

CROSSING THE VEIL

Draft 6

May, 2020

A full-length play

By Bob Bowersox

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Registered WGA/E

Contact:

Bob Bowersox

1212 Georgia Street

Key West, FL 33040

302-540-6102

RTBowersox@gmail.com

Represented by:

Robert Carl Cross

Robert Carl Cross & Associates

Robertcarlcross.com

Rcca@robertcarlcross.com

786-971-5023

CHARACTERS:

MARTIN HOPEWELL.....late 50s or so; the spirit of the deceased

MAGGIE HOPEWELL.....mid-40s or so; wife of the deceased

LISA HOPEWELL.....12 or 13; daughter of the deceased

BEN HOPEWELL.....27 or 28; son of the deceased

FATHER OWEN LARSON.....60s; Catholic priest and long-time family friend

CONRAD RUSTIN.....40s to 60s; Director of the Rustin Funeral Home

PLACE:

A large viewing room in the Rustin Funeral Home

TIME:

The Present

Notes on the text:

A “...” means a pause, unless it falls at the end of a line, where it means the thought/speech trails off.

A “/--” at the end of a line means the next actor’s line cuts off this line

A word in italics means to give that word a little stress.

A word in CAPS means to give that word a solid stress.

The conceit of this play is that the family members and priest – Maggie, Ben, Lisa, and Father Larson – do not see or hear Martin. Their speeches should be delivered as monologues when they are alone with the coffin and corpse. They are basically speaking their thoughts to themselves and the corpse. There are obvious points where they would normally pause in their thoughts before speaking again, which is where Martin’s lines come. Their lines are written to indicate this, and those moments should be more or less obvious.

But the actors playing family and priest must never give any indication or nuance that they are aware of Martin in any way. Their eyes should never fall on him. They cannot react to anything he says or does, other than as indicated.

Martin, however, is aware of and can see and hear all the other players. It is up to the actor playing Martin how he interprets Martin’s awareness of his situation.

When the spirit of Martin touches one of the other actors (he touches all but the priest), the touched actor must not give any indication that they feel the touch in any way. Each will be doing some kind of business at the time of the touch, and must continue with that business as though nothing happened.

AT RISE:

The sterile, flavorless blah of a funeral home viewing room.

Large double doors are center on the angled SL wall, which runs downstage left to upstage center-left. The angled SR wall runs mid-downstage right to upstage center-right. It is bare, except for a large portrait of a heavenly scene placed center.

In front of the SR wall is a raised riser area, upon which rests an open coffin, with its head downstage. There is no lid. Behind and on either side of the coffin and riser are some moderate flower arrangements on stands.

In front of the SL wall and doors are two or three sections of folding chairs, arranged in several rows, with an aisle between them. They should sit on the same angle as the wall.

(See Set Sketch in Appendix A)

Inside the coffin can just be seen the top of the head of the body of a very dead MARTIN HOPEWELL, silvering hair and some heavy-handed makeup. The shoulders of a blue suit are just visible over the edge of the mahogany rail of the coffin.

Just barely heard is the typical cloying organ music heard in such circumstances.

MARTIN HOPEWELL sits rather laxly on the edge of the downstage edge of the riser, one leg stretched out, an arm across the other knee, leaning back against the head of the coffin. He's checking the nails of his other hand. He looks bored.

Nothing happens for several long beats -- almost too long -- then the doors open and CONRAD RUSTIN enters, turns, and closes the doors. He's pole-straight, perfectly coiffed and dressed, all business.

He straightens a chair or two on his way up the short aisle toward the coffin. He fluffs the flowers at the foot of the coffin, then walks right past Martin on the riser to fluff those at the head of the coffin. He doesn't acknowledge Martin in any way -- he in fact doesn't see him.

Martin rises, watches Ruskin at the flowers a moment, then steps to the center of the coffin and looks in.

MARTIN

I never liked that suit.

Rustin doesn't react. He just turns and crosses back to the doors, stops and peruses the room one last time, then exits.

Martin leans on an arm on the edge of the coffin, watching him go. He looks back at the body in the coffin. He snorts a smile, shakes his head.

The doors open again and Rustin escorts MAGGIE HOPEWELL into the room. She's an attractive woman, wringing the life out of a hankie in her hands. She's uneasy and slow to enter the space. She is followed by a very reluctant LISA HOPEWELL, who obviously would rather be anywhere but here.

Martin straightens at their entrance, a smile breaking on his face. He takes a step toward them, stops.

MARTIN

Maggie?

(then to Lisa)

Hi, baby.

Neither react. Maggie's looking at the floor, then slowly allows herself to look up at her deceased husband in the coffin. Martin follows her eyes to his body, then turns back to her and shrugs.

MARTIN

I'd say I'm sorry, but I'm not sure you'd care.

She exhales a sigh, and shakes her head.

Rustin comes to the side of the coffin, touches this and that perfunctorily. He stands directly in front of Martin, his back to him. He looks to Maggie.

RUSTIN

(in a hushed tone)

The room is yours, Mrs. Hopewell, privately, as long as you and your family require. The formal viewing's scheduled for five. Until then, I and my colleagues will be just down the hall if you need anything.

Maggie lets her eyes drift from the coffin to Rustin.

MAGGIE

Thank you. Do you know....is Father Larson here yet?

RUSTIN

I haven't seen him. But I'll check. Shall I send him in when he arrives?

MARTIN

No.

MAGGIE

Yes, that will be fine.

RUSTIN

May I get you anything in the meantime? Some water, perhaps?

LISA

(plopping into a chair SR, breaking the hush rather loudly)

I'll take a gin and tonic. Light on the tonic.

MAGGIE

Lisa....

LISA

What?

MAGGIE

Please.

LISA

Okay. I'll take a gin and tonic, *please*.

MAGGIE

That's not what I meant, and you know it.

(to Rustin)

I'm sorry. Thank you. We'll be fine.

Rustin smiles mechanically, nods, and exits, closing the door softly behind him.

MAGGIE

(to Lisa)

Try to show a little dignity, will you? Your father's lying in a coffin and--

LISA

(snottily)

I didn't put him there. And why do you care all of a sudden? It's been what, eight years?

Martin sits in one of the chairs, watching Maggie and Lisa intently.

MAGGIE

Lisa. Jesus. Not today, okay? I can't deal with your hormones on top of all of this. Let's just try and get through today without any drama, would that be all right?

Lisa crosses her arms, sighs heavily, looks away from her mother.

MAGGIE

Have you seen your brother?

Lisa shrugs.

MAGGIE

LISA JEAN....Is your brother here?

MARTIN

(happy to hear it)

Ben's here too?

LISA

(to Maggie)

How should I know? Maybe he's outside, okay?

(she stands quickly)

I'll go get him.

MAGGIE

Oh, no. You stay right where you are. He'll find us. I don't want to be chasing either of you around this place.

Lisa plops back down in the chair, pulls out her cellphone and starts scrolling through it.

Maggie watches her a moment, then shakes her head, then turns to look at her dead ex-husband again.

Martin watches her.

Maggie takes a step or two to her right, stretches her neck to try to see into the coffin a bit more, but she doesn't move closer to it.

She moves back to her left, again craning her neck to see, but again, not moving closer.

As she moves again to her right, Lisa looks up at her mother, watches a moment.

Martin smiles.

MARTIN

I won't bite you, Maggie.

LISA

He can't bite, you know.

Maggie looks at her.

MAGGIE

(sheepish)

I know, I know.

(back to the coffin)

I just...I can't...don't want...

Maggie looks back to Lisa, then again to the coffin. Her shoulders sag, she sighs, then steels herself.

As she begins to take a step toward the coffin, the door suddenly opens behind her, startling her. She jumps.

MAGGIE

Oh, my God!

FATHER OWEN LARSON, in priest's garb, enters.

LARSON

(humorously, with a strong Minnesota accent)

Well, not exactly, but I believe I'm in His family, don't ya know.

Martin slumps in his chair. Not the guy he wants to see.

MAGGIE

Father. My God. You nearly scared me to death.

Larson closes the door as Ben moves to his mother, gives her a hug.

LARSON

Well, I hope not, there, Maggie. My apologies. Found Ben outside, thought we should come right in.

As he says this, BEN HOPEWELL enters and closes the doors. He's in an obviously expensive business suit and power tie. Very successful-looking, and he bears himself that way.

Martin stands excitedly.

MARTIN

Ben! How are you, son?

Ben walks right past him to his mother. As he does, Martin dejectedly sits again.

BEN

You okay, Mom?

Maggie nods, hugs into him.

MAGGIE

I'm just glad you're here.

BEN

Sorry I was late. Traffic out of the city was horrid.

LISA

(without looking up from her phone)

Amazed you even bothered.

BEN

Hey...

LARSON

(stepping in)

And Lisa. Good to see you too, lookin'...

(she ignores him)

...lookin', uh...

LISA

(without looking up)

Uh-huh.

LARSON

...Well, lookin' o kay, I guess....

Lisa rolls her eyes, shakes her head.

Maggie moves to Larson, takes his hands.

MAGGIE

Thank you for coming, Father. I really appreciate it. It's just been so....

LARSON

I know...

MAGGIE

...hard...

LARSON

(giving her a hug)

I know. I know, Maggie. One can never be fully ready. But we're all here now, together, and the Good Lord has given us this chance to say our goodbyes to Martin in quiet and peace.

LISA

(under her breath, with disgust)

Oh, my God....

Maggie smiles at Larson, shrugs her shoulders.

Ben has moved to the side of the coffin.

BEN

He looks...good. Like he's just sleeping.

Lisa jumps up.

LISA

(looking to him angrily)

How would you know how he looks, Ben?

MAGGIE

Lisa--

LISA

When was the last time you came out of that bank to go and see him, huh? When?

BEN

It's not a bank, it's a securities--

MARTIN

Not a bank...

LISA

When, Ben? A year?

BEN

I--

LISA

Two years? Five?

MAGGIE

LISA!

LISA

This is ludicrous. Daddy's dead, and you're all standing around like it's just another day...like he's just taking a nap....

(spit at Ben)

...*sleeping*....I can't believe you people.

Lisa grabs her coat and starts for the door. Ben moves quickly to her, stops her.

BEN

Sis...Come on...This isn't easy for any of us....

He touches her shoulders. She looks up at him, then falls into him, burying a sob into his chest.

A long silence as they all follow her into themselves.

Finally, Lisa gathers herself, pulls from Ben.

LISA

I can't be here right now. I can't.

She moves to the door and opens it. Martin rises, moves toward her.

MARTIN

Baby...

MAGGIE

Lisa...

Lisa exits, leaving the door ajar.

MAGGIE

Lisa!

Ben moves into the door.

BEN

I'll go with her. She just needs to...you know.

MAGGIE

Please don't let her leave.

BEN

I won't.

Ben exits.

MARTIN

Jesus, Maggie, can't you see she's hurting?

Martin circles the chairs to upstage.

Maggie moves to one of the downstage chairs, drops her purse next to it, and sits. She rubs the headache rising in her temples.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Father. Lisa's not been....

LARSON

I'm sure...

MAGGIE

...I think this hit her harder, you know?

LARSON

(moves to her, squats in front of her)

I do. Girls and their daddies, right? They were close, no doubt.

MAGGIE

(a shrugged nod)

Very. She was only five when we split. A tough time for a girl to lose her father.

LARSON

Yah, I'm guessin' so.

(he stands)

What can I do, Maggie? Would you like to pray?

MARTIN

Please...don't.

MAGGIE

I don't know what I'd pray for, Father.

LARSON

Comfort, maybe? Strength?

MARTIN

(as he sits in an upstage chair)

How about resurrection?

Maggie looks at Larson, smiles.

MAGGIE

Maybe later? When the kids come back?

LARSON

Sure. Fine.

(beat)

I'll leave ya alone, then, for awhile. That be okay?

She thinks about this for a moment, looks to the coffin, then back to Larson.

MAGGIE

Would that be alright? Can you stay?

LARSON

I got nothing else to do, nowhere else to be.

(rests his hand on her shoulder)

I'll go see how Lisa and Ben are.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

Larson moves to the door, opens it. He turns and smiles at Maggie, then exits.

MARTIN

Thank God. Man smells like stale cigarettes and sour cheese curds...

Maggie sits motionless a beat or two, then looks to the coffin. She slowly rises and tentatively moves to it. She cautiously reaches out a hand, rests it on Martin's chest.

MAGGIE

Aw, Marty....

Maggie sags to her knees, drops her head on her hands gripping the side rail. Her shoulders betray her tears.

As she silently weeps, Martin shakes his head.

MARTIN

How endearing. I didn't think you had any emotion left for me. I'm almost moved.

(beat)

Almost.

A moment later, Maggie gathers herself, stands, wiping her eyes. She touches the corpse again, less fearful this time.

MAGGIE

(almost whispered)

I did love you, you know...

This gets to Martin. He rises, crosses downstage, looking at her.

MARTIN

Oh, really? An odd way to show it, don't you think? Changing the locks, pitbull lawyers, the courts, taking my kids/--

MAGGIE

I think I always did.

MARTIN

Right. Bullshit, Maggie. If you loved me, you wouldn't have/--

MAGGIE

But you were so--

MARTIN

What? I was so,,.what?

MAGGIE

...closed...

MARTIN

Closed?

MAGGIE

...at the end...so...I don't know...

MARTIN

Come on, Maggie, you know that's not/--

Maggie knows she's talking to herself, but she gestures to the corpse regularly, or looks at it, as though she's in a conversation.

MAGGIE

...unreachable. I couldn't get through anymore...

MARTIN

Jesus, Maggie, you make it sound like it was all me and you know that's not how it was.

Maggie slides down on the step of the coffin's riser, sits, as she says...

MAGGIE

God, what happened to us, Marty?

MARTIN

You threw away thirty years like it was an old newspaper is what happened.

MAGGIE

How did we let it get away from us?

MARTIN

Wasn't me who left, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Every day for the last five years -- *every day* -- I've asked myself that question. When was the moment it changed? Went out of sync?

MARTIN

Come on. It's not like some "dark" force showed up and said, "These people shall no longer love one another!"

MAGGIE

What did we lose sight of?

MARTIN

You lost sight of *me*, Maggie.

Maggie looks up at the coffin.

MAGGIE

I don't blame you...

MARTIN

Oh, well, that's comforting.

MAGGIE

...or myself, really. I don't know what I could have done differently.

MARTIN

(as he sits back in the chair)

Talking to me before blowing everything up comes to mind.

MAGGIE

I know I should have talked to you more. I know it.

Martin motions with his hand, acknowledging what he perceives as truth in a "there you go" gesture.

MAGGIE

I should have tried harder to let you know how I was feeling. I should have said something.

MARTIN

How many times did I ask, Maggie? "What's wrong? What can I do?"

MAGGIE

I mean, I know you tried...once in a while. But...

MARTIN

But what?

MAGGIE

For the longest time...the last year or two...you were never there, even when you were...

MARTIN

Meaning...?

MAGGIE

And I got so lonely, Marty.

MARTIN

Lonely? Why would you feel/--

MAGGIE

So much of the time I just felt...alone.

MARTIN

Look, I know I wasn't always there. I had business, Maggie, you know tha/--

MAGGIE

Even with you in the room, I felt alone. Lying next to you in bed...I...felt...alone.

MARTIN

(dismissively)

Come on, Maggie//...

MAGGIE

I don't know if I did something, or you just stopped caring about me the way you used to. You didn't touch me anymore...we didn't...anymore. I couldn't tell if it was you or me, or what.

MARTIN

Well, you hadn't exactly been amorous yourself/--

MAGGIE

For a while, I thought maybe you were seeing someone else, coming home later and later...schmoozing clients at bars, you said...but I was sure you'd met somebody else.

MARTIN

(not exactly denying it)

Maggie, I/--

MAGGIE

But I never said anything because I didn't want to believe that. I still don't want to, but how would I know? And now I guess it doesn't matter, does it?

(beat)

My fortieth birthday. You remember that?

MARTIN

Don't...

MAGGIE

I waited at that restaurant for two hours. A new dress, new earrings. Spent a fortune on my hair.

MAGGIE

How many times am I going to have to say I'm sor//--

MAGGIE

I even showed up on time! Can you believe that? When did you ever see me do that?
(looks at her hands, rising..)

You never came.

MARTIN

A client called. You know this. It was an emergency.

MAGGIE

An emergency, you said.

(beat)

Maybe I should have been a client.

Maggie rises, looks at the corpse.

MAGGIE

I think only one of us wanted to be married, and it was me. It's really hard to be married to somebody if you're the one putting in all the work. I tried to be there more for *you*, Marty, but it's like you were ignoring me, always in your office, or with your nose buried in the Wall Street Journal or Forbes or Investor's Business...whatever...

MARTIN

It was my job, Maggie....it's what paid the bills!

MAGGIE

Maybe I just took too much energy to love.

(beat)

Do you know how many times you simply mumbled "Mm-hmm" to something I said?

MARTIN

Maggie...

MAGGIE

I could have said anything: “Marty, I’m going out for a bit...thought I’d rob a bank. We could use a little extra cash.” “Mm-hmmm.” “Marty, NASA called-- they’re sending me to Mars next weekend. Want to go?” “Mm-hmmm.” “Marty, I’ve decided to have the operation -- I’m bored with being a woman. I’d like to swing a dick for a while.” “Mm-hmmm. Sounds great, honey.”

MARTIN

(rising)

Oh, for the love of/--

MAGGIE

And when I ever *did* get your attention about something, you’d give me a dozen reasons why I shouldn’t feel a certain way, or do something this way or that, or give me three different ways I could do what I wanted to do that you thought were better than the way I wanted to do it.

MARTIN

(pacing, not looking at her)

Maybe I knew better about some things, that’s all.

MAGGIE

You never listened to me, Marty.

(beat)

You stopped *listening*...I felt like I was opening my mouth and no sound was coming out, or I was invisible or something.

This stops him. He turns to look at her.

She leans back against the coffin, arms crossed.

MAGGIE

I actually started to wonder if you even *saw* me anymore.

(looks at the corpse)

I mean, really *saw* ME. I felt invisible, you know? It crushed me...

The emotion in her voice affects him.

(beat)

MARTIN

I...I did. I saw you. I just....

(quietly, as he sits, looking at her)

I saw you.

Maggie smiles, reaches out and fiddles with the knot of his tie, smiles.

MAGGIE

Remember when we first met?

MARTIN

Sure I remember. At Delaware.

MAGGIE

University of Delaware, April 22, 1968. Just after five in the afternoon. It was raining, kind of cool, a little breezy.

MARTIN

Well, not that precisely, but/--

MAGGIE

Jim Smith introduced us in...

MAGGIE

The Deer Park.

MARTIN

The Deer Park.

MARTIN

I remember that place...

MAGGIE

I couldn't take my eyes off you.

MARTIN

(remembering)

Jim said he was graduating and was leaving you in my care for your last year.

MAGGIE

Jim said he was graduating and leaving me in your care.

(she laughs)

It kind of turned out the other way around, but it didn't matter.

MARTIN

(smiling)

No. It didn't, did it?

MAGGIE

We took care of each other.

MARTIN

(nodding)

We did.

(beat)

MAGGIE

(with regret)

Until we didn't.

A heavy, silent beat.

MARTIN

Yeah...Until we didn't.

Maggie looks at the corpse again.

MAGGIE

Don't get me wrong, Marty. You always took care of us in that way--you were a good provider, making sure we had everything we needed. But I'm talking about taking care of each other in those unspoken ways: the touches, the hugs, the looks, the knowing smiles, the silent moments when you just sit and *feel* each other, you know? Just being *present*, you know? Where did all *that* go?

MARTIN

I...don't know, Maggie. I/--

MAGGIE

When was the moment -- the definable instant -- when all of that was suddenly gone? Extinguished? I mean, how does someone fall in love one day and then seemingly wake up the next and not *be* in love anymore? Or at least remember how to show it? How can it just evaporate like that? Is love really that fragile?

Maggie wipes a tear from the corner of her eye. During the following, she digs in her pocket for a tissue, dabs at her eyes, blows her nose quietly.

MARTIN

I don't know. I wish I did.

(he smiles)

You'd think that kind of knowledge would be a basic instinct we're born with, wouldn't you? A foundational truth we need to know from the get-go, like not breathing water, or holding fire in the palm of your hand. I feel like I lost something I didn't know I could lose and I've been forced to relive that loss every damn day since.

(looks at her)

You know what I mean?

Of course, she doesn't answer him and this frustrates him. He moves around the back of the coffin as...

God! I wish I could talk to you!

MAGGIE

It's hard for me to see you like this, Marty....

MARTIN

(across the coffin to her)

Imagine my perspective...

MAGGIE

...so still. So *totally* unreachable. At least...before...no matter how busy you were...I always felt I had a chance to catch you in a quiet moment when your eyes would find mine and we would...connect...for however long. Let our souls touch again, make each other smile, maybe. I'd love to have a chance at that again...at least one more time...

MARTIN

I wish I could give it to you. I wish I could take us back...before the walls, before the anger, before the fights and the yelling...

(he looks at her sadly)

...before the flame burned out. I always thought there would be time, you know? Time to make up for what I wasn't able to do...to be...

(anguished)

...I don't know!...

(he looks to the sky, arms spread, as if
pleading)

If whatever this is, is possible, why can't *that* be? Why give me this miracle and not that one?

Maggie turns, touches the corpse's chest again.

MAGGIE

I don't know where you are now, Marty, but I hope that if you're able to remember me, it's with kindness, and maybe a little love. And I hope...a little forgiveness too.

MARTIN

(turns back, approaches her)

Oh, if you only knew.

(long beat, looks at her lovingly)

God, you look good...still beautiful.

Martin reaches across the coffin and tries to touch Maggie's cheek with a finger.

MARTIN

Still my beautiful Maggie.

Maggie doesn't react to the touch at all. She doesn't feel it.

Martin rubs his finger with a thumb, indicating that there was no feeling there for him either...no sense of having touched her.

MARTIN

You know what I miss the most, Maggie? Touching you. Feeling your softness, your warmth. Rolling over in the morning and wrapping myself around your nakedness, listening to you breathe while you slept, smelling the scent in your hair as I lay on the pillow next to you.

(smiles)

I could pick the scent of you out of a dozen women in a dark room blindfolded, I swear. But it was the *feel* of you next to me that I could never get enough of.

(looks at her)

God, I was a lucky man.

Maggie breathes a deep sigh, and begins to turn away from the coffin...

MARTIN

Don't go. Please.

...but she notices something. Her eyes drift down, find the left hand of the corpse, she reaches out and touches the unseen gold band encircling the ring finger.

MAGGIE

You're still wearing your ring...

MARTIN

Never took it off.

MAGGIE

I wouldn't have thought...

MARTIN

It seemed wrong to not wear it. It would have felt like a finality... an end of hope, I guess. Even after eight years, there was something about holding on to it...

Maggie raises her own left hand to show the corpse, and wiggles her ring finger, around which rests a gold band.

MAGGIE

How about *that*?

(laughs lightly)

Does this mean we're still married...still connected...in some ethereal way?

MARTIN

God, I hope so.

MAGGIE

I'm not so sure I wouldn't mind.

(beat, then touches the corpse's face)

Aw, Marty, I wish I could talk to you one more time.

MARTIN

You can. You are.

MAGGIE

Just for a minute.

(she smiles, pats the corpse's hand)

But...

She sighs, then turns away from the coffin,
moves toward the chair where her purse still
sits.

Martin comes quickly from behind the coffin.

MARTIN

No...it's all right. I can hear you. What would you say?

She picks up her purse.

MARTIN

Please. I'm listening.

She pulls out a compact, opens it, looks over
her make-up, adjusts a few strands of hair,
smooths the powder on her face a bit, pulls out
a tissue and wipes at the tear-run mascara on her
cheek.

MARTIN

Please...

(indicates the coffin)

Come back and talk to me some more.

MAGGIE

(to herself)

God, I'm a sight.

MARTIN

A bewitching one.

He touches her shoulders, but she doesn't feel it or react in any way. She just puts the compact back in her purse, and turns toward the door. She takes a couple of steps and then looks to the coffin.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Marty. For everything.

MARTIN

(stepping to her)

Maggie, I...

She smiles sadly, then takes a step toward the door, dabbing at her eyes with the tissue. But just as she does, the door opens, and Ben and Lisa enter.

Martin's face brightens.

MARTIN

Hey, guys...

MAGGIE

Oh, good.

Lisa's still moody, tentative. She stands to the side, arms crossed, and watches Ben move to her mother, put his arm around her.

BEN

You okay?

MAGGIE

I guess. It's just...I don't know...thought I'd buried a lot of stuff, but...

BEN

Yeah.

MAGGIE

...I didn't expect...to feel...like I'm feeling

LISA

(testily)

What the hell *did* you expect?

BEN

Hey, Leese...come on...

LISA

No, really. What, exactly? Forgiveness?

MARTIN

Hey, sweetie, that's not really/--

LISA

Because that's never going to happen now. Ever.

(gestures at the coffin)

Daddy's dead. You blew your chance for forgiveness a long time ago.

BEN

Lisa! Jesus!

Lisa drills a stare at Ben, then...

LISA

Fuck you, Ben. Fuck both of you.

Lisa turns away from them, sits angrily in a chair by the door.

MAGGIE

Lisa...

Ben hugs her in tight.

BEN

(quietly)

Let it go, Mom. She's hurting and doesn't know what to do with it.

MAGGIE

I know, I know. But I'd hoped we could all just...be a family again for a little while, you know?

LISA

Like that's going to happen...

BEN

Lisa! Stop!

MAGGIE

It's okay, Ben. Leave her be.

(pulling herself together)

I need to fix my face. You two stay here, okay? Father wants to...you know...do a little something..

BEN

No hurry. He's having a smoke, said he'll be in when he's finished.

MAGGIE

He smokes?

MARTIN

Unless his cologne is Eau de Marlboro, he most definitely does.

BEN

Not a sin, if I remember my Catechism.

Maggie smiles at Ben, then moves to the door.
She stops in front of Lisa.

MAGGIE

I'm...sorry.

LISA

Don't.

MAGGIE

It'll be okay, I promise.

LISA

Yeah, yeah. Just...

(she waves her hand in a get-on-with-it manner)

MAGGIE
(to no one in particular)

I'll be right back.

Maggie exits.

Ben watches the door close, then looks at Lisa.

BEN
Nice, Leese. It's hard enough without you--

LISA
Now *you* stop, Ben. I don't want to hear it. I just want to get this over with and get the hell away from both of you.

BEN
What did *I* do?

LISA
Exactly.

MARTIN
Kids. Come on...

BEN
Okay, look. You're angry and upset, I get it. We all are. Can we just, right now, not make this any worse than it is? Can you be okay with that?

LISA
Whatever.

BEN
Really, Lisa...please.

LISA
Yes! All right! Jesus! Just...

She puts her hand up in a pushing motion.

Ben shakes his head, then turns and moves to the coffin. He looks at the corpse a few beats, then looks back to Lisa.

BEN
(indicating the coffin)

You want to....?

LISA
No. I'm fine right here.

As Ben turns back to the coffin, Martin moves toward him.

MARTIN
You look good, son. Really good. A chip off the old block. I always told you -- the stock market's the place to b/--

BEN
(looking at the corpse)
When was the last time you saw him, Leese?

MARTIN
Last Fall, wasn't it, hon?

LISA
(hesitantly)
...Years...I think...

BEN
Really?...That long?

MARTIN
No...it was only a few months//...

Lisa rises, starts pacing, her arms wrapped around herself.

LISA
Pretty sure.

MARTIN

No, baby. The park, remember? By the lake?

LISA

He called a couple times...

BEN

Yeah, me too.

MARTIN

(sitting)

Come on...I called you both every month. Or two...whatever..I called.

LISA

I never answered, though.

MARTIN

Yes, you did. We talked...

BEN

Why not?

Lisa shrugs, stops pacing, turns to Ben.

LISA

Did you? Answer?

BEN

Sometimes.

LISA

What was he like to you?

BEN

Okay, I guess. He mostly wanted to know how school was going. At work, he would stay at his end of the building, I would be at mine. We didn't talk much. But when we did, it was always the same--you know--surface kind of stuff.

LISA

He ever talk about...him leaving?

BEN

No. Well, maybe once. Real quick. Like an apology. You know -- "Sorry I wasn't there."
That kind of bullshit.

MARTIN

It wasn't bullshit, Ben. I meant it.

LISA

Guilt call.

BEN

I suppose.

MARTIN

Jesus, guys...what should I have said?

LISA

I heard Mom talking to him on the phone.

BEN

Yeah?

LISA

Yeah. A few times, actually.

MARTIN

I called her regularly too, if you must know.

BEN

How was that?

LISA

She'd yell sometimes. Other times she'd just -- you know, talk real quiet -- those are
when she'd start crying.

BEN

He had a way of doing that to her....

MARTIN

Oh, come on. You make me sound like an ogre.

LISA

Doing what?

BEN

They would argue sometimes and she would cry.

LISA

(she lies)

I don't remember.

BEN

You were little.

(beat)

I didn't think he could still do that to her after all this time.

LISA

I think she missed him. I think she still does...

Martin sits forward at hearing this.

BEN

Maybe.

LISA

She had that album she kept -- you know -- all the old photos, trinkets and shit...

BEN

Thought she said she burned that when they split.

MARTIN

So did I...

LISA

Nope. She hid it in the top of the hall closet. She'd look at it every once in a while...always get depressed.

MARTIN

And call me...

LISA

And then she'd call Dad.

(walks to chair, sits as...)

And she'd end up crying. And then she'd hang up and she'd come looking for me, be all "I'm so sorry you had to go through all this", or some bullshit.

BEN

Oh, God.

Ben moves toward Lisa.

LISA

It sucked. Really sucked. I just started leaving the house if I saw her pulling out that album.

Ben sits next to Lisa.

BEN

I didn't know, Leese. She never said anything to me...

LISA

When would she? You were gone...college or whatever. It was just me and good ol' Mom, so it was only me that had to deal with her turning into a basket case whenever she talked to him.

MARTIN

I had no idea.

LISA

(starts to tear up)

It's so fucked up. I just wanted Daddy. I just wanted him to come home and then to get over it and things be normal again. But he never came, and you were gone, and she was...Fuck.

MARTIN

Oh, baby...

Ben reaches out, touches her arm.

BEN

I'm sorry.

Lisa sniffles, wipes at her eyes and nose with her hand.

LISA

Why? Nothing for you to be sorry for. They fucked it up and we had to live with it.

Ben hands her his handkerchief.

BEN

I thought about coming home, you know.

LISA

You did?

BEN

Yeah. Was ready to leave school and everything.

MARTIN

That would have been foolish, son.

LISA

When?

BEN

Senior year. Couple months before I graduated.

MARTIN

Why would you do that?

BEN

(looks at Lisa)

I missed him too, you know? Even up at Wharton. I felt like there was this big hole in my life...not like he was ever really there in the first place...the business always came first, right? But I always felt like a part of me was missing. Like a limb or an organ or something that was important to my well-being, just wasn't there.

LISA

Hollow.

BEN

Yeah, good word. It was like being...hollow.

Ben puts his arm around Lisa. They fall silent
as...

MARTIN

Oh, for the love of God. I was a victim too, kids! My soul was as empty as yours! I lost her *and* both of you!

(gestures to the coffin)

Hell, now I've lost it *all*!

(moves slowly to the coffin, looks in)

I look at this guy and honest to God, I don't recognize him. He looks old to me. Exhausted. He looks like he's carried no residual life or love into the void with him. He looks...like a failure. And I didn't think I was one, but I know he was me, and it sounds like you think he failed you somehow, but for the life of me, I can't figure out how. I always thought I was doing what a father *should* do -- to keep you all safe, to make sure you had everything you needed or wanted. I thought that was what I was supposed to do. That was *my role*. A man provides for his family. That's what my father taught me and things worked out fine in *his* family. How is it that my doing it in *mine* ended up tearing *us* apart...

(turns to the kids)

...that it would make....make you...

(the word disgusts him)

...*hollow*....?

Martin slides to sitting on the riser in front of the coffin.

MARTIN

My God...how can something so fucked up come out of something so well-intentioned?

A heavy silence, then...

BEN

I wonder if he even knew...

MARTIN

Of course I did.

BEN

...either of them.

MARTIN

Well, I can't speak for her.

LISA
Knew what?

BEN
How we were feeling.

LISA
I think Mom did. A little anyway.

BEN
(gestures at corpse)
What about him?

LISA
I think...maybe. Maybe...he knew...a little. He said--

She catches herself...Ben looks up at her...he's
picked up on something.

BEN
Thought you said you didn't talk to him.

LISA
I...well...

BEN
What...?
(beat)
What, Lisa?

LISA
(beat, then quietly)
I kinda lied.

BEN
About what? When?

LISA
Earlier. When you asked me if I'd seen him. I said years, but...it wasn't.

MARTIN
Right. Thank you.

BEN

Yeah?

LISA

(she rises, crosses to left center)

He called the house. Probably looking for Mom, but she was out somewhere...work, shopping...I don't remember. I thought maybe it was you, so I answered, but...

MARTIN

It was me.

BEN

It was Dad.

LISA

Yeah. I don't think he was sure who I was at first. But when I heard his voice, I like...froze...

MARTIN

You didn't say anything.

LISA

...I didn't say anything. But then he said my name -- real quiet-like, you know...and...

The general stage lighting fades, and two spots solo Lisa, LCS, sitting on her feet, and Martin, who has stood up on the riser.

MARTIN

Lisa?

(beat)

Lisa, honey? Is that you?

LISA

(almost whispered)

Daddy?

MARTIN

Yes, Darlin'. It's Daddy. Oh, baby, it's so good to hear your voice.

LISA
(a mix of joy and desperation)

Daddy...Where are you?

MARTIN
I'm, uh...close. Not too far away.

LISA
Are you coming home? When are you coming home?
(a beat, as Martin doesn't immediately
answer)

Daddy?

MARTIN
Yes. Yes, I'm here, honey.

LISA
When are you coming home?

MARTIN
I, uh...I'm probably not going to be--

LISA
I want you to come home!

MARTIN
Lisa, honey...

LISA
Please!

This is difficult for Martin.

MARTIN
Lisa--

LISA
Please! Just say you're coming home, okay? I want you to come home.

MARTIN
I know. I know you do. But...I can't.

LISA
(anguish)

No....

MARTIN
(calmly, deliberately)
You're eight now, right? Old enough to know it's not that simple, yes?
(off her silence)

Yes?

LISA
(a small, little girl)

Yes.

MARTIN
Look...Your mother and I had different...ideas...about some things, that's all. Things between moms and dads. It had nothing to do with you or your brother.

LISA
Yes it did.

MARTIN
No, it/--

LISA
Yes it did! I didn't want you to go!

MARTIN
Okay...

LISA
She made you go.

MARTIN
Yes, she did, but it wasn't about you.

LISA
Yes it was.

MARTIN
It was about me.

LISA

She said you had to leave. She said I couldn't see you until I was bigger.

Martin sighs heavily.

MARTIN

I know. I know, baby. But that's a court thing. I can't do anything about that.

LISA

I want to see you!

MARTIN

I know. I want to see you too, but/--

LISA

If you won't come home, then can I come there?

MARTIN

I don't think that's allowed either...

LISA

Please? I won't tell Mom. I want to be with you.

He doesn't answer immediately...he doesn't know how to respond to that.

LISA

Please, Daddy? I don't want to be here anymore.

MARTIN

Look...How about this? Why don't I come see you. Some afternoon after school? Not at your Mom's, but...how about that little park near the house? We can have a snack or something. Would you like that?

LISA

Tomorrow? Can we do it tomorrow?

MARTIN

Sure. Tomorrow. I'll be on one of those benches by the lake when schools' over. How's that sound? I'll bring some bread for the ducks.

LISA

(rising to her knees)

Yes! Thank you, Daddy! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

MARTIN

You don't have to thank me, baby. I want to see you too. Tomorrow then. And uh...let's keep this between us, okay?

LISA

Okay.

(beat)

I love you, Daddy.

MARTIN

I love you too, sweetheart.

The two spots fade and the general lighting rises. Martin has returned to sitting, Lisa has stood up during the crossfade.

BEN

Did he show up?

LISA

Yeah.

MARTIN

Of course I did.

BEN

How'd he look?

Lisa wanders toward Ben.

LISA

Skinnier. And he had a beard...scratchy when I hugged him.

BEN

Not all spit-shined, huh?

LISA

No, not really...

BEN

I'm surprised. So...how was it?

LISA

It was...good...I guess. We sat on a bench, fed ducks.

MARTIN

You wouldn't let go of me. Squeezed my arm so tight, it fell asleep.

LISA

He tried to make me laugh. Told jokes and stuff.

BEN

His jokes always sucked.

MARTIN

Hey...

LISA

Yeah, but...it was...you know...

MARTIN

We had a good time.

LISA

...good...

BEN

I'm happy for you.

LISA

...I guess...

Lisa sits back down near Ben. She looks at her hands a beat or two. Ben waits. Then...

LISA

It didn't feel real.

Martin looks up.

BEN

What do you mean?

LISA

I don't know...like we were playing a game. His turn, my turn, his turn...you know?
Stupid talk about nothing. I tried one time to ask him about him and Mom,
and...me...and...

BEN

What did he say?

LISA

He said...

MARTIN

Let's not talk about that right now.

LISA

"Let's not talk about that right now."

MARTIN

I didn't want to ruin it. We were having a good time.

LISA

It's like he didn't trust me or something...like I was a kid, you know? Like I wouldn't understand.

MARTIN

No, it wasn't that at all/--

BEN

Did you? Do you?

LISA

What?

BEN

Understand?

LISA

I think so...

MARTIN

I just wanted it to be you and me/--

LISA

He just wanted it to be happy, I think. No drama.

BEN

Nothing wrong with that, I guess.

LISA

But it wasn't. Not really. 'Cause the later it got, the darker it got, and the only thing I could think about was that it would be over in a minute. He would be gone again. I wouldn't have a dad again.

MARTIN

(defensively)

I told you I'd always be your Dad. Don't you remember?

LISA

At the end, I started crying. I didn't want him to go.

BEN

But he did.

LISA

Yeah. He walked me home...almost. To the corner. Said he didn't want Mom to see him.

BEN

Chickenshit.

MARTIN

What do you know about it? The courts said/--

LISA

He said not to worry...promised he'd always be there for me...gave me his phone number...blah, blah...

BEN

Right. You call him?

LISA

Couple times. But it was weird. Like we were each talking about something different, just to be talking. I don't even remember what we said. I didn't mind...I just liked hearing his voice.

MARTIN

Me too.

BEN

You see him again?

LISA

No. He...

(looks up and gestures at the coffin)

...you know...

A long beat.

BEN

I'm really sorry, Leese. If I'd known, I would have--

A muted cell phone ring. Ben pulls his phone from his pocket, looks at the screen.

BEN

Shit.

LISA

What?

BEN

It's my office.

(he stands)

I need to take this. You be okay for a minute?

Lisa nods.

BEN

I'll be back soon as I can.

Ben moves to the door, exits.

Lisa watches him go, then...

LISA

Just like him....

Lisa sits in silence, then pulls out a tissue,
wipes her eyes and nose.

Martin rises, moves to her.

MARTIN

I'm so sorry, baby. The last thing in the world I wanted was to hurt you...

Lisa looks right through him at the coffin as
Martin speaks. She stands and moves toward
the coffin.

MARTIN

...You or your brother. But you have to know -- it wasn't my choice. Your mom...

(catches himself)

...never mind. Doesn't matter now, I guess.

Lisa stands at the coffin now, looking at the
corpse. After a beat...

LISA

(to the corpse)

You promised.

MARTIN

I know.

LISA

You said you'd always be there.

MARTIN

Baby/--

LISA

(like a bomb dropping)

You lied.

Martin stares at her a few beats, then his head
drops in acceptance of her truth.

Lisa reaches out and touches the corpse's face.

LISA

You're so cold. Is it cold where you are?

Martin looks up. He answers in a manner that indicates he realizes he's without power to affect anything here.

MARTIN

It's...nothing.

LISA

Is it empty there?

(beat)

'Cause it's empty here.

(beat)

That priest said I should talk to you...say goodbye or whatever. Like you could hear me, right?

MARTIN

I hear you.

LISA

Like it would make any difference...me standing here talking to my father's dead body and telling him all the dark shit I've been burying for the last eight years. Like this is supposed to be some kind of confessional. I mean, what am I supposed to say that would change a goddamned thing? For me OR you...you're dead. Gone. I could say a thousand Hail Mary's and you wouldn't come back, so what's the point?

Lisa slumps down on the riser step, her back to the coffin. Martin sits next to her, though Lisa is completely unaware he's there.

MARTIN

God, I wish I could talk to you....let you know how much you mattered/--

Lisa smacks the side of the coffin.

LISA

Damn you!

She drops her head back to the coffin, as if talking up to him...a beat, then...

LISA

I can't stop thinking about you. I lie in bed every morning and your face is all I see on the back of my eyelids. I try to make the picture you smiling...like you're smiling at *me*, you know? But that never lasts. Your face changes into you unhappy, or mad or something. So I try to remember the times before -- when I was little and you'd swing me around like I was flying, or tickling me, or us on the beach finding shells, or riding the Ferris wheel, or... I try to hear us laughing. Like we laughed then. But I can't anymore. I just hear you and Mom arguing. Or her crying, or...

(a small ironic laugh as she rises and looks to the corpse)

You know what I see the most each morning? The back of your head. You walking away or going out the door or...whatever. You were just always going away.

(beat)

Why is all that stuff stronger than what *I want* to see? Is that all I'm ever going to remember?

MARTIN

(looking at her)

I hope not. That's not how I want to be remembered. Not by anybody, and certainly not by you.

LISA

It was so easy to say "I love you." We said it all the time. Like we said "Hi", or "See ya", or the fucking Pledge of Allegiance in school. Just words to fill a space we thought needed to be filled. Like the music in an elevator. Empty words. Now all I want to do is say it to you and have you look in my face and *see* me say it and *know* I mean it. And I want you to say it to me the same way, Daddy. I want you to say it to me...

(as she falls across the corpse in tears)

I miss you so much, Daddy. I love you. I love you.

Martin moves to her, bends over her, wraps his arms around her.

MARTIN

I love you, too, baby....I love you too.

For several beats, all that's heard are Lisa's quiet sobs in the tableau of father and daughter.

Then Martin rises, wiping his eyes. He moves DSCL. After a moment, he glances back at his weeping daughter, then looks up, spreads his hands.

MARTIN

Why now?! Why offer me clarity now when I can't do anything about it? What good is an epiphany to a dead man? It doesn't feel like absolution. And there can't be any forgiveness. Not now. So....why?!

(his shoulders slump, he looks to Lisa,
still draped over his corpse)

Why make me watch this at all?

A beat, then Lisa slowly rises, wiping her eyes with her sleeve.

The door opens, and Ben enters, looking at his phone. As he closes the door, he notices Lisa by the coffin.

BEN

Saying goodbye?

She looks at him a beat, then as she steps off the riser toward him....

LISA

Not really. He wouldn't hear me if I did.

MARTIN

I heard you. Every word.

LISA

Where's Mom?

BEN

Outside with the priest.

(he laughs)

She bummed a smoke from him, if you can believe that.

LISA

I'm surprised it took her this long.

BEN

She smokes now?

Lisa pulls a pack of cigarettes from her pocket,
wiggles them toward Ben's face.

BEN

You too? When did that start?

LISA

(a little edgy)

You need to come home more often, Bro...keep up with your family a little better.

BEN

No need to get pissy. I have obligations.

(he waves the cell phone in his hand at
her face like she did the cigarettes at his
as he crosses center)

Clients who depend on me. I have *work...a job*. Something you'll have to think about soon enough.

LISA

You sound more like him every day, Ben.

BEN

Yeah...well...

They stare at each other a moment, then Lisa
turns to the door.

LISA

I'll be outside with Mom and the penguin. We'll be in in a minute.

Lisa exits.

Ben laughs, turns into his phone. He scrolls
through his contacts.

MARTIN

Why don't you put that away, son? Visit with me...

Ben taps a contact, puts the phone to his ear.

MARTIN

Come on, Ben....really.

The call connects.

BEN

Alex. Yeah, Ben ...Yeah, I'm at the funeral home. The viewing's in a little while. No, just me and the family right now....Yeah, thanks...

(looks at the coffin as he listens)

Well, it's a little weird seeing him like this, to be honest. Guess it took cancer and dying to finally get him out of our way there....

MARTIN

Your empathy overwhelms.

BEN

No, I'm kind of okay with it. He was sick a long time, but the last three months was quick, and then I get the call that he was -- you know. Nobody expected it, least of all me....

MARTIN

You weren't even here.

BEN

I wasn't even here. Had that Nasdaq thing in L.A....Mom called in the middle of the conference...Look, I'm tied up here the rest of the afternoon and evening. That Westland thing's due to cross my desk about...

(looks at his watch)

...about now, actually, so if you could...Great. Just file it, let him know the order's in, and I'll follow up tomorrow...Okay, thanks, Alex. Later.

Ben touches off the call. He turns to the corpse.

BEN

You almost cost me a bundle, Pop.

MARTIN

Well, excuse me.

BEN

Westland doesn't like to be second agenda...

MARTIN

He never did.

BEN

...but you know that.

MARTIN

Westland's an asshole.

BEN

He's an asshole. But a rich one...gotta give him that. Guess I should thank you for the commissions...he didn't want to deal with anybody else in the firm after you...you know...*left*...

MARTIN

You make it sound like I had a choice.

BEN

He wanted a Hopewell.

(a mock salute to the corpse)

The great Hopewell name. Wall Street Royalty, right?

MARTIN

Our name means something, yes. But only if your clients trust you/--

A top-note of sarcasm is creeping into Ben's voice....

BEN

And now I'm Westland's new boy, thanks to you. The next Hopewell in the chain...

...but Martin continues as if they're talking shop....

MARTIN

Yeah, well, be careful with Westland, son. He doesn't always know what he's doing. Trades stocks like they're baseball cards. Gotta keep a close eye e/--

BEN

(the sarcasm gets edgier)

...Or maybe I should say ...on his fucking leash.

Martin looks up, not exactly sure what Ben means...

MARTIN

That might not be the best way to think about/--

BEN

(edgier...)

But he's gonna make me a shit-ton this year. You'd be proud. Got a sweet bonus coming.

Ben leans on the edge of the coffin, punching numbers in his phone.

BEN

Let's see where we are on that, by the way...you'd probably want to know, right?

Martin smiles, moves to a chair...back to the subject at hand...

MARTIN

You know, Ben...

(sits)

I *am* proud of you. What father wouldn't be? You've grown into a fine man...successful...in charge of the firm now...you seem happy. You remind me of me at your age. The world was my oyster too...an endless string of pearls at my fingertips every day. I was sure there would never be an end to it.

Ben finishes his calculations...

BEN

Wow!

(holds up his phone to the corpse)

Sweet, huh?

MARTIN
(smiles with his son)

Sometimes it is.

BEN
(more sarcasm)

New Bimmer, here I come!

MARTIN
(laughing, not picking up on the sarcasm yet)

It was a Mercedes for me.

Ben huffs a sigh that might have a touch of disgust to it. He slides down, sits on the riser, leans back against the coffin, shakes his head.

BEN
(cutting sarcasm)

Yup. Just rakin' it in, Dad. Hand over fist.

Martin's just talking now, like sharing nuggets of wisdom with a colleague....

MARTIN
Yup. No doubt about it. It's a great ride.

BEN
The money spigot's gushin'...

MARTIN
It'll do that, that's for sure. A word of advice, though, son...keep your eye on the ball. All the time. That string of pearls can break. The market's a fickle princess. Gotta pay atten/--

Ben looks up at the coffin during the above, then, like he's talking to the corpse....

BEN
You realize I never gave a shit about any of it, right?

Martin looks to Ben, uncertain of what he just heard.

BEN

The money. The firm. The fucking market. All of it. Couldn't care less.

MARTIN

Whoa, whoa...slow down there, son. What are you/--

BEN

Sucking up to pissants like Westland. Jesus, for the life of me, I can't see how you did that for thirty years...

MARTIN

(rising)

Hey, hey...

BEN

It's no fucking wonder you rotted from the inside. I haven't been there a year, and I feel like half of me is dead already.

MARTIN

Knock it off, Ben! Where do you come off talking like that? We owe that business everything!

BEN

At *least* half....

MARTIN

You had food every night, clothes on your back, a bed to sleep in, an education! That just didn't fall from the sky, you know! Somebody -- me! -- had to make that happen!

Ben has risen during the above, turns to the corpse in the coffin.

BEN

What if I told you I've felt that way for years, Pop? Half dead? Or maybe more accurately...call it....incomplete. Half-baked.

MARTIN

What the hell are you talking about?

BEN

(laughs)

Yeah...half-baked. Like there was an ingredient missing...

MARTIN

You're talking nonsense, Ben.

Ben turns his back on the corpse, leans against the coffin.

BEN

Something's not there, anyway.

(beat)

I've been thinking about it a lot lately...since you died...

MARTIN

What?

BEN

(emotion enters his voice)

I've been thinking that...that I didn't get enough of you, Pop. Or...enough of whatever it is that a father is supposed to give his son...that *something* that gives him strength enough to be who he's meant to be...that necessary element of "self" that provides the courage to trust himself despite what's thrown at him, what's asked of him.

(looks at the corpse)

Know what I mean?

MARTIN

Not really, no...

BEN

I mean...Don't get me wrong, here...I can't really blame you. You didn't know. You were too wrapped up in yourself and the business to be aware of it.

MARTIN

Aware of what, son?

BEN

But what's a young guy to do, you know? He already misses his dad, who's never really there, so when his dad *is* there, he's going to do whatever he has to to *keep* him there, to keep his attention, right? Even if it's doing something he doesn't want to do.

MARTIN

I never *made* you do anything, Ben. I always thought/--

Ben moves down CS.

BEN

I'd give anything to have you standing here in front of me right now.

MARTIN

Me too, son...me too.

BEN

(turns to the coffin)

You know what I'd ask you?

MARTIN

No. Ask.

BEN

(turns away again, looks out)

I'd ask you if you had any idea what my favorite toy was when I was a kid. Or what was my favorite thing to do. Could you tell me?

MARTIN

Of course I could...you...you liked numbers...math...doing stock projections...with me/--

BEN

My baseball glove.

(looks at his glove hand)

That raggedy old piece-of-shit leather mitt.

(punches the unseen mitt)

You even remember that?

MARTIN

(he doesn't, but...)

Ball glove? What/--?

BEN

Probably not, 'cause it was granddad who gave it to me. And it was granddad who tossed the ball around with me...

(looks back at coffin)
...‘cause you were...you know...lost in the markets...

MARTIN
No...you were always scribbling numbers/--

Ben moves to the SR chair, sits as...

BEN
...and it was granddad who taught me to do box scores.

MARTIN
Box scores?

BEN
I loved those things. Sitting at the dining room table with the game reports, or listening to the radio, or just making up imaginary games in my head and doing the box scores for them.

MARTIN
I always thought you were looking at the returns, calculating EBITA/--

BEN
(looks up at coffin)
I loved baseball, Pop.
(beat)
Baseball.

MARTIN
(derogatorily)
Baseball?

BEN
Silly, huh? You wanted to show me how to dominate the financial world, and I didn't give a shit. Not really. I just wanted to play baseball. I wanted to be Roger Clemens.

MARTIN
I didn't know...

BEN

But you didn't know. And I was too afraid to mess up the moments I *did* have with you, so...we just never connected, you and me. Not so's I felt like you liked who I was, who I wanted to be, what I wanted to do.

MARTIN

That's not true! I loved you!

BEN

So I tried to be who I thought you wanted me to be...

MARTIN

Oh, Ben...

BEN

...'cause I just wanted you to think I was okay. That you'd be proud of me. Now...you're gone, and I still don't get the feeling that you ever saw *me*. To be honest...I just think you saw my life as an extension of yours. That what you wanted, I would want, that what you liked, I would like.

Martin sits again, a little bewildered now...

MARTIN

You never said anything/--

BEN

I may have tried to tell you, I don't know. But if I did, I'm pretty sure you didn't hear me.

A silence. Martin doesn't know what to say and Ben is pained by what he just said.

Ben rises, moves back to the coffin.

BEN

Look...I can't really blame you. I shouldn't, anyway. Because in the end, it was me -- I just wasn't strong enough, confident enough...in myself, right? But that's the part of me I think didn't fully cook, you know? That I didn't get from you. That's the hole that never got filled. So now...here I am, the perfect mold, doing what you did, where you did it, with the same people you did it with.

(beat, as he looks down at the corpse)

I'm living *your* life, pop.

(beat)

You're dead...but you're still living *your* life...through me. I know it's not *my* life.

Ben slides down again, sits on the riser, a sob choked back in his throat.

BEN

I don't know where my life *is* anymore. And I don't know if it's you that's taken it away, or me that's given it up.

MARTIN

Jesus...Ben, I...

An agonizing silence. Then Ben sits up, wipes away any tears, rises.

BEN

But I do know this: it ends here. Whatever is missing in me will not come from you now. I'll have to find it on my own. And...

(he turns to look at the corpse)

...it won't be at Hopewell Investments.

MARTIN

No, please, Ben, don't/--

BEN

(rests his hand on the corpse's hand)

I love you, Dad. More than I think you knew. But it's time...time for us to let each other go.

A long beat, as Ben wipes another tear from his cheek, smiles sadly.

BEN

So...Bye, Dad.

MARTIN

Ben...

Ben turns from the coffin, steps from the riser toward the door.

Martin moves quickly to him, reaches out and touches Ben's shoulder as Ben is putting his cell phone in his coat pocket.

MARTIN

Ben, please. What will you do? Where will you go?

Ben doesn't acknowledge the touch at all -- he doesn't feel it. He steps away from Martin. Then he turns back to the coffin.

BEN

I wonder how many twenty-six-year-old rookies there are in the big leagues? What do you think?

(beat)

Well...if Robert Redford could do it....right?

Ben smiles to himself and begins to move to the door when it opens. Father Larson enters, carrying a smallish wreath of flowers.

LARSON

Ah, Ben. Good! Help me find a place for this, will ya?

BEN

Uh, sure...

(looks around)

How about over here?

Ben takes the wreath and props it on the riser at the US corner of the coffin. As he does so...

BEN

Who's it from?

LARSON

Some big fella walked in with it. Your mom's talking to him now. I got the feeling he worked with your father. Some talk about stocks and bonds and all, from what I could hear. There's a card there...

Ben lifts an envelope from the wreath, opens it and pulls out the card. He laughs.

BEN

Stephen Westland.

MARTIN

(moving to get a better look at the wreath)

You're shitting me.

LARSON

You know him, Ben?

BEN

(smiling)

Used to, yeah.

MARTIN

You'd think he could afford a bigger wreath, all the money we made him. Fucking cheapskate.

Ben tucks the card back into the wreath, then turns toward the door.

LARSON

You get a chance to say your goodbyes?

BEN

(looks back to the coffin)

I did, yes.

(then to Larson)

Thank you.

LARSON

I've asked your mother and sister to join us all together before the rest of the folks come in. You all right with that?

BEN

Fine. Thanks, Father. How about I go get them? Mom might need help getting free, if I know the guy she's talking to.

LARSON

I'll get things ready.

Ben smiles and nods, then exits.

Larson walks to the coffin, pulls a small book from one coat pocket, sets it on the edge of the coffin.

LARSON

You don't mind if I rest that there for a second, do you, Martin?

MARTIN

Won't bother me.

Larson then pulls a priest's vestment stole from his side pocket, unrolls it, kisses it, sets it around his neck.

Larson then fishes in another pocket, pulls out an airline bottle of Irish Whiskey, snaps off the cap.

LARSON

A little sacrament, don't ya know...

Martin crosses to the corner of the coffin.

MARTIN

Would love to join you, but...

Martin shrugs an indication of his reality.

Larson raises the bottle as in a toast.

LARSON

As some old Irishman used to say..."Until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of his hand."

And he slugs back a shot. He smacks his lips,
and as he puts the cap back on the bottle and
slides it back into his coat pocket...

LARSON

God's nectar, there's no denying..Got to hand it to the Irish.

Martin smiles, leans on the coffin rail, looking
at Larson.

MARTIN

You any good at miracles, Father? Like...maybe raising the dead?

(points to the little book)

Got an incantation in there that can do that?

Larson picks up the book, starts thumbing
through it, looks to the corpse.

LARSON

What passage shall I read for us today, Martin?

MARTIN

Don't really care at this point, Owen. Whatever you read will be for you and them, not
for me. Nothing in that little book of yours has relevance over here, sad to say. It's not
quite what you guys have been preaching for the last couple of millennia.

LARSON

How about a Psalm?

MARTIN

Good as any, I suppose.

LARSON

(as he thumbs more pages, reads a bit,
thumbs more...)

Let's see...

Martin sits on the riser, musing, then...

MARTIN

You know what I wish I'd known, Father?

(looks up at Larson)

How little time there really was. I don't know what all this is...

(indicates all around him))

...it feels endless...But I look back on my life and *it* seems like an instant. Things passed so quickly...like a lightning flash...it was like I didn't have time to really *see* it, *feel* it, you know what I mean? Like it was all a film strip on fast-forward.

Martin moves from the riser, paces as he talks.

MARTIN

I mean, I know I *did* things...made things happen. Built a business. Made some money. Thought I was leaving a legacy. But...none of that seems to matter at all now, because the three most important people in *my* life are telling me they never felt like I was in *theirs*. To *them*, I wasn't really there. I feel like I might as well not have existed.

Martin stands still for a moment, considering what he just said. He looks around, then turns to the coffin and Larson.

MARTIN

(quietly)

Is this what Hell is?

Long, quiet beat. Then Larson stands up, looks to the corpse.

LARSON

How about this, Martin?

(he reads)

“Psalm 139

O Lord, thou has searched me, and known me.

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,

Thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou compassest my path and my lying down,

and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord,
thou knowest it altogether.

Thou hast beset me behind and before,
and laid thine hand upon me.”

(he looks up at the corpse)

There’s more...

(looks to the book)

...about being in the dark and coming to the light, and not hating those that hate you...

(looks up again)

But it’s fitting for you, I’m thinking.

Martin looks up at Larson.

MARTIN

Short enough anyway.

Larson closes the book, puts it in his pocket.

LARSON

It’s short enough, anyways. People at wakes don’t like a long-winded priest.

Martin laughs, moves to the corner of the riser
and sits.

Larson reaches into the coffin, smooths the
lapels on the corpse.

LARSON

You don’t look bad, Marty...for being dead, I mean. And going through what you did...the
cancer and all...

MARTIN

Good to know.

LARSON

More than some I’ve seen, anyways. Old Mrs. McClatchy last week...oof!...Not sure an
open casket was a proper choice for her! But you...you look good.

(pats the corpse)

Real good.

MARTIN

Appreciate it.

LARSON

(looks at corpse, smiles)

Kinda wish you'd been a little more consistent with attending services, though. Maggie was the only one I saw every Sunday. Sometimes Wednesdays too, come to think of it.

MARTIN

She had more faith than I did.

LARSON

Woman has a lot of faith. You know, she asked me if I thought the Lord would smile on you, Marty. She was worried about you, 'specially at the end. When I gave you the Last Rites, she asked me to say a little something extra to help you along, get you where you're supposed to be.

(smiles, pats the coffin's rail)

Wonder if it did?

MARTIN

Depends on if this is where you were sending me. Doesn't resemble anyplace I remember hearing about in your sermons.

LARSON

Well, I'm sure wherever you are, it's a sweeter air you're breathing.

MARTIN

I wouldn't make a bet on that, Father.

LARSON

You know...I envy you in a way, Martin.

MARTIN

Really.

LARSON

Being the age I am, I find myself thinking more and more about what's on the other shore, beyond the veil. You know now. And I'm wondering these days -- when *I* cross, who will I see there? What kind of judgement will I face? Will I even be aware I'm there?

MARTIN

Might be the wrong questions, Father....

LARSON

I hope to see my loved ones...the ones who've gone before me. I want to hear their voices again....be held in their arms again.

MARTIN

Be careful what you ask for, Owen. You might not want to hear what they have to say.

LARSON

My hope is...that's where you are, Marty. Laughing with your loved ones, lying on a cloud, warmed by the light of the Lord.

Martin rises. He's heard enough. He moves DS as Larson pulls out his little bottle again, proceeds to take another sip.

MARTIN

O-o-o...kay...Thanks, Father. Nice picture, that, and I wish I could tell you that's what awaits you, but from where I'm standing, we're not looking at the same picture. There's no such illusions here...no eternal rest, no peace...no...light. Not like you've been preaching it, anyway. The only thing I can tell you, is that the one thing I did find here was...

(beat)

...the truth. The *real* truth. Not some philosophical definition of a truth, not the proof of whatever myth you happen to believe in...but the real deal. The capital T truth. The down and dirty, out of the mouths of babes, truth. And you won't have a choice...you're handed it straight, no chaser...no ability to refute it, no way to defend against whatever it tells you. No way to make it different.

(beat)

And it will hurt. Believe me. It will hurt when you hear it, and it will hurt even more when you realize you no longer have one iota of ability to change it.

(turns to Larson, his eyes getting moist)

That's the worst of it, Owen. To realize I had a chance and I failed to take it. To know I had so many opportunities to say the things I should have said...to the people I needed to say them to...to do some things I should have done...to simply be *present*...and I just...didn't...take the time...didn't make the effort. And now...

Martin spreads his arms as in a futile gesture, then his shoulders slump, he sighs heavily. He stands silently weeping.

Larson puts the empty bottle back in his pocket, turns from the corpse, checks his watch.

LARSON
(to himself)

About that time...

He steps from the riser, moves to the door. As he opens it, he's met with Maggie, Lisa, and Ben entering.

LARSON
Ah, there you are.

Martin turns to see his family...wipes his eyes, straightens up.

MAGGIE
Sorry, Father. Got caught up with some people. Everybody wanting to...you know.

LARSON
I do.

LISA
Didn't know Daddy had so many friends.

BEN
They're not all friends.

MARTIN
(a smile)
Not all of them, I'm pretty sure.

Maggie touches Ben's arm, looks directly at him.

MAGGIE
Maybe not, but they're here to pay their respects, and maybe that's even better. They had respect for your father, even if they weren't close, even if he didn't know them all that well. So we'll thank each and every one of them, won't we?

Ben smiles at his mother, nods.

BEN

Yeah, Mom. We will.

Lisa moves to the side of the coffin, on the riser next to it, looks at her father's corpse, wipes a moist eye.

Maggie sees it, moves to her.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Lisa...I know it's been hardest on you. You've lost him twice now.

LISA

I miss him, Mom. That's all. I just miss him.

MAGGIE

I know you'll find this hard to believe...

(looks at all of them)

...but...me too.

She puts her arm around her daughter, pulls her in, then turns around to look for Ben. She reaches out her free arm to him, waves her hand to draw him over.

Ben moves to them.

Martin stands alone in the middle of the room, looks at his family. There's emotion rising in him.

Maggie drapes her free arm around Ben. She looks from him to Lisa and back, then...

MAGGIE

He wasn't perfect, kids. Neither was I. And for the rest of my life, I'll wonder why things went the way they did, why I did what I did...what I said...what I didn't say.

BEN

I think we all will, Mom.

MAGGIE

(nodding)

We'll all have those regrets. I'm thinking that's the way it always is at times like these. We think about the things we wish we'd done, wish we'd said. Blame ourselves, question ourselves. How can we not? Like I said...we're not perfect. But we can't let that be all we remember. That would be the ultimate tragedy, I think.

(beat)

I loved your father, and I know he loved me.

(she kisses both of them)

And I know for sure he loved both of you. As much as I do.

Martin brushes a hand across the corner of an eye, his other arm wrapped tightly about his body.

MAGGIE

And *that's* what I want to remember. That's what I always want to remember. And I want you two to remember it too. Can we all do that?

Ben and Lisa nod, or whisper a "Yes".

Maggie kisses them both again, then looks up to Larson.

LARSON

Well said, Maggie. Not much to add to that. But how about a little blessing before the crowds assemble? We can do a prayer with them later, if you'd like.

MAGGIE

That would be nice, Father.

(looks to Ben and Lisa)

That okay with you two?

They nod.

LARSON

Something Irish, maybe.

BEN

(smiling)

I think he'd prefer it to a prayer, to tell you the truth.

Martin smiles, then laughs.

MARTIN

Please. Yes. Maybe the Irish know something the Popes don't.

Larson motions to Maggie and the kids.

LARSON

Join me down here, why don't you?

As Maggie, Ben, and Lisa step from the riser and move to Larson and position themselves around him, Martin slowly moves around to behind the coffin, looks down on them all.

Larson turns to the coffin.

LARSON

Let me see, now....uh...how about this....

Those we love don't go away,
They walk beside us every day,
Unseen, unheard, but always near,
Still loved, still missed, and very dear.
Death leaves a heartache no one can heal,
Love leaves a memory no one can steal.

Larson pauses, raises his hand as in benediction.

LARSON

May green be the grass you walk on.
May blue be the skies above you.
May pure be the joys that surround you.
May true be the hearts that love you.

(beat)

Safe travels, Martin.

Everyone is silent a moment, looking at the coffin.

Then Ben and Lisa look at their mother, and all three fold in on one another...a hug of final acceptance and forgiveness--of themselves and Martin.

After a beat, the door slowly opens. Rustin enters.

RUSTIN

I'm sorry. I don't mean to intrude.

MAGGIE

No, no...it's alright.

RUSTIN

It's about time. We should probably get started. If you're ready, I mean.

MAGGIE

I think we're finished, thank you.

(to Ben and Lisa)

You guys ready?

They nod. Rustin comes to them, indicates a space in a line off the US edge of the coffin.

RUSTIN

You might want to stand here, make a kind of receiving line.

MAGGIE

Okay.

(turns to Ben, then Lisa)

Let me see you now.

As Maggie fiddles with Ben's tie, then straightens Lisa's outfit....

MARTIN

If it's all the same to you guys, I think I'll skip this part. I'm feeling kind of tired, if you can believe that. And frankly, to be completely honest, I've seen everyone I wanted to see.

(beat)

Part of me wants to say I'm sorry, to find some way to tell you how much you each meant to me. But I think we've already done that, all of us, haven't we? At least, you've let me know. And I'm grateful. So very grateful.

(beat)

So...I guess...I'll just say...thank you...thank you.

(beat)

I love you all...so very much...and I promise you...nothing will ever change that. Ever. Please believe that. And I hope Father Larson's right and that I'll see you all again sometime...somewhere.

He smiles at them.

MARTIN

Goodbye, my loves.

Martin raises his hand in a kind of farewell gesture, then slowly turns and moves to the US corner of the set, then slips slowly into an unseen space behind a flat (a light cue might be used here...a slowly dimming pin spot that leaves the corner in darkness as Martin disappears).

Maggie finishes fidgeting with the kids, looks to them.

MAGGIE

How do I look?

BEN

You look great, Mom.

LISA

Beautiful.

They smile at each other, then...

RUSTIN

All set then?

Maggie nods. She, Ben, and Lisa, straighten up, align themselves.

Rustin moves to the doors, opens both sides.

RUSTIN

(to the unseen guests)

Ladies and Gentlemen, if you will, please.

As he sweeps his hand toward the room and the family...

BLACK OUT
THE END

APPENDIX A

