not entering the shadows to get you.

MANDY. (*To TODDY.*) A dark and unknown world. So I've entered a dark and unknown world...

TODDY. Yes. You have...

SANDY. The morphine were willing to slow phine shots you are

MANDY. (*To SANDY.*)

TODDY. When, you living again.

MANDY. We'll see... (*and presses the but phine dispenser.*) We

Lights slowly fade out

SCENE THIR

A spotlight fades in on is standing down stage a wireless telephone long ring is heard illuminates TODDY down stage right and a wireless telephone

TODDY. Hello...

MANDY. (*Speaking Hello, Toddy.*

TODDY. What's wrong

MANDY. (*Speaking don't want her to he sation.*

TODDY. Who's her? (*know what time it is?*

MANDY. (*Still speak per.*) I have no idea know who she is.

TODDY. Sandy?

MANDY. How did you

TODDY. Mandy, it's th morning...

TODDY. Yes. You have.

SANDY. The morphine...if only you were willing to slow down the morphine shots you are getting.

MANDY. (To SANDY.) And then, what?

TODDY. When, you would join the living again.

MANDY. We'll see... (HE stops sewing and presses the button of the morphine dispenser.) We'll see...

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE THIRTEEN

A spotlight fades in on MANDY, who is standing down stage left. HE holds a wireless telephone in his hand. A long ring is heard and a spotlight illuminates TODDY who is standing down stage right and who is holding a wireless telephone.

TODDY. Hello...

MANDY. (Speaking on a whisper.) Hello, Toddy.

TODDY. What's wrong?

MANDY. (Speaking on a whisper.) I don't want her to hear this conversation.

TODDY. Who's her? (Pause.) Do you know what time it is?

MANDY. (Still speaking on a whisper.) I have no idea. (Pause.) You know who she is.

TODDY. Sandy?

MANDY. How did you guess?

TODDY. Mandy, it's three fifteen in the morning...

MANDY. Oh, it is. My God, when did I fall asleep? (Pause.) Anyway, I can't take that woman any longer. She should be committed to an asylum.

TODDY. That woman is your mother. She is trying to do the best she can.

MANDY. Her best is not enough. Her voice, I can't stand the sound of her voice. It goes through every neuron of my brain, and my entire nervous system like a drill.

TODDY. Mandy, she was born with that voice.

MANDY. I know. Her cries probably drove her midwife to an early grave.

TODDY. Come on. It isn't that bad. She is dependable and she is willing to do the job.

MANDY. Sometimes I think I can strangle the bitch!

TODDY. Mandy! For better or for worse, she is your mother.

MANDY. You don't choose your mother. She is imposed on you.

TODDY. Yes, and I know if you had your choice you would have chosen Queen Elizabeth.

MANDY. Very funny! (Pause.) She's got to go.

TODDY. Before you fire her, have you thought of a replacement?

MANDY. Frappe can take over.

TODDY. Frappe! Come on Mandy, you know she's not dependable. Anyway she faints at the sight of blood.

MANDY. Well...

TODDY. It means that you have no

choice and you are stuck with your mother. *(Pause.)* What is that noise in the background?

MANDY. Oh, it's the T.V. I am watching one of those animal survival programs. Right now, there is a boa constrictor triturating a little rabbit and swallowing it with great gusto.

TODDY. How can you watch such a disgusting thing?

MANDY. There are disgusting things that somehow can pacify a broken spirit. Have pleasant dreams! *(Points at the imaginary television with the remote control and turns it off.)* Good night.

TODDY. Sleep well.

Lights fade out.

SCENE FOURTEEN

A spotlight illuminates MANDY who is standing stage right. HE is reading a letter.

MANDY. Dearest mother: I've packed everything. My suitcases are under my bed and I'm ready to go as soon as I receive the tickets. Father Andrew promised me that the organization is going to pay for my air tickets. This will alleviate all of the expenses that you and Keekee are going to have when I arrive. I know you don't want me to work, but I think I should do it after school hours. I don't want to be a burden on you. Did Keekee receive the fathers' day card I sent him? Is Frappe still wetting her bed? You don't know how anxious I am to see you, my little sister and Keekee. I cannot wait to embrace you again.

Your son who loves you immensely, Mandy.

The spotlight fades out on MANDY.

SCENE FIFTEEN

Lights fade in on MANDY and FRAPPE who are circling the stage dancing to the music of an old fashioned pasodoble.

FRAPPE. Mandy, how can you enjoy this music?

MANDY. Why?

FRAPPE. It's circus music.

MANDY. Circus music?

FRAPPE. It's used to bring in the horses.

MANDY. So?

FRAPPE. *(Laughing.)* It's like trotting! Oh, my God, I'm already out of breath!

MANDY. *(Panting.)* How do you think I feel? But it's good, it's good for your lungs.

FRAPPE. You're crazy. You were always crazy.

MANDY. Keep going. You should never interrupt a *pasodoble*.

FRAPPE. *(Out of breath.)* That's why they use horses.

MANDY. Where is the dancer I used to know?

FRAPPE. The dancer is getting tired. *(Pause.)* I'm becoming like one of those humongous turtles in the Galapagos Islands. Do you remember?

MANDY. Yes. We were going to open a business and live a simple profit-

able life there. Like two old maids that wobble slow like the turtles and

FRAPPE. Speak for you young to become an anyway, I hate turtles

MANDY. Why?

FRAPPE. There is something about them. Like fat ladies who know too

MANDY. What's so bad

FRAPPE. I don't want much. I don't want to for knowing too much

MANDY. Don't stop dancing. You don't want to embarrass brother.

FRAPPE. *(Laughs.)* My know as much as he *(Laughs.)* Although his rich taste in music. *(Frustrated.)* I think you don't understand. For all your pretentious theatre bohemian act like a man of impeccable manners.

MANDY. *(Laughs.)* Me

FRAPPE. *(Giggles.)* You mess your timing was a liar.

MANDY. No kidding.

FRAPPE. Well, when you're your only preoccupation worn the gray felt hat lined and made for me. A family facing exile were worried about

MANDY. Do you think

able life there. Like two old maids. Two old maids that would get old and slow like the turtles around us.

FRAPPE. Speak for yourself. I'm too young to become an old maid. And anyway, I hate turtles.

MANDY. Why?

FRAPPE. There is something ominous about them. Like fat and prehistoric ladies who know too much.

MANDY. What's so bad about that?

FRAPPE. I don't want to know too much. I don't want to be responsible for knowing too much.

MANDY. Don't stop dancing? *(Pause.)* You don't want to end up like your brother.

FRAPPE. *(Laughs.)* My brother doesn't know as much as he thinks he does. *(Laughs.)* Although he has prehistoric taste in music. *(Pause.)* Sometimes I think you don't belong in this era. For all your pretension of being a theatre bohemian sometimes you act like a man of impeccable Victorian manners.

MANDY. *(Laughs.)* Me?

FRAPPE. *(Giggles.)* Yes. And sometimes your timing was... was so peculiar.

MANDY. No kidding. Tell me more...

FRAPPE. Well, when you went abroad, your only preoccupation was: had I worn the gray felt hat you had designed and made for me before leaving. A family facing exile and here you were worried about a gray hat.

MANDY. Do you think that was pec-

uliar? It just proves that at thirteen your brother was already a slave to fashion. Do you think Marie Antoinette went to the guillotine with a disheveled wig?

FRAPPE. *(Laughs.)* Oh, stop it! *(Pause.)* You are weird. Peculiar and weird, but I kind of like you.

MANDY. *(Begins to cough and stops dancing.)* I think you are right. *Pasodobles* were meant for horses.

Music and lights fade slowly.

SCENE SIXTEEN

Lights fade in on MANDY who is asleep on the bed center stage. SANDY tip toes to cover him with a blanket. TODDY sits stage right and gets up to leave the room.

SANDY. *(Whispering.)* You don't have to leave. *(Sits down stage left.)* He's just taking a nap. *(Pause.)* When Mandy was a little boy, he loved to take naps. *(Pause.)* Then he kept us up all night. *(Pause.)* He looks so peaceful when he's sleeping... *(Pause.)* Toddy, there is nothing comparable to a mother's love.

TODDY. I imagine so.

SANDY. That's right. You can only imagine. Men don't know the feeling. Even nature didn't allow men to carry their sons in their guts for nine months. *(Feels her belly.)* You are responsible and worry for your children from the first kick. *(Pause.)* And could Mandy kick. He was difficult even as a fetus.

TODDY. Sandy!

SANDY. But he was... It didn't matter. I know there is a link between mother and son that has no equal.

TODDY. I know.

MANDY. How do you know?

TODDY. Sandy, you don't have to give birth to a baby to see the symptoms in others.

SANDY. Symptoms?

TODDY. Symptoms, syndromes, peculiarities, whatever you call the severe tie between mother and son.

SANDY. I didn't know you had any motherly instincts.

TODDY. Not really. *(Pause.)* I remember many years ago I went to a funeral to accompany a friend whose mother had passed away. They were very close and never, never were separated for long periods of time. His father had died when my friend was a young boy and his mother became both father and mother to him. They took naps together, went to the movies together, shop together, vacation together... He was a young man and depended on her for everything. *(Pause.)* She suddenly became ill and was gone without warning. My friend was desolate and when we were at the cemetery he refused to leave the car. We stayed in the car while the gravediggers were lowering the coffin into the grave. Something must have gone wrong, because one of the gravediggers let one of the ropes go and the weight of the coffin unreleased the rest of the ropes with the sharpest of sounds. My friend simultaneously with that sound, bent over and grabbed his belly and screamed: **Motheeeer!**

(Pause.) Then I understood that the umbilical cord had just been severed forever.

SANDY. What a horror story! *(Pause.)* Toddy, not even death can sever the umbilical cord... Let's have a nice cup of tea.

SANDY and TODDY leave stage left. A spotlight illuminates MANDY who is having a nightmare. During the nightmare he begins to roll in bed and the long telephone extension cord gets tangled around his body. MANDY desperately tries to untangle himself from the cord.

MANDY. *(Screams.)* Release meeeee!

Lights fade out.

SCENE SEVENTEEN

Lights illuminate the center stage area. SANDY is sitting stage left and TODDY is sitting stage right. There is a chair situated downstage center and a life size puppet dressed as a doctor sits on it with his back to the audience. During this scene TODDY will pay attention to the doctor and would convey what he is saying to SANDY.

SANDY. *(To TODDY.)* I don't understand what he's saying.

TODDY. *(Fully concentrates on what the doctor is saying.)* He said that Mandy was taken down this afternoon to have a test done.

SANDY. *(To TODDY.)* A test? What kind of a test?

TODDY. *(Concentrates on what the doctor is supposed to be saying.)*

He said that it was fluid out of his spine.

SANDY. *(To TODDY.)*

TODDY. *(Concentrates on doctor's answer.)* Meningitis and meningitis and meningitis is necessary.

SANDY. *(To TODDY.)* That's very serious. Who should I call me?

TODDY. *(Concentrates on doctor's answer.)* Suddenly, Mandy woke up during the night and tried to get out of bed and tried to...

SANDY. *(To TODDY.)* What is going on now?

TODDY. *(Concentrates on doctor's answer.)* He said that Mandy's heart failed. They tried to resuscitate but he didn't respond. He passed away ten days ago.

SANDY. *(Gets up.)* What did TODDY say that?

TODDY. *(Gets up.)* Around SANDY.

SANDY. How come you came home last night? *(To doctor.)* He said he was going to be all right.

TODDY. *(To the audience.)* You sent her home. Everything was fine. *(Concentrates on answer and then...)*

He said that it was necessary to take fluid out of his spine.

SANDY. (To TODDY.) Fluid? What for?

TODDY. (Concentrates on the doctor's answer.) Mandy developed meningitis and it was absolutely necessary.

SANDY. (To TODDY.) Meningitis? That's very serious. Why didn't somebody call me?

TODDY. (Concentrates on the doctor's answer.) It happened suddenly. Mandy became frantic during the night and jumped out of his bed and tried to run out of his room.

SANDY. (To TODDY.) How is he doing now?

TODDY. (Concentrates on the doctor's answer. Then takes a long pause and looks into SANDY's eyes.) He said that he is very sorry. Mandy's heart failed during the test. They tried to resuscitate him but he didn't respond to the treatment and he passed away about twenty minutes ago.

SANDY. (Gets up and moves next to TODDY.) What? Are you sure he said that?

TODDY. (Gets up and places his arm around SANDY's shoulder.) Yes.

SANDY. How could it be? They sent me home last night. (Points to the doctor.) He said that Mandy was going to be all right...

TODDY. (To the doctor.) She said that you sent her home last night because everything was going to be all right. (Concentrates on the doctor's answer and then speaks to SANDY.)

DY.) He said that he is extremely sorry. That they did everything that they could. That we can see him in about ten minutes.

SANDY. (In a complete state of shock.) See him? See him? Where?

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE EIGHTEEN

Lights fade in on MANDY who is sitting on the bed center stage. HE is sewing pieces of material on a huge bright colored quilt. SANDY brings in a chair and sits opposite MANDY. SHE takes a piece of material and begins to sew a piece on the quilt.

SANDY. I could never do the stitches as small as you do.

MANDY. It takes time.

SANDY. Time?

MANDY. Time and patience.

SANDY. Patience, not one of my qualities. Your stitches are perfect. Almost lady-like.

MANDY. That's a convention. You're supposed to be a lady.

SANDY. Neither Frappe or myself have any talent, I mean real talent to any artistic work. You always did. God could have spared a little of your talent for your sister and me.

MANDY. (Stops sewing.) Did you ever feel in competition with me?

SANDY. Oh, no. It's not that...

MANDY. (Begins to sew again.) Then what is it?

SANDY. (Stops sewing.) When you

were a child I wanted you to be like the other kids. You know, your regular baseball player kid.

MANDY. Uhhh!

SANDY. I always felt out of place when I got together with my girl friends. *(Pause.)* They talked about how well their children were doing in sports, how many trophies they had won, how many girls they were taking out...

MANDY. And you, poor soul couldn't say anything about your sissy son who was taking ballet classes and spent most of his time in his room designing costumes for his little sister.

SANDY. *(Begins sewing again.)* Oh, it wasn't like that. But it was kind of difficult to include your accomplishments that were so different from the rest of the other children. You know a mother always foresees her children's future according to the promise they offer...

MANDY. Have you ever heard from your lady friends and what ever happened to their promising children?

SANDY. I keep in touch with a few of them. *(Pause.)* To tell you the truth, none of their children became anything special... In fact, some of them had disastrous lives.

MANDY. *(As HE threads the needle.)* Now, aren't you happy that your son didn't end in the major leagues?

SANDY. I guess so.

MANDY. You don't sound utterly convinced.

SANDY. Well, it isn't that...

MANDY. *(Stops sewing.)* Then, what is it?

SANDY. I didn't mind that you were artistic, if only you had gotten married.

MANDY. *(Resumes sewing.)* It wasn't my fault, I never found the right man.

SANDY. *(Stops sewing.)* You see! It's impossible to have a serious conversation with you.

MANDY. What would I have solved if I had married a woman?

SANDY. You would have led a different life. I always wanted to have grandchildren.

MANDY. Oh, it is about fulfilling your needs, not mine.

SANDY. *(Begins sewing again.)* What's the use? *(Pause.)* Don't you understand, I wanted to have a family? A real family.

MANDY. And we aren't a family?

SANDY. Not really. Once you lose your country it's even more important to plant the seeds, so they will germinate in the new land.

MANDY. *(Stops sewing.)* What's all of this patriotic bull?

SANDY. *(Cuts the thread and puts the needle on her dress.)* It isn't patriotic bull! Didn't you feel the sorrow of losing your country?

MANDY. *(Stops sewing.)* Yes I did. But I don't feel obligated to create an extension of "that country" by artificially inseminating "this country."

SANDY. *(Gets up.)* I think I have done enough sewing for tonight. Good night!

MANDY. *(Closes night!*

Lights slow

SCENE

A spotlight is standing

TODDY. *(Spe*

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emergency
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and kept go
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Mandy abo
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ked up the
the bathroo
my hands.*

MANDY. (*Continues sewing.*) Good night!

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE NINETEEN

A spotlight illuminates TODDY who is standing downstage left.

TODDY. (*Speaks to the audience.*) The eve of his death I went to visit Mandy at the hospital when he was still in the emergency room. (*Pause.*) He had spent the whole day in emergency waiting for an available room. Mandy was restless and had a splitting headache. He was pacing around the room and kept going in and out of the bathroom. The nurse came in to check the bathroom and started lecturing Mandy about all the paper towels he had left scattered in the wrong places. She didn't understand or didn't want to understand that he was in no condition to know about bathroom hygiene and manners. Mandy was a person who wouldn't take any nonsense from anybody, but this was the first time I saw him completely resigned to his destiny... Meningitis had taken over, I guess... After one of his frequent trips to the bathroom, he opened the door and I realized that he was still holding a paper towel in his hand. The hospital gown was soiled with excrement and his fingernails, once dyed with oil paint, were now caked with feces. He looked listless, called my name and handed me the paper towel. "Here," he said. I tried to hide my repulsion, picked up the paper towel and went to the bathroom to dispose of it and wash my hands. The nurse came in with a

gurney and Mandy sat on it and then laid down. Sandy and I followed the gurney through the hallways of the hospital. When the nurse stopped before the assigned room, Mandy who was now in a delirious state, stretched his hand in my direction. I will never know if at that moment I made myself believe that he really didn't know what he was doing or that he in fact wanted for me to hold his hand and I didn't respond. (*Pause.*) It's so hard to hold the soiled hand of a dying friend... (*Pause.*) Mandy mumbled something I couldn't understand and dropped his arm on his chest. (*Pause.*) I didn't know that this was the last chance I had to hold his hand. The last chance...

The spotlight slowly fades out.

SCENE TWENTY

Lights fade in on MANDY who is standing center stage in front of the drafting table. HE is under severe pain but keeps drawing. SANDY comes in stage left holding a cup of tea. TODDY stands next to MANDY looking at the drawing on the drafting table.

SANDY. (*Places the cup of tea on the drafting table.*) Here, you haven't eaten all day.

MANDY. How many times do I have to tell you not to place anything on the drafting table? (*Pause.*) I'll be finished very soon. Then, I'll eat, drink, do anything you want me to do.

SANDY picks up the cup and stands next to MANDY so SHE can take a better look at the drawing.

SANDY. (*Admiring the drawing.*) Oh, my!

MANDY. (*To SANDY.*) What do you think?

SANDY. It is one of the best designs you have ever done.

MANDY. You always say that.

TODDY. (*To MANDY.*) Your mother is right. (*Admiring the drawing.*) It's stunning.

MANDY. (*To TODDY.*) Oh, stop it!

TODDY. It is. It is.

SANDY. (*To TODDY.*) All of this exquisite work. And they are paying him pennies.

MANDY. (*To SANDY.*) Well, the big producers aren't knocking at my door.

TODDY. (*To MANDY.*) But they will again.

MANDY. I hope so. (*Pause.*) I want to leave with a big bang.

SANDY. A big bang?

MANDY. Yes, a big bang. A huge success.

TODDY. Right now, the important thing is to get better. (*Pause.*) You already had huge successes.

SANDY. (*To TODDY.*) At twenty-four he had been acclaimed as the most promising designer in the business. How many designers can say that?

MANDY. That's all in the past. It doesn't count anymore. In this business what's important is the now, the present. The past is the past.

TODDY. Your experience also counts.

MANDY. (*To TODDY in an abrupt manner.*) What do you know about the business, the real business?

TODDY. I guess I don't really know.

MANDY. So? (*Finishes the drawing.*) It's done. (*Grabs the tea cup from SANDY's hand and begins to leave the room.*) A big bang. I want to leave with a big bang.

SANDY. (*To MANDY.*) A big bang? Is it that important?

TODDY. For Mandy it is.

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

Lights fade in on MANDY who is barefoot and circles the stage. SANDY enters stage right. SHE is holding a pair of slippers, follows MANDY around, and finally holds his right arm to make him stop circling the stage. SANDY kneels in front of MANDY and helps him put the slippers on.

MANDY. My head!

SANDY. Yes, I know. (*Pause.*) We should go to the hospital.

MANDY. It will probably go away.

SANDY. You had this headache all night. There must be a reason.

MANDY. (*Begins to circle the stage again.*) Get me the aspirins.

SANDY. (*Grabs his arm and makes MANDY sit down.*) Sit down. I'll get you the aspirins. (*SHE leaves stage right and comes back with a glass of water and two aspirins.*) Here. You'll feel better.

MANDY. (*Takes a drink.*) What do you know about the business, the real business?

SANDY. Leave.

MANDY. Leave have your own.

SANDY. How can you need me.

MANDY. I need depend on you.

SANDY. Are we again? All right if that satisfies me, and I'm not. Does that make sense?

MANDY. Nothing more.

SANDY. If you would you like.

MANDY. Oh, please. (*Head.*) I don't have time left for feelings.

SANDY. I'm trying to get your headache to go away. It's not working. (*Pause.*) I don't have time left for fantasies with some real time we've all had. We think and feel.

MANDY. If I say sure I will off.

SANDY. Why can't you hide anything?

MANDY. Oh, what do you want?

SANDY. I tell you. I know you'll grow so long.

MANDY. (*Takes the aspirins and drinks the water.*) How come you haven't left?

SANDY. Leave. Where?

MANDY. Leave this apartment. You have your own place.

SANDY. How can I leave you? Not now. You need me.

MANDY. I need you? You should say I depend on you.

SANDY. Are we going to start this game again? All right, you depend on me, if that satisfies you. You depend on me, and I'm not going to leave you. Does that make you happy?

MANDY. Nothing makes me happy. Not anymore.

SANDY. If you could fantasize, where would you like to be?

MANDY. Oh, please... (*Rubs his forehead.*) I don't think there is that much time left for fantasies.

SANDY. I'm trying to distract you from your headache. I guess I haven't succeeded. (*Pause.*) If there is no time left for fantasies, what about dealing with some realities. For the longest time we've always talked about what we think and not about what we feel

MANDY. If I say what I feel I know for sure I will offend you.

SANDY. Why don't you try me? You can't hide anything from me.

MANDY. Oh, my head. (*Pause.*) So, what do you know?

SANDY. I tell you one of the things I know. I know why you let your beard grow so long.

MANDY. (*Nervously.*) You'll never guess the real reason. Not in a million years...

SANDY. (*Teasingly.*) What about that you are trying to hide...

MANDY. Trying to hide what?

SANDY. Trying to hide some scars.

MANDY. Who told you? Frappe?, Toddy?

SANDY. I'll never tell.

MANDY. So, you knew it all the time. (*Pause.*) How long have you known?

SANDY. When you were released from the hospital. (*Pause.*) Where did you pick up this man?

MANDY. (*Rubs his forehead.*) My head... Does it matter? That happened four years ago...

SANDY. How many times did he slash your face?

MANDY. Just a few. (*Pause.*) Time heals everything. I wonder how large the scar on his back is.

SANDY. His back?

MANDY. Yes, I stabbed his back with my scissors. I was lucky that they were handy. It taught me two lessons; never pick up a stranger when you are drunk and never, ever invite someone home after taking money out of the bank.

SANDY. You should have called me when you were in the hospital.

MANDY. Did you want to see your son suspended upside down like the hanged man on the Tarot cards?

SANDY. That's what the doctors did?

MANDY. Precisely. It was the only way to stop the bleeding. *(Pause.)* My head...

SANDY. Why is it that you never trusted me?

MANDY. I guess it all began when we were separated.

SANDY. Separated? When we sent you to the summer camp? That was the only way out. We all became exiles in different countries.

MANDY. I'm not talking about being political exiles. I'm talking when you exiled me from your life.

SANDY. I exiled you from my life?

MANDY. *(Rubs his forehead.)* My head... It's getting worse. *(Pause.)* Yes, when you married a man who wouldn't accept me the way I was. A man who rejected every intent of my creative spirit.

SANDY. Did you want me to leave Kee-kee? I was in the middle and had the right to live my own life. He was my husband and you were my son. Just as simple as that.

MANDY. You walked out on him when you got tired of his sexual demands.

SANDY. He dealt with me as if I were a sexual object.

MANDY. Oh, come on Sandy. I wish someone had dealt with me as any kind of object. *(Pause.)* My head...

SANDY. I'll get you a cold towel. *(Goes out and comes back with a small towel that SHE wraps around MANDY's forehead.)* You'll feel better. *(Pause.)* I never knew that you were jealous of your stepfather.

MANDY. Jealousy has nothing to do with it. You always misinterpret things.

SANDY. No, I don't. I think for the first time I'm beginning to understand you. *(Caresses MANDY's forehead.)* Do you feel better?

MANDY. Much better. *(Pause.)* Thank you.

Lights fade out.

SCENE TWENTY-TWO

Lights fade in on TODDY, who is removing the drawing left on the drafting table. SANDY enters stage right. SHE brings a design mounted on white cardboard that SHE shows TODDY.

SANDY. I think this is the last one. Have you closed the boxes?

TODDY. Yes, I closed and sealed the last carton. Where did you find it?

SANDY. Behind a mirror in the bedroom closet. *(Hands the drawing to TODDY.)* Take a look at it.

TODDY. *(Takes a long look at the drawing.)* This is... *(Pause.)* This is probably the last design he drew. Look at the date... *(In a sudden outburst of anger.)* I don't know where else to place it. Everything was accounted for. Now I have to start another list!

SANDY. Why are you so upset? It's just another drawing...

TODDY. I have been locked in this studio for months. God! Why didn't he keep things in a certain order?

SANDY. Relax! This is... *(Pause.)* Toddy, you with the dead.

TODDY. *(Takes the design from the cardboard box set up on the table. HE places it inside the box.)* I am not angry with you. I'm angry with life.

SANDY. *(Hands a roll of paper to TODDY.)* Why? Because you took away the best friend I ever had?

TODDY. Right now I can't see you. Right now I think I'm just a waste. Faced with the reality of a world where sounds futile and trivial, the creation of art, the revelation of art, do we have to be creative? So everything ends in cardboard boxes to be shipped and hopefully some will research the art inspired and fooled.

SANDY. Fooled by it?

TODDY. *(Hands SANDY a tape.)* Yes, fooled by students, whether they tried not to follow the same path you did. To probably be treated with the art world. *(Points to the ceiling.)* Designs buried in a box. *(Points to the floor.)* an urn. An urn the size of peaches in heavy

SANDY. *(Bursts into a fit of laughter.)* Suddenly gets in a fit of laughter. Toddy, most people of peaches and with the cardboard boxes anything of real value

SANDY. Relax! This is the last design.
(Pause.) Toddy, you can't get angry with the dead.

TODDY. (Takes the design and opens a cardboard box set up stage left then HE places it inside the cardboard box.) I am not angry with him. I guess I'm angry with life.

SANDY. (Hands a roll of masking tape to TODDY.) Why? Because life took away the best friend you had?

TODDY. Right now I couldn't answer you. Right now I think everything is a waste. Faced with death, everything sounds futile and trivial: the preservation of art, the relevance of art, why do we have to be creative. (Seals the cardboard box with masking tape.) So everything ends up in cardboard boxes to be shipped to some college and hopefully some design students will research the artist's work and be inspired and fooled by it.

SANDY. Fooled by it?

TODDY. (Hands SANDY the masking tape.) Yes, fooled by it. You inspire students, whether they are artistic or not to follow the same road that Mandy did. To probably end up as frustrated with the art world as he was. (Points to the cardboard box.) Designs buried in a cardboard box. (Points to the funeral urn.) Ashes in an urn. An urn the size of a large can of peaches in heavy syrup!

SANDY. (Bursts into laughter. Then suddenly gets in a somber mood.) Toddy, most people end up in the can of peaches and without anything in the cardboard boxes. (Pause.) I mean anything of real value.

TODDY. You may be right. (Moves the cardboard box off stage.) Don't you think it would be a good idea to have a glass of wine?

SANDY. I think it's a great idea.

Lights fade out.

SCENE TWENTY-THREE

A spotlight illuminates a hospital gurney where MANDY lies covered in a white hospital sheet. SANDY and TODDY enter stage right. SANDY moves towards the head, bends over and weeps softly. TODDY moves in front of the stretcher and slowly folds down the sheet to reveal MANDY's hands that are crossed over his chest.

SANDY. Son, my dearest, dearest son. Why couldn't you wait for me? Why did you decide to leave all by yourself? (Pause.) Although you never accepted it, you always depended on me. Do you remember your letters from the camp when we were separated for the first time in our lives? You couldn't wait to get together with me again. It didn't matter how much we fought, I know you always wanted to be with me. Isn't that the truth, dearest, dearest son? Couldn't you wait just a few more minutes? (Pause.) You may not be able to understand me, but a mother always thinks that it's her privilege to leave this world first. Why did you always have to do things differently? Couldn't you have for once a gallant gesture towards your mother and open the final door to her, so she could go first? Couldn't you?

SANDY kisses MANDY's forehead and then stands up caressing his head.

TODDY. (*Bends over and grabs one of MANDY's hands.*) Mandy, I know you aren't dead. (*Pause.*) Well, I mean, not in the real sense. I know you'll always live in your work. Your work which probably will be appreciated more after you have gone. (*Smiles.*) Isn't it peculiar that an artist has to die for his work to be really appreciated? You were such a realist that I never thought that this was going to happen so soon. Not to you who always had to plan everything in advance. I guess destiny plays incredible jokes on us. Good-bye dear friend. (*Bends over and kisses MANDY on his forehead.*)

TODDY moves next to SANDY who is still weeping in a soft manner. MANDY gets up from the gurney and moves downstage center. MANDY's actions and words are not seen or heard by either SANDY or TODDY.

MANDY. (*Speaks to the audience.*) Isn't this a crock-full of sentimentality! My mother questions why I left first. (*Laughs loudly.*) My entire life I've been trying to have some power over something, absolute control of my actions in life, absolute control of the creative process in the imaginary life of the theatre. No luck! And the first time that I can take a decision, I mean, the most important and final decision, I get questioned. (*Pause.*) When I was a child, I used to dream about the sensation of freedom, yes, the absolute sensation of freedom that Peter Pan must have felt then he flew for the first time. The sensation

of a small bird that for the first time leaves his mother and soars with relief cutting clouds in a half, passing other birds, and contemplating the world from a different perspective. Good-bye Lilliputians! How tiny everything seems when you are flying high! (*Pause.*) Now, I know. Now I've experienced that sensation, that unique sensation of a maiden flight. (*Pause.*) Oh, (*Points to TODDY.*) he will organize all of my work and will probably send it to the library of some college, where hopefully some serious art students will research my designs. Perhaps, sometimes he'll miss our friendship and how much he learned from me. He has naturally good taste... (*Pause.*) But, watch out, there will always be a little streak of a hick, hidden under the surface. (*Points to SANDY.*) My mother will continue to drive everybody insane. She will organize exhibitions in my honor and will spend huge amounts of energy and money to preserve my artistic work... (*Smiles and moves back in front of the gurney.*) I wish she had done that much when I was alive. (*MANDY sits on the gurney and begins to cover himself with the sheet.*) I hope she finds peace. I've never seen anyone doing so much searching for peace while making everyone else so restless.

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR

Lights fade in on SANDY who is sitting at the table situated stage left. SHE takes a bottle of correction fluid and begins to apply the liquid to a photo static copy of a

document. FRAPPE enters from the right and stands behind

FRAPPE. Mother, what are you doing?

SANDY. A little fixing...

FRAPPE. A little fixing on a photo static copy? You are altering the document. Do you realize you can't do this?

SANDY. (*Keeps applying correction fluid to the document.*) I'm just deleting just two words.

FRAPPE. Two words? What words?

SANDY. I deleted H.I.V. and AIDS.

FRAPPE. That's all? Why?

SANDY. It's absolutely necessary. I'm making a photo static copy of the document to Keekee.

FRAPPE. My father doesn't want a static copy of Mandy's work. It's a tificate.

SANDY. Your father said that he died the death he deserved. He meant that he had a homosexual related sick tificate shows that he died of AIDS and H.I.V. complications of that part. Now, he has AIDS.

FRAPPE. Suppose my father died. It doesn't matter anymore. He's dead, and the truth is that he died of complications from both AIDS and H.I.V.

SANDY. He died of cancer.

FRAPPE. This is not what you said.

SANDY. He died of cancer. I'm applying the cap on the correction fluid.

document. FRAPPE enters stage right and stands behind SANDY.

FRAPPE. Mother, what are you doing?

SANDY. A little fixing...

FRAPPE. A little fixing on a death certificate? You are altering the document. Do you realize you can go to jail for this?

SANDY. (*Keeps applying the correction fluid to the document.*) Oh, I'm deleting just two words.

FRAPPE. Two words? What for?

SANDY. I deleted H.I.V. positive, that's all.

FRAPPE. That's all? Why?

SANDY. It's absolutely necessary. I'm making a photo static copy to mail it to Keekee.

FRAPPE. My father doesn't need a photo static copy of Mandy's death certificate.

SANDY. Your father said that Mandy died the death he deserved. And by that he meant that he had died of a homosexual related sickness. The certificate shows that he died of cancer and H.I.V. complications, so I took care of that part. Now, he has to shut up.

FRAPPE. Suppose my father did say that. It doesn't matter anymore. Mandy is dead, and the truth is that he died of complications from both diseases.

SANDY. He died of cancer.

FRAPPE. This is not what was diagnosed.

SANDY. He died of cancer. (*Places the cap on the correction fluid and sli-*

des the photo static copy in a Manila envelope.) As far as I'm concerned the H.I.V. never existed.

FRAPPE. This isn't true. You have altered the truth!

SANDY. Do you want to explain the truth to your father? Do you want to explain to him how Mandy got infected?

FRAPPE. What's so horrible about that? He fell in love and...

SANDY. He fell in love with a young man who turned out to be a hustler. A sophisticated hustler.

FRAPPE. He was a former hustler. Anyway, we don't even know if he was the one that...

SANDY. Let's leave it at that. (*Grabs the Manila envelope and flashes it in front of FRAPPE's face.*) This certificate is the final death certificate. Your father will never know and I forbid you to discuss what you have seen me do with him. It's not about us. It's about your brother's memory.

FRAPPE. Mother...

SANDY. Mother nothing! Not one more word. Keekee will have to swallow his viperous tongue. How did I allow that man to impregnate me!

FRAPPE. I wouldn't be here, mother.

SANDY. (*In a sad manner.*) That's right. You wouldn't be here.

Lights slowly fade out.

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE

Lights fade in on MANDY and

TODDY who are standing center stage. TODDY is holding the body of a rag doll by its legs while MANDY is stuffing the body through an opening in the head.

MANDY. Toddy, hold it firmly! What's wrong with you?

TODDY. I'm tired.

MANDY. You are not tired. You're just not interested!

TODDY. Well, I'm not a doll maker.

MANDY. You could learn.

TODDY. Mandy, why do you assume that everybody has to like the same things you like?

MANDY. Why? Because I'm creative, and anyone else could also learn to be creative.

TODDY. Have you ever stopped to think that other people could be creative in different ways?

MANDY. No. *(Pause.)* My way is the only correct way, so other people should follow.

TODDY. Is that so?

MANDY. It is. *(Pause.)* I'm getting tired. Let's sit down.

MANDY and TODDY sit on the floor. MANDY continues stuffing the rag doll.

MANDY. We haven't spoken to each other for a long time.

TODDY. We talk on the phone every night.

MANDY. It's not the same. You don't come here that often anymore. I think you don't want to face me.

TODDY. What?

MANDY. It's true. You don't want to face me. The me that is deteriorating. The me that is changing.

TODDY. How can you say that? *(Pause.)* Most of the time you sleep, and I don't want to disturb you. Anyway, your mother takes good care of you.

MANDY. Sandy doesn't take good care of me. She takes over. That's a different story.

TODDY. It isn't a different story. It's the same story with different variations. It's an ancestral story that has been going on between you and your mother for ages.

MANDY. Are you angry with me?

TODDY. No, I'm not angry with you.

MANDY. Yes, you are. You disagree with me. You never disagreed with me before.

TODDY. Because it was the only way to keep our friendship. To agree with you in everything you said. In your code of friendship, one is either with you or against you.

MANDY. How come you never told me this before? We've been friends for years and you never complained.

TODDY. I don't know.

MANDY. Perhaps you want to tell me before it's too late. Before I...

TODDY. *(Interrupts MANDY.)* Nothing is going to happen to you.

MANDY. Toddy, I'm dying.

TODDY. No, you are not!

MANDY. Who are you, God?

TODDY. No.

MANDY. So? *(Pauses the doll.)* There. The bo

TODDY. I've never se than when you are w

MANDY. That's true. I ven me more peace ment with lovers.

TODDY. How come yo up fighting with pe with?

MANDY. You are real *(Pause.)* I didn't fi They fought with me for perfection. A couldn't match.

TODDY. Don't you have made some ce

MANDY. In art you concessions. Do yo nini made any con you think that it w easier for him to s thicker around Sair

TODDY. We aren't li oque period!

MANDY. An artist is the ages. An artist mise.

TODDY. You're diffic

MANDY. If I'm so diff still here?

TODDY. Because th designs has brough

MANDY. *(Grabs TOD my work done that*

Lights fade out.

TODDY. No.

MANDY. So? (*Pauses to inspect the rag doll.*) There. The body is finished.

TODDY. I've never seen you happier than when you are working.

MANDY. That's true. My work has given me more peace than my experiment with lovers.

TODDY. How come you always ended up fighting with people you work with?

MANDY. You are really out to get me! (*Pause.*) I didn't fight with people. They fought with me because I aimed for perfection. A perfection they couldn't match.

TODDY. Don't you think you could have made some concessions?

MANDY. In art you don't make any concessions. Do you think that Bernini made any concessions? Don't you think that it would have been easier for him to sculpt the clouds thicker around Saint Theresa?

TODDY. We aren't living in the Baroque period!

MANDY. An artist is an artist through the ages. An artist doesn't compromise.

TODDY. You're difficult!

MANDY. If I'm so difficult, why are you still here?

TODDY. Because the beauty of your designs has brought tears to my eyes.

MANDY. (*Grabs TODDY's hands.*) Has my work done that to you?

Lights fade out.

SCENE TWENTY-SIX

Lights fade in on stage that is completely bare, except for the pyramid-like structure that holds the funeral urn with MANDY's ashes. SANDY comes in stage right and circles the stage, checking to see if SHE has forgotten anything. TODDY and FRAPPE carrying suitcases enter stage left.

FRAPPE. Mother, I've already checked everything.

SANDY. You always have to double-check everything.

TODDY. I have checked the studio, the bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen, and we are standing in the living room. (*Pause.*) Anything else you want me to check?

SANDY. Did you check all the closets?

FRAPPE and TODDY. (*Together.*) Yes, we did!

SANDY. We have to wait for the superintendent. I wouldn't give the keys to anyone else.

TODDY. We can leave the keys in his apartment on our way down.

SANDY. He probably isn't there...

FRAPPE. Mother. No more excuses! We have to leave or we are going to miss our flight.

TODDY. We should be going down, or we are going to be late.

SANDY. (*Picks up a chair and sits center stage.*) Why are we in such a hurry?

FRAPPE. Mother, you have been in this apartment a year and a half!

SANDY. I had to sell everything, and you know how much junk your brother accumulated through the years.

FRAPPE. I know, but you took your sweet time to sell everything.

TODDY. It isn't healthy to stay here any longer. Sandy, you've got to let go.

SANDY. Why?

FRAPPE. Why? Because Mandy is dead! Mandy is dead and nothing is going to revive him.

SANDY. To me he isn't dead.

TODDY. Okay, not to you. But the rest of the world officially considers him gone.

FRAPPE. That's right. So you better get on with your life. (*Pause.*) We should have a toast in Mandy's honor. There's still some wine left from last night.

SANDY. (*Under her breath.*) You'll grab any reason to have a drink...

FRAPPE. (*Going to the kitchen.*) What did you say?

SANDY. Nothing... That it's probably a good idea to have a toast in Mandy's honor.

FRAPPE comes in with a tray and three paper cups filled with red wine.

FRAPPE. (*Gives one paper cup to TODDY.*) We are going to miss you Toddy.

TODDY. Thank you. Me too.

FRAPPE. (*Gives one paper cup to SANDY.*) Mother, one last drink for the road.

SANDY. (*Lifts her paper cup and is joined by FRAPPE and TODDY.*) May this moment be just the beginning of a life dedicated to the preservation of my son's artistic legacy. (*FRAPPE and TODDY look at each other and then at SANDY.*) I thank you, Mandy, for the privilege of being your mother. (*Lifts her paper cup pointing to heaven.*) Cheers!

FRAPPE and TODDY. (*Together and with great relief.*) Cheers!

FRAPPE and TODDY grab the luggage and begin to leave stage left.

SANDY. (*As she exits behind TODDY.*)

Toddy, do you know that the last time I saw Mandy alive in the hospital, he held my face with both of his trembling hands and said: "You are the most beautiful mother in the world." Would you believe it? "The most beautiful mother in the world." He loved me, he really loved me, Toddy.

The sound of a door being slammed is heard, followed by the sound of a door being opened. SANDY rushes in, stands in front of the pyramid-like structure and grabs the funeral urn containing MANDY's ashes. SHE places the urn in her handbag and rushes out. MANDY comes in, stands center stage and takes a last look at SANDY and begins to laugh wholeheartedly. Black out!

CURTAIN



Dr. Lillian Mar

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