

amityville 74

By Tommy Jamerson

Loosely based on the life of Ronald Defeo Jr. and the 1974 Defeo Murders.

AMITYVILLE '74

© 2021 by Tommy Jamerson

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **AMITYVILLE '74** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **AMITYVILLE '74** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to genekato@nextstagepress.com

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **AMITYVILLE '74** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

AMITYVILLE '74

TIME

Fall 2019/Fall 1974.

PLACE

Sullivan Correctional Facility/112 Ocean Avenue, Amityville.

CHARACTERS

RONNIE DEFEO – Male. Late sixties. A criminal who is serving life in prison for murdering his entire family.

BUTCH DEFEO – Male. Twenties. The younger version of Ronnie.

RONALD DEFEO SR. – Male. Forties/Fifties. The Patriarch of the DeFeo family.

LOUISE DEFEO – Female. Forties/Fifties. The Matriarch of the DeFeo family.

DAWN DEFEO – Female. Late teens. Around seventeen/eighteen. The Golden Child.

JULIE DEFEO – Female. Ten or so. A bit of a loudmouth. Doubles as **KID 1**.

JENNY DEFEO – Female. Six or so. The youngest member of the household. A bit of a troublemaker. Doubles as **KID 2**.

ALEXIS RUSSO – Female. Mid-to-late thirties. The daughter of a famed reporter.

JODIE – Female. Forties/fifties. The Defeos' neighbor.

PEG – Female. Late teens/early twenties. Ronnie's old girlfriend. Doubles as **NEWSCASTER 3** and **VOICES** if needed.

MICHAEL YESWIT – Male. Late teens. Dawn's boyfriend. Doubles as **NEWSCASTER 4**, **SALESMAN**, and **VOICES** if needed.

MALE LONG ISLANDER – Male. Any Age. Portrays all the male denizens of Amityville. Traditionally plays: **NEWSCASTER 1**, **GUARD**, **MALE CUSTOMER**, **PHANTOM RONALD**, **MERV**, **VOICES**.

FEMALE LONG ISLANDER – Female. Any Age. Portrays all the female denizens of Amityville. Traditionally plays: **NEWSCASTER 2**, **FEMALE CUSTOMER**, **PA SYSTEM**, **PHANTOM LOUISE**, **OPERATOR**, **FEMALE CUSTOMER 2**, **VOICES**.

AMITYVILLE '74

AMITYVILLE '74 was commissioned by interACT Theatre Productions (Maryann Galife Post, Producer) and received its world premiere at the Burgdorff Cultural Center for the Performing Arts in Maplewood, NJ on October 15th, 2021. The performance was directed by Nicholas J. Clarey (Artistic Director), with costumes by Dan Schulz, lights by Brielle McArdle and Gilbert “Lucky” Pearto, props by Isaiah J. Abdul-Qawi, sound by Alexander Post, original music by Eddie Bean, and fight direction by Katie Claire. The Production Manager was Felicity D. Selby, and the Stage Manager was Alicia N. Fink. The cast was as follows:

Alexis Russo.....	Tasha R. Williams
Ronald “Butch” DeFeo Jr. (1974)	Pierce V. Lo
Ronald “Butch” DeFeo Jr. (2019)	Timothy Wagner
Ronald DeFeo Sr	Nat Gennace
Louise DeFeo	Karen Thornton
Dawn DeFeo.....	Madeline Machado
Julie DeFeo.....	Masen Joy Chen
Jenny DeFeo	Harper Kennedy Allen
Jodie	Marcy Orloff Prastos
Peg/Others	Sarah-Elisabeth Stein
Michael Yeswit/Others.....	Alex Martynetz
Newscaster/Merv/Others	Mentha Marley
Newscaster/Guard/Others	José A. Rivera
Newscaster/Customer/Others	Johanna Erickson
Newscaster/Therapist/Others	Barbara Velazquez

Special thanks to: Mark Aquilino, Dawilla Madsen, Lisa Tasch, Lee White, Celeste Post, Justin Brantley, Randy Post, Jessie Thiele, Matt Kersey, Laura Byrne, Katy T. Baronich, Jim Winter, Jennifer Bouquet, Miguel Garcia, Harper Jacobs, DeJuan James, Hayden Kimball, Katherine Loyacano, Sydney Michelli, Lauren Price, AJ Salazar, Kelly Slaton, Annabelle Snow, Kevin Thompson, Chloe Williams, Chad Winters, and Shadow.

AMITYVILLE '74

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When Tommy and I discussed the events in this play from a special effects standpoint, we wanted to make sure that they were attainable for all levels of theatrical budget and experience. We didn't want anyone to be scared away from the magic called for by the script. With that in mind, I encourage you to be creative and adapt the special effects to your own ability and budget level. Even in the original production, some effects had to be adapted differently than what was called for in the script.

For instance, in Scene Two where Louise is being taunted by the bottle that comes to life, it proved tricky for the limited timeframe we were working within, so we changed the effect a bit. Instead, we utilized the cabinet door as a device to obtain a similar feeling. When Louise took the bottle out of the cabinet, she sat with it for a moment, then walked away, continuing to steal glances back at it showing the draw of the vice. Once she had enough, she'd scoffed at herself, and placed the bottle back in the cabinet. As soon as she turned away, the cabinet door opened on its own using fishing line, eye hooks, and a person operating them from behind the flat (This is a good way to operate the rocking chair as well). The bottle then fell out of the cabinet on its own, broke on the counter (breakaway bottle) and the door slammed shut. The bottle was pushed with a simple dowel that was camouflaged to blend in with the back wall of the cabinet, and the door was pulled shut using the same fishing line contraption. It seemed possibly too simple but warranted a gasp and shifts of uneasiness from our patrons at every performance.

For the crucifix in Scene Twelve, we mounted a simple wooden cross with a single screw and washers on a hollow flat faced with wood paneling. A person easily hid behind it and using a small block of wood attached to the back side of the screw, rotated it at the predetermined time, using marks on the back of the wood to know when to stop.

The wall to the Red Room proved to be a large challenge for us, as we had the bedroom on a moving truck with very little room for mechanics. While the script calls for the wall to open on its own at some points, we chose instead to use the flexibility of the wood paneling to make the wall bulge and throb. One panel

AMITYVILLE '74

attached with hooks or magnets in the corners and a person behind it pushing gently on the center of the panel mixed with red light and fog created an incredible effect for something so simple to employ.

Never underestimate the power of lighting and sound within the world of Amityville. Work closely with your lighting and sound designers to develop special effects within their realm as if they were a whole separate character. A flicker here, a blackout there, an intense brightening at a quick pace, an uncomfortable buzz, random whispers, can all elevate the surrounding practical effects and fully immerse the audiences' minds into a world where these effects not only are believable but become reality.

The specific effects exhibited in the script are not gospel. The Director and Technical Director can create a world as large or as small as they see fit. The importance is placed on the evocative nature of the effects, not on the "how'd they do that" factor. They should appear out of the ordinary, something unsettling, alluring, sinister, and uncomfortable. Tommy has created a world that offers many opportunities to explore the possibilities of the supernatural (or is it hallucinations from the LSD?) I encourage you to play within that world.

Nicholas J. Clarey
Artistic Director
interACT Theatre Productions

AMITYVILLE '74

ACT 1

A PROLOGUE IN PANTOMIME. NOVEMBER 13TH, 1974.

Two large quarter-round windows, suspended midair, stare into the abyss like a pair of all-seeing eyes. The stage is predominantly bare, except for a few pieces of furniture scattered about, and five or six raised platforms, forming what look to be the remnants of a house. A spiral stairwell winds its way to an equally bare second floor. Nothing should seem real – only representative. The set is nothing more than the distorted memories of a warped mind.

Down Stage Right stands a white post, a sign hanging from it. The sign reads: High Hopes. If possible, it should sway ever so slightly, back and forth, back and forth, lulling those gazing at it into a sense of comfort.

Once the audience is seated, the lights dim, and the sound of a needle being placed on a record is heard. The first few gentle notes of the classic “The Way We Were” by Barbra Streisand, or something similar to it, waft through the air. A hazy, warm light rises on THE FAMILY, all in their pajamas. It’s a Rockwellian fantasy come to life.

The father, RONALD, sits in an easy chair, reading his paper, while the two youngest siblings, JENNY and JULIE, lie on the ground in front of an old television set, legs crossed, and bodies supported by elbows – their gleeful faces resting in their soft hands. The oldest daughter, DAWN, sits in a chair next to her younger siblings, working tirelessly on her homework.

As the music continues to swell, LOUISE, the mother, enters and looks at a nearby clock. She shakes her head playfully, approaches the television and with a flourish, turns it off. Jenny and Julie begin protesting, but Louise

AMITYVILLE '74

wags her finger at them and points to the clock. After a few dramatic sighs, the girls embrace their mother, kiss Dawn on either cheek, and then bound over to Ronald, who plops down his paper and gives them a large bear hug.

Dawn picks up her schoolbook, hugs her mother, and kisses her father on the forehead. The family turns and, one by one, ascends the spiral stairs, each member approaching their respective room. As they reach their room/platform, they turn and face the audience, trancelike. A spell of some sort has been cast. All of the lights slowly begin to fade on the rest of the stage, save for the faint glow behind the suspended windows, and five singular spots on each of the family members.

As the song begins to draw to a close, the music gradually becomes louder, and louder. Moving as one, the family clasps their hands together, as if praying, and looks heavenward. And then, just as the scene is about to draw to a close, and the music continues to crescendo ...

BANG! *The sound of a shot ringing through the air is heard. And as it does ... the light goes out on Ronald.*

BANG! *Another sound. Another shot. The light goes out on Louise.*

BANG! *This time, the spot goes out on Julie.*

BANG! *The spot goes out on Jenny.*

Dawn stands alone, the sole person left onstage. A moment passes, she catches her panicked breath, and then ...

BANG! *The spot goes on out Dawn. The song continues to play.*

BUTCH, Louise and Ronald's oldest, enters from the bowels of the house, strands of his long, thick black hair dangling in his face. Dressed in jeans

AMITYVILLE '74

and a white undershirt, he clutches a .35 Caliber Marlin rifle tightly. Soon, the stage is awash with the flashing of red and blue lights.

The sound of sirens and police officers talking is heard, their words begin converging with the music. Their dialogue, the sirens, the song, all crescendo, growing louder and louder until eventually ...

They're silenced by the voices of various NEWSCASTERS whose words begin to overlap as the story develops. Lights fade on Butch. Music underscores.

NEWSCASTER 1. We interrupt this program for a special bulletin. Five members of a Long Island family have been found shot to death in their home in Amityville. The victims have been identified as members of the DeFeo family. They were found by eighteen-year-old Michael Yeswit, boyfriend of the DeFeo's eldest daughter. Ronald "Butch" DeFeo Jr. is believed to be the only surviving member of the family but was unable to be located for questioning. We will have further details on the 11 O'clock news.

NEWSCASTER 2. *(Overlapping.)* After an extensive two-day manhunt, police announced tonight that they have located Ronald DeFeo Jr. and charged him with the murder of his parents and three sisters. When asked about the murder weapon, Suffolk Deputy Police Commissioner Robert Rapp said, "The rifle we found is of the same make and caliber believed to be fired in the DeFeo slayings."

NEWSCASTER 3. *(Overlapping.)* Ronald DeFeo Jr. goes to trial today, a year and a half after murdering his parents and three siblings. Defense lawyers claim Mr. DeFeo killed his family because demonic forces told him to do so. His lawyers are expected to mount a Plea of Insanity. It should be noted that DeFeo was under a special narcotic probation. We'll have more on this story as it develops.

NEWSCASTER 4. *(Overlapping.)* Our top story tonight: a State Supreme Court jury has convicted twenty-three-year-old Ronald "Butch" DeFeo Jr. of shooting all five members of his family in their sleep. He reportedly displayed no emotion when the jury announced a verdict of guilty on all

AMITYVILLE '74

counts of murder, each punishable by life in prison. Coincidentally, another family of five moved into 112 Ocean Avenue this afternoon. The new homeowners, George and Kathy Lutz, claim they have no qualms about living in a house where murders were committed. They say they like the area and foresee many happy years in their new home ... *(We shift.)*

SCENE 1. SULLIVAN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY. 2019.

Stage Right. Harsh, fluorescent lighting. A small, sterile room with a round table and two chairs, and a large metal door. ALEXIS, a well-dressed thirty-something paces, a visitor's badge clipped to her blouse. Alexis sits in one of the chairs, takes a deep breath, and rubs her hands together nervously. The sound of a heavy door opening is heard. A GUARD peers in.

GUARD. Rebecca Defeo?

ALEXIS. *(Nervous. She stands.)* Yes? *(The Guard enters, dragging with him an older, handcuffed RONNIE. Ronnie's long hair is graying and pulled back into a ponytail. He wears a tan jumpsuit. He glances at Alexis. His eyes dance.)*

GUARD. You got two hours. If he gives you any trouble, I'll be right outside this door.

ALEXIS. Thank you. *(The Guard turns and begins to exit. To Ronnie:)* Hi, Butch – uh, Ronnie. It's a ... it's good to see you.

RONNIE. Good to see you too. *(Waits for the Guard to shut the door. The lock turns. Beat.)* Now who the fuck are you?

ALEXIS. Right. Please... *(She motions to one of the chairs. He sits.)*

RONNIE. They told me my cousin Rebecca was here. I said I don't have a cousin Rebecca. She's dead. But they said you were here, and you had all the right paperwork.

ALEXIS. I do.

RONNIE. You know, the guards here are pretty good at spotting fake IDs. Your guy must know what he's doin'.

ALEXIS. She does.

AMITYVILLE '74

RONNIE. ... So what are you? Some kinda reporter? I hate to break it to you, but nobody cares about Amityville anymore.

ALEXIS. They don't?

RONNIE. No. 'Least not the real stuff. The stuff to do with me. They only want to talk about the hauntings and that family who moved in after. What was the guy's name? George ... Putz?

ALEXIS. Lutz.

RONNIE. I like Putz better. Asshole took my story ... took what happened to— (*Lost for a moment. Unsure how to finish his thought.*) See he twisted it. The whole thing. There was the real stuff. The ...

ALEXIS. ... Murders?

RONNIE. (*Moving on.*) Then after I wound up in here, he buys the house and says it's haunted. Said flies attacked him and the walls were bleeding. And there was a ghost pig with glowing eyes. You ever hear of something so stupid? But people bought it. He publishes a book, goes on TV, had a bunch of movies made. One of 'em even had that Ryan Gosling guy, who, if you ask me, doesn't look anything like him.

ALEXIS. I think that was Ryan Reynolds.

RONNIE. Oh. He doesn't look like him either.

ALEXIS. (*Smiling. Nodding.*) No, he doesn't.

RONNIE. It's all a bunch of lies. All of it.

ALEXIS. Okay. So then if there wasn't a haunting ... if there weren't any ghosts or pigs ... what happened? What happened to you? ... To Dawn?

RONNIE. (*A beat. A thought. A smile.*) Lady, I don't even know yer real name. You think I'm going to spill my guts to some stranger? Who are ya? ... The truth.

ALEXIS. (*She's hesitant. He's waiting.*) My name's Alexis ... Russo. (*Ronnie starts to react.*) My mother, Lauren Russo—

RONNIE. (*Over her line.*) Jesus Christ!

ALEXIS. Ronnie—

RONNIE. (*Over her line.*) You are a reporter—

ALEXIS. No, my mother was a reporter—

RONNIE. And a pain in my ass. Always harassin' me, trying to get another interview, even after I gave her a hundred.

AMITYVILLE '74

ALEXIS. She wasn't harassing you; she was trying to get your story straight. You kept changing it. You're still changing it.

RONNIE. *(Over her line.)* I'm allowed to, aren't I? It's still my story! ... You know I thought something had finally gotten through to her. That she wasn't going to bother me anymore. Then a few months ago it starts up again – visiting the prison, writin' letters. And now what? She got you doing her dirty work for her? She's waiting outside, isn't she? Isn't she?!

ALEXIS. ... My mother's dead, Ronnie. She died a few weeks ago. Lung cancer. *(A long, deafening pause.)*

RONNIE. Oh.

ALEXIS. ... I'm here to finish what she started. You were her first interview. Her first big break.

RONNIE. You're welcome.

ALEXIS. But even after you were sentenced, she couldn't move on. ... She had this filing cabinet in her study that was filled with notes, old police reports, theories. All devoted to Amityville. ... I went through it once when she was out, and there was this picture. It was the house. Your house. You could see the sign out front, and above it those two large windows, that were like the–

RONNIE. Like eyes. They sear themselves into you. Make it so you can never unsee 'em. People say they're just windows but ... there's more to it than that. Every night when I close my eyes – there they are. Those windows. Starin' right at me. *(Beat. He stands.)* I'm tired of talking. If you want to know the facts, Google 'em. They're all out there.

ALEXIS. Except they're not. There are so many unknowns. And the things we do know – the things you've said – don't add up.

RONNIE. Like what?

ALEXIS. Like at 3:15 in the morning you went from room to room shooting every member of your family with a .35 caliber rifle and nobody heard it. *(Ronnie attempts to interject. Alexis presses on.)* None of your siblings woke up after you shot your parents. None of the neighbors heard the blasts from the gun – a gun that the police tested days after you used it. The shots could be heard three miles away. *(Again, Ronnie attempts to speak; again, Alexis won't allow him to.)* We know you didn't use a silencer. The autopsy shows you didn't drug your family. What happened,

AMITYVILLE '74

Ronnie? *(Ronnie stays silent. A beat.)* First you said it was the drugs. Then you blamed your father, then your mother, your sister's boyfriend, everyone, until a month after you were convicted ... you were found in the showers, hunched over, crying, saying that voices made you do it. A demon. Is that what it was? Something supernatural?

RONNIE. I'm getting out of here. *(Calling out.)* Hey uh, Guard! I'm ready.

ALEXIS. I need you to tell me, Ronnie.

RONNIE. Bullshit. *(Calling out again. Maybe even punctuating his lines with a whistle.)* Guard! *(Ronnie bangs on the door with his fist.)*

ALEXIS. And if you won't do it for me—

RONNIE. Today would be nice!

ALEXIS. Or my mother—

RONNIE. Hello! HELLO!

ALEXIS. ... Then do it for Jodie.

RONNIE. WHA—! *(Stops dead in his tracks. Shaking.)* What did you say? *(The door swings open. The Guard enters. A beat.)*

GUARD. What's going on? *(Silence. Alexis and Ronnie glare at one another.)* Everything all right? *(Snapping his fingers at Ronnie.)* Hey, Defeo! I'm talking to you.

ALEXIS. Everything's fine. Just a misunderstanding.

GUARD. ... All right. *(To Ronnie.)* You start shouting again, and you're done. Got that?

ALEXIS. Yes. *(Guard exits. Beat.)*

RONNIE. ... How do you know about Jodie?

ALEXIS. I went to the house looking for ... I don't know what ... and when she saw me snooping around, she introduced herself. Apparently, no one's lived there for years. She still lives across the street and said she couldn't tell me anything, but if I visited you and mentioned her name ... maybe you'd talk. Ronnie, I need you to talk.

RONNIE. You're as determined as your mother, you know that.

ALEXIS. Thank you.

RONNIE. ... If I tell ya ... you're not going to believe me.

ALEXIS. You never know.

AMITYVILLE '74

RONNIE. No, I guess ya don't. (*Hesitant, then ...*) Okay ... we had just moved from Brooklyn to Long Island. My father owned a car dealership there. ... If anyone asked, my parents said we moved so my father could be closer to work, get out of the city ... but we really moved because of ... me. I'd uh, gotten into some trouble and ... my mother wanted me to have a second chance. ... More like the third, fourth chance by this point. That's why she even put out that stupid sign.

ALEXIS. High Hopes.

RONNIE. Yeah. She had 'em ... (*We shift.*)

**SCENE 2. THE DEFEO HOUSE. KITCHEN. SEPTEMBER 3rd,
1974.**

Lights rise on the DeFeo house and its kitchen. The opening notes of "Come and Get Your Love," or something similar to it, pour out of a tiny radio on the kitchen counter. Boxes are scattered everywhere. It's the epitome of chaos and function. Louise is packing five lunches. The youngest siblings, Julie and Jenny, can be heard arguing offstage.

JULIE (O.S.). (*Pounding her fist against the door.*) Jenny, open the door!

JENNY (O.S.). I told you, it's stuck!

JULIE (O.S.). It's my turn! Get out!

JENNY (O.S.). I can't!

JULIE (O.S.). Yes you can!

JENNY (O.S.). No I can't! (*Julie pounds against the door again. Aggravated, Louise turns off the radio.*)

LOUISE. Hey, what's going on up there?

JULIE (O.S.). Jenny's hogging the bathroom!

JENNY (O.S.). The door's stuck!

JULIE (O.S.). No it's not!

LOUISE. Stop fighting and get down here! The bus'll be here any minute!

JENNY/JULIE (O.S.). But, Mom!

AMITYVILLE '74

LOUISE. I don't want to hear it! *(They groan in unison. Louise composes herself then goes back to her work. Dawn enters.)* Sweetheart, look at you! You're lovely!

DAWN. Thanks, Mom.

LOUISE. You have everything you need? Don't want to start your senior year off by forgetting somethin'.

DAWN. I won't.

LOUISE. You never do. *(A pause.)* Um ... Dawn, you're not still sore at us for movin' are you? I know you miss your friends and your school, but your father and I feel like this change was best, for all of us.

DAWN. I know. It's fine.

LOUISE. What would I do without you? *(Moving on.)* Have you seen your brother? He's going to be late for his first day. *(Dawn goes over to a bag of bread, grabs two slices, and begins buttering them.)*

DAWN. What do you expect? He's late for everything.

LOUISE. Not today. *(Calling out:)* Butch? Butch, it's— *(Butch enters in a brown suit, attempting to tie a tie. He looks completely out of place.)*

BUTCH. Yeah?

LOUISE. There he is! And so handsome! Dawn, don't you think he's handsome?

DAWN. *(Sarcastic, obviously.)* A dream. *(Butch makes a face at his sister while he continues to fiddle with his tie.)*

BUTCH. How's this go again?

LOUISE. I don't know, dear. Did you ask your father?

BUTCH. ... No.

LOUISE. Right. *(Attempting to do multiple things at once.)* Uh...Dawn, help your brother with his tie?

DAWN. *(Mouth full of toast.)* But I'm eating.

BUTCH. *(Imitating her.)* But I'm eating.

LOUISE. Dawn, please. *(Dawn takes another bite of toast, then approaches Butch and reaches for his tie.)*

BUTCH. I hope you know what you're doing.

DAWN. I do. I do.

BUTCH. *(Over her line.)* And don't talk with your mouth full. It's gross.

AMITYVILLE '74

DAWN. Oh, like this? *(She opens her mouth and gives him an eyeful of her partially chewed breakfast.)*

BUTCH. You're disgusting. *(Dawn laughs.)*

LOUISE. I swear, you're worse than the girls! *(Julie and Jenny enter on Louise's line.)*

JULIE/JENNY. Hey!

LOUISE. There you are! Now eat your breakfast. Scoot! *(Julie and Jenny make their way to the table.)*

JULIE. Yeah, wait till Dad hears about what you did. You're going to be in trouble.

JENNY. I am not! You're the one who—

LOUISE. And do it quietly. *(Julie and Jenny begrudgingly sit in their chairs and help themselves to the premade bowls of cereal.)* Okay, everyone. New schools, new job – I'm counting on all of you to be on your best behavior. You need to make a good first impression today. You got it?

BUTCH/DAWN/JULIE/JENNY. *(Halfheartedly.)* Yes ...

LOUISE. I mean it. Do you promise?

BUTCH/DAWN/JULIE/JENNY. Yes!

LOUISE. We need to try and be better. *(More to herself.)* All of us.

DAWN. *(Finishing up the tie.)* There.

LOUISE. Perfect. *(Smells something.)* Sweetie, did you shower this morning? You smell a little ...

DAWN. Butch always smells like that. *(Jenny and Julie laugh. Butch imitates their laughter, then takes a moment and gives his jacket a sniff.)*

BUTCH. I keep tellin' you, it's the basement. It stinks. Something in the pipes.

LOUISE. I'll have your father take a look at it. You want some breakfast before you go?

BUTCH. No, I'm good. I've got this. *(Butch grabs Jenny's orange juice and takes a swig.)*

JENNY. Hey! That's mine!

BUTCH. Yeah? What about this one? *(Butch grabs a spoonful of Julie's cereal and slurps it.)*

JULIE. Hey!

AMITYVILLE '74

LOUISE. Butch, you sure you don't want something? (*Quietly.*) You still haven't gained any weight back. There's nothing I can make you?

BUTCH. Can you make it so I don't have to go in today?

LOUISE. It'll be fine.

BUTCH. Yeah well ... guess if Dad couldn't send me to 'Nam he thought this would be the next best thing – wearing this monkey suit, walkin' up to strangers like a grinning idiot and say: (*Doing a spot-on impersonation of his father.*) “Hey there little lady, would you like to buy a new car? What about you, Ma'am? I know you do! And what about you? Yes you, Sport! Have I got a deal for you – she's a ride as smooth as Ex-Lax but with less cleanup.” (*The family laughs. Ronald enters.*)

DAWN. You sound just like Daddy. (*They continue to laugh for a beat. Ronald clears his throat, loudly. The room grows silent. He's clearly in a mood.*)

LOUISE. Ron, uh, you want a cup of coffee or somethin'?

RONALD. Not now, Louise. (*To Butch.*) So what're you sayin' exactly, son? You don't want to work in the car business?

BUTCH. Dad, I was just–

RONALD. Think you're too good for it?

BUTCH. No. I–

RONALD. (*Holds his hand up, silencing Butch.*) Maybe uh, maybe I'm wrong here, but hasn't the car business been good to ya?

BUTCH. Yeah, it has–

RONALD. Paid for your food, hasn't it?

BUTCH. Yeah.

RONALD. Clothes you're wearing?

BUTCH. I didn't ask you to–

RONALD. Even paid for your new car after you wrecked the last one. (*This time Butch doesn't answer.*) And what about that dope you were smokin' when your mother and I weren't looking? Huh? Paid for that, right? And that expensive rehab we had to send you to. Paid for that also.

LOUISE. Ron.

RONALD. Stay out of it, Louise. (*To Butch. Getting right in his face.*) And it paid for this house that we moved to so we could get a fresh start ... and get you away from those junkies you call friends. So maybe ... maybe

AMITYVILLE '74

you should be a little more grateful. *(He pats Butch on the face a few times. A beat. The sound of the school bus horn honking is heard.)*

LOUISE. *(Shaking it off. A change in demeanor.)* The bus is here! C'mon, c'mon, let's go. *(She hands them their lunch bags. Jenny and Julie are about to snatch them when—)*

RONALD. Wait just a minute ... *(Fishes something out of his pocket.)* can anyone explain to me what happened to the bathroom door? *(He holds up the doorknob. Jenny and Julie look at one another. They've been caught.)*

JENNY/JULIE. Uhhh ... *(The sound of the bus honking again is heard.)*

JENNY. ... Gotta go!

JULIE. Bye! *(They snatch the lunch bags and scurry offstage.)*

LOUISE. *(Hands Dawn her lunch.)* Good luck today, sweetheart.

DAWN. Thanks. *(Dawn kisses her mother on the cheek.)* Bye, Daddy. Bye, Butch. *(Genuinely.)* Good luck. *(Butch nods, appreciatively. Dawn exits.)*

RONALD. I swear those kids. Haven't even been here a week and they're already destroying things.

LOUISE. The doors and windows have been getting stuck lately. Maybe they need some attention?

RONALD. Yeah, and what the kids need is a good kick in the ass.

LOUISE. You'd better hurry too or you're going to be late for your meeting.

RONALD. *(He looks at his watch.)* Shit. Louise, my blazer. *(Louise helps him slip into his blazer. She hands him his briefcase and car keys.)* See you at dinner. *(Turns to Butch.)* And you – I expect to see you there on time and with a better attitude. Got it?

BUTCH. Got it.

RONALD. Don't embarrass me. *(Ronald sets the doorknob down and exits. Louise goes about her business. Beat.)*

BUTCH. ... He hasn't changed at all, has he?

LOUISE. You know your father. He's ... he's got a lot on his mind.

BUTCH. Yeah, right. *(He turns to leave when ...)*

LOUISE. Butch ... I know you think he's hard on you but...he was just raised differently.

BUTCH. Stop tryin' to defend him.

AMITYVILLE '74

LOUISE. I'm not. It's just how he is. If you accept it, you'll—

BUTCH. I gotta go.

LOUISE. Bye, sweetheart. And good luck. *(He exits. Louise stands there alone for a moment. She goes to the counter and pulls out a bottle of something – clearly alcohol – and sets it on the table. She stares at it for a moment, then turns away, resisting the urge to drink. An internal war is raging. Maybe the bottle starts to shake or rumble while Louise is doing something – picking something up, wiping something down, etc. – she looks up and it stops. She goes back to what she's doing, and it starts again. Once more she looks up, and once more it stops. Nothing. She turns away again, and the bottle slides across the table and crashes on the ground. She stands up and looks over at it.)* What the—?! *(She bends over and one by one begins picking up the pieces of shattered glass. We shift.)*

SCENE 3. SULLIVAN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY / CAR DEALERSHIP. LATER THAT DAY.

A spot shines on Ronnie as light rises on Butch, pacing nervously, looking around the dealership. "Cat's in the Cradle" by Harry Chapin, or something similar to it, begins to play. CUSTOMERS enter and exit under the music. Butch approaches them, mimes hello, and then is obviously dismissed. The music begins to fade ...

RONNIE. My father always wanted me to be in the car business, just like his father did for him. Our family dealership, that was his legacy, ya know? And it was my responsibility to keep it goin'. Only problem was, even though I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life – I knew sellin' cars wasn't it. *(Butch motions to someone offstage.)*

BUTCH. I'll be right back, Paul. Takin' a cigarette break. *(Butch pulls a packet of cigarettes out of his pockets. He lights one, inhales, exhales – loudly, and tries to relax. He does not see PEG, a pretty twentysomething, playfully sneaking up behind him.)*

PEG. *(Jumps on Butch's back – covering his eyes with her hands.)*

GUESS WHO!

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. *(Pushing Peg off him, forcefully. He jumps back, startled!)*
Jesus! What the – Peg!?!

PEG. *(Shoving him.)* What the fuck, Ronnie?

BUTCH. What are you tryin' to do? Scare me half to death?

PEG. I was tryin' to surprise you!

BUTCH. Yeah ... well ... not here. *(Lowering his voice.)* If my dad sees you he'll blow a frickin' gasket.

PEG. So?

BUTCH. Gimme a minute, okay. *(Butch leaves her side and begins peering about, looking for any sign of his father.)*

PEG. What in the hell are you doin'? Ronnie?

BUTCH. Makin' sure the coast is clear.

PEG. You serious? Bastard! *(She swings a large bag over her shoulder and begins to exit.)*

BUTCH. Where you goin'?

PEG. Sorry, Babe. I don't got time to stand around here while you play daddy's boy.

BUTCH. Get back here. Peg! *(Butch chases after her.)* Hey, hey, hey!
Don't go.

PEG. Why?

BUTCH. 'Cause... 'cause I wanna talk to ya. What are you doin' here?

PEG. I came for the fresh air 'n' sunshine. Whaddya think? ... I haven't seen ya since–

BUTCH. I know.

PEG. That was a long time ago.

BUTCH. Yeah.

PEG. You uh ... ever think about me?

BUTCH. What kinda question is that? *(She scoffs, loudly. Irritated, she begins to leave once more. Butch pulls her back.)* Wait. Wait. 'Course I do. Come here. *(He pulls her close and kisses her.)*

PEG. Ya look good.

BUTCH. You too.

PEG. *(Feeling around his waist.)* But yer gettin' too thin.

BUTCH. You sound like my mom.

AMITYVILLE '74

PEG. Way to ruin the mood. So uh ... what'd they do to ya over there? ...
At the place.

BUTCH. *(Over her line.)* Not much.

PEG. *(Over his line.)* Was it like a hospital, or—

BUTCH. *(Over her line.)* No. Just a lot of therapy, talkin' about feelings.
... Stupid shit like that.

PEG. ... Ah. You cured now or what?

BUTCH. I dunno.

PEG. Maybe it's just me, but personally ... I didn't mind you on that stuff.

BUTCH. I was your best customer.

PEG. You know what I mean. I thought it was good for ya. Brought out
yer personality. Made ya more exciting.

BUTCH. Yeah well ... I'm not really excitin' anymore.

PEG. No. But ya could be. *(Reaches into her purse and pulls out a round,
beat-up tin. Butch eyes it. Startled.)*

BUTCH. What the hell!?! Are you kidding me with this?

PEG. C'mon, Ronnie we used to have fun. You'd pick me up, we'd find a
parkin' spot, fool around a little, do a— *(She begins to open the tin. Butch,
though tempted, stops her.)*

BUTCH. I'm done with that.

PEG. You always say that.

BUTCH. This why you're here? Business been slow so you what, traveled
two hours to come and try and get me hooked again?

PEG. No! Stop freakin' out. 'Sides it's only LSD.

BUTCH. What do ya want, Peg?

PEG. ... I had some free time, and since the Borrellis have been givin' me
extra lately, I—

BUTCH. You still get yer supply from them?

PEG. What if I am?

BUTCH. They're dangerous.

PEG. They're not that bad.

BUTCH. *(Overlapping.)* Tell that to Louie Falini.

PEG. Whatever. ... Look, uh, I'm here because I thought ... we could
have some fun. I thought you'd want to see me. I want to see you. ... You
still like me, don't cha?

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. Yeah. *(She kisses him, passionately. He's resistant at first, perhaps even tries to gently push her away, but eventually he gives into the spell she's weaving. Peg slips the tin into his hand. Unwittingly, he takes it.)*

RONALD (O.S.). Butch? *(Butch pulls away.)*

BUTCH. You gotta go.

PEG. What? But, I came all th—

RONALD (O.S.). Butch!

BUTCH. You know what he'll do if he catches you here? Go!

PEG. Yer a real charmer, you know that, Ronnie DeFeo? See ya soon. *(She kisses him one last time, then scurries off.)*

BUTCH. *(Notices the tin of drugs in his hand.)* Hey, I can't keep this— *(He stops himself and examines it again.)*

RONALD. There you are! What in the hell are you doing? *(Quickly, Butch stashes it in his suit jacket.)* We got customers out here and you're what? Daydreaming?

BUTCH. Sorry, I lost track of time.

RONALD. Get your ass back out there and sell some cars.

BUTCH. I will. *(Ronald exits in a huff. Once the coast is clear, Butch reaches into his pocket and fishes out the tin of LSD. He stares at it for a moment. Butch stays like this as "Cat's in the Cradle" picks up once more. We shift.)*

SCENE 4. SULLIVAN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY. 2019.

The hum of the fluorescent lights from the prison are heard. Lights rise on Ronnie and Alexis.

ALEXIS. ... And what was Peg to you?

RONNIE. You name it.

ALEXIS. Drug dealer? Friend? ... Girlfriend?

RONNIE. No. You don't date a girl like Peg.

ALEXIS. Why's that?

AMITYVILLE '74

RONNIE. ... She just wasn't someone you could really get close to. She liked to make like you could – but deep down, you could never really connect with her, no matter how hard you tried. ... When I think about it, my father was a lot like that. Ya know what I mean?

ALEXIS. I do. *(They share a beat, Alexis ponders her next question, then ...)* When uh ... when did it start? *(Ronnie glances at her, puzzled.)* The abuse.

RONNIE. Oh. I dunno.

ALEXIS. Really?

RONNIE. Guess I don't remember.

ALEXIS. So there wasn't one moment in particular that jumps out at you, an instance or a–

RONNIE. You wanna hear my story or not? 'Cause this is startin' to sound more like an interrogation than anything else.

ALEXIS. Sorry.

RONNIE. ... You know, I got beat up since the day I was born. People like you, yer mom, think I'm makin' this shit up, but my aunt told me once when I was little, my dad took me out of my highchair and threw me onto the floor because I took a bowl of spaghetti and poured it over my head. It was a big joke when it happened ... everyone was laughing ... that is 'til the mess had to get cleaned up, and he wasn't gonna do it. So, he picked me up and just ... flung me down. Probably one of the reasons my spine was so screwed up. *(Attempts to readjust his back. Crack it.)* Still is. So uh, yeah ... he beat me up from practically day one. From day one until the day he died. He did it to everybody, but me and mom ... we got it the worst.

ALEXIS. That's ... terrible.

RONNIE. *(Shrugging it off.)* Whaddaya gonna do? Anyways, when I got home that night I tried to lock myself away for a bit ... shut everything out ... but I couldn't ... *(We shift.)*

AMITYVILLE '74

SCENE 5. THE DEFEO HOUSE. BUTCH'S ROOM. LATER THAT DAY.

Butch enters his room. There's a lamp, a table with a radio and phone, a rocking chair, and an unmade bed with a wooden cross hanging over it. Butch takes off his jacket and tosses it across the chair. He grabs an old pocketknife off the table and begins playing it – flipping it open and then closing it. Opening then closing. Music underscores. Eventually, he plops down onto his bed and takes a deep breath. He kicks back and closes his eyes for a moment. The lamp begins to flicker. Nothing significant at first, just enough to be noticeable. The flickering stops for a moment, then starts back up. It stops then starts, stops then starts – the light spasming. Before Butch has a chance to notice, voices – breathing – the vocalizing starts. Deep and guttural – yet soft. Unnatural. Butch's eyes blink open.

BUTCH. What the–? *(And then he notices the lamp. Curious, he stares at it. The flickering continues, gradually flashing more and more. Music begins to seep into the scene: dissonant, strange – all underpinned by the breathing. The vocalizing. Something ethereal. Butch begins to lean forward when ...)*

DAWN (O.S.). Butch! Open up. *(Immediately, it stops. All of it. The flickering. The sounds. Everything goes back to normal. Dawn is outside Butch's room, attempting to turn the knob. It's locked.)* Hey, Butch!

BUTCH. Yeah?

DAWN. Unlock the door. I need to talk to ya.

BUTCH. I'm uh – I'm not here. Leave a message after the beep and I'll get back to you. Beep.

DAWN. ... Okay. "Hi, Butch. I was going to ask for a favor, but since you're not around, I'll just talk to Mom and Dad. I hope I don't slip up and accidentally tell them about the time you and Sarah Calproni got wasted and took Dad's Eldorado for a –"

BUTCH. *(Leaps off the bed, practically rips the door off its hinges.)* Fine. Fine. Fine. Get in.

DAWN. Thought that would work.

BUTCH. Yeah, yeah ...

AMITYVILLE '74

DAWN. *(Dawn takes a step forward, a putrid aroma greeting her. She gasps.)* Oh! Jesus H, Butch! *(Covers her nose.)* Let out a warning first.

BUTCH. It's not me. I told you it smelled down here.

DAWN. *(Looking around. Nose still covered.)* Smelled yeah, but ... did something die?

BUTCH. Nope. Nothin' dead around here. *(More to himself.)* ... 'Least nothin' you can see. *(Crosses back to his bed and stretches out. Begins fiddling with his pocketknife again. An awkward beat.)*

DAWN. What do you mean?

BUTCH. ... Nothing. Whaddaya want?

DAWN. I wanna know what you mean. ... Well?

BUTCH. *(Sighs.)* ... This isn't how I saw things turning out. For me.

DAWN. In what way?

BUTCH. Twenty-three, broke, livin' in Mom and Dad's basement, inhaling ... *(Takes a whiff.)* who-knows-what and sellin' crappy cars to assholes. And all of that, all of that might be tolerable if I could just ... smoke a little somethin' once 'n' a while ... have a drink. But no, even that's off limits. Everything's off limits. ... I'm a fucking failure.

DAWN. *(Sits down next to him.)* You didn't sell any cars today, did you?

BUTCH. Nope. Not even close. Which Dad made sure to point out to me and anyone who'd listen.

DAWN. You're gonna sell something, Butch. You just need time. *(A beat. Butch begins fiddling with the knife again.)* Hey. *(He continues to ignore her, focused on the knife. Dawn, annoyed, snatches it away from him. Firm:)* Hey. You're not a failure.

BUTCH. You don't mean that.

DAWN. No. I don't. I was just trying to be nice. *(They both crack a smile.)*

BUTCH. God, you're a dork. You know that?

DAWN. I do. I also ... need to borrow your car.

BUTCH. 'Scuse me?

DAWN. Just for a few hours. A friend and I want to go for a drive.

BUTCH. You just started today. How do you already have friends?

DAWN. One friend, singular. We met first period, and he was—

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. Ohhh. A dude. You two, uh ... *(He makes a crude gesture indicating sex. You decide what it is.)*

DAWN. No! It's not like that.

BUTCH. Okay. Sure. And where are you go— *(Again, we hear the ethereal breathing. The murmurs. Vocalizing. Something unsettling. Something is seeping into the scene and Butch's consciousness. Powerless, he turns and stares at the wall closest to his bed. Dawn hears nothing.)*

DAWN. ... Butch? ... Butch? *(The sounds continue. Dawn touches Butch's shoulder – and it stops. All of it. The lights snap back into place. All is still.)* You okay?

BUTCH. *(Still in a daze.)* Yeah. ... I think it's coming from over there. The smell. *(Beat. Still staring at the wall.)* Does this place feel weird to you?

DAWN. Weird how?

BUTCH. I don't know, like there's this pressure. It feels like pressure ...

DAWN. *(Over his line.)* Pressure?

BUTCH. *(Over her line.)* No, not pressure but ... something pushing down on me. On my chest and ... it's hard to describe but, it's like this force or something's in the room.

DAWN. Something or someone? *(Beat. Butch is unsure how to respond.)* ... Ever since we got here, I keep getting this feeling like I'm being watched or something. It feels like ... like someone's in my room. I don't know if it means anything but—

LOUISE (O.S.). Dawn, there's a boy named Michael here to see you. *(A loud whisper.)* And he's cute.

DAWN. I'll be right there!

BUTCH. ... You better get goin'. Keys are over there on the table.

DAWN. Thank you! *(She bounds over to the small desk and begins frantically searching for them. Butch is still transfixed by the wall.)*

BUTCH. But uh, you gotta promise you'll be careful. 'Cause I— *(Dawn sees something large and round in one of the jacket pockets. She reaches for it and pulls out the tin. She recognizes it immediately.)*

DAWN. What are you doing with this? *(Butch turns around to see what she's talking about. Eying the tin.)* Is this the pressure you're talking about?

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. ... It's not what you think.

DAWN. I know what these are.

BUTCH. Yeah, but ... I wasn't gonna take 'em.

DAWN. Mom and Dad said—

BUTCH. You can't tell 'em.

DAWN. But they—

BUTCH. You can't. ... I wasn't gonna take 'em. You gotta believe me.

DAWN. Then why do you — where'd you get 'em? ... Butch?

BUTCH. From Peg.

DAWN. Oh.

BUTCH. Give 'em to me and I'll get rid of 'em. *(He approaches her, hand outstretched. Dawn takes a step back. Beat.)* Give 'em to me.

DAWN. Let me do it. I'll put it in my bag, and—

BUTCH. And what? Get caught? Like last time? That's how this whole mess started.

DAWN. I was trying to help you!

BUTCH. I know! *(Softer. Genuinely.)* I know. But I know what I'm doing. What if you get caught? Dad'll either blame me, beat my ass and kick me out ... or they'll blame you. Just give it to me, okay? ... Okay?

DAWN. Butch, you gotta swear—

BUTCH. On everything. I swear on everything. *(... She takes a slight step forward, when:)*

LOUISE (O.S.). Dawn, are you down here? You don't want to keep your friend waiting.

DAWN. ... Coming! *(A long beat. To Butch.)* You promise? *(Butch nods. Hesitantly, and against her better judgement, Dawn hands the tin back over to him. They stare at one another for a moment. She spies the car keys, picks them up, and exits. Butch is alone. Mind racing, looks down at the tin, resting in the palm of his trembling hand. The sound of a heart beating is heard.)*

BUTCH. *(To self. Repetitive.)* It's okay. It's okay. It's okay. It's — *(Forcefully he tosses the tin across the room. He takes a step back — a hunger bubbling inside of him.)* Damnit! *(Pounding his fist against the wall, HARD.)* DAMNIT! *(And then ... an echo of the thud. Clearly the wall is hollow and there's something behind it. He knocks again. Again, an*

AMITYVILLE '74

echo. Once more, to be certain. He traces his finger along the side of the wall, only to notice ...) What the ...? (He begins tugging at the wall and the nails.) What is that? (He coughs wildly.) God! (Again, the breathing. The heavy, gurgling sound manifests. The vocalizations. Butch looks about, frantic. Determined, he returns to the wall, attempting to free the plywood against it. He continues to cough periodically. The smell is increasing. The sound of breathing is amplified.) Almost got – (At last, he breaks it free, the door slides to the side, revealing in its wake, a small room painted crimson. Suddenly, smoke billows forth – not a lot, but enough to be effective.) Jesus Christ! (Butch's coughing increases, followed by the instantly recognizable sound of flies buzzing. Music begins to play. The heartbeat grows louder. The breathing becomes almost unbearable, the buzzing unstoppable, and underneath it, underneath it all ... the murmuring of words. Indecipherable whispers. Overwhelmed by it all, Butch drops to the floor, covering his ears.) WHAT THE–! STOP IT. STOP IT! STOP IT!! (Butch's coughing refuses to cease, eventually causing him to fall to his side and pass out. Lights around him dim, only a spot on the Red Room, and the lights behind the large, half-moon windows visible. The breathing continues a bit, then ... silence. Blackout.)

SCENE 6. THE DEFEO HOUSE. BUTCH'S ROOM/THE KITCHEN. AN HOUR LATER.

*Time has passed. The light on Butch pulsates in time with the heartbeat. Perhaps the old rocking chair sitting next to Butch's bed starts to rock back and forth on its own. Maybe the radio even switches on, changing stations – nothing but static and bits of classic 70s' rock. Slow at first – the sounds, the rocking of the chair, the heartbeat, but then it builds, faster ... and faster. It grows at an alarming rate, when suddenly – **DING DONG**. It stops. All of it. Butch stirs. **DING DONG**.*

BUTCH. *(Groggy.) Huh? What the – (**DING DONG. DING DONG.**) Mom? Mom, it's the door! Someone's at the – (**DING DONG. DING DONG. DING DONG.**) Jesus Christ! (Butch climbs to his feet and makes*

AMITYVILLE '74

his way to the kitchen. Perhaps there's a loud rapping at the door.) Hold –
HOLD ON! *(He opens the door. JODIE, a fortysomething with glasses framing her otherwise open face, enters.)* Yeah?!

JODIE. Is everyone all right? Are you all right? Where's it coming from?!

BUTCH. What the hell?! What are you–!

JODIE. Is it upstairs? In the basement? Where?

BUTCH. What are you talkin' about? Who are you?!

JODIE. Gunshots! I heard gunshots! One after another! Bang! Bang!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Did you hear them?

BUTCH. No!

JODIE. You must've! They were ... ! I could've sworn ... ! *(Realizes.)*

Nothing?

BUTCH. No.

JODIE. *(A small "Ha" escapes her.)* How do you like that? I guess the husband was right. I really am losing it. Thank God nothing happened.

(More to herself.) Thank God I didn't call the police. Again.

BUTCH. ... It's uh, okay.

JODIE. No it's not, but you're sweet. I'm Jodie. Your neighbor.

BUTCH. Hi.

JODIE. *(Over Butch's "Hi.")* I live – *(Pointing out the door.)* I live just down the street. There. The white house with the blue shutters. That's me.

Me and Merv. That's the husband.

BUTCH. Nice. Call me Butch.

JODIE. ... Do I have to? Kidding! I like it. It's a pleasure to meet you,

Butch. *(She offers him her hand. They shake.)*

BUTCH. Yeah. You too.

JODIE. Normally when I greet the new neighbors, it's not this chaotic...but those gunshots ... *(Looking around.)* or whatever ... scared the dickens right out of me. Either way, it got me over here. To tell you the truth, I did try to stop by with a basket of muffins the other night, but I heard shouting and ... you know.

BUTCH. Sorry about that. Things uh, things can get–

JODIE. Don't worry about it. *(She notices something.)* Say uh, not that

it's any of my business but you look tired. Are you feeling all right?

BUTCH. Yeah ... it's been a long day.

AMITYVILLE '74

JODIE. I bet. For you and ... where's the rest of the family?

BUTCH. I don't know. They were here earlier, but ... I guess they're out.

JODIE. So it's just you. Hm. You got a piece of paper or somethin'?

BUTCH. Um, I think on—

JODIE. *(Sees paper and a pencil on the counter.)* There we go. *(Begins writing.)* This is my phone number. If you need anything – anything at all – don't hesitate to call me. You got that?

BUTCH. *(He takes the paper.)* Thank you.

JODIE. Well I'd better get back to my Merv and let you get back to whatever it is you were doing. Don't be a stranger now.

BUTCH. I won't.

JODIE. And use that number.

BUTCH. Will do.

JODIE. And don't shoot off any rifles. Ha! 'Bout scared me to death. *(She chuckles to herself.)* 'Night, Butch. *(She exits. Beat.)*

BUTCH. ... What the hell? *(Butch looks down at the piece of paper. He shakes his head, shoves it in his pocket, and begins to exit when Jenny, Julie, and Louise enter through the front door. Louise is carrying a large pizza box and has a sparkle in her eye and is slightly more animated than normal.)*

LOUISE/JULIE/JENNY. *(Chanting.)* Pizza! Pizza! Pizza! Pizza!

JENNY/JULIE. Pizza! Pizza! Piz—

LOUISE. Yes, yes, pizza! Pizza! Here. *(She hands Jenny the box.)* Take this and set the table.

JENNY. All right.

LOUISE. And you, go help your sister?

JULIE. Why?

LOUISE. Just do it. *(The pair begin to scurry off.)* And don't eat anything until everyone's seated.

JENNY/JULIE. I won't! / ... We won't.

LOUISE. *(To self.)* Yes, you will. *(To Butch.)* Oh. There you are. I swear you're just like your father – can sleep through anything.

BUTCH. Just tired, I guess.

LOUISE. We all are, dear. We all are. *(Moving on.)* Wash up. Dinner's ready. *(She chuckles to herself and exits while taking off her jacket. Dawn*

AMITYVILLE '74

enters through the door, carrying another pizza box. Butch darts toward her.)

BUTCH. You're back.

DAWN. I'm back.

BUTCH. Can I talk to you for a sec?

DAWN. Can it wait? I gotta help Mom.

BUTCH. Yeah, but – *(Notices the pizza box.)* I thought you were going out.

DAWN. I was, but ... *(Motions towards where Louise exited.)* she wasn't in any condition to be alone. Or driving.

BUTCH. ... Again? *(Dawn shrugs.)* Where's Dad?

DAWN. Still at the dealership.

BUTCH. What happened?

DAWN. She–

LOUISE. *(Re-entering.)* Ronnie, is your sister–? *(Sees Dawn.)* There you are! I swear ninety percent of motherhood is trying to get all your kids in the same room. I'll take that. *(Taking the second pie from Dawn.)* Thank you again for driving, sweetie – but you really didn't have to. Just one of my spells. I'm fine.

DAWN. I know, Mom. Don't worry about it.

LOUISE. Let's um ... let's keep this between the three of us, all right? Don't want to upset your father.

BUTCH/DAWN. Right/No. *(Louise smiles, picks up the second pizza, and pats them both on the cheek.)*

LOUISE. *(Exiting. To Jenny and Julie.)* All right, who's ready for anchovies and onions?

JENNY (O.S.). Mom!

JULIE (O.S.). Gross! *(Butch waits a beat, then ...)*

BUTCH. Do you think she's starting again?

DAWN. I don't know. Did uh ... you get rid of–

BUTCH. Yeah.

DAWN. You swear?

LOUISE (O.S.). Hey, come on. Pizza's getting cold.

BUTCH/DAWN. Coming.

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. It's cool. (*Dawn stares at him, then exits. To self:*) ... It's cool. (*We shift.*)

SCENE 7. SULLIVAN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY. 2019.

RONNIE. That was the first night I remember havin' the nightmares. Real messed up stuff. Faces mostly. Pale, sunken faces with those milk-white eyes. I'd wake up not knowin' where I was ... or if somethin' was next to me.

ALEXIS. ... And the voices, did they continue?

RONNIE. I never said I heard voices.

ALEXIS. Before you said—

RONNIE. ... I said I heard somethin'. Maybe it sounded like voices. Maybe it didn't. But it was somethin'.

ALEXIS. Why not specify?

RONNIE. 'Cause the minute you say you're hearin' voices; people call you crazy. And I wasn't! Same thing happened to me when my folks sent me to that clinic. I had to go cold turkey, and then I started seein' ... and hearin' ... all kinds of things. Things I don't think a person could describe.

ALEXIS. You were detoxing.

RONNIE. (*Sarcastically.*) You don't say. ... I thought, maybe ... the drugs were still in me. Maybe they hadn't all left yet. Hell, maybe what I was smellin' in the basement was messin' with me.

ALEXIS. Perhaps. Or perhaps it was the LSD? ... From Peg?

RONNIE. No.

ALEXIS. What did you do with it? You told your sister you got rid of it. Did you?

ALEXIS. (*Beat.*) Ronnie?

RONNIE. ... I wanted to, but I couldn't. Somethin' inside wouldn't let me. So, I hid it.

ALEXIS. Where? (*Ronnie turns away and looks over at the house. Butch enters his room. He picks up the tin of drugs and makes his way over to the sliding door – to the Red Room. He slides it open, and making sure no one*

AMITYVILLE '74

is watching it, stashes the drugs in it. Once he's done, he slides the door closed, and exits. Alexis suddenly realizes.) ... The Red Room.

RONNIE. *(Turns back, acknowledges Alexis.)* Is that what yer callin' it?

ALEXIS. The family that moved in after you the—

RONNIE. Putzs—

ALEXIS. Lutzs blamed everything on the Red Room. They said it wasn't on any of the blueprints of the house. Like it was left off on purpose.

RONNIE. What can I say? It was a little room. You'd have to crouch down to even fit in it.

ALEXIS. And you didn't tell Dawn about any of this? What you heard? What you found? Did you see a—

RONNIE. Yer doin' it again. *(Almost sing-song.)* Interrogatin'. ... And no. I didn't tell her. Didn't want to worry her. Anyway, uh ... days just kinda bled together. One long nightmare. I was constantly freezin', hackin' up a lung ... you name it.

ALEXIS. Did you see a doctor?

RONNIE. Naw. I had more important things to worry about, like sellin' a car— which I had to do soon or else ... or else it woulda been bad. *(We shift.)*

SCENE 8. THE DEALERSHIP. SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1974.

Lights rise on the car dealership. The opening guitar riffs of "Brown Sugar" by the Rolling Stones, or something similar to it, plays, Ronald, in a fancy, three-piece suit, enters with a pair of CUSTOMERS.

RONALD. I know you said you want something economical and on the cheaper side, but I'm sorry folks, what we got here is the genuine article. Brand new, fresh out the factory, a real beaut. Wouldn't ya say?

MALE CUSTOMER. *(Immediately taken with it.)* Definitely.

FEMALE CUSTOMER. It is. *(She notices the price.)* But uh ... it's a little out of our price range.

AMITYVILLE '74

RONALD. Uh, it's a bit more than we discussed, but when I see a price like this, I try not to think of it as an expense – but an investment. An investment in– *(The sound of a PA System being turned on is heard:)*

PA SYSTEM – VOICE. Mr. DeFeo, there's a call for you on line four. Mr. DeFeo, a call on line four.

RONALD. Ah shi – *(Realizes he's in front of a customer.)* oot. *(To Customers.)* One sec, folks. Gimme a minute to – *(Just then, Butch enters.)* Hey! Son! Come here. I want you to meet someone. *(Butch approaches them.)* Butch, these are the Lombardis. *(To the Customers.)* Mr. and Mrs. Lombardi, this is Butch. Pride n' joy. Just turned twenty-three last month.

MALE CUSTOMER. Hello there, young man.

BUTCH. Hi.

FEMALE CUSTOMER. You know we have a son about your age.

RONALD. How do ya like that? Butch, these fine people are in the market for a new Ambassador.

MALE CUSTOMER. Actually, we–

RONALD. They're thinkin' about it. Take care of 'em for me will ya, and I'll–

PA SYSTEM – VOICE. Mr. Defeo, there's a call for you on line four.

RONALD. Duty calls. *(To Butch.)* Come here a second. *(He pulls Butch aside.)* Whatever you do, don't let 'em leave. Keep 'em talkin'. You can let 'em wander, but don't let 'em out of your sight. If they insist on a cheaper model, don't show 'em anything under four Gs. You got it?

BUTCH. Yeah.

RONALD. Don't screw this up. *(An awkward beat. Butch turns and faces the Customers.)*

MALE CUSTOMER. ... So Butch, what can you tell us about this particular model?

BUTCH. What can I tell you? Well, uh ... what uh ... what can't I tell you. It's uh ... it's top of the line. Uh, a luxury vehicle. It's got four doors. It's... *(Looking the car over.)* red. *(Husband and Wife look at one another for a moment.)*

MALE CUSTOMER. ... Thank you for your time, Butch, but I think we'll try looking elsewhere.

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. Wait, um ... (*Genuine.*) I'm still kinda new to this – and figurin' it out – but my dad, he's great. And he'll get you a good car – and a good deal. Best deal on the lot. Can uh, can I get you some coffee or something while you wait for him? Please?

FEMALE CUSTOMER. (*To Husband.*) You know, we have been looking all afternoon...and I am a little thirsty. I don't think giving them a few more minutes would hurt. (*To Butch.*) Would you mind getting me a cup of water?

BUTCH. Comin' right up.

FEMALE CUSTOMER. And hey – (*Whispers to Butch.*) you're doing fine.

BUTCH. (*A slight smile.*) Thanks. (*Butch spies a bench lined with a water cooler and few cups. As he approaches it, he coughs to himself a bit. He begins to fill one of the cups with water when he notices something out of the corner of his eye. Jodie enters, clutching a basket of blueberry muffins. Looking around.*)

BUTCH. Jodie?

JODIE. Oh! There you are.

BUTCH. What are you doin' here? In the market for a new car?

JODIE. Heavens no. I could use one, but talk is cheap and so is Merv. No, I stopped by because I wanted to give you these. I feel just awful for scaring you the other night, so I thought I'd bring you a basket of my world-famous blueberry muffins.

BUTCH. Oh. Thank you. (*Eyeing the customers.*) Well, uh ... I need to get back to– (*Butch starts to head towards the customers, but stops, turns his head, and immediately begins to cough – loudly and violently. This goes on for a beat.*)

JODIE. You all right? (*Feels Butch's forehead.*) You're cold as ice. I knew you weren't feeling well the other night.

BUTCH. Just haven't been sleepin' much, and I think there's a ... a pipe or somethin' leaking in our basement ...

JODIE. I wouldn't be surprised. Some of those houses aren't even fifty years old, but the basements...I think they date back to the 1600s. They're full of mold and have God-only-knows-what hidden God-only-knows-where. (*Butch coughs again.*) You want me to call someone?

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. Naw, I'm fine.

JODIE. You at least need to see a doctor.

BUTCH. No, what I need to do is sell one of these before my father fires me.

JODIE. Sell a car? Is that all? Listen, may I give you some advice?

BUTCH. Sure ...

JODIE. Here. Have a muffin. *(She offers him the basket. He looks at her hesitantly.)* Go on. *(He takes a bite of one. It's awful.)*

BUTCH. Yeah, it's um ...

JODIE. They're terrible. I know. You can spit it out. I didn't say they were world famous because they're good. But you know what? They sell like hotcakes at the church bazaar. When a customer approaches my booth asking for sprinkle cookies, I send them in the direction of the sprinkle cookies. Lookin' for lemon ladyfingers? Two tables down on the left. Usually they're so thankful for my help, they'll buy one of these burnt things without even tasting 'em.

BUTCH. Lucky you.

JODIE. *(Playfully taps him.)* The point is Butch, some people like to tell the rest of us what to do, what to say, how to dress, and act. Maybe if instead they asked what we wanted – what we're looking for – it could make a world of difference.

BUTCH. Maybe. But my dad would never–

JODIE. Listen to me: forget about what your dad says. These balloons and cheesy slogans may work for him, but what works for you?

BUTCH. I wouldn't even know where to start.

JODIE. How about...if those folks have a son around your age, then chances are they don't need something as big as a station wagon. Maybe you should ask 'em what they want.

BUTCH. I guess that's a good – did I tell you they have a son my age? *(Female Customer waves at Butch.)*

FEMALE CUSTOMER. Excuse me, Butch! I think we found something.

JODIE. *(Hands Butch two cups of water.)* Now's your chance. Knock 'em dead.

BUTCH. Here goes nothin'. *(Butch grabs two cups of water, takes a deep breath, and marches towards the customers. We shift.)*

AMITYVILLE '74

SCENE 9. THE DEFEO HOUSE. THE KITCHEN. LATER THAT DAY.

Lights rise on the kitchen. The radio is playing in the background. Julie's back is turned to the audience, her hands over her eyes.

JULIE. 18, 19. 20. Ready or not, here I come! *(The lights pulsate a bit. She looks up, and notices something is off. Suddenly, the phone begins to ring. Julie, annoyed, turns off the radio, and answers the phone.)* Hello. *(A spot illuminates Peg, standing at a payphone.)*

PEG. Hiya. Is uh, is Ronnie home?

JULIE. Uhh ... I dunno.

PEG. Well ... coulda ya check?

JULIE. Why?

PEG. *(Attempting to keep her cool.)* 'Cause I needa talk to him.

JULIE. Why?

PEG. ...'Cause – just because. Could ya see if he's there?

JULIE. *(Sighs.)* Okay.

PEG. Tha–

JULIE. *(Shouting at the top of her lungs.)* BUTCH, ARE YA HOME? *(No response – hurting Peg's ears.)* BUTCH!!! *(No response – still hurting Peg's ears. Peg attempts to say something when –)* BU– *(Julie stops mid-yell. Back to Peg.)* no. He's not here. Sorry.

PEG. Then could you gi–

JULIE. *(Calling out.)* Look out, Jenny – I'm gonna find you! *(Julie hangs up and runs off.)*

PEG. Hold it one– *(The dial tone is heard.)* Little shit. *(Peg slams the phone down. She mimes taking quarters out of her bag, putting them into the payphone, and dialing. It rings. Peg waits...impatiently. Lights in the kitchen flicker. Louise enters with a basket of laundry. She hears the phone ringing. She answers.)*

LOUISE. Yes? Who is it?

PEG. Yeah ... uh ... I'm lookin' for Ronnie. Is he there?

LOUISE. *(Immediately recognizing the voice.)* ... Who should I say is calling?

PEG. Tell 'im it's a ... friend.

AMITYVILLE '74

LOUISE. A friend?

PEG (*Nervous chuckle, moving on ...*) Yeah and, it's kinda important so if you could give h—

LOUISE. I know it's you, Peggy. Leave my son alone.

PEG. ... Hey, I never—

LOUISE. Leave him alone! Haven't you done enough?

PEG. No offense, Mrs. DeFeo, but last I checked Ronnie ain't no saint. I didn't force that stuff on him. He came to me.

LOUISE. Don't you—

PEG. (*Moving on.*) Look, it don't matter. I just really need to talk to him. Okay? It's important.

LOUISE. I'm hanging up now.

PEG. (*Panicking.*) Mrs. DeFeo, you just gotta give me one—

LOUISE. Never call this number again, you got that?

PEG. Yeah, well...if Ronnie wants to see me, he'll see me. He sure liked seein' me the other day.

LOUISE. What are you talking about? ... Peggy! (*And then ... static. The line connection is interrupted.*) Hello?! (*More static, growing in volume.*) Peggy?

PEG. (*Attempting to shout over the static.*) Mrs. DeFeo? Mrs. DeFeo?!

LOUISE. Hello? ... What's going— (*Peg continues to shout into the phone as the spot goes out on her, her voice drowned out by the static. Louise clutches the phone for dear life, shouting louder and louder...*) Did Ronald see you? (*And then ... the disconnect tone sounds. Peg, frustrated, slams the phone down and exits. Louise hangs up. Silence. A beat. Louise begins to exit, then stops, thinks for a moment. Reluctantly, she approaches the phone once more, and begins to dial. We hear a soft ringing. A click.*) Hi, may I speak to Ronald D— (**BAM!** *The radio switches back on, rock music blasting from it at top volume! Louise screams. She approaches the radio and turns it off. Shouting:*) **WHAT THE HELL!**

RONALD – VOICE. Jesus Christ, Louise!

LOUISE. (*Straining to hear.*) Ron? (*A light rises on Ronald.*)

RONALD. What in the hell has gotten into you? (*Through gritted teeth. Looking around to make sure no one is listening.*) Can't you go one fuckin' afternoon without drinkin'?

AMITYVILLE '74

LOUISE. ... Ron, I—

RONALD. Forget about it. I'm glad you called – we're gonna be late for dinner.

LOUISE. Why? What did he do?

RONALD. I'll tell ya what he did. That son of yours ... sold six cars in one afternoon. Week's worth of cars in three hours!

LOUISE. Are you serious?

RONALD. The guys have never seen nothin' like it. I don't know how he did it or what's gotten' into him, but I think we got ourselves a natural here. *(Overcome with joy, Louise places her hand over her mouth, attempting to keep Ronald from hearing her cry.)* Louise? Ya there?

LOUISE. Yeah, Ron ... yeah. *(Relief washes over Louise. We shift.)*

**SCENE 10. THE DEFEO HOUSE. BUTCH'S ROOM.
LATER THAT NIGHT.**

The rock music that blasted out of the radio plays again and transitions us into Butch's room. Butch once again takes off his jacket and throws it on the table. He picks up the pocketknife and begins fiddling with it again. Suddenly, the music stops. Butch approaches the radio to see what the problem is...when the vocalizing, once more, seeps into the scene. Butch stops and stares at the sliding wood panel – the only thing that separates him from the Red Room.

As the vocalizing continues, Butch looks about the room. He sets the knife down, and, almost entranced, makes his way towards the panel. He slides it open. Red light spills out from the tiny room. Tempted, Butch scoops up the tin of LSD. The vocalizing grows louder as he slowly begins to open the bag. He's just about to reach in when – there's a knock at his door.

BUTCH. Uh, just a minute! *(The knocking continues. Quickly he shoves the bag back into the room and slides the panel shut. The knocking gets louder and harder.)* One second. One sec – *(He opens the door.)* Dad!

AMITYVILLE '74

RONALD. *(Entering.)* Jesus Christ. It does stink down here. What'd you do?

BUTCH. Nothin', I swear.

RONALD. Yeah ... well ... yer Mother, she thought maybe I should come down here ... and talk with ya ... or somethin'.

BUTCH. ... Okay.

RONALD. *(Firm.)* Sit. *(Butch does as he's told. Ronald approaches him, sits down as well.)* I'm not gonna bullshit ya. You've screwed up a lot lately. A hell of a lot.

BUTCH. I know, Dad—

RONALD. You've caused your mother a lot of heartache, cost me a lot of money — just done a lot of stupid things. But today ... today you did good. You should know that.

BUTCH. *(Stunned.)* ... Thanks.

RONALD. Now I ain't sayin' this makes up for all the shit you've pulled but...you came in, did your job, and showed up everybody. Even yer old man. Yer comin' around. ... How'd you do it anyway? I mean, six cars!

BUTCH. Just got lucky I guess.

RONALD. No, no, that's more than luck. I'll be honest with ya, at first when you convinced those stupid Lomabardis to go with a Gremlin, I was ready to wring yer neck. But then, then you sold another and another and ... I uh ... *(Taps his son on the leg. Gets up, heads out the bedroom door.)* wanna to give ya somethin'.

BUTCH. What?

RONALD (O.S.). You know, to sorta commemorate the occasion. Sold your first car. *(Scoffs.)* Yer first fleet. My first month on the job I was lucky if I got anybody to spit on me, let alone buy a week's worth of cars in a day.

BUTCH. So ... you ... got me something?

RONALD (O.S.). Relax a minute, will ya? Where'd those movers put the—? *(Spies something.)* Here we go. *(He emerges through the doorway, holding something behind his back we cannot see.)* Now, this was given to me by my Dad. It wasn't until I sold my first car that he started seein' me as a man. And uh ... now I guess I'm given' it to ... yeah. *(And then, Ronald pulls out a .35 caliber Marlin Rifle.)*

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. *(Overwhelmed.)* Wow. This is—

RONALD. Nice, huh?

BUTCH. Yeah ...

RONALD. *(Holds the rifle out to Butch.)* Take it. But be careful!
(Hesitantly, Ronnie takes the rifle from his father's grip.) You know how to hold it, don't you?

BUTCH. Yeah, I remember you showing me when I was a kid. *(Butch holds the gun out, inspecting it. He's clearly held one before.)*

RONALD. Oh yeah? Well ... I'd better get washed up. You too. Don't be late for dinner now, you got it? *(Ronald begins to exit, then pauses for a moment ... right next to the Red Room. Butch watches him closely. Ronald covers his nose.)* Man, we really gotta do somethin' about that smell.

BUTCH. *(A slight smile.)* Yeah ...

RONALD. I'll uh ... I'll take a look at it later. *(Ronald exits. Butch looks down at the gun, transfixed. Lights rise on Alexis and Ronnie.)*

ALEXIS. And that was the ...

RONNIE. Yep.

ALEXIS. I didn't realize it was a gift.

RONNIE. Why would ya? ... Ya know ... when I think back on my father, I try not to think too much 'bout the bad stuff. What I try and think on is this moment, right here – 'cause for the first time – the only time in my life, things between us were good. Even with all the other shit going on – I felt okay. *(We shift.)*

**SCENE 11. THE DEFEO HOUSE. THE DINING ROOM.
LATER THAT NIGHT.**

“I Can See Clearly Now” by Johnny Nash, or something similar to it, begins to play. The family gathers around a large table, center stage. Jenny makes faces at Julie, who is desperately trying to ignore her. Ronald stares down at his food, eating quietly, as Louise rushes in and out, throwing one dish on the table, only to exit so she can grab another. Butch smiles and nods along with all the activity. The moment should almost feel like a montage – or excerpts from an old home movie. The song continues

AMITYVILLE '74

to play under the action. Louise rushes in once more and pours Butch a glass of milk. She approaches Ronald and touches his shoulder. He looks up at her, rolls his eyes, then takes his spoon and taps his glass of milk. The music fades ...

RONALD. Settle down. So uh, today was a good day. (*Dawn enters – harried, rushed.*) It was a good day for the dealership, and it was uh ... (*Stops and looks at Dawn. Dawn realizes she's being watched.*)

DAWN. (*Unbuttoning her coat.*) Sorry, Daddy. I got held up.

RONALD. Yeah? Where ya been?

DAWN. At the library with a friend.

JULIE. Was it ...

JULIE/JENNY. Michael? (*Julie and Jenny make a few kissing noises.*)

RONALD. Who's Michael?

DAWN. No one, Daddy. (*To Julie and Jenny.*) Knock it off.

LOUISE. (*To Dawn.*) It's all right, dear. You're growin' up. (*To Ronald.*) And he's a nice boy.

DAWN. Thanks, Mom.

RONALD. Yeah, well ... as I was sayin', today was a good day for the dealership, for me ... but 'specially ... for Butch.

LOUISE. (*Interjecting.*) To Butch! (*They all raise their glasses.*)

DAWN/JENNY/JULIE. To Butch!

LOUISE. I'm so proud of you I could burst. (*To Butch's dismay, Louise kisses him on cheek multiple times. The sound of the smoke detector going off is heard.*) The dinner rolls!

RONALD. Geez, Louise.

LOUISE. (*Running out the room.*) Don't worry – I've got 'em! (*Ronald grunts and goes back to eating. Butch looks down at his glass of milk, swirling it around a bit. He shivers a bit, clearly cold.*)

DAWN. (*To Butch.*) Hey. You okay?

BUTCH. Yeah ... I am.

DAWN. (*Smiles.*) Good. (*And then Butch's coughing returns. He begins hacking – it gets worse and worse.*)

RONALD. You raised in a barn? Cover yer mouth.

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. *(Through coughs.)* Sorry, Dad *(Butch lifts the glass to his lips and takes a hearty swig.)* What the – *(Jumps up from the table and spits out a mouthful of blood. He coughs and coughs, barely able to utter the words:)* Jesus Christ!

RONALD. What in the hell are you doing?

BUTCH. It's blood! Jesus Christ! See! *(Shows Jenny and Julie his cup. The girls look at each other, unsure of what to say.)* What? Look! *(Dawn looks in it.)* Don't you see?

DAWN. Butch ... it's milk.

BUTCH. Are you fuckin' kidding me?

RONALD. Watch your mouth.

BUTCH. Dad, I'm serious! Look!

RONALD. *(Ronald looks in Butch's glass. It's milk. Plain, ordinary milk.)* What are tryin' to pull here? You tryin' to be funny?

BUTCH. Dad, no!

LOUISE (O.S.). What's going on out there? Everything all right?

BUTCH. Mom it's – look at this and tell me this isn't – *(Louise enters, only it's not her, but an entirely different person dressed in her clothes. PHANTOM LOUISE.)*

PHANTOM LOUISE. What's wrong? Butch? *(Butch jumps back, stunned.)* Everything all right, honey? *(She reaches out her hand to touch him, but Butch steps back.)*

BUTCH. W – who are–?! *(To the rest of the family.)* Where's Mom? Where's Mom?! *(Silence. No one knows how to respond.)*

RONALD. *(Slamming his fist on the table.)* Dammit! I knew it! I knew you couldn't stay off it forever. You're on that shit again!

BUTCH. No!

PHANTOM LOUISE. Sweetheart, what's going on? *(Phantom Louise takes another step towards Butch.)*

BUTCH. Get away from me!

DAWN. *(To Jenny, Julie.)* Come on you two, let's–

BUTCH. Dawn, please! You gotta see what I'm seein'.

DAWN. I'm sorry but ... I don't. *(To Jenny and Julie.)* C'mon. *(They exit. The real Louise enters. She doesn't say a word. She immediately goes over to the table and begins clearing it.)*

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. Mom! What's going on? *(Louise doesn't answer. She ignores him and quietly continues picking up dishes.)* Mom? ... Mom!

RONALD. Who the hell you talkin' to? There's no one there!

BUTCH. *(Pointing to the original Louise.)* Mom's right here!

PHANTOM LOUISE. Sweetie, no.

BUTCH. Who the hell are you? You're not our mother! She is. *(Louise, trancelike, and hands full of dishes, begins to exit.)* Right, Mom? ... Mom!

PHANTOM LOUISE. Butch, no! Don't say that! I don't understand.

Why are you—? I need a minute. *(Phantom Louise exits.)*

RONALD. Look what you did! There ain't nobody there and you know it.

BUTCH. No, she's—

RONALD. Enough.

BUTCH. But she's not—

RONALD. ENOUGH! *(Ronald smacks Butch across the face.)* What in the hell is the matter with you? Huh? You on that shit again? Are you!?

ARE YOU!?! *(Ronald starts shaking Butch violently. The real Louise enters.)*

LOUISE. *(Grabbing her husband.)* Ron, no!

RONALD. I thought you were finally actin' right but yer screwin' it up again!

LOUISE. Ron, stop! Please!

RONALD. GET OFF ME! *(He shoves Louise to the ground. She screams.)*

BUTCH. ... Mom, I—

RONALD. *(Stepping between Butch and Louise.)* Get outta my sight. *(Butch doesn't know how to respond at first. Then:)* GO. *(Butch exits and heads towards his room. Music underscores. We shift.)*

**SCENE 12. THE DEFEO HOUSE. BUTCH'S ROOM. MOMENTS
LATER.**

Butch enters his room, slamming the door behind him. He makes his way over to the wood panel concealing the Red Room and slides it open. Once

AMITYVILLE '74

again, a crimson light spills out. He reaches into the tiny area and pulls out the tin of LSD, his hands trembling.

BUTCH. *(To self.)* No. No! *(Butch throws the stash back in the Red Room and slides the door shut. He quickly makes his way over to the little table where he keeps his pocketknife. He grabs it and once again begins fiddling with it, doing whatever he can to distract himself. And then ... the sounds, the vocalizing – a steady stream of breathing begins once more.)* ... Not again. *(While Butch's back is turned, Peg sneaks out from a dark corner and slowly makes her way towards him.)*

PEG. *(Quietly.)* Ronnie?

BUTCH. *(Covering his ears – attempting to make the sounds stop.)* No. No.

PEG. ... Hey, Ronnie. *(But it's no use. He can't hear her.)*

BUTCH. *(To self.)* No. No. N–

PEG. *(Gently she taps him on the shoulder.)* Guess who? *(It all stops. The world immediately snaps back to normal.)*

BUTCH. *(Turns around, startled.)* What the–

PEG. *(Placing her hand over his mouth. In a half whisper.)* Shh! Shh!!

BUTCH. *(Whispered. His coughing resumes.)* What are ya doin' here?

PEG. I snuck in through a window in the back. You were right about the Borrellis. I messed up. I did the math wrong. I didn't give 'em the right cut, and I don't got enough money to – I need a place to lay low. Just for a few days. *(He continues coughing and doesn't respond to her.)* ... So can I stay or what?

BUTCH. No. You can't.

PEG. What am I s'pose to do?

BUTCH. I dunno, I– *(His cough gets progressively worse...)*

PEG. I can't go to th – *(... and louder.)* Ronnie? *(He stops and looks up at her, breathing heavily, wiping sweat from his brow.)* You don't look so good. You trippin' or somethin'?

BUTCH. No. No, I– *(A few more coughs.)* I just haven't gotten a lot a sleep 'n' – *(And then he hears it. It's quiet at first. Short. Succinct. But mechanical. It ripples throughout the theatre.)*

VOICES. Ronnie.

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. ... W–

VOICES. Ronnie.

BUTCH. ... Did you– *(A buzzing sound pierces the air. And then ...)*

VOICES. *(Almost military like. Twisted. Distorted. One after another. Growing in volume.)* Ronnie. Ronnie. Ronnie. Ronnie. Ronnie. Ronnie. Ronnie. *(And just as quickly as they started, all the sounds stop.)*

BUTCH. You hear that?

PEG. Hear what? ... You all right?

BUTCH. No. Uh ... my dad, he–

VOICES. Ronnie. Ronnie. Ronnie.

BUTCH. Uh, Peg ... you gotta get outta here.

PEG. Why? Ron–

BUTCH. You just do! There's somethin' – there's somethin' going on, with me. I dunno, I–

VOICES. *(Louder.)* RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE.

BUTCH. You don't hear that? It's–

VOICES. *(Louder.)* RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. *(Butch covers his ears, perhaps muttering to himself, attempting to make it stop. As the voices grower louder and louder, we once again hear flies buzzing, adding to the discord. Peg, petrified, stands back in amazement.)*

BUTCH. *(Over the Voices.)* God! It hurts!

VOICES. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. RONNIE. *(And then ... silence. Butch slowly brings his hands down, relieved, when a singular voice is heard:)* ... Kill her, Butch.

BUTCH. ... What?

PEG. Ronnie, what's goin' on? *(The chorus of Voices is heard again – overlapping, shouting/whispering/nattering over one another.)*

VOICES. Kill her. KILL HER. Kill her. Kill her. KILL. Kill. Kill. KILL. kill. KILL HER. KILL. kill. kill. Kill her. kill. kill. kill her.

BUTCH. *(Over the voices.)* No! I'm not – stop! Stop it!

PEG. *(Over the Voices.)* Okay, now yer really scarin' me. I'm gettin' outta here. *(Peg darts back to the corner from which she emerged. She grabs a bag she stashed there. The Voices continue.)*

AMITYVILLE '74

BUTCH. *(To Peg. Over the Voices.)* How can you not – *(Being driven mad.)* STOP IT! *(The rocking chair begins rocking back and forth. The lights begin flickering again. The voices swell. The buzzing grows louder and louder!)*

VOICES. Kill.kill.kill her.kill.KILL HER. KILL HER. KILL.KILL.KILL HER.

KILL.KILL.kill her.kill her.kill.kill.

BUTCH. *(On the verge of tears.)* It's gotta stop! *(And then the radio turns on. Static at first, then ... the nasally voices of an all-child chorus singing the Clint Holmes' classic "Playground in My Mind," or something similar to it, blasts out of the radio. It's jarring. Distorted. Underneath it, the voices, the sounds, they all continue.)*

PEG. *(She runs to the door, it's locked. She bangs on the door.)* Hey, it's – how do you unlock this? Let me out! *(The voices, the music, the buzzing, Peg banging against the door – it's too much for Butch to take. He dashes over to the radio, and turns it off, but the music won't stop playing. It refuses. It only gets louder ...)*

BUTCH. NO! NO! *(As do the voices. Butch makes a mad dash for the knife on the ground. He picks it up and begins attacking the radio with it, trying to break it apart. Smash it. End this nightmare once and for all.)*

VOICES. Kill her.Kill her.Kill her.Kill her.Kill her ...

PEG. What are you doin'?! *(But he ignores her and continues stabbing, hitting, beating the radio with all his might.)*

BUTCH. STOP!! STOP! STOP! STOP! STOP!

PEG. You fuckin' crazy? Stop it, Ronnie!

VOICES. KILL HER. KILL HER. KILL HER. KILL HER. **KILL HER.** *(Butch can take no more. He shoves Peg off him, raises the pocketknife in the air and begins stabbing her, violently. Blood splatters. Lights strobe. She screams for dear life and attempts to fight back, but it's no use.)*

PEG. Ronnie! No!! STOP! *(Finally, Peg lets out one final blood curdling scream and then ... all is still. The music stops. The Voices stop. The flies stop. The lights return to normal.)*

BUTCH. *(As if coming out of a trance.)* What the–? ... Peg? *(The shrill ring of his telephone slices through the air. Butch looks at it for a moment,*

AMITYVILLE '74

collapsing to his knees, begins rubbing his fingers through his hair. It rings. And rings. And rings. Until finally he answers it. Dazed.) ... Hello? JODIE (O.S.). Butch? Butch! Did something happen? I know I heard something this time. Sc–screaming! It was screaming, right? Butch, are you – Butch? Butch?? (Suddenly, the door to the Red Room slides open on its own – the crimson light spilling out, the colors pulsating, and the tin of LSD in plain sight.) Hello? Butch! Are ya there? I can hear something – (Butch drops the phone and makes his way over to the bag of drugs.) Butch! Butch! (Butch, bathed in the crimson light, reaches into the tin, and ripping along the perforated lines, rips off a square of LSD from the blotter paper and plops it on his tongue. Euphoria. He begins laughing to himself, Peg’s dead body resting at his feet. Soon, his entire bedroom glows a bright red. The eyes of the house glow red as well.) I know something’s wrong! Butch! ...Butch!! (Butch, ignoring the call, and lost in his thoughts, looks over to see the cross above his bed slowly turn upside down. Blackout.)

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS –
ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM***