



Scripts.com

The Bad Seed

By John Lee Mahin

1

- Be right out, sergeant.

- Yes, sir.

- Car's here, sweetheart.

- All right, darling.

Rhoda.

Rhododendron, pal.

That's a mighty pretty piece.

It's Au Clair de la Luna, Daddy.

In English, that means

"By the Light of the Moon."

Well, I hate to tune you off, but have
you got time to come say goodbye?

Of course, Daddy.

- Will you write Mother every day?

- I'll write both my girls every day.

And will you put in a special page
just for me?

Oh, she has to have a very special page
all her own, you know.

- Ha, ha.

- A special page with lots of X's.

Oh, Monica, how nice.

Yes, here's your effusive landlady from
upstairs, darlings, come to say goodbye.

No life of my own,

so I need other people's.

I speak for my brother Emory as well.

He had to go to meet Reginald Tasker.

He's the speaker

at our psychiatry club this evening.

Emory never gets a chance

to speak when I'm around.

Oh, dear, I've talked enough.

You say something, colonel.

I'm afraid it'll just have

to be goodbye, Monica. I'm taking off.

Do something about not having a war.

I'm not ready to be turned

into a piece of chalk just yet.

Well, by... By gum, I'll try.

You said "by gum" because I'm here.

- You're right. I did.

- Don't worry about your two darlings.

If either of them begins to look peaked,
I'll send smoke signals.

- Thanks, Monica.

- Rhoda, dear, let's you and I stay here...

...so Mommy and Daddy can say goodbye
by themselves.

- Besides, I have a surprise for you.

- Presents?

Rhoda.

All right.

I'll take my goodbye present here.

Now, what'll you give me

if I give you a basket of kisses?

Ha, ha. I'll give you a basket of hugs.

I'll miss your hugs.

I'll miss your kisses, Daddy.

You're so big and strong.

See my effect on girls?

Goodbye now, sweetheart.

- Take care of Mommy?

- I will, Daddy.

- Goodbye, Monica.

- Goodbye.

Come on, darling.

What have you got for me, Aunt Monica?

Let's see if you can guess.

- Good morning, sergeant.

- Morning, Mrs. Penmark.

Thanks, sergeant.

Darling, when you see Daddy

in Washington...

...will you have him come

and pay me a visit?

Sure, I will.

Oh, Kenneth.

- We've lived through this before.

- Oh, I know it.

I'm just not in any mood

to shout "hooray," that's all.

- Smile, girl.

- Ha, ha.

My girl?

Oh, yes, forever and ever.

Bye, darling.

Look, Mommy.

Oh. Monica,

what have you given her now?

It's a pair of dark glasses to keep the sun
out of those pretty blue eyes...

...and the rhinestones to frame them in.

My, my, who is this

glamorous Hollywood actress?

Ooh, I like them.

- Where's the case?

- Here it is, dear.

Didn't you ever hear

about spoiling people?

Nonsense.

Now, here's something else.

This was given to me

when I was 8 years old.

- It's a little young for me now.

- Ha-ha-ha.

But it's still just right

for an 8-year-old.

Monica, Monica, I just don't know

what I'm going to do with you.

However, there's a garnet set in it, so we'll

have to change that for a turquoise...

...since turquoise is your birthstone.

Could I have both stones?

The garnet too?

- Rhoda. Rhoda.

- Ha-ha-ha.

What a way to behave. Now...

- Why, certainly you may, of course.

- Tsk, tsk, tsk.

How wonderful to meet

such a natural little girl.

She knows what she wants

and she asks for it.

Not like these over civilized little pets

that have to go through analysis...

...before they can choose

an ice cream soda.

- Ha, ha.

- Aunt Monica. Dear, sweet Aunt Monica.

Darling, I know I'm behind the times,

but I thought children wore blue jeans...
...or play suits to picnics.
Now, you, my love, look like a princess
in that red-and-white dotted Swiss.
Aren't you afraid you'll get it dirty or
that you'll fall and scuff those new shoes?
- Uh-uh.
- Oh.
She won't soil the dress
and she won't scuff the shoes.
Rhoda never gets anything dirty,
although how she manages it, I don't know.
I don't like blue jeans. They're not...
You mean blue jeans are not quite ladylike,
don't you, my darling?
Oh, you sweet, old-fashioned little dear.
Am I to keep this now?
You're to keep it until I can find out
where to get the stone changed.
- Put it in my treasure drawer.
- Rhoda, we'll be leaving in a few minutes.
Is your room all straightened?
Yes, Mother.
Unnecessary question.
Leroy.
- Leroy.
- Yes, Miss Breedlove?
What on earth
do you think you're doing?
I'm just trying to hurry
with my chores, ma'am.
Well, ring first and wait.
If nobody answers, then use your key.
Morning, Mrs. Penmark.
I left my chammy and pail...
...doing the inside windows yesterday.
Very well, Leroy. They're in the bathroom.
Does he always crash in that way?
Only when we're up and about, I think,
trying to prove his individualism.
- Leroy doesn't mean any harm.
- Has the mind of an 8-year-old...
...but he's managed to produce a family,
so I keep him on.

Monica. Ha, ha.
Morning, Miss Uppity.
When I was in school,
we didn't have no picnics.
I don't care what you didn't have.
Oh, we'll go right along, dear.
I just wanna write
this tuition check for Miss Fern.
Yes, Mother.
Excuse me.
You sound like Fred Astaire
tap-tapping across the room.
What have you got on your shoes?
I run over my heels...
...and Mother had these iron pieces
put on them so they'd last longer.
I'm afraid I can't take any credit.
It was Rhoda's idea entirely.
I think they're very nice.
They save money.
Oh, you penurious little sweetheart.
You think of everything,
take everything so much to heart.
That's one reason why I thought
you should have some presents today.
You wanted to win that
penmanship medal very much, didn't you?
It's the only gold medal Miss Fern gives,
and it was really mine.
Everybody knew I wrote the best hand
and I should've had it.
I just don't see how Claude Daigle
got the medal.
Oh, Rhoda, Rhoda.
These things happen to us all the time...
...and when they do,
we simply accept them.
Now, I've told you,
darling, try to forget it.
I'm sorry. I know you don't like
people pawing over you.
It was mine! The medal was mine!
It was mine! The medal was mine!
Hey!

Leroy, have you lost your senses?
Look at Rhoda's shoes.
I'm sorry, Mrs. Breedlove, but she had
to come running out just as I was...

Leroy! RHODA:

- Sorry, ma'am.
- Leroy, I own this apartment house.
I employ you. I've tried to give you
the benefit of every doubt...
...because you have a family.
I've thought of you as emotionally
immature, torn by irrational rages...
...a bit on the psychopathic side.
But after this demonstration,
I think my diagnosis was entirely too mild.
You're definitely a schizophrenic
with paranoid overtones.
I've had enough
of your discourtesy and surliness...
...and so have the tenants in my building.
My brother has wanted to discharge you.
- I've been on your side.
- Monica...
- I shall protect you no longer...
- Monica.
He didn't mean it. It was an accident.
- Sure, it was...
- He meant to do it. I know Leroy.
It was no accident, Christine.
It was deliberate,
the spiteful act of a neurotic child.
He meant to do it.
You watched out of the corner of your eyes.
- Rhoda, I want you...
- You made up your mind in one second.
I never. I never. I'm just clumsy.
Leroy, my patience is at an end,
and you might as well know it.
Get about your work.
Oh, well, it's much too lovely a morning
for such tirades.
Now, don't forget our luncheon
with Reggie Tasker.

Dear me. I haven't put in my order yet.
What do you feed a criminologist?
Prussic acid, blue vitriol, ground glass.
- Ha, ha. Hot weather things.
- Nothing would hurt Reggie.
He thrives on buckets of blood
and sudden death.
Goodbye, dear.
Have a wonderful, happy day.
Goodbye, Aunt Monica.
That know-it-all Monica Breedlove.
Don't think nobody
knows anything but her.
Well, she ain't got long to go anyway.
Old heifer's about ready for the canners.
But that young,
trough-fed Mrs. Penmark...
...she might get kind of lonesome
with that soldier boy of hers gone.
Yes, sir, she might.
Yeah, that Rhoda's a real smart one.
That's a smart little gal.
She's almost as smart as I am.
She sees through me
and I see through her.
Swallow me a frog, but she's smart, huh?
- Jenny, you come back here.
- I wanna see...
You're not to go near the water.
Now, remember, everybody.
You are not to go out on that pier...
...or near the boathouse.
- Oh. Why, Mrs. Penmark. How splendid.
- Good morning, Miss Fern.
- Good morning, Miss Fern.
- Good morning, Rhoda.
- That was a perfect curtsy.
- Thank you, Miss Fern.
You run along with the others now.
I wanna speak to Miss Fern for a minute.
- Yes, Mother.
- That is, if you have a minute.
Well, we're rather rushed this morning,
but, of course, Mrs. Penmark.

Shall we talk while I place
the favors on the tables?
Oh, yes, of course.
Oh, by the way, Miss Fern...
...I have the check here for
the last quarter. Here it is.
Oh, why, thank you.
Now, about Rhoda, naturally, uh...
Tell me frankly, Miss Fern...
...is she always as perfect in everything
as she was in her curtsy?
She does everything extremely well,
as you must know better than I.
And as a person,
does she fit in well at the school?
Let me think. In what way, Mrs. Penmark?
Well, Rhoda's been...
I don't quite know how to say it...
...but there's a mature quality about her
that's disturbing in a child...
...and my husband and I thought
that a school like yours...
...where you believe in discipline
and the old-fashioned virtues...
...might, well, perhaps teach her
to be more of a child.
Yes. Yes, I know what you mean.
Do the other children like her?
Is she popular?
The other children? Oh.
Well, of course, Mrs. Penmark. Um...
Well, I really should get things started.
- Will you excuse me, please?
- Oh, yes, of course, and thank you.
Morning bells are ringing
Ding, dang, 70179
Ding, dang, 70179
- But I did meet him.
- Ha-ha-ha.
But I did meet Freud.
Nobody ever believes me when I tell them
that I met Sigmund Freud.
They don't believe
that you're old enough, little sister.

Anyway, it wasn't Dr. Freud
who analyzed me.
It was Dr. Kettlebaum in London.
Monica's been spread out on couches
from New York to Los Angeles.
And what was Kettlebaum's verdict?
He said my whole trouble
was associating ideas...
...with words and names.
My marriage to Fred Breedlove,
for example.
He said I married Fred
because of the combination of ideas...
...suggested by his name.
The last syllable, "love,"
romantic, eternal...
...and the first syllable...
Hmm. That is rather obvious, isn't it?
And the result of the analysis?
- It broke up my marriage.
- Oh. Ha, ha.
When I explained it
to Mr. Breedlove, he became so confused...
...between his first syllable
and his last syllable...
- ...that he just gave up.
- Ha-ha-ha.
Let's sit over there,
where we can get away from analysis.
At least be comfortable.
Yes, come on, Reggie.
Entertain us with your latest work.
What is your bloodthirsty scribbling
about to disclose now?
I've been making a collection of data
on Mrs. Allison.
News Budget wants an article on her.
You mean that practical nurse
who killed all those people?
- Mm-hm.
- My, yes.
That simply fascinating
paranoidal female.
Listen, Christine.

Oh.

Oh, yes, Mrs. Allison was
a quite definite personality.
She did away with nine patients...

...for the life insurance,
with almost as many different poisons.
But you read about her in the papers,
didn't you, Mrs. Penmark?

Oh. Only hastily, I must say. I'm afraid
I shy away from reading about such things.
Now, that's an interesting psychic block.
Why would Christine
dislike reading about murders?

I don't know. I just have an aversion
to violence of any kind.

I even hate the revolver
Kenneth keeps locked in the house.

Oh. Do you dislike the revolver
more than the poison?

- Ooh, I just hate them both.

- Hmm.

Maybe if you try saying the first thing...
...that comes into your mind,
we can get at the root anxiety.

Just say it,
no matter how silly it seems to you.

Tell your story, Reggie,
and Christine will associate.

- What nonsense.

- What do you mean?

Just speak up, because any idea
that comes into your mind...
...will be an associated idea.

Oh.

Well, they finally caught on
to Mrs. Allison...

...when she poisoned
her 80-year-old father...
...with arsenic in his buttermilk.

- There, say anything quickly.

- But what?

Well, I'll be a middle-aged Mongoloid
from Memphis.

Sweetsie, little lovebird.

Now, you play your little cards right
and instead of a piece of cuttlebone...

...Uncle Emory will get you
a piece of Dr. Kettlebaum.
Emory, shh.

- Go on, Christine, no matter how silly.
- Oh.

What I was thinking
at that very moment was...
...well, that outside of Kenneth, my father
is the dearest man in the whole world.

- Is that silly?
- No, certainly not.
- Isn't your father Richard Bravo?
- Yes, uh-huh.
- There's a man that can write.
- Mm.

Those pieces from the Pacific
during the war.

I'm very proud of him.
The whole country is,
but we've disclosed nothing yet.

- Go on with your story, Reggie.
- I think we can afford a change of subject.
All right, then, there.

What does that suggest to you?
Well, it doesn't suggest anything
because I'm still thinking about my father.

- What about him?
- Oh, well...

No editing, no skipping.
Well, what I was thinking that time
was even sillier. I...

I've always had the feeling
that I was an adopted child...

...and that the Bravos
weren't my real parents.

Oh, you poor, innocent darling.
Don't you know

that the changeling fantasy...
...is the commonest of childhood?

Why, I once believed
that I was a foundling...
...with royal blood.

Plantagenet, I think it was.
And Emory, let's see. Emory was, um...
I was a chipmunk.
You really always
have had this suspicion...
- ...that you were adopted?
- Yes, always.
- But no evidence.
- Only that I'd dream about it.
- What kind of dream?
- Oh, Monica, really.
Do I have to tell my dreams too?
It's all so silly,
I haven't even mentioned it to Kenneth.
Say, the gal that really took the prize
was that one you wrote about...
...in that first book of yours.
The one that pulled all those jobs
and they couldn't convict her.
Oh, you mean Bessie. Bessie Denker.
Most amazing woman
in all the annals of homicide.
She was beautiful, she had brains...
...she was ruthless, and she never used
the same poison twice, either.
Her father, for example, died of rabies...
...supposedly contracted from a mad dog.
- It just happened...
- Did you...?
- ...that all his money went to Bessie.
- Did you say Bessie Denker?
Yes.
There. Now we might
have struck something.
Murderess, poisons,
et cetera, ad infinitum.
Oh, Monica, this really is nonsense.
Here, let's clear
some of these things away.
By the way, still planning on hanging
around for a few days' fishing?
I'd sure like to,
but I don't wanna bother you any.
Ha, ha, listen,

any excuse with me for fishing.
We'll get the weather for tomorrow and
if the channel reflects a good deep blue...
... nothing more important
has happened for many years...
...in the field of foreign affairs.
That's international news for the moment.
Now let's look at the weather forecast.
For tomorrow and... Hmm? Hmm?
I interrupt this program to...
I have been asked to announce that one
of the children on the annual picnic...
...of the Fern Country Day School...
...was accidentally drowned
in the bay early this noon.
The name of the victim is being withheld
until the parents are first notified.
More news of this tragic affair
is expected momentarily.

- Monica!

- It was not Rhoda.

Rhoda is too self-reliant a child.
It was some timid, confused youngster
afraid of its own shadow.

- It was certainly not Rhoda.

- Emory, please.

To continue with the weather. Locally...

- What am I standing...?

- Hmm?

Yes. We now have the full story
on the Fern School drowning.
We are now authorized to give you
the name of the victim.
It was 8-year-old Claude Daigle...
...the only child of Mr. and Mrs.
Henry Daigle of 126 Willow Street.
He appears to have fallen
into the water from the abandoned pier...
...on the Fern property.
It is a mystery how the boy
got on the pier...
...for all the children
had been forbidden to play near or on it.
But his body was found off the end

of the landing wedged among the pilings.
The guard who brought up the body applied
artificial respiration, but without result.
There were bruises
on the forehead and hands...
...but it is assumed that these were caused
by the body washing against the pilings.
And now to continue
with the report of local weather.
Scattered showers...
Oh, that poor little boy. That poor child.
They'll send the children
home immediately.
- They must be on their way now.
- I don't know...
I don't know what to say to her.
Rhoda is 8. I remember
I didn't know anything about death...
...or it didn't touch me closely
until I was much older.
A teacher I adored died. My...
My whole world changed and darkened.
Monica, here comes the bus now.
I don't know what to say to her.
Well, this is between you and Rhoda now.
Nobody else can help.
Well, I suppose.
I would come with you, dear...
...but I think mother and child
are better alone at a time like this.
Oh, darling.
Mother, we didn't really have our lunch
because Claude Daigle was drowned.
I know. It was on the radio.
He was drowned, so then they were all
rushing and calling and hurrying...
...to see if they could make him
alive again, but they couldn't.
So then they said the picnic was over
and we had to go home.
Well, I'm glad you're home.
So could I have
a peanut butter sandwich and milk?
Rhoda, did you see him?

Well, yes, of course.

Then they put a blanket over him...

No. Did you see him taken
from the water?

Yes, they laid him out on the lawn
and worked and worked, but it didn't help.
Sweetheart...

...I want you to try to get these pictures
right out of your mind.

Now, I don't want you to be worried
or frightened one little bit.

These things happen to us sometimes,
and when they do, we simply accept them.

Oh, but I thought it was exciting.

Can I have the peanut butter sandwich?

Why, yes, darling.

I'll get it ready for you.

Leroy.

Just doing my baskets, Mrs. Penmark.

Good.

- I thought I'd go out and skate after.

- Very well, dear.

Mighty awful event at the Fern School
this morning, huh, Mrs. Penmark?

- Uh, yes, Leroy. It was very sad.

- They say when they found that little boy...

Yes, Mrs. Penmark.

Now, Rhoda...

...you're behaving very well, dear...

...but still, it's a terrible thing
to see and remember.

I understand how you feel, darling.

I don't know what you're talking about.

I don't feel any way at all.

- Have you been naughty?

- Why, no, Mother.

What will you give me
for a basket of kisses?

I'll give you a basket of hugs.

I wanna finish my sandwich
while I skate, Mother.

Well, then you should.

How come you go skating
and enjoying yourself...

...when your poor little schoolmate's
still damp from drowning in the bay, huh?
It looks to me like you'd be staying home,
crying your eyes out.
Either that or be in church,
burning a candle in a blue cup.
You ask me,
and I say you don't even feel sorry...
...about what happened
to that poor little boy.
Why should I feel sorry?
It was Claude Daigle
who got drowned, not me.
Ain't scared of nothing, huh?
I'll find a way to scare you.
"The knight had not gone
more than a dozen paces..."
...before he saw beside the path...
...a beautiful lady who laid out
a fair damask cloth under an oak...
...and set thereon...
...cakes and dainties and a...
And a flagon with...
"...two silver cups..."
- Mommy.
- What?
Why aren't you reading?
Oh...
I was just thinking, I guess.
About what? The accident?
Mm-hm, partly. And my telephone call.
The circuits were busy.
What are cakes and dainties?
- Oh. They're like little cakes, you know.
- Oh.
"Cakes and dainties,
and a flagon with two silver cups."
'Knight, ' she called. 'Knight, come eat
and drink with me...
...for you are hungry
and thirsty, and I am alone... "'
Did you take your vitamins, dear?
Yes. I took one before.
This is my second.

I was saving them
because I like the juice.
- I'll close my eyes, but I won't be asleep.
- I know.
"And then the knight answered her:"
'I thank you, fair lady,
for I am not only hungry and thirsty...
...but I'm lost within the forest.'
Then he let his palfrey graze nearby...
...and he feasted with the lady,
who gave him loving looks...
...sweeter than the wine from the flagon,
though the wine was sweet and strong.
And in this fashion, the time passed...
...till the light was gone
out of the wood and it was dark.
And he was aware that the pavilion
had not been there in the daylight...
...but had been created...
...out of darkness...
"... by magic."

Rhoda.

- May I come in, Mrs. Penmark?
- Oh. Yes, of course, Miss Fern.
I was going to come and see you.
I got your note.
We're in such distress,
all of us at the school.
We've suffered such a blow,
losing one of the children that way...
- Yes, I know...
- I'm sure you'll forgive us...
- ...for going over and over things.
- Oh. I think everyone has been worried...
...and puzzled and saddened.
I don't think I've ever known
any happening to puzzle...
...so many people in so many ways...
...and I can help so few of them.
- I've just come from seeing Mrs. Daigle.
- Oh, dear.
Of course, our first thought was of her.
The rest of us are touched
only lightly by this tragedy.

- She'll have to live with it.

- I know.

I've seen her several times...

...and each time she's asked me
to find out from you...

...if you had any possible clue
to where the penmanship medal might be.

It was lost?

Yes, it wasn't found with the body,
and has completely disappeared.

Well, I didn't know about this. I...

- Good morning, Miss Fern.

- Good morning, Rhoda.

Mother, could I sit under the scuppernong
arbor for a while and read my book?

- Of course, Rhoda.

- It's so shady there...

...and I can see your window
and you can watch me from the window...

...and I'd like to be
where you can see me.

- Is it a new book?

- Mm-hm.

It's Elsie Dinsmore, the one I got
for a prize at Sunday school.

- Well, I'll be here.

- I'll be right there all the time.

Goodbye, Miss Fern.

It occurred to me that Rhoda
might've told you a detail or two...

...that she hadn't remembered
when she talked with me.

You see, she was the last to see
the little Daigle boy alive.

Are you...?

- Are you sure of this?

- Yes.

Well, I hadn't realized...

You see,
several times during the morning...

...Rhoda had to be stopped
from following Claude around...

...and trying to take the medal
away from him.

She kept snatching at it and he finally became very upset and started to cry.

Oh, I'm terribly sorry to hear this.

When you say that Rhoda might've been the last one...

- ...to see the little Daigle boy alive, how...?

- Yes.

Shortly before Claude's body was discovered...

...the beach guard saw Rhoda coming off the wharf.

He shouted a warning,

but by then she was on the beach...

...and walking back

to join the main activity...

...so he decided to forget the matter.

The guard didn't

identify the girl by name...

...but she had blond pigtailed

and was wearing a red dress, he said.

And Rhoda was the only girl

who wore a dress that day.

At 1:

...Claude was missing

when the roll was called.

- You know the rest of it.

- Well, yes, but this is very serious.

- If Rhoda was on that wharf...

- Not serious, really.

Children conceal things from adults.

Suppose... Suppose Rhoda did follow

the Daigle child onto the wharf.

So many things could've happened,

quite innocently.

He may have concealed himself

in the old boathouse...

...and then when discovered,

may have backed away from Rhoda...

- ...and fallen in the water.

- Yes, that could've happened, but I don't...

Later on, when it was too late

to do anything...

...she was afraid to admit

what had happened.

Oh, well, then you do think that Rhoda knows something that she isn't admitting. Yes, I think that like many a frightened soldier, she deserted under fire.

- Well, then...

- This is not a serious charge.

- Few of us are courageous when tested.

- Oh, yes, but she has lied, though.

Is there any adult who hasn't lied?

Smooth the lines from your brow, my dear.

You're prettier when smiling.

Well, I'll question Rhoda.

I wish you would, though I doubt you'll learn more than you know.

Oh. Miss Fern, there's something

I've been wanting to ask you.

There was a floral tribute at the funeral sent by the children of the Fern School.

I assume that the children helped share the expenses...

- ...but I haven't been asked to pay my part.

- I know, my dear.

We thought perhaps you'd like to send flowers individually.

Why should I want to send flowers individually?

Rhoda wasn't friendly with the boy...

...and my husband and I

haven't even met the Daigles.

Well, I don't know, my dear. I really...

There are three of us.

- In the hurry of making decisions...

- You make excuses for Rhoda...

...yet at the same time, you admit to me that you didn't ask me to pay my share.

And the reasons that you give me for not asking are obviously specious.

Does this mean that in your mind and in the minds of your sisters...

...there's some connection

between the Daigle boy's death...

- ...and Rhoda on the wharf?

- I refuse to believe there is any connection.

- But you've acted as if there were.

- Yes, perhaps we have.

Perhaps you...

Miss Fern, this has been
a terrible tragedy for Mrs. Daigle.

As you say, she's lost her only child...

...but if there's any shadow over Rhoda
because of what has happened...

...then I have to live under it.

And my husband does too.

And as for Rhoda, she would not be happy
in your school next year.

No, she would not.

Since she would not, it'd be as well to make
up our minds now that she will not be there.

Well, then there is some shadow over her.

You've already decided
not to invite her back.

- Yes, we have made that decision.

- You can't tell me why?

I think her behavior in the matter of
the medal would be sufficient explanation.

She has no sense of fair play.

She's a poor loser. She doesn't like to...

Surely you're not saying
that Rhoda had anything...

...to do with the Daigle boy's death?

Well, of course not.

Such a possibility
never entered our minds.

I'll have to answer that.

Of course, my dear.

- Yes?

- Thanks, we're Mrs. Daigle and Mr. Daigle.

You didn't have to let us in.

You realize we followed you.

We shouldn't have done it.

I'm a little drunk.

I guess you never get a little drunk.

You're very welcome, both of you.

Don't pay no attention to him.

He's all for good breeding.

He was trying to stop me.

How are you, Mrs. Penmark?

You've always had plenty.
You're a superior person...
- Oh, no, I'm not.
- Oh, yes.
Father's rich. Rich Richard Bravo. Heh.
I know. Famous.
Me, I worked in a beauty parlor.
Miss Fern used to come there.
She looks down on me.
- Please, Mrs. Daigle...
- I was that frumpy blond.
Now I've lost my boy and I'm a lush.
Everybody knows it.
We're worried about Mrs. Daigle.
She's under a doctor's care.
She's not herself.
But I know what I'm about just the same.
Just the same.
May I call you Christine?
Oh, I'm quite aware you come
from a higher level of society. Heh.
You probably made a debut, all that.
I always considered Christine
a gentle name.
Hortense sounds fat. Heh.
That's me. Hortense.
"My girl Hortense,"
they used to sing of me.
"Hasn't got much sense.
Let's write her name on the privy fence."
Children can be nasty, don't you think?
Please, Hortense.
You're so attractive, Christine.
You got exquisite taste in clothes,
is what.
Of course, you got amples of money
to buy them with.
What I came to see you about...
I asked Miss Fern
what happened to Claude's medal...
- ...and she wouldn't tell me a thing.
- I don't know...
You know more than you're telling.
You're a sly one because of the school.

You don't want the school
to get a bad name.
But you know more than you're telling,
Miss "Butter Wouldn't Melt" Fern.
There's something funny
about the whole thing.
I said so over and over to Mr. Daigle.
He married quite late, you know,
in his 40s.
Of course, I wasn't exactly what the
fella calls a spring chicken, either.
We won't have any more children.
No more.
Please, Hortense,
let me take you home where you can rest.
Rest? Sleep?
When you can't sleep at night,
you can't sleep in the daylight.
I just lie, and I look at the water
where he went down.
Christine, there is something funny
about this whole thing.
I heard your little girl was the last one
to see him alive.
Would you ask her
about those last few minutes...
...and tell me what she says?
Maybe she remembers some little thing.
Oh, I don't care how small it is.
No matter how small.
You know something?
Miss Fern dyes her hair.
She knows something
and she won't tell me.
Oh, my poor little Claude...
- ...what did I do to you?
- Oh, Hortense, I'll speak...
Somebody took that medal off his shirt.
It couldn't have come off by accident.
I pinned it on myself and it had
a little lock with a clasp in the back.
It was no accident.
You can wear such simple things,
can't you?

I never could wear simple things.
I couldn't even buy them.
When I got them home,
they didn't look simple.
He was such a lovely, dear little boy.
He used to say I was his sweetheart...
...and he was gonna marry me
when he grew up, and I used to laugh so.
"You'll forget about me long before then.
You'll find a prettier girl and marry her."
And you know what he said then?
"No, I won't...
...because there's not a prettier girl
in the whole world than you are."
If you don't believe me,
you ask the lady who comes in and cleans.
She was present at the time.
Why do you put your arms around me?
You don't give a hoot about me.
You're a superior person and all that.
I'm just...
God forgive me.
There were bruises on his hands...
...and that peculiar crescent-shaped mark
on his forehead...
...that the undertaker covered up.
He must've bled before he died.
That's what the doctor said.
And where's the medal?
Who took the medal?
I have a right to know
what happened to the penmanship medal!
If I knew, I'd have a pretty good idea
what happened to him.
I know why
you put your arms around me.
I'm as good as you are.
Claude was better than your girl.
He won the medal. She didn't.
I'm drunk.
It's a pleasure to stay drunk
when your little boy's been killed.
Maybe I better lay down.
We'll go home. You can lie down there.

Why not?

Why not go home and lay down?

Goodbye, all.

- Sorry.

- Oh, who cares what they think?

I drank a half a bottle of bonded corn
in little sips, so I'm drunk as I can be.

Poor woman.

I'll be getting back.

Thank you for bearing with her
and with me.

I'll, um...

I'll talk to Rhoda. I...

I know there isn't anything
that will help that poor creature...

...but I'll do what I can.

We both have to do what we can.

- Goodbye, Mrs. Penmark.

- Goodbye, Miss Fern.

She'll have to live with
this until she dies.

Yes, until she dies.

Thank you.

Rhoda. - Yes, Mother?

Will you come in a moment, please?

May I just finish this last page?

- Very well, but then I wanna talk to you.

- Yes, Mother.

Hello?

Yes, speaking.

Kenneth?

Oh, darling, I am so glad you called.

Honey, what was the accident
at Rhoda's school?

The one where the little boy
was drowned?

The little boy who was drowned?

Well, has it affected Rhoda any?

Oh, no. No, Rhoda's her usual self.

She's right outside where I can see her.

I just talked to her.

I miss you both

and love you both so much.

Aw, do you really, darling?

Well, I hope it won't be too much longer.

Well, it'll be at least four weeks.

Oh. Heh.

Four weeks is a long, long time.

Well, um, write to me as...

- Kenneth.

- Yes, darling?

I love you.

Colonel

Penmark, the general is waiting, sir.

I'll be right there.

Honey, the general just buzzed for me.

All right, dear,

then don't keep him waiting.

Goodbye, darling.

Give my love to Rhoda.

Bye.

Oh, Monica.

Don't be alarmed. I'm just in and out.

This is not another psychiatric session.

Come on in, please.

It's Rhoda's locket I'm using
for an excuse.

I've actually found a place
where they'll change the stone...

...and clean it in one day.

I'll get the locket.

I know where she keeps it.

- I think it's in her treasure box.

- Good.

They didn't agree to this
without a little pressure.

- In fact, I had to threaten them.

- Oh, not really.

You don't know the old busybody.

She uses pressure, influence,
bribery, blackmail.

And I had to pull them all
on old Mr. Finchley.

He said this little job would take
at least two weeks.

But I told him straight...

...I'm handling
the community chest again this year and...

Oh, you found it. The darling.
She keeps her treasures so carefully.
It's a kind of miserly delight.
- Shall I wrap it?
- No, no, darling. I'll just drop it in my purse.
My horoscope says that today is the day
for paying attention to small objects...
...and getting things done.
Now I take to the air, dear Christine.
Only do forgive me for bursting in
and rushing out.
- No ceremony, please.
- No, no, darling. Be seeing you.
What did you want
to see me about, Mother?
So you had the medal after all.
Claude Daigle's medal.
- Where did you find it?
- How did the medal...
...happen to be hidden under the lining in
the drawer of your treasure chest, Rhoda?
Now, I want the truth.
Mother, when we move
into our new house...
...can we have a scuppernong arbor?
Can we?
Oh, it's so shady and pretty.
- And I love sitting under it...
- Answer my question.
I'm not as innocent about what went
on at the picnic as you may think.
Miss Fern has told me a great deal.
Don't make up any stories for my benefit.
What was Claude Daigle's medal
doing in your drawer?
It certainly didn't get there by itself.
I'm waiting for your answer.
I don't know how the medal
got there, Mother. How could I?
You know how the medal got there,
you know very well how it got there.
Did you go on the wharf
during the picnic?
- Yes, Mother. I went there once.

- Before or after you were bothering Claude?

I wasn't bothering Claude, Mother.

- What makes you think that?

- Why did you go on the wharf?

- It was real early, when we first got there.

- Why did you go on the wharf?

You knew it was forbidden.

One of the big boys said there were
little oysters that grew in the pilings.

I just wanted to see if they did.

One of the guards said he saw you
coming off the wharf...

- ...just a little before lunchtime.

- I don't know why he says that.

He's wrong,

and I told Miss Fern he was wrong.

He hollered at me

to come off the wharf and I did.

I went back to the lawn

and that's where I saw Claude...

- ...but I wasn't bothering him.

- What did you say to Claude?

I said if I didn't win the medal...

- ...I was glad he did.

- Oh, Rhoda, please.

I know you're an adroit liar,

but I must have the truth.

- But it's all true, every word.

- I was told that you were seen trying to...

I was told that you were seen trying
to snatch the medal off Claude's shirt.

- Is that all true, every word?

- Oh, that was one of the monitors...

...that big girl, Mary Beth Musgrove.

She told everybody she saw me.

Even Leroy knows she saw me.

You see, Claude and I were
just playing a game we made up.

He said if I could catch him
in 10 minutes...

...and touched the medal with my hand,
it would be like prisoner's base.

He'd let me wear the medal for an hour.

How can Mary Beth say I took the medal?

- I didn't.
- She didn't say you took the medal.
She said you tried to grab at it
and that Claude ran away down the beach.
- Now, did you have the medal even then?
- No, Mother, not then.
- Rhoda, how did you get the medal?
- Oh, I got it later on.
- How?
- Well, Claude went back on his promise.
Then I followed him up the beach.
Then he stopped and said
I could wear the medal all day...
...if I gave him 50 cents.
Stop that.
- Is that the truth?
- Why, yes, Mother.
I gave him 50 cents
and he let me wear the medal.
Well, then why didn't you tell this
to Miss Fern when she questioned you?
Oh, Mommy, Mommy,
Miss Fern doesn't like me at all.
I was afraid she'd think bad things of me
if I told her I had the medal.
Oh, Rhoda. Rhoda. Now, listen to me.
You knew how much Mrs. Daigle
wanted that medal, now, didn't you?
- Yes, Mother, I guess I did.
- Well, then why didn't you give it to her?
She's lost her little boy, Rhoda.
She's heartbroken about this.
She may never get over it.
It may have destroyed her.
Well, do you know what I mean?
Well, yes, Mother, I guess so.
No, you don't know what I mean.
But it was silly to wanna bury the medal
pinned on Claude's coat.
Claude was dead.
He wouldn't know whether
he had the medal pinned on him or not.
Oh, I've got the prettiest mother.
I've got the nicest mother.

That's what I tell everybody.

I say I've got the sweetest mother
in the world.

If she wants a little boy that bad...

...why doesn't she take one

out of the orphans' home?

Rhoda. Get away from me.

Don't talk to me.

- We have nothing to say to each other.

- Okay, Mother. Okay.

Rhoda, when we lived in Wichita,

Rhoda, there was an old lady...

...who lived upstairs, Mrs. Clara Post.

- She liked you very much.

- Yes.

Every afternoon you used to

go upstairs to visit.

She used to show you all her treasures.

And the one that you admired most was a
crystal ball in which a little fish floated.

And old Mrs. Post promised this to you
when she died.

And then one afternoon

when her daughter was out shopping...

...and you were alone with the lady,

she managed to fall down the stairs...

...and break her neck.

You said she heard a kitten

and went to see what was the trouble...

...and accidentally missed her footing

and fell to the courtyard below.

- Yes, it's true.

- And then later, you asked her daughter...

...for the crystal ball,

and she gave it to you.

- And it's still sitting on your treasure chest.

- Yes, Mother.

Rhoda, did you have anything...?

I don't care how small it was...

...did you have anything to do

with the way Claude got drowned?

- What makes you ask that, Mother?

- Come here.

Now, look me in the eye

and tell me the truth...

- ...because I must know.

- No, Mother, I didn't.

You're not going back
to the Fern School next year.

- They don't want you anymore.

- Okay.

I'm gonna call Miss Fern
and have her over here.

No, no, no! She'll think I lied to her!

- You did lie to her.

- But not to you, Mother. Not to you.

Oh...

Hello, Fern School?

Miss Claudia Fern, please.

No. No message.

Well...

She isn't home yet.

Mother, what are you gonna do
with the medal?

It's really mine.

Rhoda, come here to me.

It can't be true.

Fifty, \$0.75, \$5, and \$5 are \$10.

Thank you very much, colonel.

- And here's the card to go in it.

- Yes, colonel.

- None of it will get broken in the mailing?

- No, it'll be packed in excelsior for that.

Good. Thank you.

Look, a tea set.

Oh, I guess we know a daddy
who loves somebody, all right.

What does the card say?

"For no reason, except she's the sweetest
little girl in the world. Daddy."

Oh, look, it's got a pot and everything.

Mother, could I take it out
under the arbor for a while?

I wanna pretend

I'm giving a garden party.

Yes, dear. Oh, and, by the way, unpack
it while you're out there, will you, dear?

Because this excelsior is just

getting over everything.
Oh, and don't put it down the incinerator,
because it's much too large.
Leave it out by the cellar doors
for Leroy to dispose of.
- Yes, Mother.
- A garden party.
Isn't she the perfect old-fashioned girl?
By the way, do you know
you're having your supper with me tonight?
Really, Aunt Monica?
Is it a special reason?
Oh, no. Just that I've invited
Reginald Tasker for cocktails.
You remember, Rhoda,
Granddaddy's coming tonight.
I'm going to have my dinner with him.
And that's much too late for you to eat.
- Wasn't that nice of Aunt Monica?
- Of course. Aunt Monica's sweet.
And I'll be glad to see Granddaddy.
He's sweet too.
I wish she were mine.
Every time I look at her,
I wish I had just such a little girl.
There she is at her little table,
playing with her little dishes...
...looking cute and innocent...
...looking like she wouldn't melt butter,
she's that cool.
She can fool some people
with that innocent look...
...she can put on and put off
whenever she wants, but not me.
She can't fool me.
Don't wanna talk to nobody smart, huh?
Like to talk to people she can fool...
...like her mama and Mrs. Breedlove
and Mr. Emory.
Here's some excelsior for you.
You talk silly all the time.
I know what you do with the excelsior.
You made a bed of excelsior...
...down the basement,

behind that old furnace...
...and you sleep there,
where nobody can see you.
I've been way
behind the times heretofore...
...but now I got your number, miss.
I've been hearing things about you
that ain't nice.
I been hearing you beat up
that Daigle boy in the woods...
...and it took all of the Fern sisters
to pull you off.
I heard you run him off the wharf,
he was that scared.
If you tell lies like that,
you won't go to heaven when you die.
I heard plenty.
I listen when people talk, not like you...
...gabbing all the time,
won't let nobody get a word in edgewise.
And that's why I know
what people are saying and you don't.
People tell lies all the time, but I think
you tell them more than anybody else.
I know what you done to that little boy
when you got him on that wharf.
You better listen to me
if you want to stay out of bad trouble.
What did I do, if you know so much?
You picked up a stick
and you hit him with it.
You hit him with it because he wouldn't
give you that medal like you told him to.
I thought I seen some mean little gals
in my time...
...but you're the meanest.
You wanna know how I know
how mean you are?
Because I'm mean.
I'm smart and I'm mean.
And you're smart and you're mean.
And you never get caught
and I never get caught.
I know what you think.

I know everything you think.
Nobody believes anything you say.
You wanna know what you done
after you hit him?
You jerked the medal off his shirt, and
then you rolled that sweet little boy...
- ...off that wharf among them pilings.
- You don't know anything.
None of what you said is true.
You know I'm telling the gospel truth,
I got it figured out.
You figured out something
that never happened, and so it's all lies.
Now, take your excelsior
down to the basement...
...and sleep on it
when you're supposed to be working.
You ain't no dope, that I must say.
That's why you didn't leave that stick
around where nobody could find it.
Oh, no.
You got better sense than that.
You took that bloody stick...
...washed it off real good,
and threw it in the woods...
- ...where nobody could find it.
- You know, I think you're a very silly man.
It was you who was silly, thinking
you could wash off blood and you can't.
- Why can't you wash off blood?
- Because you can't.
And the police know it.
You can wash and you can wash,
and there's always some left.
Everybody knows that.
I'm gonna call the police and tell them...
...to start looking for that stick
in the woods.
They got what they call
stick bloodhounds to help them look...
...and them stick bloodhounds can find
any stick there is that's got blood on it.
When they bring in that stick
you washed off...

...the police are gonna sprinkle
some special blood powder they got on it.
And that little boy's blood
is gonna show up on that stick.
Gonna show up a pretty blue color,
like a robin's egg.

- You're scared about the police yourself.

- Shh.

What you say about me is all about you.

They'll get you with that powder.

Rhoda, it's time to come in now.

- Time to get ready for supper.

- Yes, Mother.

Getting up this excelsior, Mrs. Penmark.

Messing up my lawn here.

- What were you saying to Rhoda?

- Why, nothing, Mrs. Penmark.

We was talking

about her little play dishes.

Well, you are not to talk to her again.

If you do, I'll report you.

Is that entirely clear?

But, ma'am, I...

I started it, Mother.

It wasn't Leroy's fault.

Very well,

but you're not to talk to her again.

- Do you understand?

- Yes, ma'am.

- Mother?

- Hmm?

Is it true that when blood
has been washed off anything...

...a policeman can still
find if it's there?

If he sprinkles some powder
on the place...

...will the place really turn blue?

Who's been talking to you
about such things? Leroy?

Oh, no, Mommy, it wasn't he.

I heard some men talking about it
when I was out front this morning.

I don't know how they'd test for blood,

but I could ask Reginald Tasker.

- Or Miss Fern, she would know...

- No, don't ask her.

Oh, Mommy. Mommy, nobody helps me.

Nobody believes me.

- I'm your little girl.

- All right, Rhoda. It is not a very good act.

Now, you may perfect it enough to convince someone who doesn't know you...

...but right at present, it is quite easy to see through.

Maybe I'd better go up to Monica's and have dinner.

Yes, she said any time.

- Good evening, Mr. Tasker.

- You can't renege on the invitation now.

- I showed up.

- Well, I'm very glad you could come.

- This is my daughter, Rhoda.

- Hello, Rhoda.

- Well, isn't she a little sweetheart?

- Thank you.

That's the kind of thing that makes an old bachelor wish he were married.

- Oh, you like little girls to curtsy?

- The best thing left out of the Middle Ages.

I'm having dinner upstairs.

The loss is ours, all ours.

- You may go now, Rhoda.

- Yes, Mommy.

It's been a pleasure to have met you, Mr. Tasker.

Now, there's a little ray of sunshine, that one.

- Ooh, I've seen her stormy. Ha, ha.

- No doubt.

But she's going to make some man very happy, just that smile.

Since I spoke to you,

I've had a wire from my father.

He's coming here tonight.

It's a whole year since I've seen him.

- Richard Bravo's coming here?

- Mm-hm.

There's a man
I've always wanted to meet.
Well, he may be here before long.
He said possibly for dinner.
Good. By the way, dear lady...
...if you want advice on writing anything,
you don't need me.
Not with Richard Bravo on the scene...
...especially if it's a mystery story,
as you said.
Your father was a real authority
on crime and horror in his early career.
- I know.
- He covered every famous case there was.
Well, I'm afraid he wouldn't listen to me.
You're always an office boy
to your city editor, aren't you?
- What will it be?
- Uh, gin and tonic?
Good, I'll have that too.
The, uh, question that I wanted to ask you
is a psychological one.
I doubt that it's been asked or answered,
if it has, until recently.
- Well, I may not know all the answers.
- Well, perhaps no one does...
...but this story that I'm thinking
of writing made me wonder.
Tell me,
do children ever commit murders...
...or is crime something
that's learned gradually...
...and grows as the criminal grows...
...so that only adults
do really dreadful things?
Oh, yes, children often commit murders.
And quite clever ones too.
Some murderers,
particularly the distinguished ones...
...who are going to make great names
for themselves...
- ...start amazingly early.
- In childhood?
Oh, yes,

like mathematicians and musicians.
Poets develop later.
Pascal was a master mathematician
at 12.
Mozart showed his melodic genius at 6.
And some of our great criminals
were topflight operators...
...before they got out of short pants
and pinafores.
Yes, but they grew up in the slums,
among criminals...
...and learned from their environment.
Surely, you...
I wonder if that could be Father.
- Daddy.
- Hi, darling.
You're here, you're actually here.
Told you I'd come.
You said you wanted to see me...
- ...and I wanted to see you.
- Oh, I'm so glad.
Oh. Um, Father, this is Reginald Tasker.
Reginald Tasker?
- The writer fella?
- Afraid I stand convicted.
- One of my favorites.
- Put you to sleep regularly, hmm?
Mostly keeps me awake.
Also, I'm not forgetting...
...that impressive research you've done
for the Classic Crime Club.
Not half as good as the papers
they used to publish by Richard Bravo.
- Ha, ha.
- That old dodo?
No, he's written himself out
and talked himself out.
Now he just hobbles around the country,
working for a second-rate news service.
I took time out because I wanted to see
my long-lost daughter.
- Mm. Ha, ha.
- Ha, ha.
Mm.

- Where's my granddaughter?
- Oh, she's upstairs having dinner, Daddy.
- She'll be down in a few minutes.
- That's fine.
Oh. Sit down, huh?
Say, any reason I can't have
one of those wicked-looking mixtures...
- ...Mr. Tasker's consuming?
- Oh, Daddy, I'm sorry.
You're about ready
for another one too, aren't you?
Haven't you ever considered coming back
into the criminology racket?
There's been nobody like you
since you left.
Ha, ha. Well, all compliments aside...
...my last books didn't sell
as well as my earlier ones...
...and the war came along,
and now I write filler.
You've written some things
that will never be forgotten.
Let's hope.
And now your daughter tells me
she's gonna try her hand.
At writing? She can't even spell.
Ha, ha. - Oh.
It gets lonely here with Kenneth away.
I thought I might...
...try a murder-mystery
during the evenings.
Are you encouraging
this energetic competition?
Well, I must admit, I didn't quite know
how to answer her first question.
She was asking me...
...whether criminal children
are always a product of environment.
There's nothing difficult
about that, little one. They are.
Mm, I always thought so too.
- Always.
- Well, I couldn't prove you're wrong...
...of course, sir,

but some fellow criminologists...
...including some behavior scientists,
have begun to make me believe...
...we've all been putting too much emphasis
on environment...
...and too little on heredity.
They cite a type of criminal...
...born with no capacity
for remorse or guilt...
...no feeling of right or wrong...
...born with a kind of brain
that may have been normal in humans...
...50,000 years ago.

Nonsense.

If you encounter a human
without compassion or pity or morals...
...he grew up where these things
weren't encouraged.

Or at birth, he received some pitiable
physical injuries to the brain tissues.
Certainly not inherited.

That's final and absolute for me.

The rest is hogwash.

And with that outburst,
I terminate for a refill.

- Oh, no more ice.
- Oh, Daddy, I'm sorry. It's in the kitchen.
- Would you mind?
- Certainly not.

Do you really mean to say
that nice family surroundings...

...and advantages
could make no difference at all?

Yes. It's as if these children
were born blind permanently...

...and you just couldn't expect
to teach them to see.

Well, would you notice
any brutish expressions on their faces?
Sometimes, but more often,
they present a more convincing picture...
...of virtue than normal folk.

But that's horrible.

It's just that they are bad seeds...

...plain bad from the beginning,
and nothing can change them.
This favorite murderess of yours...
...the one you were telling us about
the other afternoon, is she an instance?
Bessie Denker? Was Bessie a bad seed?
Well, yes, I should say so...
...because when the full story
of her career came out...
...it was realized that she must've started
at the age of 10.
Well, then she started young, huh?
Oh, yes.
Isn't that so, Mr. Bravo?
What so?
We were talking about Bessie Denker.
I know you covered all her trials...
...because I read your famous essay
listing her methods.
I've forgotten
all about those gloomy cases.
Put them out of my mind.
I'm full up with my present prosaic series
on offshore oil.
How did she end?
Sweetheart, you don't wanna probe
into these nonsensical graveyards.
Yes, I do.
Say, Kenneth and I saw the Senators
play the Yankees Sunday.
- And that Mickey Mantle...
- Daddy, please.
Mr. Tasker, would you tell me
the rest of the story?
- Did she ever use violence?
- She ended in mystery.
Just when the authorities
thought they had her dead to rights...
...she disappeared, just vanished.
She had quite a fortune by then.
There was a rumor
that she went to Australia.
A similar beauty turned up in Melbourne.
Her name was Beulah Demerest.

If it was the same person, she didn't have to
change her initials on her linen and silver.
How could she kill so many
and leave no trace?
Every time she was indicted,
she just took off for parts unknown...
...leaving absolutely no...
Wait a minute.
Wasn't there a child, a little girl?
Never heard of one.
Must be a recent addition to the myth.
There's one more question I'd like to ask.
Wasn't she ever found out here?
Not in this country.
Three juries
looked at that lovely dewy face...
...and heard that melting, cultured voice

and said:

- "She couldn't have done it."
- She wasn't convicted?
- "Not guilty" three times.
- Do you think that she was one of these...
...poor, deformed children,
born without pity?
Did She...?
Did she did she have
an enchanting smile?
Dazzling, from all accounts.
- She was doomed?
- Absolutely.
Doomed to commit murder after murder...
...until somehow or other,
she was found out.
Huh.
She'd have been better off
if she'd died young.
You've been talking tommyrot, Tasker,
and you know it.
Well, on this not-too-merry
but disputed point, I'll take my leave.
It's been a great pleasure, sir.
I've been lecturing, so I'm afraid
I was the only one to enjoy it.

Oh, not at all.

Don't go to any major-league doctor
with that heredity theory.

- They'll shoot it full of holes.

- We'll stay off the subject the next time.

I'll study up on my baseball.

- Good night.

- Good night.

- Good night.

- And again, thank you, Mrs. Penmark.

Good night.

Well, it's nice to be alone again
with my girl.

Are you really planning
to write something?

Oh.

I was just asking questions.

- You saw Kenneth in Washington?

- Yes, he's looking well.

As well as possible

when a fella's hot and sticky and tired...

- ...and most of all, lonesome.

- We had planned to go somewhere...

...this summer, but then this sudden change
of orders came through...

Am I looking too close...

...or is there something heavy
on your mind?

Does something show in my face?

Everything shows in your face.

- It always did.

- Oh, well...

I don't know if I'm worried
about anything now that you're here.

I always felt so safe and comfortable
when you were in the room...

...and you have that same effect now.

To tell you the truth,
you did a magic for me.

I'd always wanted a little girl...

...and you were everything lovely a little
girl could possibly be for her dad.

But, Christine, tell me,
what did you wanna ask me?

Oh.

Let me think a minute.

Would you like another drink?

Yes, I guess I would.

- Can I fix you something?

- No. No, thank you. I don't want any.

Well, speak up, darling.

It's between us, whatever it is.

Well...

...my landlady here...

...is a kind of amateur psychiatrist,
a devotee of Freud's...

...constantly analyzing.

- I know the type.

- You'll meet her. Her name is Breedlove.

She's offered a room for you
to stay in while you're here.

Rhoda's upstairs
having dinner with her right now.

You were going
to come out with something.

Yes, well, what I was going to ask
reminded me of her.

I confessed to her the other day
that I'd always been...
...worried about being an adopted child,
and that...

...I was afraid that Mommy
wasn't really my mother...
...and that the daddy that I...
That I love so much...

...wasn't really mine.

- What'd she say?

- She said that it was...
...the commonest of childhood fantasies,
that everybody had it...

...that she'd had it herself.

Well, it certainly is common.

Yes, but that doesn't help me,
because, you see...

...I still feel that old fear...
...that you're not really mine.

Has something made you
think about this lately?

- Yes.

- What is it?

My little girl, Rhoda.

- What about her?

- Oh, Daddy, I'm terrified...

I'm afraid for her.

I'm afraid of what she might've inherited from me.

What could she have inherited?

- Nothing but sweetness and...

- Daddy.

Father...

...whose child am I?

- Why, mine.

- Oh, no, Daddy, please don't lie to me now.

It's gone beyond the time

where that will help. I...

I've told you about a dream I have,

but I'm not sure it's only a dream.

Whose child am I?

Are you my father?

Oh, I know this is a strange question to greet you with...

...after having been so long away from you...

...but for Rhoda's sake and my sake, I must know.

- What has Rhoda done?

- I don't know, but I'm afraid.

Christine, even if it were true, well...

...just remember, all this inheritance stuff is pure rubbish.

All thumbs and webbed feet.

I'm sorry.

I won't ask any more questions.

Right, darling.

Let's just close the book.

Besides...

...I know the answer now.

- Answer?

- Yes.

Christine, I've been a very fortunate man.

If it hadn't been for you

becoming part of my life...

...all these years would've been empty and lonely and unbearable. The greatest piece of luck I ever had was a little girl named Christine. You were the only child I ever had. As I said, you were magic for me. I was happy and proud to keep going, just for you. You don't have to say any more.

- I don't, do I?

- No.

You found me somewhere.

Yes.

In a very strange place.

- In a strange way.

- Oh, Daddy, I know the place. I don't think you could have. You were less than 2 years old. Well, then if I don't know it, I guess I must've dreamed it. What kind of dream?

On, Daddy, I...

I dream of a bedroom in a farmhouse in a countryside where there are orchards. I share the room with my brother, who's older than I am. One night, somebody... Is it my mother? ...she comes to take care of him and... She's a lovely lady. She's beautiful, like an angel. And later, I guess my brother must've died because I'm alone in the room. One night, I'm terrified to be in that room another minute. Somehow, I get out of bed, it's moonlight. And I get out the window, drop to the ground below... ...and I hide myself in the deep weeds beyond the first orchard. And then I don't remember very much else, except that towards morning, I'm... I'm thirsty and I begin to eat the yellow pippins that fall from the trees...

...and then when the first light comes up
on the clouds...
...I can hear my mother's voice...
...calling to me from the distance,
and I don't answer her because I'm afraid.
Now, is that a dream?
Is that only a dream?
What name did she call?
Well, it isn't Christine.
Could it be Ingold?
- You remember that name?
- Yes, yes, Daddy.
It's coming back to me now. Ingold.
"Ingold Denker," she's call...
Denker.
On, Daddy.
You've kept this from me all these years?
I came out of that terrible household?
That's where you found me?
The neighbors found you
after your mother disappeared.
I discovered you with them
before anybody.
The most astonishingly
sweet and beautiful little thing...
...with the most
enchanted smile I've ever seen.
Oh...
As Tasker said, I was there covering
the case for a Chicago newspaper.
I wired my wife and she joined me.
- We couldn't resist you.
- Oh, Daddy.
Oh, God, help me. God, help me.
Why didn't you just leave me there?
Why didn't I die in the orchard...
...and end the agony there?
It was the neighbors
who found you and saved you.
Would you rather have stayed with them?
No. You...
You've been a wonderful father. It's...
It's that awful place and that evil woman.
My mother.

There are places and events in every man's life he'd rather not remember.

- Don't let it hurt you now. It's past.

- Daddy, I wish...

I Wish I had died then.

I Wish it. I Wish it.

It hasn't mattered where you came from.

You've been sound and sweet and loving.

You've given me more

than I ever gave or could ever repay.

If you'd been my very own,

I couldn't have hoped for more.

You've known

nothing but love and kindness from us...

...and you've given nothing but love and

kindness and sweetness all of your life.

Kenneth loves you,

and you've made him infinitely happy...

...and Rhoda's a sweet,

perfectly sound little girl.

Is she, Father?! Is she?!

- What has she done?

- It's as if she'd been born blind.

- It doesn't happen. It cannot happen.

- Well...

Excuse me, please,

but Rhoda has tired of her puzzle...

...finished her dinner,

and now she wants a book.

- Well, we haven't even started yet.

- And I haven't met Mr. Bravo.

How do you do?

I'm Mrs. Breedlove, the oversized analyst.

I'm going to put you up,

and I promise not to annoy you.

Well, you know what newspapermen

are like:

- If you can put up with me,

you're a saint. - Granddaddy.

- Rhoda.

- Isn't she perfection?

Next to Daddy, you lift me up best.

Why do you look at me?

I just wanna see your face.
You know, Mr. Bravo, these Penmarks are the
most enchanting neighbors I've ever had.
Now I'll want Rhoda
for dinner every night.
Thank you, Aunt Monica.
Tell me, Mr. Bravo,
didn't you write the Fingerprint series?
I'm afraid I was guilty of that
about 20 years ago.
I read the first volume to pieces
and wept over it...
...till the parts I loved most were
illegible, then bought another.
- Well, I've finally met my public.
- I don't disappoint you?
Anyway, I'm large.
I like people who read books to pieces.
It's good for royalties.
Uh...
It's time I began to get our dinner.
Maybe I better find my room
and get ready for the evening.
- I'll take you, if you care to go.
- If you'll be so kind.
It's the next floor above.
Good night, Christine.
Ah.
- What are you doing?
- Nothing.
Is that for the incinerator?
- Yes.
- But what is it?
It's just some things you told me
to throw away.
No!
- You let me see what's in the package.
- No! Give me that!
- Let me see what's in the...
- Give it!
Let me see.
- Let me see what's in the package.
- Give me that!
You hit him with the shoes, didn't you?

You hit him with the shoes.
That's how he got those half-moon marks...
...on his forehead and on his hands.
Answer me, Rhoda.
Answer me!
I hit him with the shoes.
I had to hit him with the shoes!
- What else could I do?
- Do you realize that you murdered him?
But it was his fault.
If he gave me the medal like I told him to,
I wouldn't have hit him.
All right.
All right, now, we're gonna...
We're gonna start at the beginning
and you're gonna tell me the truth.
I know you killed him,
so there's no sense lying.
- Rhoda, I want you to tell me the truth!
- I can't tell you, Mother.
I want you to...
I'm waiting for your answer.
He wouldn't give me the medal
like I told him to, that's all.
So then he ran away from me
and hid on the wharf.
But I found him there...
...and I told him I'd hit him with my shoe
if he didn't give me the medal!
But he shook his head and said no.
So I hit him the first time.
Then he took off the medal
and gave it to me.
And then what happened?
Tried to run away from me.
So I hit him with my shoe again!
But he kept on crying
and making a noise...
...and I was afraid
somebody would hear him...
...so I kept on hitting him, Mother!
I hit him harder that time...
...and he fell in the water.
Oh, my God. My God.

What are we gonna do?
What are we gonna do?
Oh, I've got the prettiest mother.
- I've got the nicest mother.
- How did...?
How did the marks
get on the backs of his hands?
He tried to pull himself
back on the wharf...
...after he fell in the water.
I wouldn't have hit him anymore.
Only he kept saying
he was going to tell on me.
Oh, Mommy, Mommy, please say
you won't let them hurt me.
I won't let them hurt you.
I don't know what must be done now,
but I promise you nobody will hurt you.
I wanna play the way
we used to, Mommy.
Will you play with me?
- If I give you a basket of kisses...?
- Oh, Rhoda, Rhoda, please.
- Please.
- Can't you give me an answer, Mother?
- If I give you a basket of kisses...?
- Rhoda, I want you to...
I want you to go in your bedroom now
and read...
...because I have to think
about what to do.
Promise me you won't tell anyone
what you've told me. Do you understand?
- Why would I tell and get killed?
- Rhoda.
What happened
to old Mrs. Post in Wichita?
There was ice on the steps...
...and I slipped and fell against her...
...and that was all.
That was all?
No.
I slipped on purpose.
Rhoda, get the shoes.

Get the shoes and put them
in the incinerator. Hurry.
Put them in the incinerator
and burn them.

- What will you do with the medal, Mother?

- I'll think of something to do.

You won't give it to Miss Fern?

No.

I won't give it to Miss Fern.

So your grand pappy finally left, huh?

My mother and I just came
from taking him to the plane.

That's really none of your business.

Maybe he don't like you so much.

Maybe he sees through you, like I do.

You know so much.

His editor called from long distance
and he had to go to work...

...and you better do yours.

And I found out about one lie
that you told.

There is no such thing
as a stick bloodhound.

I ain't supposed to talk
to little Miss Goody-Goody.

Then don't.

Where's your mama?

She had to go back to the grocery store,
and that's none of your business, either.

And I'm busy with my puzzle.

Puzzle, huh?

Well, you don't puzzle me none,

Little Miss Sweet-Looking.

Just for your own sake,

I'll tell you something.

There may not be any stick bloodhound,
but there's a stick, all right.

You better find that stick before they do,
because they're going to turn blue.

And then they're gonna fry you
in the electric chair.

There isn't any stick any more than
there's a stick bloodhound.

You know the noise

the electric chair makes? It goes:
And when that juice hits you,
it parts your hair neat.
Like lightning struck you.
Oh, go on with your lawn mower.
They don't put little girls
in the electric chair.
They don't?
They got a little blue chair
for little boys...
...and a little pink chair for little gals.
I just remembered something.
Just the morning of the picnic,
I wiped off your shoes with the cleats.
You used to go tap-tap-tap
on the walk.
How come you don't wear them
anymore?
You're silly.
- I never had a pair of shoes like that.
- You used to go tap-tap-tap on the walk.
I'd squirt water on them
and wiped them off.
They hurt my feet and I gave them away.
You know something?
You didn't hit that little boy
with no stick.
You hit him with them shoes.
- Ain't I right this time?
- You're silly.
You think I'm silly
because I said about the stick.
All I was trying was to make you say,
"It wasn't no stick, it was my shoes."
- I knew what it was.
- You lie all the time. All the time.
How come I got those shoes, then?
Where did you get them?
Just walked right into the apartment,
right into your room, and took them.
It's just more lies,
because I burned those shoes.
I put them down the incinerator
and burned them.

Nobody's got them.
I don't say that ain't
smart, because it is.
Only suppose I say I heard something
come rattling down the incinerator...
...and I says to myself, "Sounds to me
like a pair of shoes with cleats."
I don't say you didn't
burn them a little...
...but you didn't burn them all up
like you wanted to.
- Yes.
- You listen to this, then figure out...
...which of us is the silly one.
I'm working down the cellar and I hear
them shoes come down that incinerator.
I open the door quick and there they is...
...just sitting up on top of the coals,
only smoking the least little bit.
I pull them out.
They're scorched.
Sure, they're scorched,
but there's plenty left to turn blue...
...and show where
that little boy's blood was.
Plenty left to put you
in the electric chair.
- Give me those shoes back.
- Oh, no.
I got them shoes hid
where nobody but me can find them.
You'd better give me those shoes.
They're mine. Give them back to me.
I ain't giving them shoes back to nobody.
You'd better give them back to me, Leroy.
I'm keeping them shoes.
Who says I got anybody's shoes
except my own?
You did.
You get them and give them back!
I'm fooling you, I'm teasing you.
I got nobody's shoes.
- I got work to do.
- Give me back my shoes!

Don't you know
when anybody's teasing you?
Will you bring them back?
Play with your puzzle.
I got no shoes, I tell you.
You bring them back.
I believe you did it.
I was fooling before,
but now I believe you killed him.
You killed that little boy with your shoes.
You've got them hid...
...but you'd better get them
and bring them back here...
...right here to me!
- What is Leroy saying to you?
- Nothing.
I heard you yelling,
"Bring them back here."
- He said he had my shoes.
- I got nobody's shoes, Miss Penmark.
You may go, Leroy.
Yes, ma'am.
There you are.
May I come down a minute?
I have that present I promised
a certain precious somebody.
- Yes, of course, Monica.
- I'll be right down.
Rhoda...
...I thought I told you
not to discuss this with anybody.
Yes, Mother, but he said he had my...
We'll talk about it later. Get upstairs.
Rhoda.
Rhoda! Ah. Look what I have for you.
- What is it? The locket.
- My smart little darling, exactly.
- Oh.
- And here's the garnet too, in there.
Oh, how pretty.
- Will you help me fasten it, Aunt Monica?
- Yes, I will, darling. Come over here.
Now.
Now you're going to look

just like a little princess.

Oh.

It's the ice-cream man.

Mommy, can I have a Popsicle?

- What?

- Can I have a Popsicle?

Oh, uh...

Yes, take the money from my purse.

Rhoda.

What have you got those for?

I just wanted some

to play jackstraws with.

Well, put them down this minute.

Now, you know we have a rule about that.

Yes, Mother.

Ooh, it's so hot today.

Christine.

Christine, you won't mind

if I'm nosy and ridiculous...

...but you haven't been yourself lately.

It's as if something is dragging you down.

Oh. Does it show to other people?

- Then there is something wrong.

- Uh, no, Monica. Not really. I'm...

I'm just tired, I guess.

Do you take vitamins regularly?

No. No, I don't.

Well, you should, darling.

That's one of the things we do know.

I have an awfully good combination.

I'll bring some down if I may.

And now you must really forgive me...

...but have you and Kenneth

come to a parting of the ways?

His being transferred to Washington

didn't mean that?

- Oh, no.

- Well, it can happen in marriage, you know.

That restlessness in cycles

of seven or eight years, they say.

Something to do with hormones.

I can't speak from experience...

...because I always doubted

if Mr. Breedlove had any.

Aw. Ha, ha. No.
No, Monica.
It isn't anything like that. I...
I wish I were as sure of other things
as I am of Kenneth.
Do you sleep enough?
No, not always.
You must have some sleeping pills.
That much we can do.
Monica, I, um...
I really don't like sleeping pills.
I'm afraid of them.
Well, I'm not going to bully you anymore,
dear Christine.
I'm only going to say that I love you.
Truly... Oh, please.
Please. Please, tell me what it is, dear.
- I can't, Monica. I can't.
- Please, you can trust me.
Oh, dear, dear Christine.
You'll feel better now.
Perhaps you can get some rest. Perhaps...
There, now, dear.
I'll get rid of whoever it is.
Wait a minute. Wait a minute.
Well, Mrs. Breedlove.
Hi.
I know you don't want me here,
and I don't wanna be here...
...but I can't stay away,
so I got a little drunk and came over.
- Excuse me, please.
- You're very welcome.
Like a skunk, I know.
Mrs. Breedlove knows everyone,
knows even me.
How are you, Mrs. Daigle?
Well, I'm half-seas over.
I just wanna have a talk with your little girl.
She was one of the last to see my Claude.
I know.
Where do you keep the perfect little lady
who was the last to see Claude?
I thought I'd hold her in my arms...

...and we'd have a little talk,
maybe she'd remember some little thing.
- Any little thing.
- She's out playing, I think.
I'm unfortunate, that's all.
Drunk and unfortunate,
ladies and gentlemen.
Well, she isn't there now. I don't see her.
She's a perfect little lady.
That's what I heard.
Never gives any trouble.
Christine, have you got anything
in the house to drink?
Any little thing at all.
I'm not the fussy type.
I prefer bourbon and water,
but any little thing will do.
Oh, ain't we swank?
Really Plaza and Astor.
I wanna have a little talk with Rhoda
because she knows something.
I called that Miss Fern on the telephone
a dozen times.
She just keeps giving me the brush-off.
She knows something, all right.
Oh. Are you all right there?
I'm not intoxicated
in the slightest degree.
Kindly don't talk down to me,
Mrs. Penmark.
I've been through enough without that.
- I brought back change, Mother.
- Very well.
Mrs. Daigle would like to see you.
So this is your little girl.
Oh, Claude spoke of you so often...
...and in such high terms.
You were one of his dearest friends,
I'm sure.
He said you were so bright in school.
- So you're Rhoda.
- Yes.
Well, Rhoda, you just come
right over here and see me.

You come give your Aunt Hortense
a big kiss.

Aw.

You're the little girl who was with Claude
when he had his accident, aren't you?

You're the little girl who thought she
was gonna win that penmanship medal...

...but you didn't win it, did you?

Claude won it, didn't he?

Now, you tell me this.

Would you say he won it fair and square
or he cheated?

These things are so important to me
now that he's dead.

Would you say he won it fair, darling?

Because if he did win it fair,
then why did you go after him for it?

I want my Popsicle.

Rhoda, if you're going shopping with me,
you'll have to come now, darling.

- Right now?

- Yes. We're late as it is.

Take your Popsicle, dear.

You can wash upstairs.

- Well, I must say...

- They really did have an appointment.

I'm sure they did.

Practically sure.

I didn't know Rhoda had
all these social obligations.

Thought she was like any little girl that
stayed home and minded her mother...

...and didn't go traipsing all over town
with important appointments.

I'm sorry that I interfered
with Rhoda's social life.

I offer you
my deepest apologies, Christine.

I'll apologize to Rhoda too
when I can have an interview with her.

You haven't interfered at all.

I was not going to contaminate Rhoda
in the slightest degree, I assure you.

Hello?

Oh, uh...

Yes, Mr. Daigle, I know. She's here.

No, not at all.

Did you tell him I was drunk
and making a spectacle of myself?

Did you tell him to call out
the patrol wagon?

No, no, you heard what I said.

I said only that you were here.

Your husband is at the drugstore
at the corner.

I was only gonna hold her in my arms
and ask her a few simple questions.

- Perhaps another time would be better.

- You think because I'm lit?

I'm not. Rhoda knows more than she's told,
if you don't mind me being presumptuous.

I had a talk with that guard
since I saw you last.

It was an interesting conversation.

He said he saw Rhoda on the pier...

...just before Claude was found
among the pilings.

She knows something, all right.

Oh, I know what you're thinking.

You're thinking,

"How can I get rid of this pest?"

You may fool some

with that mealy mouth.

You look like Ned in the primer to me.

Well, then...

...perhaps you'd better not
come here anymore.

I wouldn't come here again
for a million dollars laid on the line.

I wouldn't have come here this time if I'd
known about Rhoda's social obligations.

I am going home.

I'm not gonna wait for Mr. Daigle.

I know where I'm not wanted
and I'm not wanted anyplace...

...where people have all these
social obligations, if you get what I mean.

Say, you're looking kind of

sick and sloppy.
Why don't you come up to my house
and I'll give you a free beauty treatment.
If you're hard-pressed for ready cash,
it won't cost you a nickel.
Thank you, Mrs. Penmark.
Come, Hortense. It's time to go home.
Oh, my God. My God, it's time to go home.
Christine, you know something.
You know something you won't tell me.
Operator.
I wanna call...
...Washington D.C., please.
Kenneth, my darling, my love.
What am I going to say to you?
That our baby is a...
Never mind it, operator.
Cancel the call.
Good. She's gone.
I know I shouldn't take things
into my all-too-capable hands...
...but I couldn't
let her paw Rhoda any longer.
Oh, well, Mr. Daigle came for her.
And I fear I've loosened the discipline
just a little.
I let Rhoda go out for another Popsicle.
Oh, she wanted a second?
That's unusual.
She seemed quite eager,
and since she's not one of these...
...fat, self-indulgent little blobs,
I doubt that it will do any harm.
By the way, darling, here are
the sleeping pills and the vitamins...
...both plainly marked.
Thank you, Monica.
I'll keep them separate.
Emory and Reggie
just got back from fishing.
Reggie's having dinner with us
before he leaves tonight.
Wouldn't you like to eat with us,
you and Rhoda too?

No, Monica.
Thank you very much.
Really, I'd rather not.
You poor girl.
I do bully you, and I promised not to.
Let me out of here!
Let me out! Aah!
What was that?
It sounded like somebody shouting for help.
It sounded close by.
Rhoda, who was that shouting?
Oh, I don't know, Mother.
- Well, it sounded as if there were a fire.
- No, I don't think so.
Let me out! Aah!
Let me out! Let me out of here!
- No, Reg! Back here!
- Look!
Let me out! Aah!
Give me that shovel.
Get the hose! LEROY: Aah!
Help me! Help me!
It's too late.
- Somebody call an ambulance!
- He's lying still.
- Whatever can be done will be done.
- Oh, yes.
Oh, yes, Monica. But now, you see...
I should've known
that this was going to happen.
Now, I should've known it.
How could I be so blind?
- Thank God Rhoda was playing the piano.
- The fire was where Leroy was.
- But there's nothing you could do.
- But this time I saw it with my own eyes.
Now, make them stop screaming
because it isn't going to help.
- You're not making sense.
- Make her stop that music, Monica.
Because that man is still screaming...
...and the piano is going on and on
while he's dying in the fire screaming.
- Monica.

- A man screaming.
- Monica.
- I don't wanna see anybody now.
It's Emory, dear.
There was a flare-up in the basement.
Tasker and the rest are putting it out now.
- I'm afraid poor Leroy...
- Never mind.
I saw him.
I saw him run down the path and die.
Can it be any worse than that?
Seems he fell asleep
on a bed he'd made out of excelsior.
- I suppose a cigarette set fire to the
stuff. - Please. Please leave me alone.
My God, Monica.
Monica, I just simply cannot bear it.
Now she is driving me mad.
How could she play
that tinkle now? Rhoda.
- What is it? What is it?
- Monica, I can't stand it.
How can she play that music now?
Rhoda, stop that music!
Stop that music!
- Mommy.
- Let me get my hands on her!
You didn't see it, did you? No. You could
turn away, and you could play the piano.
Christine, what has she done?
It isn't what she's done.
- It's what I've done.
- What does she mean, Monica?
I don't know, Rhoda.
She'd better go upstairs with me.
- She'll stay till you're calmer.
- Yes, Monica. Would you take her, please?
- But will you be all right, dear?
- I'll be all right. I'll be all right.
It's just that that screaming
goes on and on.
We'll come down for you later.
Come, Rhoda.
She killed him.

But she's my little girl...

...and I love her.

Oh, my baby.

My baby. My baby. My baby.

"Polly put one toe out
from under the covers..."

...to find out how cold it was...

...and it was nipping cold.

She remembered why she'd wanted
to wake up and got out of bed...

...very softly...

...shivering and pulling on her dress
and her stockings.

She'd never seen a Christmas tree
decorated and lighted...

...the way they are at Christmas
in houses where children have...

Where children have fathers,
and it isn't hard times.

"She'd promised herself
that she would see one."

You have some new vitamins
to take tonight.

- New ones?

- Mm-hm.

- Are those the vitamins?

- Yes.

May I see them, please?

Why, yes, of course.

They're some that Monica sent down.

Oh.

You know, I think Monica likes me.

I'm sure she does.

Swallowing pills is just a trick.

Ha, ha. You're very good at it.

Do you love me, Mommy?

Oh, yes.

Do you know about Leroy?

Yes.

You told me to put my shoes
in the incinerator, didn't you?

- Yes.

- What did you do with the medal?

I can have it now, can't I?

I drove out to the playground alone...
...and I went out on the pier when
it was dark and no one could see me...
...and I dropped the medal by the pilings
in the water there.

Mommy, Leroy had my shoes.
And he said he was
gonna give them to the police...
...and then tell them about me, and they
would put me in the electric chair.
Shh. You don't have to say any more.
Will you read more now?
Yes, but first you have to take these.

- So many?
- They're a new kind. I'm to take them too.
I like apricot juice.
It doesn't even need ice.

Mommy...
...I saved a couple of matches and I lit...
...the excelsior and locked the door.
But it wasn't my fault, Mommy.
It was Leroy's fault.
He shouldn't have said
he'd tell the police...
- ...and give them my shoes.
- I know.

There. That's all.
- Don't let them hurt me, Mommy.
- Oh.
I won't let them hurt you.
- Good night.
- Good night, Mommy.

Now will you read?
Yes.
"When Polly was all dressed..."
...she found her shawl and crept quietly
out of the front door.
The door creaked and she waited
and listened, but nobody woke up.
She closed the door carefully...
...and looked at the bright moon
and the shining cold snow.
The Carters must have a tree.
They lived two blocks away.

If they left the curtains open,
you could look in and see.
If only there weren't any dogs.
Polly walked carefully on the hard snow
on the walk...
...keeping the warm shawl
close around her.
It was further than she remembered
to the Carters' house...
...but she could see
that there were lights in the windows.
She came near it, only making a little
creaking noise on the snow...
...and stood for a while
in front of the house...
...before she dared go near.
Then she gathered all her courage...
...and walked across the yard,
her shoes sinking through the crust.
The Christmas tree
was right in the front window...
...and the lights were on in the house, so
she could see the fruits and the bells...
...and the strings of popcorn and candy...
"...and the silver star at the top."
Rhoda.
Rhoda, you're mine...
...and I carried you...
...and I can't let them hurt you.
I can't let them take you away
and shut you up.
They'd stare at you
and make a show of you...
...and nobody can save you from that
unless I save you.
So sleep well...
...and dream well, my only child
and the one I love.
I shall sleep too.
Yes, doctor.
Has she...?
- Has anything changed?
- Her condition is still the same.
- But can't I...?

- Please, colonel...
...everything possible
is being done for Mrs. Penmark.
But it's been two days.
You mustn't go in there.
The doctor will be out soon.
Nothing.
Why did she do it?
Again, that's what I can't understand.
Why did she do such a thing?
She wasn't unhappy when I left.
Maybe a little bit down
about us being separated for a while...
...because we were in love.
Don't you see? She proved that to me.
Christine and I were in love.
And suddenly, she doesn't want
to live anymore.
She did seem a bit upset
over the accident to the Daigle boy.
Yes, but she met that perfectly well.
Oh, no, a thing like that wouldn't
unbalance her to the point of...
Dick. Dick, you must've had a good
heart-to-heart get-together...
...when you were down for your visit.
Did she say anything? Mention anything?
You've got to be frank with me.
Ken, there's nothing I can say
that will help at all.
Monica, you know she was quite
hysterical at the death of Leroy.
And it was that same night it happened?
Yes. We heard the shot and ran down.
She had done it after giving Rhoda
that lethal dose of sleeping pills.
Why, I don't know...
...but she'd obviously planned
that they should go together.
If she doesn't live...
...I don't think I can.
Kenneth, my dear,
you mustn't talk like that.
Even if the worst does happen...

...you still have something
to be grateful for.
You still have Rhoda.
If we hadn't heard the shot
and gotten the doctor quickly...
...Rhoda would be gone.
There she is.
Is Mommy better yet, Daddy?
We're waiting, darling.
Come here, sweetheart.
The same lovely smile.
She'll always live in you.
Oh, I love you, Daddy.
Sorry, colonel, there's nothing really
definite to report. She's still in coma.
I have been successful
with this type of operation...
...but it can go either way.
The brain, I feel, definitely is not
damaged. It's mainly shock and loss of...
We've been all over that.
I really think the best thing you can do
is to go home.
A certain young lady here
looks rather tired.
She's had quite an ordeal herself,
you know.
I really think it would be best.
I won't leave Mrs. Penmark until we know.
Very well.
Let's go home now, Rhoda.
Oh, I forgot my lighter. Be right back.
- Give me a few seconds, doctor?
- Certainly.
- Smoke?
- Thanks.
I meant to ask you,
during my daughter's, uh...
While she's been unconscious,
did she say anything?
Mutter anything at all?
Yes, come to think of it, she did.
For a while there,
she kept muttering something about...

Yes. A bad seed, a bad seed.
Does that give you any clue?
Not particularly.
Oh, yes, she was starting to write a book,
something around the theory...
...let me see, that a child can inherit
criminal tendencies in the blood.
If you'll forgive me,
that's a pretty specious theory.
That's what I told her.
It's a matter of environment, isn't it?
Of course. Now and then,
we get a twisted brain chemistry...
...born to healthy, enlightened parents,
but that's one in a million.
- I was sure of that.
- Great Scott, if we were foolish enough...
...to swallow that other venal belief,
nobody would ever adopt a child...
...or even have children of their own...
...like that sweet little girl
she has, for example.
Thanks. I mean...
...well, thank you very much, doctor.
Good night.
Good night.
There, now.
Daddy, will Mommy get well?
- We just prayed for her, didn't we?
- Yes.
What made me sick
the night Mommy hurt herself?
Oh, uh...
Everybody gets tummy trouble
now and then.
- All ready to turn out the lights now?
- Mm-hm.
What will you give me
for a basket of kisses? Ha, ha.
A basket of kisses?
I'll give you a basket of hugs.
- Good night, my sweetheart.
- Good night, Daddy.
- Daddy? "Hmm?"

Aunt Monica likes me.
Everybody loves you.
She said if she ever died or anything
or went away...
...she'd give me Sweetsie, her lovebird.
That's nice, honey...
...but Aunt Monica isn't going to die
or go away for a long, long time.
- A long time?
- That's right. Go to sleep now.
- Daddy? "Hmm?"
How long do lovebirds live?
- Oh, I don't know.
- As long as people?
No, not that long.
Oh, well. I'll find out for sure tomorrow
when Aunt Monica takes me...
- ...for my sunbath.
- Where is that?
Aunt Monica promised me
she'd take me for a sunbath.
She fixed up a place on the roof.
Way up high where no one can see us.
- Isn't that nice?
- That's wonderful.
- Good night, sweetheart.
- Good night, Daddy.
- Yes?
- Colonel Penmark?
- Yes, doctor.
- I have somebody here...
...who wishes to talk with you.
Can't handle her unless she does.
But don't talk but very little, colonel.
On your honor, now.
Kenneth.
Kenneth, darling.
They said I'm going to be all right.
Christine, dearest, just to hear you,
but don't talk anymore.
Kenneth, I've committed a dreadful...
...dreadful sin.
And I know that I'm going to have
to pay for it in some way, but...

Just to know...
...that I have your forgiveness...
Sweetheart, please don't talk anymore.
Whatever it is, not now.
We'll solve it together.
Oh, Kenneth.
I love you.
I love you.
One moment, please.
And now, ladies and gentlemen,
our wonderful cast.
Mr. Gage Clarke as Tasker.
Mr. Jesse White as Emory.
Miss Joan Croyden as Miss Fern.
Mr. Bill Hopper as Kenneth Penmark.
Mr. Paul Fix as Richard Bravo.
Mr. Henry Jones as Leroy.
Miss Evelyn Varden as Monica.
Miss Eileen Heckart as Mrs. Daigle.
Miss Patty McCormack as Rhoda.
And Miss Nancy Kelly
as Christine Penmark.
And as for you...
No! No! Ow! No!
Ow, ow, ow! Aah!