

THE GRASS COURT

a play by

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## CHARACTERS

SAMMY WINIKOFF, 28, a professional tennis player.

ALAN WINIKOFF, 31, his brother, a lawyer.

NANCY WINIKOFF, their mother.

MARIA, mid-twenties.

JUAN, 28.

MORRIS WINIKOFF, Sammy and Alan's father. Seen in past, as young man, so can be played by same actor as JUAN.

SCENE: The patio area of a typical South Florida ranch house in the late 1980s. At center stage is a round table with chairs spread around it. At front right is a chaise longue. At stage right is a sliding glass door that leads to the interior of the house. Stereo speakers are hung somewhere on the right wall. The back of the stage is a screen wall behind which lies the yard. It has a door just left of the table. Stage left includes a small portion of the swimming pool; that is to say a few feet of the shallow end. The rest is hidden offstage.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

Christmas Day.

(The lights come up to three quarters strength, and MARIA appears several feet behind the screening at stage right, walking across the backyard. It's hard to see her clearly through the screen; there is a dark mysterious quality to her. She wears shorts and a sleeveless top. She slows down as she gets halfway across, stops for just an instant as she takes in the patio and the pool, then continues her stroll offstage left. Lights come up to full strength, and after a short pause SAMMY and ALAN enter through the sliding door from the house. SAMMY is 28, tall and though not necessarily big is certainly in good shape. He wears jeans and an expensive tennis warmup jacket. ALAN is two or three years older, and though he's slightly heavier from lack of exercise, we can tell that a few years ago he had the same build as his brother. He wears a business suit and carries a twenty-year-old wooden tennis racket. As they leave the house, they spread out and look about the patio.)

SAMMY

Back to the old house.

ALAN

Never changes, does it. I even found my old racket in my room. My first one ever.

(Takes a few skillful practice swings.)

SAMMY

Patio's a little run down. They don't take care of it like they used to.

(MORE)

(He picks up a long sweeper from beside the pool and begins to sweep the bottom of the pool.)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

And my God, look at the lawn. I don't think it's been mowed since I left for college. I'd do it, but I don't think I care to walk out there.

ALAN

Well, I'm sure they don't use the pool anymore, and I don't think they're playing tennis either.

SAMMY

(Looking out over audience, where court is.)  
Apparently not. It was pretty amazing having our own grass tennis court. But now they have a weed court. Not my best surface.

ALAN

Jesus, you can barely tell what it is; the court grass is practically as high as the overgrown lawn. If Dad gave it the attention he gives to his stupid model airplanes...

SAMMY

I guess he needed something to fill his time after I left for college. After years of taking us to tournaments, all those hours watching us play, there were severe withdrawal symptoms.

ALAN

Well, you're still playing. You ought to make him your manager.

SAMMY

(Working his way around the back of the pool)  
No thanks. I'm doing badly enough on my own.

ALAN

What do you mean? You've had some great wins. You played Wimbledon!

SAMMY

I got my ass yanked on a yo-yo, dragged through a paper shredder, and kindly shown the exit in the first round at Wimbledon.

(ALAN shrugs--that's besides the point.)

And it's been slowly downhill ever since. I wouldn't be here if I'd qualified for the Australian. Hey, how come Cindy didn't come down?

ALAN

Couldn't get off from work. I said I'd stay in New York with her, but she insisted I come down, enjoy the sun.

SAMMY

(Taking the broom out of the water and laying it by the pool)

Hard to believe I was in Melbourne yesterday. Which was today, I suppose. At the time, anyway. What day is today?

ALAN

Christmas.

SAMMY

Right. It was Christmas yesterday. I get two Christmases this year. Too bad I'm Jewish.

ALAN

(Lying down in the chaise longue)  
Where's Cerise, anyway? Or Clarise, sorry.

SAMMY

No idea. We parted ways somewhere in Europe in October, I think. Didn't I tell you?

ALAN

No.

SAMMY

Yeah, she got a modeling assignment back in New York, and we decided to call it a day, so to speak. Or one of us did. She, actually. Her career was beginning to take off just as mine was headed into a steady descent. A pretty symmetry, don't you think?

ALAN

Sorry to hear.

SAMMY

(Sarcastic.)

No, I'm happy for her. I expect we'll soon be seeing her face on the cover of *Shallow* magazine.

ALAN

So things aren't exactly at an all-time high, I guess.

SAMMY

(Walking to front stage, stretching)  
Nothing a few wins won't fix. And how's the law business?

ALAN

Same as ever. Steady, long hours.

SAMMY

Steady pay.

ALAN

Steady life. Just watching the weeks go by. Every time I look up it's Wednesday again.

(NANCY enters, wearing a housedress and carrying a pitcher of iced tea and two glasses.)

NANCY

I brought you boys some iced tea.

ALAN

Thanks, Mom.

NANCY

(Pouring)

It's so nice to have the two of you back at the same time. How long has it been since we were all together?

SAMMY

Two years. Last year I got into the Australian.

NANCY

Oh dear. That's the longest it's ever been, I think. Thank goodness we didn't miss this year.

SAMMY

Glad to oblige.

NANCY

Oh Sammy, I didn't mean that. You know I'd rather you'd qualified.

SAMMY

I know, Ma. Just kidding.  
(Lifting glass)  
A Christmas toast.

NANCY

Oh dear, and you missed Hannukah too.

ALAN

Since when does that matter?

NANCY

Well not to me, but you know your father. He seems to be getting more religious each year.

SAMMY

And more eccentric.

NANCY

Sammy --

SAMMY

Just kidding again, Ma. Then if not to Christmas, here's to Dad's new P-51.

(ALAN laughs, they both drink the tea.)

NANCY

I suppose you two will be on the old court before long.

SAMMY

If we can find a machete.

NANCY

I guess we've been neglecting it. No one uses it since you boys have left. Everyone told your father, when he was building that court, that he was crazy. A grass court required too much maintenance, they said. He'd never stick to it, and it would grow fallow. But he proved them wrong. For ten or fifteen years, anyway, he kept that silly rectangle as perfectly groomed as Wimbledon's Centre Court. But now, with you boys gone, he finally let his guard down. And those doubters turn out right in the end.

(Beat.)

Still, it's not too bad. A quick run with the mower and the press.

SAMMY

Mom, Sylvester Stallone couldn't push our manual mower through that underbrush.

NANCY

Nonsense. You have time for a set or two before dinner if you like. You could go over to the college if our court's not pristine enough for you. But don't play too long -- I've got a turkey in the oven.

ALAN

I don't know, I'm a little out of shape. It's been a while--

SAMMY

I guess I could use a few days off, too. My shoulder's killing me. Not to mention my knees.

NANCY

Oh, dear.

SAMMY

(Sighs.)

Too much tennis.

ALAN

(Pats his flabby stomach.)

Too little tennis.

NANCY

I'm sorry Cindy couldn't come down too.

ALAN

(Uneasy.)

Yeah. Well, you know how it is. Working in the big city.

NANCY

Yes. Still, I have to admit it's nice to have just you two boys here. Just like the old days.

SAMMY

(Gestures to the yard.)

Yeah, except for Lion Country Safari out there.

NANCY

(Also looking out.)

Oh, well, I suppose your father has let it go a bit.

ALAN

So what else is new, Mom?

NANCY

Oh, not much. You're off enjoying the big city life --  
(Subtle reaction from ALAN -- things aren't so  
great in the city)  
-- and Sammy's travelling around the world playing tennis, but  
here things pretty much remain the same.

Oh, there is one new thing, I suppose. Someone finally moved  
into the Garcias' house.

ALAN

Well, that's news. How long has it been since they left, anyway?

NANCY

I think they must have moved out not long after Sammy left for  
college. But they never got around to selling it. It's been  
empty ever since. I must say I've had my suspicions....

SAMMY

We know, we know. The drug cartel. The Colombian Connection.  
You've seen it all from behind your front window curtain.

NANCY

Now don't mock me, Sammy. No one can tell me there hasn't been  
something funny going on there ever since the Garcias left. Once  
a month or so, a strange car pulls up. Strange people go in,  
come out. They never stay more than an hour. No one ever stays  
the night.

ALAN

If I didn't know better it would almost sound like real estate  
agents.

NANCY

Alan--

ALAN

I know, Ma, I know. It's really the Association of Central and  
South American Druglords' monthly meeting.

NANCY

--I think I know the difference between a real estate agent and  
a druglord.

(SAMMY and ALAN look at each other: they're not sure they  
would.)

SAMMY

So who moved in, anyway? God-fearing Jews, I hope.

NANCY

(Ignoring his last remark.)

That's the funny thing. As far as I can tell, it's just one person. Just the one girl, by herself.

SAMMY

Really.

(Beat.)

So what grade's she in?

NANCY

Oh come on, Sammy, she's about your age. At least.

ALAN

You haven't met her?

NANCY

Yes, I was sitting out here when she walked by one day, and we chatted for a few minutes.

ALAN

So what do you mean, as far as you can *tell* she's alone?

NANCY

That's what I mean. That's the funny thing. I mean, we talked for a while, but she never really said whether anyone else was living there with her. And she never actually mentioned *buying* the house in so many words. In fact, she never really said what she was doing here.

SAMMY

Must have been some conversation.

ALAN

Well, I'm sure you kept up your end of the deal, Ma.

NANCY

Oh, sure. I told her all about you boys --

SAMMY

(To himself.)

Well, so much for that idea.

NANCY

-- and about the Garcias, and how you were such good friends with their boy....what was his name?

SAMMY

Juan. Yeah, until he got into drugs and cars with the wrong size tires and amplifiers in place of mufflers.

ALAN

Yeah, but before that he was okay. We spent a lot of time together before we started playing tennis all the time. Then he kind of disappeared into his own crowd. Whoever they were. It's funny, we were still next-door neighbors, but I can't remember so much as seeing him at all in high-school. Where do these guys go?

SAMMY

I guess they don't attend the Latin Honor Society meetings after school.

(Standing up, yawning.)

I'm dying. I've got to lie down for a few minutes.

(Formally)

If you will excuse me.

(ALAN waves him off ceremoniously.)

NANCY

(As SAMMY exits to the house.)

I made up your bed with clean sheets.

(To ALAN.)

He doesn't seem very happy.

ALAN

Sammy?

NANCY

Of course Sammy. I thought being home would cheer him up.

ALAN

He'll be all right. Just hasn't been playing his best lately. He's probably thinking his tennis career may be in its final phase.

NANCY

Is it?

ALAN

I don't know. If not now, then within a few years anyway. I mean, he knew deep down from the start he wasn't going to be another John McEnroe, but I guess you never really accept that. Maybe that's why I envy him.

NANCY

Why would you envy him if he's so miserable?

ALAN

Because at least he knows he's not a McEnroe. He gave it his best shot, and now he can go on to the next thing without any doubts.

NANCY

But you're such a successful lawyer.

ALAN

Yeah, and so what? There're successful lawyers everywhere you look. But I was as good as he was in college, and I never gave it a shot at the pros.

NANCY

We never wanted you to be pros. We just thought tennis would be fun for you, and that you'd enjoy playing on your high school and college teams. And then of course go on to a real career.

ALAN

Which I did, strictly according to plan.

NANCY

But Sammy was always so stubborn. He was going to be a star, no matter what anyone said.

ALAN

He was right. You've got to go for it. Got to give yourself a chance.

NANCY

Better to have a good profession like you, I say. Security, comfort, a family of your own.... Give your old mother some grandchildren....

ALAN

Let's not rush things, mother.

NANCY

Oh, of course not. I didn't mean --

ALAN

These things take time. To prepare, I mean, oneself --

NANCY

Of course. Forget I mentioned it.

ALAN

I'll do my best.

NANCY

I'm going to go see about dinner.

(Rises.)

I still have to do the vegetables. You relax out here, it's so nice out.

(Heads for the house, stops by the sliding door.)

And why don't you change your clothes? It must be eighty degrees.

(She exits. ALAN smiles at her as she leaves, then turns back and stretches out on the chaise longue. Stands up and removes his jacket and tie, sits and takes off his shoes and socks. Considers for a second, then takes off his shirt and puts it with the rest on the table. Lies down again and settles into a comfortable position in the sun, eyes closed. After a short time MARIA appears behind the screening at back stage left, strolling across the backyard as before. Once again, she slows down to a stop and looks up at the patio, but this time is sharply arrested by the sight of ALAN. She smiles faintly and watches him for a few seconds. Picks a hibiscus flower and enters the patio, easing the door closed quietly. Walks through the patio, slowly taking everything in, towards ALAN. When she reaches him she stops and watches him again for a few seconds, then holds the flower over his chest and lets it drop. He starts when it touches his skin, opens his eyes. Is shocked by the sight of her, immediately tries to stand, but she stops him with a hand on his chest.)

MARIA

(Mock politely.)

Don't get up.

ALAN

No, really. I.

(Pushes up again.)

MARIA

(Again restraining him.)

You look comfortable. Stay.

(He finally relents and settles back cautiously  
in the chaise longue, eyes fastened on her.)

ALAN

You must be our new neighbor.

(She doesn't answer, instead turns and walks  
slowly about the patio, examining various items.)

Your house used to be the Garcias'. Good friends of ours.

MARIA

So I hear.

ALAN

Did you move here with your husband?

(No answer.)

I mean, are you married? Or are you alone.

MARIA

(Considering the question as she circles about,  
then decidedly)

At this point, yes.

ALAN

At this point in your life or at this point in the day?

(No answer.)

So, what do you do?

MARIA

Depends who I'm with.

ALAN

Very good. I mean what do you do for a living?

(No answer.)

For money.

MARIA

Oh, I see.

(Continues to circle.)

ALAN

Well, I'm Alan.

MARIA

Hello, Alan.

(Thinks for a moment, then stops and smiles at him.)

I'm Maria.

ALAN

(Drops his head back, joyously.)

Praise God! Information has been granted!

(Smile fades.)

Unless she's lying.

MARIA

So you're a lawyer.

ALAN

Ah...

(Closes his eyes, rests his head on the cushion.)

... I dabble.

MARIA

And you're married. Seven months, to Cindy.

ALAN

Now how would you.... Oh, right, you've been briefed. Well, to tell you the truth I'm not sure at the moment whether I'm married or not.

MARIA

You are. Ask your mother.

ALAN

Yes, I mean things aren't going so well in that particular arena. I haven't told anyone yet, but I moved out two weeks ago. We're trying a temporary separation. It's just not what I thought it would be. Marriage, that is. You know how it is.

(Lifts his gaze to her, trying to catch a revealing look. She just gazes innocently back, as if she has no idea.)

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

Anyway, there's just something missing. I don't know why I'm telling you all this, though. You just seem like a good listener, I guess.

(She has completed her tour of the patio by now and stops by the foot of the chaise longue. Long stare between them.)

You look so . . .

(the next word is "familiar" but it never comes. He sits up, feet on the floor now, one leg on each side of the chaise longue. More staring. She rests one knee on the mattress between his, leaning forward demurely. He strains his head forward, aching, and they kiss. First softly, then violently.)

NANCY

(Off, faintly.)

Alan!

(ALAN and MARIA break apart. Listening.)

NANCY

(Coming a bit closer.)

Alan, come look at this, honey!

(MARIA jumps up, turns toward the screen door.)

ALAN

Wait!

(Following her.)

When are you coming back?

(MARIA is out the door, heading back to her house. She turns and smiles at ALAN as she leaves.)

Come back tonight!

(MARIA is gone, without an answer.)

NANCY

(Entering.)

I want you to see the cake I....

(Sees MARIA offstage, leaving the yard.)

Oh, there's that girl I was telling you about.

ALAN

Maria.

NANCY

Yes, that's her name. Was she just here?

ALAN

Yes.

NANCY

Well, why did she run off?

ALAN

Don't know. Had to go.

NANCY

Oh, you should have asked her to stay for dinner. She might be all alone in that big house. And on Christmas.

ALAN

I think she had plans.

(Changing the subject.)

So where is everybody?

NANCY

Sammy's sleeping, I guess, and your father is working on a new model.

ALAN

You know, Mom, I don't think it's such a great idea using all that glue in your bedroom.

NANCY

Well, of course we don't have a basement, and the garage is packed. I really don't mind, as long as he doesn't get it on the bedspread. You have to make these concessions in a marriage, as I'm sure you've found out.

ALAN

Mmm.

NANCY

So, what's *your* opinion of our new neighbor?

(ALAN shrugs.)

SAMMY

(Off, in kitchen.)

Hey, cake!

NANCY

Oh, he's awake.

(Yelling to SAMMY.)

Don't touch it yet, it's cooling. We'll have it after dinner.

(To ALAN.)

He didn't meet Maria, did he?

ALAN

No, and I don't think we should talk about her in front of him. On account of his breaking up with Clarise and all, you know?

(SAMMY enters. He has changed into tennis shorts and a T-shirt. Barefoot.)

SAMMY

No point trying to sleep, I'll just stick it out until bedtime. It's pretty hot in the house, don't you think?

NANCY

I'm sorry, but I simply refuse to turn on the air conditioning in the winter. After having to use it the entire rest of the year. You have to draw the line somewhere. I draw it around December to February.

(Beat.)

I thought you were sleeping.

SAMMY

No, I was just telling Dad about some of my recent matches.

NANCY

Yes, why don't you sit down and let us hear some, too. You haven't told me anything about how you've been doing since Alan's wedding.

SAMMY

(Lies down in chaise longue.)

It was Alan's wedding. Why don't we hear how *he's* been doing since it.

(ALAN and NANCY take chairs by table.)

ALAN

Sorry, old boy. Not as exciting as the world travels of the young superstar.

SAMMY

Too depressing. My world ranking has been dropping steadily since Wimbledon. Soon I'll be below you guys.

NANCY

But you've won some matches. You've never had to ask for money.

SAMMY

Only in doubles. I'm still living on last year's earnings. Not for too much longer, though. What I need at this point is a big win. Of course that probably won't happen until the inflammation in my shoulder and knees shrinks away.

NANCY

Well, then it's good that you're home. You'll rest them. That's what they need, right?

SAMMY

Yeah, but six months worth, not one week.

NANCY

So why don't you --

SAMMY

Because it took long enough to climb up to the point where I can get into the good tournaments. If I take six months off, I don't know if I'll ever be able to get back there.

(Beat.)

NANCY

(Sighs.)

Sitting out here reminds me of when the court was new and you boys used to play on it, battling it out set after set while your father and I watched from the patio.

SAMMY

Back when you could see through the jungle.

ALAN

We fought like madmen for every point. Loser had to clean the pool, or mow the lawn, press the court....

SAMMY

Spent half my childhood playing tennis, the other half beautifying the estate.

NANCY

Alan was older, of course. He had a big advantage when you were still growing.

ALAN

I'd sometimes offer to give him a handicap, but he'd never accept. And on the rare occasion that he'd win, you'd think he'd beaten Laver at Forest Hills.

SAMMY

Only happened three times before you left for college.

NANCY

So when did he start winning regularly?

ALAN

I don't know. Must've been after I graduated college.

SAMMY

(Shaking his head slowly.)

Unh-Unh.

ALAN

(Warily.)

What do you mean?

SAMMY

Don't you remember that I played a position above you on the team your last year?

ALAN

Yeah, I know, but that was just Coach's decision. To give you experience.

SAMMY

(Realizing it's too touchy a subject.)

How about some music? You mind, Mom?

NANCY

Of course not.

ALAN

I'll go pick something on my way in. I haven't even unpacked yet.

(ALAN rises and gathers his discarded clothes from the table, exits to the house.)

NANCY

(Quieter, after ALAN is gone.)

I never knew you boys played against each other for the college team.

SAMMY

(Also quiet, dreamy, as if transported back in time.)

It wasn't anything official. We played a week before his senior season. No one else around, early on a Sunday morning. Three out of five sets, no tiebreakers.

(Pause. Then, more melancholy than triumphant.)

He never took a set off me again.

NANCY

Of course, he was already into law school by that time.

SAMMY

Of course.

(Long pause.)

NANCY

(Rising lazily, looking about.)

Well, I guess dinner will be ready in about half an hour. Think I'll lie down -- this heat just makes me so lazy.

SAMMY

Okay.

(NANCY exits. Pause, while SAMMY stares straight ahead, as if concentrating on something.)

SAMMY

(Without emotion.)

Six-four, Six-four, Six-two.

(Long pause. He rises slowly to his feet, bends over and feels his knees. Takes off his T-shirt and throws it on the table. Stretches a bit, moving his arm in a motion similar to serving a tennis ball, testing the pain in the shoulder. Walks slowly towards the pool, doing slow twisting stretches as he does so. Walks along the

side of the pool and disappears offstage. A few seconds later we hear a loud splash as he jumps in. A second of silence and then the music starts. Neil Young's "Harvest." A few seconds after that SAMMY comes floating into view on an inflatable raft. He lies on his back, eyes closed, basking in the sun. About fifteen or twenty seconds of this before MARIA appears, once again walking across behind the screening, now in a bathing suit. She stops when she sees him on the raft. Slowly and quietly she enters the patio, holding the door with her hand as it closes so as to make no sound. Walks silently to the front right corner of the pool and stops. SAMMY is floating near the center of the visible portion of the pool, his head closest to her. MARIA dips one hand in and then out of the water and flicks droplets towards him. He opens his eyes, but does not immediately see her behind him. Looks up, then to the side, then finally behind him. When he sees her he sits up quickly, but this isn't so easy on a raft. Tilts to one side and then the other clumsily, barely avoiding capsizing, before finally balancing himself in the middle and turning to face her. He is straddling the raft, quite surprised by the appearance of this beautiful woman on his patio. A few seconds of silence. Then it hits him.)

SAMMY

You must be....

(She splashes him lightly. The general motion of the water is moving him ever so slightly but steadily towards her. He smiles and splashes her back, though still unsure of the situation. The raft is now but a foot away from her. They regard each other. After a few seconds the LIGHTS and MUSIC fade out together.)

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

(The same scene, just minutes after midnight, New Year's Eve. SAMMY is in the chaise longue, MARIA sitting at the table, ALAN standing in front of the pool looking out over the audience at the neighborhood. NANCY stands near the door to the house. All hold champagne glasses. Two champagne bottles on table, one empty, one almost so. As the scene progresses, everyone except MARIA becomes increasingly inebriated. Occasional shouts and sounds of firecrackers from far off in the neighborhood, most frequently at the beginning of the scene and gradually thinning out. Neither SAMMY nor ALAN appear particularly excited about the occasion. NANCY is enjoying herself. MARIA's emotions, as usual, seem to be in neutral.)

NANCY

(Calling into the house.)

I'll be up in a few minutes, dear.

(Turning and walking to the table, already slightly tipsy, replenishes her glass from the bottle.)

Your father just can't seem to stay up past midnight anymore.

(Drinks.)

I remember, when we were young, going to parties on Saturday night...

(Remembering, disappointed.)

Well, if the truth be told, I guess he never did like to stay up too late. I did, though. I was the life of the party. Your father held me back.

ALAN

You should have gone to the Gilberts' party tonight.

NANCY

No no, we wanted to stay home with you boys. Besides, your father hates the Gilberts.

ALAN

What? They've been your friends for twenty years.

NANCY

Oh, I love Sid and Marilyn. It's your father that can't stand them. I was just surprised that you boys didn't go out with friends tonight.

SAMMY

My friends, such that actually exist, are scattered about the earth.

NANCY

(Helpfully, not maliciously.)

Well, if you would only settle down....

ALAN

My friends in New York are all working tonight, I believe. It's a great chance to get work done without distraction. To jump ahead of the other guy while he's blowing into party favors.

NANCY

Anyway, I'm so glad you could join us, Maria. Nice to have another lady around.

MARIA

(Lifting her glass.)

Nice of you to have me.

(Sips.)

SAMMY

(Lifts glass. Solemnly.)

Happy New Year.

NANCY

(Sighs.)

Another year gone by.

SAMMY

It's so silly, though. Another year was gone by yesterday too. And on October 4. We just invent these methods of measuring time in order to feel sorry for ourselves.

ALAN

Jesus, do you have to attack *everything*?

SAMMY

Just trying to make her feel better.

NANCY

Oh, I'm not sad. In a way it's comforting to watch each year go by and see you boys grow up so magnificently.

SAMMY

Now, let's not go overboard Mom. "Perfectly" would have been adequate.

NANCY

(Refilling glass, drinking.)

Oh, I mean it. I mean it.

(ALAN lifts glass, SAMMY follows suit, both kill what they have left. MARIA sips. ALAN takes bottle and refills glasses.)

MARIA

(Dreamily, looking out.)

Doesn't the tennis court look lovely in the moonlight.

SAMMY

You mean the pasture?

MARIA

Mmm. It glimmers.

ALAN

It gloams.

SAMMY

I used to go out there.

ALAN

What are you talking about?

SAMMY

On nights like this. After you were away at college. Late at night, the whole neighborhood asleep, I'd walk out onto the court. You ever do that? All you could see, back when it was mowed and chalked, were the lines. The white lines, glowing in whatever light makes it down to the surface of the earth. You heard things you never did at other times: the sound of your sneakers on the grass, stepping, turning; you felt the grass

(MORE)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

like you couldn't in the day. You'd stare at the lines, the way they were glowing, and you'd be hypnotized.

(Long silence.)

ALAN

(To MARIA.)

Shall we explore the vision?

(Offers his arm in old-fashioned manner. She smiles demurely and rises, taking his arm, and they walk out the screen door and exit stage left.)

SAMMY

(Calling.)

It won't work now. No chalk lines left, the high grass. You're just gonna get ticks.

(Beat.)

Mother, yonder goes your elder son off to our old tennis court with the woman your younger son is going to marry.

NANCY

Oh dear, Sammy. You don't mean that.

SAMMY

(Dramatically.)

I do.

NANCY

But Sammy. I mean, she's very nice. And very pretty too, but.... You don't even know her.

SAMMY

(Not listening. Watching ALAN and MARIA out on the court.)

They have entered the arena. They walk. Around the former baselines. She, lovely on the arm of her future brother-in-law. They stroll on the court where I practiced topspin lobs till I could hit them for winners at will.

(He has forgotten NANCY's presence. Continues in slightly inebriated manner.)

Where I broke my finger diving for a drop shot. Where I learned to return a deep lob backwards between the legs. Where I lost my virginity on a night just like this.

(Pause.)

(MORE)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

They stop near the service line, where the service line once was, anyway, where one might stop for a volley after a good first serve. He demonstrates a backhand, in slow motion. His hand stops at her cheek. They --

NANCY

(Squinting, trying to see.)

They what? I can't see without my glasses.

SAMMY

(Reaching for the bottle, filling his glass.)

To a new year, mother. May it be the last.

(Drains the glass.)

NANCY

Oh dear, I believe I've had enough to drink tonight.

(Stands shakily.)

When we were younger, we could . . . Well, I could . . .

(ALAN and MARIA appear behind the screening at stage left, enter through the screen door. SAMMY remains staring out at the court.)

Oh, here they are. They're back, Sammy. And how was our old tennis court at the beginning of another year?

ALAN

Sammy was right. It was hypnotizing.

NANCY

(To MARIA.)

Dear, how would you like to see some old pictures of Alan and Sammy, before I go up to bed?

MARIA

(Quietly.)

I'd love to.

NANCY

Goodnight, boys. Happy New Year.

ALAN

Happy New Year.

(MORE)

(SAMMY raises his glass but says nothing. NANCY and MARIA exit to house. ALAN takes bottle, fills his own and then SAMMY's glass three quarters, puts bottle down. SAMMY takes bottle and fills his own glass to the brim. ALAN sips, SAMMY chugs.)

ALAN (CONT'D)

You know, Sam, I feel all right. Yeah, this new year looks okay to me.

SAMMY

You're drunk and it's been less than an hour. Give it a couple days.

ALAN

You know what's wonderful about life, Sam?

SAMMY

Its brevity?

ALAN

(Continuing, paying no real attention to SAMMY's negative responses.)

No. No, what's wonderful about life is, in a word, possibilities.

SAMMY

I wouldn't know. I deal in impossibilities. Chasing the unattainable till you fall down with your tongue in the sand.

ALAN

The possibilities for change. Things may not be going so well, you're down about the whole deal. But then... But then, you see what you really want. You begin to see how things could be different, and you realize that if it seems like you can't change your life, that's only because of your attitude.

SAMMY

And you, my older brother, see what you want.

ALAN

You might say that. God damn it Sam, you just might say that.

SAMMY

I don't suppose this has anything to do with your midnight stroll on the tennis swamp?

ALAN

(A bit embarrassed.)

Oh, did you see...? Well, I don't care. You're right. Not just her, but she's part of it, somehow. Isn't she something?

SAMMY

She's many things, brother,  
(rising, shakily)  
one of which happens to be my fiancée.

ALAN

You're drunk.

SAMMY

(Grandly.)

I am.

ALAN

Does she happen to know she's your fiancée?

SAMMY

Out of the purest of coincidences you have just happened to place your lecherous finger on the single imperfection in our relationship.

ALAN

Aha. I doubted she was aware of her bleak future.

SAMMY

She will be.

ALAN

Well, I'm sorry to destroy your dreams, but she's mine. I had her first.

SAMMY

And where have you been all week?

ALAN

With her, of course. When I haven't been with you.

SAMMY

Well, I've been with her when I haven't been with you. That is, when you haven't been with me. Same thing, I believe.

(Pause while they exchange looks.)

ALAN

Well, at any rate, first come first served.

SAMMY

That probably describes fairly accurately your relationships with women in general.

ALAN

(Thinking about it.)

Now just a...

SAMMY

And wait a second. I seem to remember a wedding last year, in which you seemed to play some principle part.

ALAN

(Suddenly depressed.)

Ah...

SAMMY

Or was that just because you look so good in a tuxedo?

(Pause.)

You remember the bride.

(Reality is falling down on ALAN.)

Blonde girl, fairly attractive? Cindy, I believe was her name?

(Pause.)

I mean, I'm sorry Alan, but....

ALAN

We've separated.

SAMMY

What?

ALAN

I moved out. Two weeks ago.

(Pause. He moves to stage left in front of the pool, looking out in the direction of the court.)

Things fell apart almost instantly, the moment we got back to the city and unpacked. Insane--I never thought that could happen to me. It's as though the act of getting married was like pulling a plastic bag over our relationship and suffocating it. Do you know, in the six months since our honeymoon we've made love only five times? None in the last three months.

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

It seems so much more difficult in New York. Pressure. I started imagining the rest of our lives just going on like they were. It's not what I'd dreamed of. And I guess it started to show in the way I treated her.

SAMMY

Jesus, that's an awfully fast decline. And it's not like you married Elizabeth Taylor.

ALAN

We weren't made for that life, you and me Sammy, we were bred for the sun, stretching and running, cracking tennis balls across the court. Sweating. It's a different kind of sweat you work up in the office. It's just no good.

SAMMY

Neither is the alternative, you should know.

ALAN

What?

SAMMY

Tennis. It's just not the same when it's a business. Too much pressure, too much strain on the body. It's really for kids.

ALAN

We are kids. We remain kids.

SAMMY

And any way, the price is too high. You give up too much.

ALAN

Believe me, what I have you don't mind giving up.

SAMMY

Okay, but there's a real life somewhere, and it isn't on the pro tour.

ALAN

It's easy for you to say. You've explored that possibility.

SAMMY

Lots of people would kill for *your* position. And what are you implying, that you would have done better than I have?

ALAN

I didn't say that. I don't know. You never know.

SAMMY

Well you wouldn't have, believe me. You should know how tough it is, better than the women I meet in bars all over the world: "You're a tennis pro, really? You played Wimbledon? Do you own a jet?"

ALAN

I was a hell of a player.

SAMMY

Yeah, so are a thousand other guys. And they all want that paycheck, that ranking. They'll do anything for it. Maybe we *should* play a few sets before we leave here. Getting your ass kicked by the number 178th ranked player in the world should bring you back to earth.

ALAN

Hell, I'll play you. It hasn't been *that* long. In fact, standing on the court just before, I could feel it all coming back, the old feeling surging back into my body. You know what I mean? I could actually imagine knocking a backhand down the line, or crosscourt, wherever I wanted. It's still there.

SAMMY

Well, I was only speaking rhetorically. I wouldn't have the heart to do that to you even if my knees and shoulder weren't killing me. As it is, I need the rest.

(MARIA enters. To her.)

Lovely photos?

MARIA

(Sitting.)

Lovely photos.

ALAN

(Sarcastically, a bit angry).

Lovely week?

MARIA

(Thinks about it for a second, then decidedly.)

Lovely week.

SAMMY

You didn't have to look at them with her, you know. You could have told her the truth, that you'd rather watch the tennis court grow.

MARIA

I know I didn't have to. I wanted to. I never do anything I don't want to do.

SAMMY

Oh, how lovely. How lovely for all of us. We all get to do whatever we want.

ALAN

(To SAMMY.)

Well you certainly do, don't you.

SAMMY

Yes, of course, we *all* do. How wonderful. The only problem is that it may make for some rather exacting physical demands on some of us.

(Gestures toward MARIA. She appears not to hear his last comment. He takes champagne bottle, fills his glass, offers it to ALAN, who nods yes and has his own filled. They drink.)

MARIA

It's a lovely night.

SAMMY

Yes. Will you marry me?

MARIA

It must have been wonderful to grow up here. Warm moonlit nights in the middle of winter, sitting out by the pool.

SAMMY

(To ALAN.)

Am I here?

ALAN

Sort of. You're starting to fade, but I can still make out your face.

MARIA

(Softly.)

Well, at least I live here now.

SAMMY

(To MARIA. Not sarcastically; matter-of-factly)

Excuse me? Hello. I believe I just asked you to join me in the rites of matrimony.

MARIA

I can't marry you.

SAMMY

Can't? Why not?

ALAN

(Clears his throat.)

Hello there. Would it be presumptuous to assume that my own existence might enter into the scheme of things? That it might even, perhaps, be the main reason.

MARIA

Yes, it would. Though I'd just as soon marry you. At the moment, anyway.

SAMMY

Now wait a minute. He's still married.

MARIA

It doesn't matter. I can't marry either of you.

ALAN

And why not?

MARIA

Oh, I'll let you two make up your own reasons and believe them. They'll be as convincing as any I can offer.

SAMMY

(To ALAN.)

Is it just me, or do you get the feeling that this lovely young lady was dropped out of the sky by alien visitors. Possibly because they couldn't figure out what the hell she was talking about half the time.

(Pause.)

ALAN

We'll have a tennis match for her.

SAMMY

Al....

ALAN

Tomorrow morning. Three out of five, no tiebreakers. Winner take all.

(Gesturing at MARIA.)

MARIA

(Not taking the "prize" seriously.)

How romantic. I've never seen a real tennis match in person. I mean between real pros, of course.

SAMMY

(Sighs, arguing.)

Only one of us....

ALAN

I was captain of one of the best college teams in the country, God damn it.

SAMMY

Al, I told you I've got to rest my injuries. My knees....

ALAN

Well, if you don't want to do it, okay. If you're that insecure about your ability.

MARIA

Walking on the court tonight, it seemed magical. I've never played, but I could sense what it means to you. It was like being in a cathedral.

SAMMY

Well let me tell you, it seems less like a ... *synagogue* when the sun's overhead, it's eighty degrees and ninety percent humidity, you have a pot belly and haven't raised your pulse rate above the resting level with your pants on in three years.

ALAN

I shall respond to that, sir, with my forehand return of serve.

SAMMY

Jesus, you're drunk.

ALAN

Only so that you can't use your own hangover as an excuse tomorrow.

Three out of five sets.

No tiebreakers.

Like the old days.

MARIA

(Rising and going over to ALAN, kissing him on the cheek.)

It was a wonderful New Year's. Thank you for inviting me.

(Same kiss for SAMMY.)

And thank you too.

(Walks to screen door, turns.)

See you all tomorrow. On the court.

(She exits. Long pause.)

SAMMY

Dirty rat.

ALAN

Me?

SAMMY

She was the one. Finally, I met her, and you....

ALAN

Sorry, Sam-O, but I really don't think I'm the reason she can't marry you.

SAMMY

Then what...?

ALAN

I don't know. Shit, maybe you're the reason she's hesitant to have me. I deserve a little happiness too, you know.

SAMMY

You have Cindy! Okay, things aren't going so well at the moment, but that's just temporary. Right?

ALAN

I don't know. I wasn't thinking that when I was walking with Maria.

(Pause.)

SAMMY

You gotta admit one thing--she is one odd bird.

ALAN

Yeah. Coming down here, living all alone in that house. God knows what she does all day. Doesn't seem to work.

(SAMMY reaches for champagne bottle. Pours, but it's empty.)

Just as well, eh Sam? You want to be in top shape for our match tomorrow.

SAMMY

Alan, we can't do that. Let's just use my knees as an excuse, and think of something else to do. Okay?

ALAN

Well if that's the excuse then what's the real reason? You can tell your big brother.

SAMMY

(Sighs.)

It's *because* you're my big brother. I don't want to beat you. It hurt enough the other time.

(Slight pause.)

ALAN

(Laughing.)

What time was that, pal, in your dreams?

SAMMY

Look, let's just skip it, okay? We'll play checkers or something instead.

ALAN

Man, you *are* drunk.

(Pause.)

Hell, I am too.

(MORE)

(Beat.)

ALAN (CONT'D)

Not bad, is it, being back in the old neighborhood?

SAMMY

Not bad at all.

ALAN

I guess that's what kind of got to me, that and Maria and being with her on the court in the moonlight. Made me start feeling that my fantasies didn't have to be all fantasy. That they could actually happen. That I could get back into shape, work hard at my game, take my own shot at the big time.

SAMMY

(As they each go into their own drunken reverie, oblivious to the other.)

You've got it all wrong, brother. *She's* what you want. What *I* want. Maria and I in a wooden cottage in the country somewhere.

ALAN

Start with the smaller tournaments, build up some tour points and some momentum, work my way across Europe and then the American summer circuit.

SAMMY

A plain, steady job that I could really put my shoulder to without worrying about aches and pains, erratic backhands, jet lag. A place to come home to, a *family* to come home to.

ALAN

Then a surprise qualifier for the Open in New York. I make my way through the early rounds, mild upsets piling on, then a major one or two in the quarters and semis. Next thing you know--it could happen--I'm this year's surprise sensation, playing in the finals of the U.S. Open.

SAMMY

A little security, a little happiness. Something you can hold on to.

ALAN

(Standing, walking slowly forward in a trance.)

Maybe I even lose in the finals, that's okay--a long tough match. At least I've been there, on a crisp night in early fall, under the stadium lights. And the crowd understands what I've

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

sacrificed, how I've worked for this moment, that this game ...  
*is my life.*

SAMMY

(Quietly.)

Yeah, that was a good summer.

(We hear the sound of a crowd of thousands as their applause slowly dies down so they can listen to ALAN speak to them.)

ALAN

I just want to thank everyone for coming out to watch.

(Mild applause.)

I also want to thank my parents and my brother Sam for their support. And most of all I want to thank Maria for being here with me.

(Short pause.)

And you know, I want to say that although I'm obviously a bit disappointed right now from losing such a tough match, I know that that will soon fade and that no matter what happens to me in the years to come, I will probably always remember the time of this tournament as being the greatest two weeks of my life.

(Enthusiastic applause.)

Thank you.

(Applause continues for a few seconds as the lights slowly dim, and then fades out with them.)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

The next afternoon.

(Hot and sunny. SAMMY sits near table, hunched forward, head hanging down. Somewhat sweaty from tennis on a hot and muggy day. Two ice packs balanced on his knees while he holds another to his shoulder. ALAN lies on the chaise longue--it is adjusted so that the back is completely horizontal, and he lies on his back, arms limply hanging over the sides. Drenched in sweat, completely exhausted. Three or four of SAMMY's rackets lie on the table, along with two well-used tennis balls. A couple of towels as well.)

SAMMY

Christ, what a mistake.

ALAN

(Slow moan.)

Uuuuh.

SAMMY

I told you, Al. You shouldn't have made me play. Too much to drink, too little sleep, too damn hot and humid, my inflamed tendons, your inflated stomach, etc. etc. Bad combination all around. Now I'll have to spend two days freeze-drying my knees. I may not even be able to visit you in the hospital.

ALAN

(Painfully.)

Nahwah. Fuhgame.

SAMMY

Huh? No, never mind. Conserve your energy.

ALAN

(Raising his head slightly.)  
Not one fucking game.

(Drops head again.)

SAMMY

Well shit, what did you expect? You're a lawyer now, not a player. An out of shape lawyer at that. You looked ready to drop just from chopping and mowing the court.

ALAN

(Spoken, as a word.)  
Wahh.

SAMMY

Why? Don't be dense, Al. We've obviously gone in opposite directions tennis-wise since we were even. I've improved drastically since college, and--

ALAN

Wahr.

SAMMY

Huh? Besides, to tell you the truth I thought you played pretty damn well, considering. You were within a point of winning your serve several times. I mean, you couldn't have really expected to--

ALAN

Water. I need...more...water.

SAMMY

I can't get up just yet, Al. Got to ice them for twenty minutes straight or it'll do no good at all. You can get it, can't you? You're not *actually* dying, are you?

(ALAN looks longingly toward the kitchen, weighing things in his mind, then flops back down flat on his back.)

Well, maybe Mom'll wander by.

(Looks out in direction of court.)

Man, will you look at Maria out there? Sunning herself, not a care in the world. We put her to sleep, Al. I wonder if she saw a single point.

(ALAN slowly starts to sit up to look.)

Maybe you'd better not. In your condition.

(MORE)

(ALAN manages to sit up, even to adjust the back of the chaise longue and turn it so as to comfortably look at MARIA. SAMMY shrugs.)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

It's *your* heart.

ALAN

Where was she when we were in high school?

SAMMY

Probably in high school too. On one of those student-exchange programs. With Pluto.

ALAN

You sound a bit piqued with our fair female friend.

SAMMY

Just kidding. I haven't given up. She fits perfectly into my new plans. That is, if she doesn't choose you instead.

ALAN

Don't be so sure she wouldn't. If she hadn't already dismissed both of us, that is.

SAMMY

Dismissed? All she said, as far as I'm concerned, is that she doesn't believe in marriage. You think too conservatively, Al.

ALAN

And you too imaginatively.

(Pause.)

I really do need some water.

(Neither move.)

What new plans do you have for her to fit into, anyway?

SAMMY

First, I'll take her with me to Holland for this tournament I have to play in a couple weeks. My farewell tournament. She can't refuse that. Then it's back to Miami where we shall live happily as next door neighbors for four years while I...attend medical school.

ALAN

What?

SAMMY

You heard me, Al. I'm following you into the real world.

ALAN

Wait a minute. First of all, I don't see why professional school is more *real* than travelling around the world doing what you're doing. And anyway, you can do that later. You can't quit tennis now.

SAMMY

I can't?

ALAN

No. You're playing too damn well. I couldn't believe it out there today. It's different than it was, even in college. When you hit the ball it's like you own it, like it's a part of your body and you're going to put it wherever the hell you want. It's something above anything I ever did. It's too beautiful to just stop like that.

SAMMY

I don't know, Al, I thought it was pretty beautiful the way you hit that one into the woods when I won the first set.

ALAN

I'm trying to be serious. If someone doesn't bring me water soon, these will be the last words I ever speak.

SAMMY

Well, I'm serious too. I'm sick of it. Ten-hour flights, into the hotel at three in the morning, up at nine to eat, stretch and get a little practice in before the first-round match. Head spinning, muscles sore, knees killing me, my shoulder so bad I can't even serve without rubbing in that fucking horse solvent-- God knows what *that's* doing to the rest of me. I trot out for the match and try to slug tennis balls harder and better than the other guy, some twenty-one year old from Argentina or somewhere who's been working just as hard, wants it just as bad as I do. Maybe win a tough one just to get to the second round and lose to the number two seed. Fight through a few rounds in the doubles just to pay for the next tournament. It would be safe to say that it's not all it's cracked up to be.

ALAN

Aren't you skipping some things?

SAMMY

Did I forget to mention food poisoning at bad motels?

ALAN

I was thinking more of how you said it felt to walk out for your first-round match at Wimbledon. You'd qualified easily, playing the best of your life. Then walking out onto Center Court the first day to play Becker--

SAMMY

I got crushed.

ALAN

You said at the time it was a dream come true.

SAMMY

Cliché.

ALAN

It may be a cliché, but it was true. And it doesn't happen too often, or to too many people.

SAMMY

Well, I've had enough of the dream, thank you. I think I'll opt for the waking life now. A nice house on the water, my own family, a bunch of cats. You know--the whole disgusting picture. It sounds perfect right now. The only ice I'll see is in a glass.

(Lifts ice packs, examines the skin under them, replaces them. NANCY enters from house, carrying tray with iced tea pitcher and glasses.)

NANCY

Here's some iced tea, boys--

(ALAN turns in his seat and stares ravenously at the tea, too exhausted and relieved to speak.)

Oh dear, you overdid it again, didn't you? You boys never did know when to stop. You're just like your father with his model airplanes. Why, I had to practically pry the tube of glue from his hands last night to get him to come to bed.

(Beat.)

My, the court looks beautiful, doesn't it? I told you you could get it into shape in a jiffy.

SAMMY

It took all morning.

ALAN

Ma--

NANCY

Alan, dear, you don't look too well. Why don't you have some tea?

(ALAN grabs the glass she offers out of her hands and chugs it down.)

Are you all right, dear?

ALAN

Saved at the bell, Mother.

(Drinks some more.)

I've just been stunned by Sammy's news.

NANCY

(Looks at SAMMY.)

News?

ALAN

Our Sammy has decided to forsake the glamorous world of athletic superstardom for the safe, secure, bourgeois life of the country doctor.

SAMMY

In case Alan decides to ever try to play three sets of tennis again, I'll be able to be of some use. In fact, now that I think of it, perhaps I should study for the priesthood instead.

NANCY

Are you really going to do it, Sammy?

SAMMY

I am.

NANCY

Oh, my. That's wonderful, honey. I think you'll be much happier now.

(Hesitantly.)

Where do you think you'll study?

SAMMY

Right here at U.M., Ma. Assuming I get in.

NANCY

(Ecstatic.)

Oh come on, they'll take you like that. I'll fix up your old room just like it was. You can use Alan's room for a study. I'm just going to go tell your father.

(Exits into house.)

SAMMY

Everybody's happy. You see how easy it is?

ALAN

Well you've sure as hell changed.

SAMMY

You're right Al, I have. I'm tired of being the renegade, running off in pursuit of romantic dreams. From now on I'll make everyone happy.

(They drink iced tea as MARIA enters through the screen door in bathing suit with towel. Drapes towel on back of a chair and sits.)

Enjoy the match?

MARIA

I fell asleep. But it was wonderful before that. You're both so good.

ALAN

Flattering a dead man will get you nowhere.

MARIA

I fell asleep to the sound of the balls thumping against your rackets, and I dreamed. I dreamed that we were all playing, that I was a great player too, and we were all naked, and we struck the balls back and forth and ran around the cool grass...

ALAN

(Wistfully.)

The grass was cool?

MARIA

The grass was cool, and there was a fine mist in the air.

(Pause.)

SAMMY

She's too much. Is she too much?

ALAN  
Too much.

SAMMY  
(To MARIA.)  
Would you like to see Holland?

MARIA  
Again?

SAMMY  
Again? Okay, again, but with me this time.

MARIA  
That's very nice of you, Sammy, but I can't.

ALAN  
Okay, then how about with me?

SAMMY  
Just for a week, no strings attached. It's the last tournament of my career. Then we'll come right back to Miami. I'm going to go to med school here.

MARIA  
(Shaken ever so slightly.)  
Oh.

(She rises, wanders slowly forward.)

SAMMY  
So what do you say?

MARIA  
I'm afraid I can't.

(Walks slowly left in front of the pool,  
disappearing off stage.)

SAMMY  
Why not?  
(Silence. Louder, calling to her.)  
I said, why not?

MARIA

(Off.)

My husband will be home tomorrow.

(Loud splash as she jumps in. Shocked silence from both SAMMY and ALAN. A few seconds later MARIA appears in the pool, lying on the raft, eyes closed.)

ALAN

And holes appear in the happy vision.

SAMMY

I'm not going to go to Holland anyway. What's the point of one more tournament? One more first-round loss?

ALAN

One more shot at the big upset.

SAMMY

One more case of chronic jet lag.

ALAN

One more backhand passing shot down the line, sizzling past him while you uncoil from the stroke.

SAMMY

I wonder if it's possible to start school mid-year.

(MARIA drifts out of view.)

ALAN

(Gesturing to her.)

Is it just me, or do you also feel a bit, uh, used?

SAMMY

There are other fish in the sea.

ALAN

Only one in our pool, though.

SAMMY

That fish is starting to look familiar....

ALAN

What do you mean?

SAMMY

I don't know. Don't you feel like you've seen her before?

ALAN

Yeah. But I might just be thinking of "The Stepford Wives."

(NANCY enters.)

NANCY

(To SAMMY.)

Your father and I have been talking about your big decision.

SAMMY

Ah. A hushed, waiting world resonates with the echo of my every whim.

ALAN

So what does Dad think of the young maestro's abdication of superstardom?

NANCY

Well, I don't know exactly. He was working on a Spitfire while we were talking.

ALAN

So?

NANCY

So he was having trouble getting the wing flaps to move.

SAMMY

Perfectly understandable. We all do, from time to time.

NANCY

So what I mean is, he was terribly irritated. About the wing flaps. So I'm not sure whether it was a reaction to the airplane or the news about Sammy.

ALAN

You're not sure whether *what* was a reaction?

NANCY

Well, when I told him Sammy was quitting the tour he threw the Spitfire against the vanity mirror.

ALAN

Must've been the flaps. It's not like Dad to react so passionately to real life.

NANCY

Oh, I agree. I think so. Although I do think he was a little, mm, less than ecstatic about Sammy. After all, all those years of taking you to lessons and matches....

SAMMY

I thought you said you never meant for us to become pros anyway.

NANCY

Well, I suppose I was speaking for myself. Though your father never really intended it, either, I don't think. Still, once you had made it, he got so involved in following your career. And as you know, your father's not the most realistic of men. I think I understand, however. There comes a time when you have to admit you gave it your best shot and go on to something else.

SAMMY

(Less sure.)

Exactly.

NANCY

I wonder if you'll practice here in Miami.

ALAN

Sure. That's what he was just telling me.

NANCY

Oh, I always hoped you boys would end up settling down back here. Do you think you could ever persuade Cindy to move down here, Alan?

ALAN

Oh, I don't know, Ma.

NANCY

Oh look, I didn't even notice Maria in the pool.

(Waves, calls.)

Hi there.

(Pause.)

Odd sort of girl, don't you think?

SAMMY

Married sort of girl, I'd say.

NANCY

No. Why would you say that?

ALAN

We didn't, she did. She was forced into confession by the threat of a week in Europe with Mr. Sunshine. The Gestapo could have done no better.

NANCY

Well, she was lying. Or joking.

ALAN

Why do you say that?

NANCY

She never wears a wedding ring.

SAMMY

Hardly conclusive evidence. Not everyone does these days.

NANCY

Oh, you're such boys. It didn't even occur to you to look to see. You young people think your times are so new and different, but I'll tell you:

(Quieter, as MARIA drifts into view.)

Women still wear wedding rings.

SAMMY

(To MARIA.)

We've been telling our mother about your husband. She's looking forward to meeting him tomorrow.

MARIA

(Eyes still closed on the raft.)

How nice.

NANCY

Sammy. Don't be rude. You make it sound as if he has to come running over as soon as he arrives.

SAMMY

Well, it'd only be neighborly.

(To MARIA.)

Say, what does Mr., uh, Mr. Maria do, anyway?

MARIA

He's a...consultant.

ALAN

What sort of consultant?

SAMMY

I wouldn't bother asking her. I believe she's exhausted her quota of information for the day.

(Pause, as they watch MARIA drift out of sight again.)

Anyway, whether the consultant husband exists or not, I suppose you won't be around to meet him. Your plane's leaving in a couple of hours, isn't it?

(No answer, as ALAN continues to stare out at the pool.)

Al? Plane to catch? Not that I'm anxious for you to leave, brother.

ALAN

Huh? Oh, right.

NANCY

It's a shame you have to go back. It's so wonderful having the whole family together again.

SAMMY

You're forgetting our Alan's marital appendage, mother.

NANCY

Of course I'm not. Alan knows what I mean. And that's no way to talk about Cindy, Sammy.

Alan, your father said he'd drive you to the airport.

ALAN

He doesn't have to do that. I already ordered a cab.

NANCY

He'd like to drive you.

ALAN

(Rising.)

I'll go talk some sense into him. I've got to shower and get ready anyway.

SAMMY

Let him drive you. You said you wanted more excitement in your life.

(ALAN exits into house.)

NANCY

You certainly played wonderfully today. I watched some of it from the window.

SAMMY

I inflamed my knees pretty badly. I guess I was trying to make a point.

NANCY

The only point you made, as far as I can see, is how beautiful your game has become. Even more than it was in college. I think Alan envies you.

SAMMY

Well he doesn't have to anymore. I'm joining him in the real world.

NANCY

Sammy, are you sure you're not making too hasty a decision?

SAMMY

I thought you agreed with me. I thought you wanted it.

NANCY

I want what you want. I thought this would make you happy. But won't you miss the tennis? After all you've put into it, to just walk away from it....

SAMMY

Mom, I hope I never see another tennis racket in my life. Like I told Alan, I've had just about all the pain and competition and fruitless.... I've just had it, that's all.

NANCY

Well then I'm glad. I just didn't want you to be doing this because it's what I've been urging you to do.

SAMMY

Don't worry. I'm doing what I want. I've scrambled for my last drop shot.

(MORE)

(NANCY smiles at him doubtfully, then the smile fades and she sighs.)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

What?

NANCY

Oh, I don't know.

(Stands.)

We tried. We tried to give you everything. Everything you would need to be happy. Tennis lessons, your own court, a fine home. When Alan went to law school I was sure he was doing the right thing. It all seemed written to order: a fine college athletic career at an excellent school, and then on to a profession. But he's never liked it one bit. And now his marriage. I thought Cindy was nice enough, but obviously things are terribly wrong there too.

SAMMY

He told you something?

NANCY

A mother doesn't need to be told everything. I knew at the wedding that it wasn't going to stick. Still, I smiled and laughed at jokes and tried to play the role of happy mother.

SAMMY

You danced up quite a storm with Cindy's father, if I recall.

NANCY

Well try dragging your father onto the dance floor sometime. He quit for good when rock and roll was invented.

SAMMY

A man of principles.

NANCY

And what about you, Sammy? With Alan unhappy I figured maybe you were right to try the pro tour. And it certainly was exciting for a few years, wasn't it? Your father could speak of nothing else for a while. But you've been so down about it lately, and now you're quitting. You're not happy either, are you? So what's the point? What's the point of giving your children everything, devoting yourself to them, giving up everything for them, if they won't even be happy?

(Silence. Looks at her watch.)

I better get dressed. Are you coming to the airport?

SAMMY

No, I'll say goodbye here.

(NANCY exits to house. Sound of light splash  
offstage as MARIA lets herself off the raft. In a  
few seconds she enters, hair wet and pulled back,  
a towel around her.)

Gonna stick around till Alan gets back, say goodbye to him?

MARIA

I'm not very good at goodbyes. Or to be more exact, I don't say  
them. I'm going to go home and shower.

SAMMY

I guess your husband wouldn't like it very much if I joined you.

MARIA

Mmm? Oh, he might not mind. We have a very...unusual  
relationship.

SAMMY

That much I gathered. Still, I think I *will* say goodbye to Al.  
He being my brother and all.

MARIA

Fine. I guess we'll be seeing each other around, now that you'll  
be living here.

SAMMY

I guess.

MARIA

It'll be nice having a doctor next door.

(She turns to leave.)

SAMMY

Wait a second.

(She stops, turns back.)

I wanted to ask you.... were you ever here before? Did you grow  
up in Miami?

(Pause.)

MARIA

I grew up everywhere *but* here.

(Smiles, turns and leaves through the screen door as usual. SAMMY watches her walk away for a few seconds. Then walks offstage left in front of the pool. A few seconds later we hear a loud splash as he jumps in. Then a few seconds after that a smaller splash just before ALAN enters from the house, showered and changed.)

ALAN

(Looking around, surprised.)

Where'd they go?

(Looks out at backyard, at tennis court, then finally sees movement in the pool, underwater. Walks toward it, peering down.)

Sam? What the hell?

(Pause.)

Hey, come on up. Okay, you set the record, I'll call Guinness.

(Pause.)

Holy Jees--

(Splashing noises and heavy breathing offstage.)

God *damn*, how long were you down there?

SAMMY

(Off, gasping for breath.)

Don't know.

ALAN

(Getting a towel from the table.)

Didn't get enough exercise doing a triple-bagel job on me, huh?

(Throws towel to SAMMY as he enters from left, wearing only his tennis shorts and dripping wet.)

SAMMY

It's her. She just makes me feel like doing weird things. One week with her and I'm quitting tennis and asking her to marry me. Then she says a few words and leaves, and for some reason I feel like holding my breath under water til I suffocate. Don't ask me why.

ALAN

Where'd she go, anyway?

SAMMY

Who knows? Back to her lair. Preparing for hubby, I suppose.

ALAN

She could've at least hung around to say goodbye.

SAMMY

She doesn't say goodbyes.

ALAN

Oh. I should've figured. Well, it's just as well this time, since I'm not leaving.

SAMMY

What are you talking about?

ALAN

I can't leave, Sam. I've got nothing to go to up there. A job I hate, and a wife who cringes at the very sight of my body.

SAMMY

Cringes?

ALAN

Cringes. We would lie awake at night, each camped out on our own edge of the bed, pretending to be asleep. God knows what happened. Things were great before we got married. Well, they were great the first few months we went out. To be honest, by the time we got engaged the thrill had worn off. As the engagement wore on, I was developing some pretty serious doubts--

SAMMY

You never said a word.

ALAN

I didn't want to upset anyone. And I figured I was just nervous, that everything'd be fine once we were married. I didn't want you to always remember my complaints about Cindy.

SAMMY

Jesus.

ALAN

So I'm not going back. I'm sending in my resignation from here, I'll pay to have my things packed and moved, and I'll get a new job down here. I'm thinking about being a Park Ranger in the Everglades.

(Pause.)

SAMMY

Sunstroke is a terribly unheeded medical problem.

I don't suppose Marlene Dietrich next door has anything to do with it.

ALAN

You don't buy that bit about a husband, do you?

SAMMY

Sure. And he wears a red suit and says Ho Ho a lot.

ALAN

Well, then. I'm gonna be here to see what happens. Can't just leave her to you. She and I had something special this week--

SAMMY

(Laughing.)

Don't tell me--I think I know. In fact I think I could describe it down to every last detail.

JUAN

Perhaps you'd like to fill me in on those details.

(SAMMY and ALAN turn, shocked. JUAN has entered on "Dietrich" and listened from behind the screening. He is in his late twenties, dark, wears an expensive suit with open collar, gold jewelry, shades. The obscuring effect of the screening gives him a menacing look.)

SAMMY

What do you want?

JUAN

I'm looking for Maria.

(Beat. Then BLACKOUT.)

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

(Lights come up on same scene, JUAN behind screening. He walks slowly to screen door and enters patio.)

JUAN

You don't seem to remember me, my old friends.

SAMMY

(Suddenly realizing.)

Juan. God damn, it's Juan, isn't it?

(JUAN nods, smiles)

ALAN

(Gets up, comes over to shake hands.)

Didn't recognize you, Juan. What's it been, ten years? Fifteen?

JUAN

My family moved out ten years ago. But you and I, we haven't really seen each other since longer, no? Fifteen years would be a good guess.

(Takes chair.)

Your place is not so different. In fact, if you take away the...vegetation, it's really the same, isn't it? I wonder if Maria has found the same refuge that I found here as a young boy.

SAMMY

Now wait a minute. How do you know Maria?

JUAN

You mean she didn't tell you? Or perhaps you were too busy with other matters.

ALAN

Tell us what?

JUAN

And you don't remember? Certainly you remember Maria from before.

ALAN

Before what?

JUAN

Before we all grew up, before you both disappeared into the world of tennis stars, before I stopped coming over here to play. You don't remember that summer when my pretty cousin Maria spent the summer at my house?

ALAN

Ah...

SAMMY

That's where it was. I knew it.

JUAN

If I remember you were both quite taken by her. It would appear that adolescence and adulthood don't change things so much.

ALAN

Well, what were we? Twelve?

JUAN

Sammy and I were twelve. You must have been fourteen that summer. Old enough for more...mature yearnings.

ALAN

Well you don't have to act as if something *happened*.

JUAN

No, but apparently something has "happened" this week.

SAMMY

What does it matter to you, anyway? You still haven't said what you're doing here. Or what you've been doing the past ten years.

JUAN

Doing business. That answers both your questions. And you, Sammy, you've been playing tennis.

SAMMY

Yes--an admirable way to spend one's life, don't you think? What sort of business?

JUAN

(Pause.)

Retail, you could say.

ALAN

Wait, I don't get something. You guys sell your house ten years ago, and now your cousin buys it back?

JUAN

Who said we ever sold it? I just said we moved away.

SAMMY

Who leaves a house unused for ten years?

JUAN

Not unused. Just unlived in. I've used it for business purposes. A sort of warehouse.

SAMMY

That explains the occasional visitors. My mom thought drug deals were being done over there.

JUAN

These days, you never know, do you?

NANCY

(Entering.)

Is that Juan Garcia out there? I don't believe it.

JUAN

(Rises.)

Mrs. Winikoff.

(They kiss on cheek.)

SAMMY

You recognized him?

NANCY

Well of course. How are your mom and dad, honey?

JUAN

Fine, thank you. They're back in Colombia.

NANCY

Oh my, I had no idea. I thought you had just moved up to Boca Raton.

JUAN

(Smiles.)

I came here looking for my cousin, Maria.

NANCY

Maria's your cousin? Well that explains a lot.

JUAN

Glad to be of assistance. Have you seen her, by any chance?

NANCY

Oh, just stay right where you are. She'll show up.

JUAN

I thought as much.

ALAN

This is a precious opportunity for us, though. We can finally find out what her story is. Do you know her husband?

JUAN

(Amused.)

She told you she has a husband.

SAMMY

Of a sort. They have a very liberal relationship.

JUAN

I suppose that could be said.

ALAN

So she is married.

JUAN

Not exactly, no. Married to her work, perhaps.

SAMMY

Oh, God. The Riddler cousins.

NANCY

Don't be rude, Sammy. There's no need to pry.

(Exits.)

SAMMY

(Waits till she's gone.)

So on the level, Juan. What's the deal with Maria?

JUAN

On the level, Sammy. It's not a very happy story, I'm afraid. Before she came to me, she was having a pretty miserable time of it. She once told me that her summer in Miami was the only endurable time of her childhood. Her father used her for his own little girlfriend, if you know what I mean. Her mother hated her as if she were just that. It's the same old story. I didn't see her for ten years or so. When she finally looked me up again, I had a successful small business operation going. She had been a junkie and a prostitute in L.A.

ALAN

Fuck you. You're full of it.

JUAN

I'm sorry. I misunderstood. I thought you two were hungry for "the real poop."

SAMMY

Let's hear the rest of it.

JUAN

Needless to say, she didn't look quite as glamorous as she does these days. More like a stray mutt in a railroad yard. On a wet night. I took her in--blood thicker than water and all that--and gave her sustenance. She blossomed under my care. And came to work for me.

ALAN

To work for you.

JUAN

Well, I branched out a bit in my business. She turned out to have applicable skills.

ALAN

Applicable skills.

SAMMY

(Catching on.)

You are full of shit.

JUAN

How can I be full of shit? I'm still being so annoyingly vague.

SAMMY

You're saying she's your whore.

JUAN

I would never use that word.

SAMMY

And you're her pimp.

JUAN

Or that word.

(Beat.)

ALAN

Okay, so what was your business before you branched out into prostitution? Hotel management?

SAMMY

No, remember he said he used the old house as a warehouse. Retail, right? So what was your product? Mom's convinced the house was a drug cartel dropoff point.

(Silence, smile from JUAN.)

Oh Jesus, don't tell me she was right. I've been making fun of her paranoia for years.

JUAN

Perhaps I shouldn't be so frank in the presence of an attorney.

ALAN

Former attorney.

JUAN

Former? Well, all right. I do admit that I was able to take advantage of good family contacts back in Colombia....

ALAN

Oh my God. Whatever happened to you, Juan? You were such a nice kid. Then something happened to you, you disappeared. What on earth did you *do* in high school?

JUAN

Wait a minute, my friend. I'm not the one who disappeared. This house was my second home for years. You two were my only friends in the neighborhood, all through elementary school. Then, when Sam and I were about ten, came tennis. Suddenly you were at the tennis club every afternoon and all weekend. Unless you were playing here, on that weird fucking grass court.

SAMMY

You had no interest in tennis, Juan.

JUAN

How could I? Without lessons, without entry to the country club? I couldn't so much as step on the court with you. Not that I was ever invited. I went from two friends to none. In high school I made different friends. We didn't play tennis, either. We smoked dope and played our Led Zeppelin records very loud. Later we moved to harder stuff. And I don't mean Ted Nugent. Meanwhile you boys were in your tennis whites, romping around your grass tennis court.

(MARIA has appeared behind screening. At end of JUAN's speech, she enters casually.)

MARIA

Hello darling.

(Takes seat.)

JUAN

So there you are. I was told you'd show up here before long.

MARIA

Just being neighborly.

JUAN

So I hear.

SAMMY

We've been having a nice reunion with your "husband."

MARIA

Lovely.

SAMMY

He's been very helpful. Filling us in on some particulars of your resumé.

ALAN

And his own. Very impressive.

SAMMY

Garcia and Cousin. Vice, Etc.

ALAN

Why didn't you tell us you were Maria from that summer? Juan's cousin?

MARIA

I thought I'd let you remember for yourselves. I'm a bit insulted that Alan heard no bells ring.

(ALAN embarrassed.)

You do remember now, don't you Alan? Nighttime on the grass tennis court. You were fourteen, I was twelve. It was so warm all night, no covers needed. We snuck back to our houses before dawn.

ALAN

I remember. I remembered the other day, I just didn't know it was you.

SAMMY

All night? You never told me about that. What happened?

MARIA

Not so much as you think. We were kids. It was all very sweet.

JUAN

You were quite the little siren, cousin.

MARIA

Distant cousin.

JUAN

What are you saying? Our parents are siblings. Were, anyway.

ALAN

You married your first cousin?

MARIA

You're allowed to marry your cousin, especially a removed one.

JUAN

We're neither removed nor married. That's enough of that.

SAMMY

Juan has informed us that he is more your...uh...business manager than your *husband* per se.

MARIA

What has he been telling you? Let me guess. I'm his whore, who he rents out as a side business.

(Silence.)

My poor husband likes to have his little fantasies. If he told you about his drug dealing, he told the truth. As for the rest, I'm afraid not. Tell me, did I *seem* like a prostitute to you?

SAMMY

ALAN

No.

Of course not.

(Embarrassed silence.)

MARIA

Juan is my husband. He just likes to pretend.

(Beat.)

SAMMY

Well, I don't even care what the truth is. Maybe you were a virgin two weeks ago or maybe you're a professional. I'm going to Amsterdam in a few days and I want you to come with me.

MARIA

How could I do that? What would Juan say?

JUAN

Exactly. Finally she speaks sense. Of course, that doesn't mean we couldn't work out some sort of arrangement. Two weeks for, say....thirty-five hundred.

MARIA

Juan, darling, you can't rent out your wife.

JUAN

I can if I get my price.

SAMMY

I don't care if she's your wife or your employee. If she comes with me it's of her own free will.

JUAN

I'm afraid that won't be possible. On the other hand, it could be profitable to have her make a business trip to Amsterdam. Pick up some cheap merchandise....

SAMMY

(To MARIA.)

Of course I'll pay for your plane fare and other expenses. It's an offer you can't refuse.

JUAN

(Amused.)

And no strings attached. No obligations, no favors required.

SAMMY

(Angry.)

That's right.

MARIA

(Standing.)

I'm sorry to disappoint you all. I'm sorry to disappoint everybody. I've always disappointed. I suppose I have a knack for raising expectations. But I'm unable to be your travel companion, Sammy. I don't travel well anyhow. And I can't be your second wife, Alan, despite the wonderful times we've had on that wonderful grass tennis court. And you, Juan, poor Juan, my cousin and husband. You want me to be your whore as well. You want power so badly, and you see that as power, don't you? Somehow that would be a way of getting back at a world that has wronged you. Making money off of drugs and women, driving a fancy car, wearing expensive clothes. You're a regular DeNiro. But I can't be your whore, Juan, you know that. Though I will try to help you, as you helped me. It's an ugly world out there, away from the Winikoff's backyard tennis court.

(Exits. JUAN takes out notebook and starts adding figures.)

SAMMY

What are you doing?

JUAN

(Writing.)

Business. You boys apparently have been patronizing my business, whether or not you realized it.

NANCY

(Enters, upset.)

Juan, I have to ask you to leave.

ALAN

Mom?

NANCY

I heard every word from inside. I knew something evil was going on at that house all these years. You two and your father made fun of me, but I knew. For Maria's sake, I believe her version of who she is. God knows that poor girl deserves the benefit of the doubt. But I will not tolerate drug dealers in my home.

JUAN

(Finishes calculations, stands.)

Mrs. Winikoff, you were always kind to me, and I will respect your wishes. This neighborhood is practically half Hispanic now, but back when we were the only Latinos on the block, you were kind to me. The other parents made me feel like a little criminal, a refugee, but you treated me like a regular person, like someone who deserved respect.

NANCY

You were a good boy. I was just being a human being, Juan.

JUAN

I'm afraid that's not true. I've known human beings.

(Rips out two sheets, hands one to SAMMY, one to ALAN.)

I think you boys will find this reasonable.

(Moves towards screen door.)

Remember: Nothing promised that's not performed.

(Exits.)

ALAN

(Reading.)

"Invoice for services rendered: \$1,600. Due: whenever--on account of old time's sake."

NANCY

(Sits.)

I can't believe it. A drug ring operating right across the street.

SAMMY

You can't believe it? You've been trying to convince us of it for ten years.

NANCY

I know, but Juan? Little Juan Garcia from next door? I don't  
(MORE)

NANCY (CONT'D)

know what's happening to this world. This neighborhood used to be at least far enough away from the city to provide a semblance of a haven from the crime, the drugs. Your father insists there's no danger, but that's fine for him--he never leaves the house. But I like to take a walk now and then.

We moved down here partly to escape the crime. Back then this area was so peaceful. It was rural--hard to believe now with all the strip malls. There were actually areas of *land*--undeveloped, wild land. Now it's all pavement and housing development, each one identical to the next.

Thank God we were able to hang onto our precious acre. Where else could we go? We're practically in the Everglades already.

SAMMY

Not to worry--they'll pave that soon too. Welcome to the Great Mall of the Everglades. Pink plastic alligators and all.

NANCY

Imagine: a grass tennis court, smack dab in the middle of all this concrete suburbia. A wooden windmill could be no stranger. Thank you for mowing it, boys. I don't know why your father stopped taking care of it. It was some exercise at least, some fresh air.

SAMMY

Probably afraid of being mowed down himself by stray Tommy-gun fire. Rat-a-tat-tat-tat!

NANCY

Oh my God, don't even joke about that. Your father and his machine gun....

ALAN

What did you say?

NANCY

Oh, about a year ago, what with crime becoming such a problem, you know you never feel safe anymore, not even in your own home.

ALAN

Yes?...

NANCY

Well, your father went out and bought an easy.

SAMMY

An easy?

NANCY

Oh, whatever they're called--those machine guns from Israel....

SAMMY

An Uzi? Are you joking?

NANCY

Uzi, that's it. Just went over to Don's Gun Shop, easy as buying a microwave. I think he liked the idea of buying Israeli.

SAMMY

Jesus! Couldn't he have just had a tree planted in the Sinai like anyone else?

ALAN

Mother, I can tell you for a fact that it is not quite as easy to buy an Uzi as it is to buy a General Electric. Almost, the way things are these days, if you have the right connections, but not quite. Now how did he really get an Uzi?

NANCY

Well, that's what he said. He drives out to the Everglades every few weeks or so to practice.

SAMMY

What does he shoot, cans of soda?

NANCY

It's sad, really. He came down here for the safe, crime-free, bucolic life. Now all he can hear in bed at night is the new interstate, packed with cars all night long, and he says he's ready for the first housebreaker, whom he's going to "blow back out the door like a Swiss cheese."

ALAN

I'm glad he didn't have that thing when I was a teenager, sneaking back into the house just before dawn.

NANCY

I'm afraid to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night. I tell you, it's not healthy. We should have stayed up north, with the snow and the old-fashioned kind of crime. You just can't plan anything, the way the world keeps changing. (MORE)

(Beat.)

NANCY (CONT'D)

Alan, I'm going to make you some sandwiches for the flight.

ALAN

I get a meal on board, Mom.

NANCY

What would that feed, a ten-year-old?

ALAN

Mom, please, I don't want--

NANCY

(Almost in tears.)

Just let me make you the damn sandwiches!

(NANCY exits. Beat.)

SAMMY

So, you're not really going to stay down here, are you?

(Pause.)

ALAN

(Sighs.)

No, I guess not. I make too much goddamn money.

(Pause.)

You know, I probably would love being a park ranger, and I'll never do it.

SAMMY

I'd hate it. And that's probably just what I'll end up doing.

ALAN

No med school.

SAMMY

No. You're right--I can't quit the tour now. And I'll never go through med school and a residency in my thirties. Some people do, but I won't.

ALAN

Club pro?

SAMMY

Nah, I never did have the patience for teaching tennis. Hitting slow balls out of your hand, repeating the same directions over and over, faking interest in Mrs. Lipshitz's backhand.

ALAN

I'm sure some club on a Caribbean island would pay you to just lounge around in tennis shorts and your tanned, sculpted chest, and get up every once in a while to pound a bucket of serves and impress the tourists.

SAMMY

I like that, except for the hitting serves part.

(Beat.)

ALAN

(Looks out toward court.)

I guess with both of us gone the court's going to grow back. It'll be a jungle again when we get back here.

SAMMY

Then we'll just mow it again. Chop, then mow, then roll it.

ALAN

Chalk the lines. String up the net.

SAMMY

I don't care if this entire neighborhood becomes part of the Mall of the Everglades. They can even have the house. But that patch of land stays a tennis court.

ALAN

They can watch us play between shopping at Wal-Mart and dining at Burger King.

(Beat.)

I gotta get going.

SAMMY

What are you going to do?

ALAN

I'm going inside. I'm going to convince Dad to get rid of his beloved assault weapon. Then I'm going to make sure my cab's coming.

SAMMY

That's ridiculous. I can drive you. No one takes cabs here.

ALAN

It's over an hour round trip. The cab's no problem. Remember all that god damn money I make?

SAMMY

All right, all right. But that's not what I meant anyway. What about your marriage?

ALAN

I don't know. We'll see what happens. A year from now, ten years from now, we'll both know.

(Beat.)

I better go.

(Extends his hand. They shake warmly.)

Good seeing you.

SAMMY

Yeah. I'll see you.

(They break. ALAN heads towards house, glancing in the direction of MARIA's house, then stopping near the door.)

ALAN

Hey, you remember that game I almost held serve today?

SAMMY

No.

ALAN

Thanks a lot. Near the end of the second set. I thought I was finally gonna win a game. I got it to my ad, and then came to net on your backhand. You had to really run for it, way out of the court, and I was covering well. I didn't think you had a chance. But you got there and took it right in stride, just cracked it down the line. I didn't even get near it.

(Pause.)

Nice shot.

(ALAN exits to house. SAMMY sits in chair at center stage, thinking. After a few seconds picks up one of the tennis balls from the table, almost without thinking. Holds it against his mouth with both hands, smelling it, thinking. The sound of

balls hit by rackets fades in quietly, and he looks out at the court and smiles, and the sound rises and the light fades to black.

The sound continues and then the lights come up to an orange sunset glow. SAMMY is gone, and a younger NANCY and MORRIS, both in their forties, are standing on the patio watching their sons play on the court.)

NANCY

Oh, it's marvelous, dear. Such a beautiful court. And look at them play--they love it so much! And they're so good, after only a few lessons.

MORRIS

I guess you could say it's a dream come true. I loved tennis for some reason, even though I was never any good. Ever since I was a kid I dreamed of having my own tennis court. After the war everyone was talking about having their own airplane, their own boat, two cars in every garage. Not me: I wanted a grass tennis court. I had visions of garden parties, round-robins of mixed doubles while the guests sipped gin and tonics. Perpetual summer, down in Florida. A son--or two (gesturing)--growing up learning to play the game the right way. A champion. And there they are: my two boys, knocking around the ol' white ball on our very own brand new grass court.

NANCY

And you got *two* champions.

MORRIS

No, I don't think so. Alan will be a good player, he's a fine little athlete. But not a real champ, like Sammy. It's the little one who's got the instinct, the real spark. Little Sammy's going to be our champion.

(Beat.)

NANCY

It's almost dark. I don't see how they can still see the ball.

MORRIS

What a sky. I dreamed of skies like this, too, freezing up there in Boston.

NANCY

Look at how that Miami sunset bouncing off the clouds reaches the court. The trees are dark and so is the grass. But the lines, and the ball, and their white clothes are all glowing that faint gorgeous orange.

(Pause.)

They look like they never want to stop.

FADEOUT, CURTAIN