

THE DALLAS FILE

Recipient of the Florida Theatre Conference New Play Award

THE DALLAS FILE

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THE DALLAS FILE

CAST 2 MEN, 2 WOMEN

Tyrone “T Bone” Stakes, 22, a journalism student at SMU

Teresa Stakes, 20, his wife

Bonnie Smithers, 40, an exotic dancer

Walter Weltner, 56, a police sergeant

SETTING: An efficiency apartment in the upper reaches of an older home that has been redesigned for separate renters. There is a sitting area with sofa, side tables, television, radio, and telephone, a separate sleeping area with a closet and bath, and a separate kitchen with a window and a fridge, kitchen sink, and gas stove. Outside the main entry is a hallway. The walls of the apartment are thin.

TIME: Spring, 1978. Dallas, Texas.

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

Dallas, Texas. 1978. An efficiency apartment, empty. Through the thin walls of the apartment come the sounds of two women struggling with a heavy, inanimate object. A crash is heard coming from the hall followed by a male voice as someone fights his way through boxes and furniture in the hall passageway. A key enters the lock, the door opens, and T BONE enters the room. He carries a large package wrapped in brown paper and bound by a piece of string. He takes off his light jacket as he listens to the continuing struggle through the wall.

T BONE. Terry? *(No answer.)* Terry! *(The phone rings.)*

TERESA. *(Off.)* I'm next door, hon.

T BONE. What?

TERESA. *(Off.)* Just a minute.

T BONE. I can't understand you.

TERESA. *(Off.)* I said – just a minute!

T BONE. *(Answering the phone.)* Hello? *(He listens.)* What? *(Pause.)* Who is this? *(He listens.)* You want me to do what? *(Listens.)* This is some sort of joke, right? Is this some kind of practical joke? Hello? *(He jiggles the hook.)* Hello! What the hell is this. . . *(He hangs up. He starts to put the package down, then stops, looks at the telephone, then back to the package. He sits on the sofa and removes the cord from the package. TERESA enters. She rushes to him, throwing her arms around his neck and kisses him.)* Terry – you're – *(She rushes back to the door, calls into the hall.)*

TERESA. Coming? *(A small crash in the hall.)*

BONNIE. *(Off.)* Yeah, yeah.

T BONE. Who're you talking to?

TERESA. Our new neighbor. Come in, come in. *(BONNIE enters through the door. She stops in the entry, looks around with one large*

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“Wow” expressing her shock or appreciation.) It’s not much, same size as yours. Honey, this is Bonnie – uh –

BONNIE. Smithers.

TERESA. My husband, Tyrone.

BONNIE. How are ya.

T BONE. *(Not getting up.)* Howdy.

TERESA. Honey . . . *(She motions for him to rise.)*

BONNIE. Listen, don’t get up on my account. I ain’t nobody. Was that you wrestling with my junk out there? Sorry ‘bout that.

T BONE. No problemo. You moving in?

BONNIE. Hey! He’s pretty quick. *(Phone rings. T Bone moves to answer it.)*

TERESA. Of course she is, dummy. I’ll get us something to drink.

BONNIE. It’s about time!

T BONE. *(On the phone.)* Hello? *(Pause.)* Listen, if you’re some kind of . . . Hello? *(He hangs up.)*

TERESA. What was that?

T BONE. Who knows. Some kind of practical joke.

BONNIE. You get those here, too, huh. Well don’t let it bother you. It happens to the best of us. *(She laughs.)*

T BONE. *(Not laughing.)* I won’t. *(He goes into the bathroom, taking the package with him, tossing it on the bed as he passes it.)*

BONNIE. Losing my touch. Some men I can turn on just like that. *(Snaps her fingers.)*

TERESA. All I have is tea. Will that do?

BONNIE. Double on the ice.

TERESA. I haven’t had a chance to do any shopping – otherwise, I’d have –

BONNIE. Listen, sweetie, you start making excuses, I’ll have to do the same. So, let’s take each other just like we are, okay?

TERESA. Okay.

BONNIE. Great. Just put a bunch of ice cubes in a glass and pour the tea over them, that’s a dear. I can’t believe this weather in April.

TERESA. *(Fixing the teas.)* Your apartment’s been empty for more than a year. It’s nice having company up here again.

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BONNIE. What was this place anyway? An attic? God, I've lived in worse. Looks to me like they just ran a few two-by-fours up and called it an "apart-ment". . . It's apart, all right. I like your place. You've done it up real cute.

TERESA. Thanks.

BONNIE. My place looks like a horror film I saw once. Cockroaches all over. There any rats up here?

TERESA. Not anymore.

BONNIE. Hate rats. You been here long?

TERESA. Since our marriage. Almost two years. T Bone graduates in August. Then, we'll be moving. I hope. A place with not so many stairs.

BONNIE. T Bone?

TERESA. My husband, Tyrone.

BONNIE. T Bone.

TERESA. A nickname. Everybody calls him that. *(Gives Bonnie a glass of iced tea.)*

BONNIE. Thanks. T Bone. Now I've heard 'em all.

TERESA. His dad was a Dallas police officer back in the 60s and he was so upright and honest that people called him "Tough." With a last name like "Stakes," it seemed to fit. He was "Tough Stakes," so his son became "T Bone."

BONNIE. If it had been up to me, I'd a called him "Tenderloin."

TERESA. *(Calling.)* T Bone? Want some tea?

T BONE. *(Off.)* No. *(Sound of a toilet flush.)*

BONNIE. Thin walls.

TERESA. You get used to it.

BONNIE. Don't you though. Like that other place I lived. Christ, what a joint. Crawling with junkies and rats, bugs . . . But I got used to it after awhile.

TERESA. This neighborhood's not much better.

BONNIE. Hell, this neighborhood's the next thing to heaven if you ask me. *(She sips her tea.)* You know, this'd be a hell of a lot better with a jigger of gin in it. Got any?

TERESA. No, sorry.

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BONNIE. Be right back. *(She exits. Teresa places a coaster under Bonnie's glass. T Bone comes from the bathroom, sees that Bonnie is gone, then sprawls across the bed, removing the brown paper from the package. Teresa approaches him.)*

TERESA. T Bone?

T BONE. Hmm?

TERESA. What are you doing?

T BONE. Nothing.

BONNIE. *(Returning with a bottle of gin.)* Here we go, here we go. I had to dig to find this. I had it packed with my underwear. Didn't want this to get broken, you know. *(She pours gin into her glass of tea.)* You don't mind, do you?

TERESA. Not at all.

BONNIE. A bit of gin can spice up just about anything. Would uh. . . The Frisky Brisket want some?

TERESA. No. No, thanks.

BONNIE. Here goes. Cheers. *(Drinks. Teresa watches too closely.)* What'd I do, smudge my make-up?

TERESA. That couldn't be good.

BONNIE. Well, it wouldn't make it on the streets. *(She flops on the sofa, gets comfortable.)* You know, I really like your pad. I mean, it's cute, clean. I wish I could keep my place as clean as this. But it takes qualities that I simply do not possess to keep a house. You know what I mean? What do they call them these days, uh – domestic supervisors? I think that's it. Domestic supervisor. That's you. A full-time housewife.

TERESA. No, I work. I'm a telephone receptionist at Southern Methodist. Listen to me. I'm a poet.

BONNIE. Telly phone re-cep-tion-ist at Southern Me-tho-dist. *(Laughs.)* That's good. Cheers. *(Drinks.)* Sure you don't care for any of this?

TERESA. No, thank you. *(Awkward pause.)* T Bone works part time –

BONNIE. Beg pardon? Look. I really appreciate you helping me move in. I couldn't have managed that dresser by myself.

TERESA. I – no problem – if I can be of . . .

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BONNIE. It amazes me. I've accumulated more trash in the past few years. That's all it is, too – trash. It takes moving every so often just to clean out the closet. (*Referring to the stuff in the hallway.*) Christ, what a heap. You should of seen the pile of junk I threw out. Well, it'll just have to stay there in everybody's way for the time being. I mean, there's no place to put it!

TERESA. These apartments are terribly small.

BONNIE. Small, hell. Miniscule. (*Laugh.*) That's a good word, miniscule. Who would think that a broad like me would know such a word as that, miniscule. I mean, look at me. See anything miniscule? (*Another laugh.*) Well . . . The walls'll start bulging if I move anything else in. Christ. Did you see my bedroom? Heaven knows where I'll sleep tonight.

TERESA. Our sofa's not too bad.

BONNIE. Teresa, you're a treasure. I'll make out. I've never hurt for a bed in my life.

TERESA. You don't have to go, do you?

BONNIE. That junk out there's not getting stuffed away without me.

TERESA. Maybe some more tea?

BONNIE. Oh, what the hell. It's not the best mixer in the world, but at least it's available. (*More tea which again is spiked with gin.*) Skoal! (*They drink.*) This is what I call cozy. (*Referring to the window above the kitchen sink.*) You've got a view.

TERESA. T Bone has another name for it.

BONNIE. Oh?

TERESA. Wait until the northeast wind comes.

BONNIE. Why's that?

TERESA. The sewage treatment plant is just beyond those trees over there. Some nights, it gets so bad we have to go to the all-night movie just to get some sleep.

BONNIE. Why don't you complain about it?

TERESA. We have. Nobody listens. We'll have to wait until we can afford to move.

BONNIE. Where you gonna move to?

TERESA. Oh, I don't know. Somewhere outside the city, maybe.

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BONNIE. Really packs a punch, huh? Guess I should be thankful I work nights. Look, don't tell your hubby, but I'm an exotic dancer.

(Teresa giggles.) What's so funny about that?

TERESA. Nothing. I'm sorry.

BONNIE. I started in ballet, I'll have you know.

TERESA. I'm sorry. I'm not laughing at you.

BONNIE. Huh.

TERESA. It's just, I mean, when I saw you this morning carrying that crate up the stairs, I thought you might be – you know.

BONNIE. It shows, huh?

TERESA. It's how you move. I'm sorry.

BONNIE. Christ, I can take it. It's a living. Better than being a receptionist at Southern Methodist any day of the week. To my way of thinking, when you've got it, strut it. That's my philosophy. It's not a bad living either. Nothing to sneeze at or giggle about. I bet I make a hell of a lot more than any old telly phone re-cep-tion-ist.

TERESA. I don't doubt it.

BONNIE. How much do you make?

TERESA. Oh. . .

BONNIE. Come on, I won't tell Tenderloin.

TERESA. Minimum wage.

BONNIE. Jesus! Look, honey, why don't you let me give you some lessons. You know, for free. I could get you a job down at the club, and before you know it, you'll be pulling down close to four hundred a week, maybe more, if you uh – know what I mean.

TERESA. I couldn't do that.

BONNIE. Why not? You've got the body!

TERESA. But I'm not pretty.

BONNIE. Who am I, Miss America? Why says you have to be pretty for God's sake.

TERESA. Well, I thought. . .

BONNIE. You thought! Nobody looks at faces. It's the peel, you know? Let me look at you. Sure, sure. Who says you ain't pretty? You've got classic features.

TERESA. I don't. I'm plain.

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BONNIE. Why, you've got one of the – *(Catches herself.)* Hell, I ain't about to let you go fishing for compliments out of me.

TERESA. I wasn't.

BONNIE. Turn around.

TERESA. What for?

BONNIE. Turn around! *(She does so, awkwardly.)* Mmm. Hmm. Sure, the right frame. A few chest exercises, fill you out a bit. Hell, you're fit for a bundle. The right make-up –

TERESA. You're embarrassing me.

BONNIE. *(Holding one of Teresa's arms over her head.)* Now, turn. You got any scars?

TERESA. Of course not.

BONNIE. Stretch marks turn guys off.

TERESA. Well, I haven't any.

BONNIE. Let me see you walk.

TERESA. I couldn't be a stripper.

BONNIE. Exotic dancer, please. Will you walk?

TERESA. When I was eleven, my dance teacher told me to go home and not come back again. She said I was in love with gravity. That's how bad I was. . . am.

BONNIE. Great! Then, you're experienced. Being exotic is merely a special way of moving. I said, walk! *(She moves self-consciously.)* Not so stiff. Loosen up. What the hell, can't you even walk?

TERESA. You're looking at me.

BONNIE. Up there, on that little stage, every eye in the joint will be looking at you. And every eye will be male.

T BONE. *(Coming from the bedroom, going to the fridge for a beer.)* What're you two cooking up in here?

TERESA. Nothing. What're you reading?

T BONE. Nothing. *(He returns to the bedroom.)*

BONNIE. *(With a nod of understanding.)* You must enjoy being a receptionist.

TERESA. Really?

BONNIE. Listen to her. "Really?" Sure. For Southern Bell at Southern Methodist. One Southern Belle. We have a lot in common. Look, I could

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hang out here for hours, but I'm sure you have other things to do.
Thanks again for the helping hand.

TERESA. My joy.

BONNIE. You know any eligible bachelors in this part of town? I mean, point me in the right direction and I can get me some real help. All I can handle.

TERESA. Sorry, no.

BONNIE. Well, if you need me, give a holler. I can't help but hear you.

TERESA. There is Walt. Walter Weltner. He's like one of the family.
Lives on the first floor. He's a bit older but nice.

BONNIE. Yeah?

TERESA. A policeman.

BONNIE. Cop? Thanks but no thanks. *(She is leaving.)*

TERESA. Bonnie, did you mean that about. . . about—you know.

BONNIE. No, I don't.

TERESA. Teaching me to . . . dance.

BONNIE. Hell, yeah. And no charge. You see how much I like you? I don't come cheap, you know. And I could get you on down at the club, too. Easy. The guys're always hollering for some fresh meat.

TERESA. Oh, it sounds terrible.

BONNIE. It's not. They look, that's all. And they'll tip you if you really turn them on. They do more than look, Buster's there with the old heave-ho. You don't mess with Buster.

TERESA. How far do you . . .

BONNIE. How far do you think? I mean, hell, there's only so far you can go.

TERESA. I thought that *that* was against the law.

BONNIE. So, who's gonna tell?

TERESA. I could never do that.

BONNIE. Sure you could. It might be tough at first, but it's like the cockroaches— you get used to it. I remember my first time. It was an amateur night over – well, some time back when I was in Pittsburgh. I walked out on the stage, looked at all those eyes watching me. . . and froze right in my shoes. I was on this date, see, and – Well, when it came time for me to do it, I just shut my eyes and peeled. Then, I came to my

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panties and I decided that enough was enough. But a jackass jumped up on the stage and yanked them right off. The jackass turned out to be my date. You should of heard those guys cheering and whistling. There ain't a feeling in the world quite like it. I've been in exotic performance from that day to this. You know, we still have amateur nights every Monday. There's a hell of a lot of fun in it. Why don't you and T Bone come down sometime?

TERESA. Maybe.

BONNIE. Forget maybe. Do it. We'll start the lessons tomorrow.

TERESA. Well. . .

BONNIE. Look. Let me show you. *(A demonstration begins.)* All you do is wiggle this and shake that. See? Get the hands going. You have to make it look like you're something special, what you've got there ain't nothing else like it in the world. Not Dallas, anyway. Wiggle the fanny, make a milk shake. It's sort of like belly dancing. You've got to get the guy's attention, then lure him in with the peel – *(Phone rings.)*

TERESA. *(Answering the phone.)* That's fantastic. Hello? *(Pause.)*

T BONE. *(In the doorway as Teresa replaces the receiver.)* Well?

TERESA. No one was on.

T BONE. Strange.

BONNIE. Me, I get the heavy breathers. See you, kid. Thanks for tea and the help. I'm gonna do something for you, to show my appreciation.

TERESA. That's not necessary.

BONNIE. I want to. If I can help you with anything, just give the wall a couple of kicks.

TERESA. Can we start the lessons tomorrow?

T BONE. Lessons?

BONNIE. You bet. After one p.m. I never get up till after one. We'll get together. *(She exits.)*

T BONE. What kind of lessons?

TERESA. Aren't you going to kiss me hello?

T BONE. Thought I had. *(Kisses her.)* What kind of lessons?

TERESA. I'll never tell. Besides, they're free. Do you have to go back to the library tonight?

T BONE. No.

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TERESA. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

T BONE. What's for dinner?

TERESA. Dinner!

T BONE. You forgot.

TERESA. Sorry, honey. I was busy helping Bonnie move in and –
(Banging on the wall.) Yes? *(A muffled sound from Bonnie.)*

T BONE. What's she saying?

BONNIE. *(From the other side of the wall.)* I'm stuck behind my chest of drawers. Can somebody give me a hand?

T BONE. Did you understand her?

TERESA. Something about her chest. I'll be right back.

T BONE. I'll go. You get supper started. Walt'll be up in about forty-five minutes.

TERESA. Walt? What's he coming up for?

T BONE. Dinner. I invited him.

TERESA. Without telling me? *(More banging through the wall.)*

T BONE. I better see what I can do for that ditzy broad next door. *(He exits.)*

TERESA. T Bone, you better not have done this to me. *(She exits behind him. The phone rings. Teresa returns, starts to answer it, hesitates, then picks the receiver off its cradle. She listens as lights fade. End of Scene 1.)*

SCENE 2

The same, an hour later. Finishing the evening meal are Teresa, T Bone, and WALT WELTNER. It has been something less than a successful meal as far as Teresa is concerned. She avoids direct contact with T Bone whenever possible. Walt is aware of the tension. As lights rise, Teresa is removing plates and eating utensils.

TERESA. Sorry, no dessert, guys. I didn't have time to whip anything up.

WALT. Couldn't take another mouthful, Terry. *(T Bone tries to help her but she pushes him away.)* Terrific dinner, thanks for the invite. If I ever

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get married – and that is one big if, kids – she’ll have to be as good a cook as you, Terry, else I’ll send her up here for lessons.

T BONE. Ha.

WALT. Hmm?

TERESA. I’m glad someone was pleased.

WALT. You’re one lucky man, T. It’s not every guy who has a woman that can cook and turn a man’s head all with so little effort. (*The silence is chilly.*) What’s the matter with you two?

TERESA. Nothing. Everything’s fine.

T BONE. A fine meal. Ha, ha!

TERESA. Honey, don’t.

T BONE. Effort, you say? The effort in this meal was mine and mine alone.

WALT. I didn’t know you cooked.

T BONE. Ha!

TERESA. Tyrone –

T BONE. When she says “Tyrone” in that tone of voice, it’s time for me to hold my tongue.

TERESA. Get out of the kitchen and leave me alone.

T BONE. Good suggestion.

WALT. Sounded like an order to me.

T BONE. But before we vacate the female domain, let me tell you something, Walt. Wives that can cook? The deli’s the answer.

WALT. Don’t you know it. Me, I live out of the deli. Freddie makes the best potato salad in town. Terry’s was just as good, too. Maybe better.

T BONE. Couldn’t be better. (*A pot clangs, a show of Teresa’s displeasure.*) What about the lasagna? As good as Freddie’s too?

TERESA. You’re hateful.

T BONE. That’s one of the reasons you love me, isn’t it, sweetie?

TERESA. Go away and leave me alone.

T BONE. No, no, just a minute. I’ve got to reveal the great secret of married life. The one secret that maintains every successful marriage.

WALT. Maybe you better not.

T BONE. The true success to married life is the ability for the man in the relationship to acclimate to over-cooked fried chicken served in a

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barrel, half frozen TV dinners, the products of the pizzeria with service to your very own door, and the deli's excellent potato salad and lasagna. Listen, my friend, you're lucky we had any dinner tonight at all.

TERESA. I hate you.

T BONE. I know you do, sweetie. I'm used to it.

WALT. I have an extra bunk if you need it tonight.

TERESA. Out of my kitchen, both of you. *(The two go into the living room as Teresa washes the dishes.)*

WALT. *(Getting comfortable on the sofa.)* This new neighbor with all the junk. Who is she?

T BONE. A crazy broad if I ever met one. She got herself hung up behind her chest-of-drawers a bit ago and couldn't move. I had to rescue her. I may do a story on her.

TERESA. She's really nice. I told her about you, Walt.

WALT. That can't be good. She a looker?

T BONE. And how.

TERESA. I didn't think you noticed. Trust me, Walt, she's a looker. She has guys looking at her all the time.

WALT. Well, get us together for crying out loud. What're we waiting for? If it wasn't for you two, my social life would be zero plus.

T BONE. The day you're hurting for female companionship –

WALT. The life of a bachelor is greatly over praised, young man. *(To Teresa.)* Think you can get us together?

TERESA. I'll leave that to you.

WALT. Come on. Help an old man out once in a while.

T BONE. Let the house slave have her sweltering kitchen.

TERESA. You could help with the dishes, you know.

T BONE. Can't. I was evicted.

WALT. It is hot in here. Why don't you open a window or something?

TERESA. Wind's from the wrong direction.

WALT. *(As he returns to the sofa.)* We had an interesting case today. You should look into it.

T BONE. Be glad to.

BONNIE. *(Entering the apartment without knocking. She carries a pie.)* Teresa?

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TERESA. In the kitchen.

BONNIE. Excuse me. I didn't know you had company.

WALT. I'm not company.

BONNIE. Oh. Really? *(She goes into the kitchen with the pie.)*

WALT. That her?

T BONE. Yeah. Dumb blonde.

WALT. Don't judge. She's got a bod and knows how to decorate it.
How do I look?

T BONE. Fine, fine. This scoop you were talking about?

WALT. Patience. As the man said of his mule, it ain't gonna run away.
(He goes into the kitchen.) Hey, what're you two cooking up in here?

Deep dark secrets?

TERESA. Bonnie, our old friend, Walter Weltner.

WALT. What's with this "old" business. I ain't old, am I, Bonnie?

BONNIE. Mrs. Smithers.

WALT. Divorced?

BONNIE. What makes you think that?

WALT. Missus. And no ring.

TERESA. Walt is a detective with the Dallas PD.

WALT. Sergeant. I got promoted.

BONNIE. Okay.

WALT. Just moving in?

BONNIE. Seems so.

WALT. Where from?

BONNIE. Another apartment.

WALT. Here in Dallas?

BONNIE. Here in Dallas, yeah.

WALT. What was wrong? Needed a change of scenery?

BONNIE. I moved, didn't I?

WALT. Well, how do you like it?

BONNIE. Slow and easy. You?

WALT. I mean your new apartment.

BONNIE. I know what you mean.

WALT. Think you're here for long?

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BONNIE. Not if I'm gonna be cross-examined every time I cross the hall. What is it with you cops? Don't you ever go off duty? *(To Teresa.)* Hope you guys enjoy the pie. I got to go.

WALT. Hey, hold on. I was only being friendly.

TERESA. You'll get used to him, Bonnie.

BONNIE. Don't put money on that.

T BONE. Give him time. He'll run out of questions in a couple of years.

BONNIE. If you ask me, he was leading up to a frisk.

WALT. I leave my badge home on social visits. If I come on strong, it's because I want to find out in a hurry if I want to take you out or not. What're you doing later on tonight?

BONNIE. Working. See you later, Teresa. Thanks again for everything. You, too, Tenderloin.

T BONE. No problemo.

WALT. What do you mean, working? This time of night?

BONNIE. Isn't that when most decent girls make their living? See you, pal. *(She exits.)*

WALT. Where does she work?

TERESA. You'll have to ask her.

T BONE. I think it's obvious where she works.

TERESA. Nobody asked you, wise mouth.

WALT. She got a phone yet?

T BONE. No. This scoop. Come on.

WALT. Eager, isn't he. Well, sit down. Sit. Got your pad? *(Seeing the manuscript.)* What's this?

T BONE. Nothing. Well? *(He is ready to take notes.)*

WALT. Thick. Heaviest nothing I've ever seen.

T BONE. Walt!

WALT. If it's nothing, I'd hate to see what you call something.

T BONE. What's wrong with you tonight?

WALT. My arthritis. It gets me here and –

T BONE. Jesus.

WALT. All right, all right. What I've got is a hot item, see, and if you don't act pronto, the police reporters will smell it out. I mean, it's got

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potential. There's this bunch of kids downtown, see. Have formed a kind of ring. A gang. Strangest thing I've come up on.

T BONE. A kid gang? How old?

WALT. Real kids. Can't be more than ten. Some as young as six. Well, there's been a number of petty robberies lately. Seems that these kids break in by burrowing under the ground and up through the floor. And when they can't burrow, they hack their way through side walls or skylights. They never take much, just enough to be a bother. The holes they leave look like miniature rat tunnels, too small for adults or even teenagers. It has to be little kids. They always leave a calling card, too. Here, look at this. *(Takes a photo from his hip pocket.)* See that? On the back of the door? "The Termites strike again." They call themselves the Termites. They always leave their slogan, every place they hit.

T BONE. This is a joke, right?

WALT. I swear. The Termites. Go to 901 East Cecil and ask for a Mr. Avery. He runs a small-time grocery. He came in today and talked to us about it. A Mr. Shelnutt – baker next door – came in this morning, too. I think it could make a halfway decent news story for somebody.

T BONE. *(Making a note.)* A bunch of pre-teens, ten and under. What do they take?

WALT. Candy. Bubble gum, things like that. Sometimes they take toys and model airplanes.

T BONE. No money or –

WALT. That's it. That's what we get from the store owners. You're the reporter. You get what you need.

T BONE. This isn't one of your jokes?

WALT. It's a story. And a damn good one. *(To Teresa who is giving him a slice of Bonnie's pie.)* What's this?

TERESA. Compliments of our new neighbor. *(She also pours coffee.)*

T BONE. You're sure it's not one of Freddie's specials? Sorry. Suspicious nature.

WALT. You're an angel, Terry. Thanks. You think of everything.

TERESA. You have no idea how nice it is to be appreciated.

T BONE. I appreciate you. *(He is looking up a number in the phone book.)*

THE DALLAS FILE

TERESA. Tell it to your professors.

WALT. The suspense is killing me. You know me, I got to know everything. What's with the heavy nothing?

T BONE. Curiosity kills. *(On the phone.)* Hello, Mr. Avery? Tyrone Stakes from the *Times-Herald*. I was wondering if I could ask you some questions concerning the Termites – He hung up on me.

WALT. When will you learn? A good newspaper man does not do business over the phone – especially after dark. What do they teach you down at that University? Go by and see him tomorrow. *(He reaches for the manuscript but T Bone moves it away.)*

T BONE. Just can't keep your nose out of things, can you.

WALT. I'm a compulsive snoop.

T BONE. Maybe I should show you this. I need some advice.

WALT. Well, well, well. Blow me down and play dead.

T BONE. You knew my dad pretty well, didn't you?

WALT. Like he was my brother.

T BONE. Did you know he had a private safety deposit box at the Industrial National Bank when he died?

WALT. No. Did he?

T BONE. It was paid up in full for ten years. Paid in advance. The bank called me several days ago. The lease was up today.

WALT. So?

T BONE. So, what do you think would be important enough for my father to lock away for ten years and not tell anybody about it?

WALT. I don't know. What?

T BONE. You're looking at it. You know what else today is?

WALT. Terry's birthday. Is today your birthday, Teresa?

TERRA. No. why?

T BONE. My dad died exactly ten years ago. . . today.

WALT. I remember it well. It came as a shocker to me, T Bone. Your old man was a picture of health.

T BONE. Shocked everybody else, too. His heart was so damn strong, and yet . . . Well, when they probated his will, there wasn't any record, no mention of a safety deposit box. So, far as I know, no one knew about it but dad.

THE DALLAS FILE

TERESA. I wish I could have known your father, T Bone.

WALT. You missed knowing one fine man, dear. One of the best cops to serve the state of Texas.

TERESA. Was he anything like you?

WALT. Two of me. He was honest. I'm just plain stupid. Teresa, you would have loved old Tough Stake.

T BONE. Everybody loved him. You should have seen the funeral. And this is what he has put away for ten frigging years.

TERESA. An unfinished novel?

T BONE. No. A set of documents. All on Dallas PD stationary. *(Walt reaches for the packet but T Bone keeps it out of reach.)* Do you know what it is?

WALT. I can guess. I thought he'd . . . How about getting me another cup of coffee, Terry. I'd appreciate it.

TERESA. But you haven't –

WALT. This cup is cold.

TERESA. Well, all right. *(She goes into the kitchen.)*

WALT. *(Quietly.)* Have you read any of this?

T BONE. Sure. It's tough to digest but I'm getting there. So far, it's duller than the Congressional Record.

WALT. Don't read any more, all right?

T BONE. Note the date on the cover sheet. It was going to be presented to the State's Attorney in New Orleans three days after dad died. And this, too. Everything's stamped "T.S." What would "T.S." mean?

WALT. I said don't read any more of it. *(He tries to wrest the manuscript from T Bone, but he is too slow.)*

T BONE. Hey. What's gotten into you!

WALT. Before Teresa comes back. Let me have this thing. It's something you don't need. It's just a bunch of garbage your father put together. So, give it to me, Tyrone.

T BONE. "Top Secret." That's what "T.S." stands for. "Top Secret."

WALT. Trust me. Let me have the file.

T BONE. File?

WALT. Yeah, sure, that's what it is, isn't it? Hey, for old times sake, okay?

THE DALLAS FILE

T BONE. You've never acted like this before. I don't understand. File?

TERESA. *(Returning with Walt's coffee.)* Your other cup was piping hot, Walt. I got it boiling for you. Watch your mouth.

WALT. Thanks. You're a real beauty.

TERESA. You think so?

T BONE. *(Paging through the file, extracting a single page.)* Do you know what this is? Damn.

WALT. Let me see it. *(He quickly scans the page, then rips it to shreds.)*

TERESA. Walter!

T BONE. What're you doing?

WALT. Give me the rest.

T BONE. Not on your life. That diagram of Dealey Plaza showed –

WALT. Listen! You don't want to know what's in that thing. Believe me, what's in there is better left alone.

T BONE. I'm a journalist, remember? If there's more stuff in here like what was on that page, I could be onto the story of a lifetime.

WALT. If you live to write it.

TERESA. What?

T BONE. Excuse me?

WALT. I didn't mean that. Terry, talk to him. Tell him to listen to me, to trust me.

TERESA. You're frightening me, Walter.

WALT. I hope to God I am. Why can't I scare him, too?

T BONE. You better leave now.

WALT. Tell you what. Let me take the file home with me overnight. I'll look it over, then I'll return it to you tomorrow. It could be something else entirely. What say?

T BONE. Like hell.

TERESA. What do you mean, something else?

WALT. Look, T Bone –

T BONE. I think you better go now.

WALT. Those documents are official police property. I could get a warrant, you know.

T BONE. Now I know I'm hanging on to it.

THE DALLAS FILE

TERESA. I don't understand what's happening. Somebody tell me.

WALT. Can we discuss this in the hall? (*T Bone clutches the file.*) God, you're stubborn. I never knew you to be so stubborn.

T BONE. And I never knew you to be so pushy. Just leave me alone, all right?

WALT. Wish I could. You have no idea what you're getting into, son.

T BONE. Why don't you go home, Walt.

WALT. What can I do? How can I convince you –

T BONE. You can't.

WALT. But that thing's nothing to you.

T BONE. It was something to my dad. I have a hunch this manuscript or file or whatever is going to make me a rich and important man.

WALT. Or a dead one. (*From the door.*) I'll do everything I can to protect you.

TERESA. From what?!

WALT. But if I couldn't help your father, how can I . . . Let me take the file, otherwise –

TERESA. Walt, you're –

T BONE. Leave.

WALT. Thanks for dinner, Terry. It was delicious as always.

TERESA. I wish you'd explain.

WALT. I'll see you tomorrow. Look. Don't let anybody else see that thing, okay? Don't mention it to a soul. No one. And don't go anywhere you don't have to. Stay where there are lots of people. I'll drop by sometime tomorrow after work. Good night. (*Exits.*)

TERESA. What is all this about? Tyrone? (*But he is deep into the file, reading. The lights fade out.*)

SCENE 3

The same, the following afternoon. T Bone is discovered reading the file, making notes. He is disturbed momentarily by a cracking noise, the sound of wood being broken, perhaps by a drill. He rises, goes into the kitchen, looks around. The sound stops. He goes to the phone with his

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notes, checks a few names, writes down some numbers. He places the phone on the floor and sits beside it and dials.

T BONE. Professor Jeffrey, please. . . But he should be out of class by now . . . Yes, I'll hold. *(Pause.)* Hello Professor Jeffrey? Tyrone Stakes, sir. . . Yes, sir, I know. I'm sorry I had to miss class, but something very significant has come up. . . Yes, sir, I'll try not to miss class again. . . Yes, sir, I understand. . . I need your advice, Professor, if you have time. I have a problem . . . Oh, no, sir, a journalistic problem. I need your help . . . Well, I can't talk about it over the phone. . . No, I just can't . . . Could I meet you in about an hour? This is really important. . . Yes, yes, fine. . . In an hour then. Your office. Good. . . Thank you, sir. I appreciate this. Goodbye. *(Hangs up, dials another number.)* Hello. I'm with the Gallup Poll, Mr. Whitmire, and I . . . Oh. . . Well, may I speak with Mr. Whitmire, please? . . . Do you have his new address? . . . I see. . . I see. Well, thank you very much. I'm sorry to have bothered you. *(Hangs up, dials another number.)* Mrs. Helen Emory, please. . . Oh, I'm terribly sorry. When did she die? . . . That long ago . . . That's awful. . . I see. Well, thank you, thank you very much. *(He hangs up. A reflective pause. He dials another number.)* Mrs. Cobb? This is Tyrone – uh, Tyrone Phoner of the Dallas Police Department. Could I ask you a few questions, please? . . . Hello? Mrs. Cobb? *(Hangs up, dials again.)* Mr. Sapelo, please. . . He's dead? But according to our records . . . My goodness. When did this happen? . . . I see. Well, give my condolences to the family. Thank you. *(Hangs up. Another number.)* Mrs. Lilybrooks, please. . . Oh, hello! Mrs. Lilybrooks. This is Tyrone Phoner, and I'm running a survey for the Gallup Poll. Would you mind answering a few questions? . . . Fine, fine, thank you very much. . . Oh, really? Well, I'll have to put a star by your name, so we'll call you more often. . . Well, we'll appreciate that, we really will. My first question is: were you in Dealey Plaza on the morning of November 22, 1963? . . . Hello? Mrs. Lilybrooks? Crap. *(Hangs up. He makes a few notes, then wraps the file in brown paper and ties it with string and goes into the bedroom. He hears a key in the main entry but pays little attention, assuming that*

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Teresa is returning from work.) What're you doing home this early, hon?

WALT. *(Entering.)* Oh. You're home.

T BONE. What the hell. Where else would I be?

WALT. Class, maybe? Aren't you supposed to be . . .

T BONE. I cut. Didn't feel well.

WALT. Terry's not home from work?

T BONE. You know she's not. What do you want?

WALT. Just thought I'd drop by. See how you're doing.

T BONE. So, where did you get the key?

WALT. Oh, here and there. I don't remember.

T BONE. Be straight with me. How much did it take to bribe the landlady? And why?

WALT. What're you talking about. I'm a cop. I don't need no bribes.

T BONE. But you do need a search warrant.

WALT. Yeah, maybe.

T BONE. Do you have one?

WALT. Do I need one?

T BONE. I don't know. You're the cop.

WALT. I'm not here as a cop.

T BONE. Oh, really. What then? Cat burglar? That would make quite a headline. . . "Dallas Police Sergeant nabbed for breaking and entering."

WALT. Cut the comedy, pal.

T BONE. I wouldn't name you, of course. I'd get better play out of it that way. I'd save the incrimination for the second story, the follow up.

WALT. Let's sit down and discuss this thing, okay?

T BONE. Can't. I have an appointment.

WALT. Then, maybe –

T BONE. And I'm taking this with me. So, there's no need in your coming back after I've gone. You'd be wasting your time. You're not getting this file.

WALT. I'm guessing you've read it by now.

T BONE. Most of it. It's confusing. But super stuff, all about. . .

WALT. I don't want to know. What're you gonna do with it?

T BONE. I haven't decided yet. Ask me tomorrow.

THE DALLAS FILE

WALT. You're making a mistake, son.

T BONE. Maybe so. Look, Walter, I don't mean to be rude, but I've got to go to the john. When I come out, I don't want to see you here.

WALT. I'll be back.

T BONE. Fine. You're usually welcome. Lock the door on your way out. *(He goes into the bathroom. Walt leaves, locking the door. After a moment, a flush is heard coming from the bathroom. T Bone emerges, puts on his jacket as Teresa unlocks the main door and enters with a bag of groceries. She is speaking to Bonnie who remains in the hall.)*

TERESA. Oh, I'd love to, Bonnie. I just need to check on T Bone. He was a little under the weather this morning when I left.

BONNIE. *(In the doorway.)* I'll have to change. Won't be a second. *(She goes.)*

TERESA. Honey, I'm home.

T BONE. You're early.

TERESA. Where are you?

T BONE. Bedroom. *(He goes to her as she puts items in the fridge.)* I've got to go out.

TERESA. But I just got home. I rushed because –

T BONE. I have an appointment.

TERESA. Feeling better?

T BONE. There was nothing wrong with me.

TERESA. But you cut classes –

T BONE. I don't know when I'll be back.

TERESA. You're meeting someone?

T BONE. Dr. Jeffrey. I'm late if I don't get going.

TERESA. Did you eat lunch?

T BONE. Not hungry. I'll grab something on campus.

TERESA. *(Finding his note pad.)* Won't you need this?

T BONE. Yeah, almost forgot.

TERESA. *(Reading from the pad.)* Mr. Whitmire, moved, no forwarding address. . . Mrs. Helen Emory, died, cardiac arrest. . . What is all this?

T BONE. A story I'm working on.

TERESA. Tell me about it.

THE DALLAS FILE

T BONE. I'm in a hurry, sweetheart.

TERESA. An assignment?

T BONE. Yeah, right.

TERESA. You're lying.

T BONE. Terry –

TERESA. This appointment of yours. Does it have anything to do with what Walt was talking about?

T BONE. I don't have time –

TERESA. You've never lied to me before. . . that I know of.

T BONE. I'm onto something big. That's all.

TERESA. How big?

T BONE. It doesn't concern you, sweetie. Maybe Walt was right. You're safer not knowing –

TERESA. Safer?

T BONE. Slipups.

TERESA. What does that mean, safer.

T BONE. Promise you won't tell a soul, okay?

TERESA. Who would I tell? I don't know anybody.

T BONE. We have to keep this thing between us for the time being. You're not to say a word to Walt about it, all right?

TERESA. If you say so.

T BONE. I've been doing some calling. These are a few of the people my dad lists in the file. He has affidavits from them and thirty or forty more. So far. I've found one of them still living and she won't talk to me.

TERESA. Affidavits?

T BONE. I've got to talk with Dr. Jeffrey. I think this file could be a very important document. It could prove that . . . well, I need to talk to him before I start drawing conclusions.

TERESA. Important? To whom?

T BONE. All of the affidavits are on DPD stationery and notarized. There's all kinds of stuff I don't completely follow – transcripts, legal papers. But. Do you remember when Kennedy was shot?

TERESA. Of course I do. I was almost five years old!

THE DALLAS FILE

T BONE. I was six. I'll never forget. There was this cop, killed on the sidewalk outside our front door. J. D. Tippit. I'll never forget that. The look on the guy's face, the guy who shot him.

TERESA. You saw that?

T BONE. Listen. Forget it. It's not important. I've got to go.

TERESA. You'll be home for dinner?

T BONE. Back by six. *(Kisses her, turns, almost bumping into Bonnie as she enters.)*

BONNIE. *(Entering.)* Hello.

T BONE. Don't you ever knock?

BONNIE. Sorry. *(She knocks.)* May I come in?

TERESA. Of course. T Bone is just leaving.

BONNIE. Oh. Are you going by the P.O.? I have a few letters I'd appreciate your dropping for me.

T BONE. No. I'm not. See you, honey. *(He exits.)*

BONNIE. Wow. Talk about a ton of –

TERESA. *(Rushing after him, the list of names in her hand.)* Wait, Tyrone. You forgot – *(She returns, shutting the door behind her.)* Oh, well. *(She places the list beside the phone.)*

BONNIE. What's his rush?

TERESA. I don't know. Reporters. Secrets coming out their noses. He has an appointment with his major professor.

BONNIE. Who's that?

TERESA. You wouldn't know him.

BONNIE. Try me. All sorts come to see my act. Even a college prof or two.

TERESA. Dr. Maynard Jeffrey. The youngest member of the journalism faculty.

BONNIE. Right. Don't know him. Well, you ready to begin?

TERESA. Let me change. *(She goes into the bedroom. Bonnie wanders about the apartment, half dancing. She sees the notes that T Bone has left behind.)*

BONNIE. What's this?

TERESA. *(Off.)* What's what?

THE DALLAS FILE

BONNIE. Looks like an obituary list. Has Tenderloin gone into death notices?

TERESA. *(Off.)* Don't be silly.

BONNIE. Who's being silly? There's good money in that sort of thing. Hell, I had a boyfriend once who was a mortician. Liveliest little booger you'll ever meet. Every night, he took me to some fancy joint, then to a play or a concert. He gave me culture. Then, we'd go to my apartment and – uh – play dead. *(She laughs. Teresa doesn't get the joke.)* Have a good day at work?

TERESA. *(Returning, now in jeans and sweatshirt.)* Hate it, hate it, hate it. I'm quitting and getting a job at the public library.

BONNIE. Bad to worse. *(About Teresa's clothing.)* Oh, come on, kid. You're gonna dance in that? How the hell're you gonna learn to dance in that get up? You need something slinky, something that says you're . . . How can I put this . . . Ready.

TERESA. I don't have anything like that.

BONNIE. How about a nightie? Black preferably. *(Teresa shakes her head.)* Anything?

TERESA. Silk pajamas.

BONNIE. You're straight out of the last century.

TERESA. No, I'm not.

BONNIE. You need me, honey, more than you know. Look, I'm parched. Got anything to drink?

TERESA. Soft drinks. Beer.

BONNIE. I'll be right back. You got any scarves, things like that?

TERESA. I have a beach towel.

BONNIE. Impossible. Impossible. I'll be right back. *(She goes. Teresa returns to her bedroom, finds the silk pajamas, puts on the top and removes her jeans. She finds several scarves which she tries for the anticipated effect. Bonnie returns with a highball and a piece of transparent cloth.)*

TERESA. How's this?

BONNIE. An improvement. *(Re: her highball.)* You want one? I didn't think to ask.

TERESA. No, but thank you.

THE DALLAS FILE

BONNIE. Let's get some of this stuff out of the way. (*The sofa is moved.*) Now. On stage. Come on, get in the middle. (*Teresa is quite self-conscious.*) Terry, you're too much. What are you afraid of?

TERESA. I've never done anything like this before.

BONNIE. Think of it this way. You'd like to turn that chilly husband of yours on, wouldn't you?

TERESA. He's not chilly. What makes you think he's chilly?

BONNIE. I've never met a marriage that couldn't use some – uh – external manipulation. How long have you been hitched?

TERESA. Two years. Thirteen months, actually.

BONNIE. Child brides! Don't you know, in a marriage it's experience that counts? Now, then, let's work with our hands. The hands are the seat of solid seduction. The hands. Come on, watch me. (*She moves seductively as Teresa giggles.*) If there's one thing that undercuts a seductive mood, it's a giggle.

TERESA. Sorry.

BONNIE. You should be. That was my best move.

TERESA. If my mother could see me now.

BONNIE. She'd be proud of you. Watch this. (*She puts on a show. Even though she is dressed in normal street wear, she undulates about the room with the piece of transparent cloth.*)

TERESA. You're good.

BONNIE. Oughta be. I've been at it long enough. And you always have to practice. That's the biggest failure of most exotics – they forget to practice. Your act has to be fresh every night. You get stale, you're out on your baggage, thumbing a ride to Waco. (*She stops.*) Okay. See what I mean? Let's see you do it.

TERESA. (*Trying her best but to no avail.*) How did you learn to do this?

BONNIE. Natural instinct, I guess. I was born stripped, I figured what the good Lord started, I'd keep going.

TERESA. We need music. (*She turns on the radio. The music is completely inappropriate, but they keep dancing.*)

BONNIE. Good, good. You've got the body, kid. Come on, follow me.

THE DALLAS FILE

(They dance.) Tenderloin seems to be more in love with that package of his than with you.

TERESA. What?

BONNIE. No, don't stop. You mustn't stop until you're completely exhausted. Then, we'll add the hips and legs. Relax a little in the wrists. That's it. Looked like a manuscript of some sort. Is T Bone writing a book?

TERESA. Oh, no. Is this right?

BONNIE. You'll be a pro before you can say "Theophilus Thistle." I'll bet Tenderloin is an author and doesn't want anybody to know. I got a lot of respect for people that write books. That sure looked like a manuscript to me.

TERESA. It was something of his father's, I think. His father was a policeman, you know.

BONNIE. Another cop. I've moved into the wrong joint.

TERESA. Oh, no. Mr. Stakes has been dead for ten years.

BONNIE. No kidding.

TERESA. I'm getting tired.

BONNIE. You have to keep at it till your arms feel like lead posts. Then, how the hell could he write a book? I mean, it doesn't seem like anybody'd be interested in a ten-year-old manuscript.

TERESA. It's a file or something. T Bone found it in a shabby deposit box at the bank. Belonged to his dad, that box.

BONNIE. Try wiggling your hips. That's it.

TERESA. Show me.

BONNIE. You're doing just fine. No, don't stop. Funny, to stash a file in a safety deposit box.

TERESA. I don't know much about it.

BONNIE. He won't let you read it?

TERESA. He won't let me near it.

BONNIE. Sounds boring.

TERESA. Well, T Bone's awfully excited about it. He's taking it to Dr. Jeffrey at the University. Get some advice on what to do with it. I'm getting awfully tired.

BONNIE. That's when it's doing you the most good.

THE DALLAS FILE

TERESA. Okay. *(She continues moving, hard to call it dancing.)*

BONNIE. That's great. Keep at it. Move the hips more. Look, I'm dry. I'm going next door for a refill. Sure you don't want me to bring you one?

TERESA. Positive.

BONNIE. Back in a jiff. *(She exits. Teresa dances for a few moments.)*

TERESA. Bonnie? How do I use a scarf? *(No answer.)* Bonnie, what's taking you so long? *(No answer.)* Bonnie? *(Lights out. End of scene.)*

SCENE 4

The same, later that evening. Teresa is ironing in the kitchen. T Bone is in the living room, reading.

TERESA. Homework?

T BONE. Hmm?

TERESA. What're you reading?

T BONE. A book.

TERESA. I can see that. Must be interesting. What is it?

T BONE. *Rush to Judgment.*

TERESA. What's it about?

T BONE. Hmm.

TERESA. Must be boring to hell.

T BONE. Hmm.

TERESA. Did you hear about the bomb? Somebody blew up the White House, the Capitol, the Supreme Court, and the Pentagon today. Wiped out the whole shebang – President, Cabinet, senators, everybody. Hear about that?

T BONE. Hmm?

TERESA. *(Slamming the iron down.)* Well, damn.

T BONE. What's the matter?

TERESA. What're you asking for? You're not interested.

T BONE. Did you burn yourself?

TERESA. No. I didn't.

T BONE. Be careful, okay?

THE DALLAS FILE

TERESA. Are you doing this to me on purpose?

T BONE. Doing what?

TERESA. You haven't spoken one decent word to me all evening. You ate supper like it wasn't there. And now you sit here with your nose in that book.

T BONE. Sorry. *(He returns to his book.)*

TERESA. Bookworm. Pseudo-intellectual. Academic moron.

T BONE. Hmm?

TERESA. At least you could say hello.

T BONE. I did.

TERESA. When? In sign language?

T BONE. Hello.

TERESA. That's it? That's all I get?

T BONE. Will you knock it off? For God's sake. *(She returns to her ironing.)* Hey, chickadee, come here to papa.

TERESA. Go play with yourself.

T BONE. Glad too. *(She tears up: she has burnt T Bone's favorite shirt with the iron.)* Hey, Terry –

TERESA. Leave me alone. *(She goes into the bedroom, throws herself on the bed. He follows.)*

T BONE. Here now. What is this? Hey, I didn't mean it baby. I'm sorry.

TERESA. I burned your shirt. Go look at it. It's ruined. Oh, I could just kill myself. *(He checks the shirt.)*

T BONE. *(Returning to the bedroom with the burnt shirt.)* I think it looks better this way.

TERESA. Don't gaslight me. Don't treat me like – like –

T BONE. Like what?

TERESA. A good-for-nothing housewife.

T BONE. Oh, honey.

TERESA. Go back to your book.

T BONE. We can get another shirt.

TERESA. That was your favorite dress shirt and I ruined it. Stupid, stupid, stupid . . . I'm sorry.

T BONE. Seriously. We'll buy another.

TERESA. We can't afford it and you know it.

THE DALLAS FILE

T BONE. Sure, we can. Look. Don't be mad at me.

TERESA. I'm mad at me.

T BONE. You through crying?

TERESA. I'm not crying. *(They are embracing by now.)*

T BONE. You're over the shirt?

TERESA. You're not mad at me?

T BONE. Mad. How could I get mad at you? Come on, sit down.

TERESA. I have more ironing –

T BONE. That can wait. Will you sit, please? We can throw this thing away. *(He tosses it into the waste basket. She rushes to rescue it.)*

TERESA. Tyrone, I can use this as a rag.

T BONE. Sit, sit. We're through using rags for clothes, honey. We're gonna be able to buy new shirts. Silk ones. Number one: you're going to quit your job.

TERESA. What?

T BONE. Number two: you're going to stay home and have kids. Number three: we're moving. We can start looking for a house next week, tomorrow if you like.

TERESA. A house.

T BONE. With a lawn and trees and maybe even a swimming pool and a putting green.

TERESA. You're crazy.

T BONE. I dropped out of school today.

TERESA. You what?!

T BONE. Give me a chance.

TERESA. If you dropped out of school, I'll divorce you, Tyrone Stakes.

T BONE. Sit down, all right?

TERESA. I will not sit down. If this is your idea of a practical joke, I don't find it one bit funny. I've slaved for the past two years to put you through school –

T BONE. It was on Dr. Jeffrey's advice.

TERESA. His – You are both out of your minds.

T BONE. He's agreed to work on the manuscript with me, Terry. He's convinced – just as convinced as me – that my dad's file must be published. He wants to get started on it right away, compiling

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everything, putting it into some kind of order. It's all a jumble – hard to make heads or tails of – except one part – one really important part. It's near the end. Oh, God, it's exciting, sweetheart. All this reading is just background.

TERESA. Background to what?

T BONE. I have to learn everything I can about the Kennedy killing so I can justify and correlate our findings – the material in the file. It contains all the evidence needed to prove that the assassination was more than anybody ever dreamed it to be. (*Teresa's confused look stops him.*) It's not sinking in, is it. This thing, this heritage from my father, is going to make us rich, honey. Believe me.

TERESA. You've really dropped out?

T BONE. To do this work, I had to.

TERESA. Oh, T Bone. . .

T BONE. Don't worry about that, will you? After the book is published, I'll go back and finish my degree. Promise.

TERESA. But honey . . .

T BONE. I thought you'd be happy.

TERESA. What's to be happy about? A pipe dream? I'm worried.

T BONE. What on earth do you have to be worried about?

TERESA. I don't know. I just don't understand what you're saying.

T BONE. You don't need to. Dr. Jeffrey is ecstatic. We're gonna be rich and famous. You'll see. He has a friend in publishing and as soon as we get everything sorted out, we take it to him. This will be the journalistic break of a decade, baby.

TERESA. Now I know what Walt was talking about.

T BONE. What the hell does he know? Has he been pestering you?

TERESA. No. But last night.

T BONE. Forget last night.

TERESA. He was acting so strange. Saying strange things.

T BONE. He's nobody. A beat cop. You've got to trust me – You're shaking. Are you cold?

TERESA. Don't touch me.

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T BONE. Look. There's nothing to be afraid of. It's been a decade and a half since the assassination. Nobody cares about it anymore. Ancient history.

TERESA. Let me see if I understand what you are saying. You claim that there is proof in that file that –

T BONE. Look. Let me show you –

TERESA. I don't want to see.

T BONE. See? An official copy of Oswald's interrogation.

TERESA. So?

T BONE. So! The official report from the police department states that when Oswald was questioned, no record was kept. There was no stenographer present. But – well, here it is.

TERESA. Let's burn it before it's too late.

T BONE. Don't be crazy –

TERESA. You're the crazy one. Walt was right. This thing is dangerous. You're not supposed to have this stuff. Nobody is supposed to have it. Officially, it doesn't exist. If your dad hid this file, it's because he was afraid of what would happen if it was found. Let's burn it, please? I'm scared.

T BONE. Tell you what. You leave this to me. I'll let you burn some of my other shirts if that will satisfy you. *(She slugs his shoulder as hard as she can. He winces, ready to, perhaps, fight back. A knock on the door.)* That damn nextdoor neighbor again?

TERESA. *(As he goes to the door.)* No, don't open it.

T BONE. You're being hysterical. *(It is Walt at the door.)* Jesus. What do you want?

WALT. *(Entering, pushing past T Bone.)* T Bone. Terry.

T BONE. Won't you come in?

TERESA. Hi, Walter.

WALT. You've been crying. *(Glances quickly at T Bone.)* You okay, kid?

T BONE. What do you want?

TERESA. Can I get you something? We have some of Bonnie's pie left.

WALT. I'm not here on a social visit. I hope you will understand.

T BONE. I'm glad you knocked for a change.

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TERESA. You look terribly serious. Is something wrong?

WALT. A couple of things. Guess you could say that.

T BONE. He's wearing his badge tonight, hon. That'd make anybody look serious.

WALT. I have a warrant here for your arrest, Tyrone. You have in your possession a very valuable, potentially important, and sensitive document that belongs to the Dallas PD.

T BONE. An arrest – wait a minute –

WALT. No, you wait a minute. Portions of that file were stolen from the department by your father. We had no idea what he had done with them until now. You're gonna have to hand it over, all of it. Otherwise –

T BONE. No.

WALT. Otherwise! I'll take you in for possession of stolen property.

T BONE. I've not stolen anything.

WALT. I know that. But you refuse to return it. Stealing official records is a serious offense, T Bone, and concealing them is equally against the law. You'd best hand the stuff over and come with me.

T BONE. No.

TERESA. Honey, please.

WALT. Here's the warrant. Read it if you want. I don't think you realize how serious this is.

T BONE. You can't do this. You'd have to let the whole world know that this file exists if you arrest me.

WALT. Oh, I think we can manage without any noise whatsoever.

TERESA. Walter?

WALT. I'm sorry. I have to do this.

T BONE. What if I give you the manuscript? Then what?

WALT. I'll tear up this warrant and you'll never hear about it again.

TERESA. Give it to him. Please.

T BONE. He's just trying to scare you, honey. He's bluffing.

WALT. You have the right to remain silent –

TERESA. I'll get it. *(She goes into the bedroom.)*

T BONE. Terry, don't!

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WALT. Stay right where you are, son. I don't want to hurt you. *(Terry returns and gives the file to Walt.)* Thanks, kid. I knew I could count on you.

TERESA. I was going to burn it anyway.

WALT. Smart girl.

T BONE. You haven't heard the last of this.

WALT. I haven't?

T BONE. I gave a copy of it to a friend of mine, for safekeeping. He's gonna help me find a publisher.

WALT. That wouldn't be Dr. Maynard Jeffrey, would it?

T BONE. How –

WALT. I've known every step you've taken today, Mr. Stakes. It's part of the business. Besides, Dr. Jeffrey was found late this afternoon – no more than an hour ago to be exact – out beyond city limits, way past Irving. He'd been in a terrible automobile accident.

T BONE. Is he . . .

WALT. Burned almost beyond recognition. Everything in his car burned to ashes. It took a dentist to identify the body. *(Pause.)* Thanks for the cooperation, Teresa. Good night. *(He leaves. T Bone is stunned.)*

TERESA. Dead . . . *(Lights fade.)*

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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