

Memorial Day

By
Paul Donnelly

MEMORIAL DAY

© 2025 by Paul J. Donnelly

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **MEMORIAL DAY** 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 **MEMORIAL DAY** 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.

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **MEMORIAL DAY** 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.

MEMORIAL DAY

*For Nalty,
With love and with awe*

MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day was produced by the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Department of Theatre and Dance in Honolulu, under the direction of Ron Heller, featuring the following cast:

George Eli K. M. Foster
Martin Matthew Kelty
Joe Adrian Khactu
Nate Robert Morris
Evelyn/Terrence Moku Durant
Scooter Craig Howes

CAST: 6 Men

GEORGE	40s, a physician tired of being in demand
MARTIN	40s, his lover, concerned
JOE	40s, a friend, acerbic
NATE	20s, Joe's lover, attractive
EVELYN/TERRENCE	20s, the ghost of a drag queen
SCOOTER	70s, an old-time southerner

TIME: Memorial Day weekend, 1992

PLACE: A beach house in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

MEMORIAL DAY

MEMORIAL DAY

ACT 1 SCENE 1

The bungalow. Visible are two segments of a wrap-around porch along the D and L perimeters of the set. A screen door C leads into the living room. There are doors to two bedrooms, with a single shared bathroom along the US wall. There is a kitchen area R. Friday night. Late. The bungalow interior is dark. The porch is bathed in moonlight. GEORGE HARRIS strides on from L as briskly as the cast on his right leg will allow. He's carrying more bundles and packages than many men without a recently broken ankle might. He stops at the front door with great impatience. MARTIN KEIRNAN saunters on after him, carrying only a large gym bag and a paper bag containing a few bottles of wine.

MARTIN. Are you planning to huff and puff and blow it down? *(George continues staring at the door without responding.)* Maybe this is a bad idea. But there's no decent way to get out of it. *(George does not respond.)* I guess we could leave a note on the door. "Sorry to cancel on short notice. Key is under the cushion on the porch swing. George requires further medical attention. Returning to Washington to see a proctologist. Say a prayer his head can be extracted. Enjoy the bungalow!"

GEORGE. Just open the door.

(Martin unlocks the front door and holds it open for George, who enters without speaking.)

MARTIN. You're welcome. *(Martin sets down his bags and begins turning on lamps in the living room as George proceeds directly to the kitchen with his haul. Martin takes his gym bag to the UR bedroom and returns quickly. He looks toward the kitchen, where George is unpacking his load, with a mix of anxiety and exasperation and then heads in with the*

MEMORIAL DAY

wine.) I think I have the only thing we really need. (*George does not respond.*) That wasn't a jibe. (*no response.*) George, please ... please can we try to make the best of this.

GEORGE. I was trying.

MARTIN. How?

GEORGE. I bring all these gadgets and cooking supplies and all the stuff you think is so ridiculous ... because it lets me feel like I'm entertaining ... with some kind of style ... like I can actually ... get something right ... have some kind of ... to bring pleasure ...

MARTIN. We rode in stony silence for three and a half hours because I laughed at you for bringing a cappuccino maker to the beach?

GEORGE. I can't find the right level of consolation in "this weekend is going to be hell, but you're stuck with it." I need a break. A break, Martin. And this weekend isn't going to be one.

MARTIN. You are not going to make me feel guilty for laughing at that cappuccino thing. Your stigmata may be bigger and bloodier, but mine's enough for me.

GEORGE. (*After a beat.*) What's your point?

MARTIN. I don't know. That I'm tired and sick of it, too. That we're all tired and it's not stopping ... it makes me sick and scared to hear myself and realize that what little I have left to give isn't going to you.

GEORGE. Sucks, doesn't it?

MARTIN. Which part?

GEORGE. That neither one of us can stand the thought of an entire weekend with Joe. Oh, we're good friends so we're gonna do it, by gum! But no one is saying," Wheee, can't wait to share a few more sobs with the widder."

MARTIN. We got through Christmas.

UNISON. "Two months to the day."

MARTIN. This may not be as bad ...

GEORGE. Talk to me, baby. It doesn't even have to be true. Just credible.

MARTIN. He's bringing a date.

GEORGE. (*Makes the sound of a game-show loser's buzzer.*) Sorry, time for our next contestant.

MARTIN. He is!

MEMORIAL DAY

GEORGE. That's not going to help.

MARTIN. How do you know?

GEORGE. Where did they meet? (*Martin shrugs.*) His bereavement support group.

MARTIN. Oh yeah.

GEORGE. Not promising. Not promising in the right ways. It suggests an exponential increase in lugubriousness.

MARTIN. Don't be so narrow-minded. You, of all people!

GEORGE. Don't be so pompous. You, of all people! I can hear their theme song now, "Double your mourning, double your grief." They'll probably show up in matching hats with little black veils. Did you pack our black speedos?

MARTIN. As long as they don't bring a pasta machine.

(JOE MORRISEY, a contemporary of George and Martin's, hurtles on from L, races across the porch, and bursts through the front door with a whoop of triumph. George and Martin are startled. Joe turns to the door to receive NATE GOLDMAN, 28, who has been heard shouting after him.)

NATE. (*From off.*) No fair! No fair!! Cheating scumdog! You knew the way. (*When Nate reaches Joe, they fall into a giggling embrace.*)

MARTIN. His veil must have slipped off coming up the walk.

JOE. (*Breaking from the embrace.*) Sorry. Sorry.

GEORGE. Please, don't be.

JOE. (*Gesturing.*) Martin, George ... Nate. Nate ... Martin and George.

GEORGE. Welcome.

NATE. Thanks for having me.

MARTIN. Truly our pleasure. (*Embracing Joe.*) And you look great ... you look great ...

JOE. Careful. One more of those and I'll get a swollen head.

GEORGE. You do.

JOE. What about you, doctor? You look scrumptious as always, but what's with the new accessory.

GEORGE. It's an empathy building exercise.

JOE. Un-hunh.

GEORGE. I felt it was time to learn what it's like to wear a walking cast. No step too great to make myself a more compassionate caregiver.

MEMORIAL DAY

JOE. *(To Martin.)* Any point in asking you?

MARTIN. None.

JOE. That sounds juicy. *(To Nate.)* We've got our work cut out for us, Frank.

GEORGE. I thought it was Nate.

JOE. You have to at least try to keep up.

GEORGE. What did I do?

JOE. If I'm Joe and he's Frank, then we're the Hardy boys and this is "The Mystery of the Dim-witted Club Foot."

NATE. I've always been more the Nancy Drew type.

JOE. You guys up for a late dinner. We didn't stop on the way down.

MARTIN. We didn't stop on the way up, either.

JOE. And maybe hit the Renegade for a while after we eat?

MARTIN. You? You want to go out dancing on a Friday ... after midnight? *(To Nate.)* You're descended from Annie Sullivan, aren't you?

NATE. Nah., he could say "wah-wah" when I met him.

MARTIN. You're a miracle worker of some sort. It was all we could do to drag him on Saturday. Once a week was his limit!

JOE. Give it a rest.

MARTIN. I wouldn't miss this trip to the Renegade for anything! *(To George.)* You up to it?

GEORGE. My Electric Slide may be a little off, but otherwise I'm your man.

MARTIN. Honey, through the worst of it you're my man. *(George is thrown by this uncharacteristically sentimental remark from Martin and doesn't respond beyond taking his hand.)*

NATE. I hate to make a bad first impression, but I kinda need to get some dinner soon.

MARTIN. Can we finish unloading the cars so we're not doing it at four a.m.?

NATE. Sure. We've got a good half hour before I start ripping limbs off passersby.

MARTIN. *(To George.)* There are enough of us, why don't you get off your foot for a few minutes?

GEORGE. I'm fine.

MEMORIAL DAY

MARTIN. You don't have to push yourself.

GEORGE. Why don't I have a seat and wait here?

MARTIN. Thank you. *(To the others.)* Shall we? *(Joe begins to hum "The Song of the Volga Boatmen" as he and Nate follow Martin out. Nate and Martin join in as they recognize the melody. As they trudge across the porch a drum roll is heard from the UR bedroom. George is startled. A male voice announces:)*

OFF STAGE ANNOUNCER. She's irrepressible. She's irreplaceable. She's irredeemable. Please welcome to the stage our own Evelyn!

(George is panicked as TERRENCE "EVELYN" O'BRIEN, eternally 24, bursts through the bedroom door in circa 1971 showgirl drag. Evelyn holds her entrance pose, impervious to the absence of applause.)

GEORGE. *(After a long beat.)* Terrence?

EVELYN. It sure ain't Princess Margaret. And, for the 10,000th time, it's Evelyn in a dress.

GEORGE. What are ... you can't ...

EVELYN. Tell me how much you've missed me!

GEORGE. I mean ... you're not ... am I ...

EVELYN. Tell me you've ached for me with every fiber of your being since the last time we were together.

GEORGE. You're not ... you can't be ...

EVELYN. I don't care if it's true or not, I want to hear it. Just because a girl's been dead awhile doesn't mean she doesn't still need a little reassurance. *(George looks anxiously toward the front door.)* What's up with your leg. *(Crossing toward him.)* Gives you a nice vulnerable quality. Ooooooh, you got any handcuffs?

GEORGE. NO!

EVELYN. Fine. Then how about my opening number?

GEORGE. Please, no ...

EVELYN. You used to like it when I'd do a private show for you.

GEORGE. I've never had a psychotic episode ...

EVELYN. Y'know, I'm starting to get the idea that you're not happy to see me.

GEORGE. But I'm having a conversation with a delusion.

MEMORIAL DAY

EVELYN. You are damn lucky I loved you as much as I did. I wouldn't take that from many people, y'know.

GEORGE. Don't say that.

EVELYN. What?

GEORGE. Don't say you loved me.

EVELYN. Look Fuckhead, May I call you Fuckhead? You believe whatever you can or whatever you want or whatever you need, but don't you dare presume to tell me that I didn't feel what I felt when I was on your side of things.

GEORGE. Stop. Just stop. I won't have a memory that is sacred to me turned into a freak show. Not even in my own head.

EVELYN. *(Softening.)* That's nice. No one's ever called me sacred. A few guys were heard to murmur "Sweet Jesus." And I got my fair share of "Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh-oh-oh my god. Oh my GOD!" But none of that was sacred like you say it.

GEORGE. *(Standing.)* I can't. No point in just sitting here.

EVELYN. Whatever you do is fine. Perfect. Wonderful. *(Martin, Joe and Nate enter with luggage and supplies. Although they give no indication of seeing or hearing Evelyn, George is wild with panic.)*

MARTIN. You haven't moved since we left? *(With real concern.)* Are you okay?

GEORGE. I ... yeah ... of course.

MARTIN. Your room is on the right. As Joe knows there's a bathroom in between. *(With a wink to Joe.)* with both doors closed you can hardly hear a thing. *(Joe sticks out his tongue. Nate forces a smile as they take their things to the room.)*

EVELYN. *(Giving Martin a once over.)* This one yours? Looks to be in nice shape for his age.

MARTIN. What is it? You look terrible.

GEORGE. I guess Nate isn't the only one who has gone too long without eating.

EVELYN. When did your taste swing to older men?

GEORGE. When I became one.

MARTIN. What?

MEMORIAL DAY

GEORGE. Thinking out loud. Sorry. ... I was thinking my taste didn't run to older men until I became one.

MARTIN. I am going to assume that you meant that as some kind of oddly backhanded compliment.

NATE. *(Returning from the bedroom.)* Joe will be right out. Can I give you a hand with anything?

EVELYN. And what have we here? Someone's nephew?

MARTIN. Everything but the duffel goes into the kitchen. Thanks.

EVELYN. Or are they calling them secretaries this year?

NATE. *(From the kitchen.)* Wow!

MARTIN. What's up?

NATE. Is this a cappuccino machine?

MARTIN. Ridiculous, isn't it?

NATE. I think it's kind of neat. I love cappuccino. I didn't expect to be able to get it at a beach house.

MARTIN. Well ... no ... normally ... one wouldn't expect ... at the beach ...

GEORGE. Some older people, people stuck in their ways, people who can't imagine taking anything to the beach that wouldn't have been taken by a heterosexual couple ... during the Truman administration ... couldn't imagine ...

NATE. *(To Martin.)* Does that make you Bess or Margaret?

EVELYN. I bet he wasn't eight years old when I died. *(George is not completely successful at suppressing a gasp.)*

MARTIN. I know you're the doctor and I'm not ...

GEORGE. A little air, a meal ... I'll be fine.

JOE. *(Returning from the bedroom.)* Sup-sup-supertime?

EVELYN. *(A take from Joe to Nate and back.)* Hmpf. Maybe the term is nurse/companion?

GEORGE. Shall we? *(All five start for the door.)*

EVELYN. This is going to be such fun. I haven't been dancing since I was alive. *(George holds back and allows Martin, Joe, and Nate to cross out onto the porch.)*

GEORGE. You are not coming with us.

EVELYN. Don't be silly. I wouldn't miss this for the world.

MEMORIAL DAY

GEORGE. NO.

EVELYN. I can sit in your lap in the car. No one will even know I'm there. If you would just relax, I'd be no trouble at all.

MARTIN. *(Returning and trying to mask the depth of his concern.)*
George?

GEORGE. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

MARTIN. Can I get you ...

GEORGE. You're right. I need to take care ... I need to rest. Give my regrets to ...

MARTIN. Maybe I should stay.

GEORGE. No. I'm going to crash right away. I promise. I'd be terrible company. Go have dinner.

MARTIN. I thought you were hungry ...

GEORGE. You know there's plenty here. I can throw together a snack. Go ahead.

MARTIN. Okay ...

GEORGE. Even try to have a good time.

MARTIN. I want to find you asleep when I get back.

GEORGE. I promise.

MARTIN. *(Not moving.)* Okay.

GEORGE. *(A gentle peck on his cheek.)* Don't keep Joe and Nate waiting.

MARTIN. Get some rest.

GEORGE. I'll be asleep before you guys even get a table. *(Martin nods and exits.)*

EVELYN. *(Advancing.)* I thought he'd never leave.

GEORGE. Get away from me.

EVELYN. I remember a time when your reaction to me on a moonlit night was very different.

GEORGE. You weren't dead then.

EVELYN. Don't niggle over details.

GEORGE. If that's even what you are.

EVELYN. You were there. It seemed to matter at the time.

GEORGE. It mattered more than anything ... before or since.

EVELYN. I know. When you're only loved once it makes an impression

GEORGE. What do you want from me now?

MEMORIAL DAY

EVELYN. To be needed. To be missed.

GEORGE. I do miss you.

EVELYN. It's not obvious.

GEORGE. It's very strange. Seeing someone who's been dead for 20 years. Talking ... There's a real cognitive dissonance.

EVELYN. Now there's no need for that kind of talk. I know you've had college, but that kind of talk is never necessary.

GEORGE. Where did you come from?

EVELYN. Connecticut. How many times have we been through that. I always told people Newport, but it was really Groton.

GEORGE. I'll wait.

EVELYN. The other side. *(George waits.)* I can't tell you more. *(George waits.)* We don't have ... words ... for ... it.

GEORGE. When are you going back?

EVELYN. When we're done.

GEORGE. With what?

EVELYN. You got a nice fella now?

GEORGE. Yeah. I do.

EVELYN. Good. You deserve it. You were good to me.

GEORGE. It wasn't complicated. I loved you. I did what needed to be done.

EVELYN. You know what's nice? I knew back then. In that damp, itchy bed. With plastic tubes in every hole, I'd flop out of my haze and there you'd be, chinos pressed and at the ready. And I would think, "This neat and deliberate boy loves me. Loves me. In the way that people talk about. Go figure." And then I'd drift back to sleep. And then I stopped being able to flop out of it.

GEORGE. I am glad you knew. To this day, I have never wanted anything as intensely as I wanted you not to die. I wanted to have you home ... where we could talk ... and touch. Where I wouldn't have to be careful not to betray too much feeling.

EVELYN. *(Kissing him lightly and impulsively.)* Aren't you dear!

GEORGE. OH MY GOD!

EVELYN. What's wrong?

GEORGE. I felt that.

MEMORIAL DAY

EVELYN. You were supposed to. I'm the one that's dead!

GEORGE. This is not right. It's just not. You claim to love me?

EVELYN. Yes.

GEORGE. Then back off. Give me time to ... figure this out.

EVELYN. Honey, if there's one thing I've got, it's time.

GEORGE. Swear to me you will stay out of the bedroom. *(Evelyn pouts without responding.)* Swear it.

EVELYN. I'm not hearing any options for fun.

GEORGE. I'm not offering any.

EVELYN. I can wait.

GEORGE. Please don't.

EVELYN. I won't lose, but I'll wait.

GEORGE. *(Backing toward the bedroom.)* You will wait out here then.

EVELYN. Not even a kiss goodnight?

GEORGE. No.

EVELYN. Or a quickie on the coffee table for old time's sake?

GEORGE. *(Smiling despite himself.)* Good night.

EVELYN. Good night. *(George exits into the bedroom and closes the door firmly.)* See ya in the morning.

SCENE 2

Both bedroom doors are shut. Nate is on the porch doing warm-up stretching in a pair of nylon running shorts and a pair of Adidas. George enters tentatively from the UR bedroom. He looks around the living room warily. He is relieved to find it empty. He crosses to the kitchen and is surprised to find a pot of coffee brewed. He pours a cup and crosses out onto the porch. He has a moment of appreciating the view.

NATE. Good morning.

GEORGE. Good morning.

NATE. Are you doing okay?

GEORGE. I'm much better, thanks. I can't believe how well I slept.

NATE. Me, too. Sometimes it helps to be somewhere other than home.

MEMORIAL DAY

GEORGE. This coffee is great. You ... (*Nate nods.*) Not our usual ...

NATE. Balducci's house blend. I wanted to bring something...

GEORGE. You can't do better than coffee for us. (*Evelyn enters in a vaguely Caribbean resort wear ensemble.*)

NATE. Joe said that. ... I appreciate ...

GEORGE. It's truly a pleasure to have you.

EVELYN. (*Stepping into George's view.*) It would be, wouldn't it?
(*George catches himself before he reveals his utter dismay to Nate.*)

GEORGE. Is this your first time in Rehoboth?

NATE. Sure is. My parents always took us to Lake George, and Casey and I went to the Pines.

EVELYN. Have you noticed how absolutely taut this child's abdomen is?

GEORGE. How was the Renegade?

NATE. Can I be honest?

GEORGE. Please.

NATE. I wish I could convince Joe that I don't need to be entertained ... constantly.

GEORGE. The Renegade is part of the ritual ...

NATE. I mean the music was fine and I like to dance and there were a surprising number of healthy people ...clubs in New York ...y'know ... and not as many here with the look.

GEORGE. I think Joe spent so much time at home last year that it's hard for him.

NATE. Me, too.

GEORGE. I'm sorry.

NATE. Thanks. But I wish we didn't have to be in motion like that all the time. Although ...

GEORGE. Yes?

NATE. Is Martin up?

GEORGE. He was stirring.

NATE. He mentioned last night that he wanted to come with me this morning. We said 8:30 and it's almost nine I don't want to leave without him, but I'm stretched...

GEORGE. We usually run together when we're here.

NATE. That's what he said last night.

MEMORIAL DAY

GEORGE. Let me get him.

EVELYN. Are you serious? You're going to send him chasing this boy down the beach while you're out of commission? (*Martin comes plodding out of the bedroom in a t-shirt, a more substantial pair of shorts, and similar Adidas.*)

MARTIN. Sorry to be so late.

NATE. No problem.

MARTIN. I'll be stretched out in no time.

GEORGE. Stretch carefully. (*Martin shoots him a look.*) One gimp in the family is already one too many. (*A beat.*) How was the Renegade?

MARTIN. Not bad, actually. Nate even got me to dance.

EVELYN. Bet that took a handgun.

GEORGE. Where was Joe?

MARTIN. Q-street Michael's date left with an ex. Joe was comforting him.

GEORGE. After the first half-hour Q-street Michael's dates would leave with Quasimodo given the chance.

MARTIN. That's why I was happy to let Joe console him.

GEORGE. How did Joe get stuck with him?

MARTIN. Joe's sister is married to a cousin of Michael's. They tricked at the wedding. Years ago.

EVELYN. (*To Nate*) Before you were in kindergarten.

MARTIN. Jeez. I snap, crackle, and pop more than a bowl of cereal.

NATE. Everyone does first thing in the morning.

GEORGE. How far are you planning to go?

EVELYN. Well put.

NATE. I usually do five. Martin said you guys do about three. So, we're going to try for four.

EVELYN. Two out. A quickie somewhere. Two back.

GEORGE. Looks like you couldn't have a more perfect morning for it.

EVELYN. What are the bushes like here? (*Nate buckles on a fanny pack and starts off the porch.*)

GEORGE. Have a good run.

NATE. Thanks.

GEORGE. (*Touching Martin's arm.*) I'm sorry I can't come with you.

MEMORIAL DAY

MARTIN. Me, too.

EVELYN. Liar.

GEORGE. Have a good one. *(George pulls Martin into a full and prolonged kiss. This hasn't happened in quite some time and Martin is taken aback.)* Hurry back.

MARTIN. Sure. *(Martin follows Nate off.)*

EVELYN. That was a bit much before breakfast, don't you think?
(George takes his coffee mug back to the kitchen. Evelyn follows. George tops off his coffee and returns to the living room without acknowledging Evelyn. He sets his coffee on a coaster on a table and exits to his bedroom. Evelyn moves about the room, testing locations and sultry poses. Finding a spot that can't be missed from George's chair and a pose that offers the right amount of hip, Evelyn holds. George returns quickly with a briefcase. He sits and takes out a medical journal which he attempts to read.)

EVELYN. I know you're not going to ignore me.

GEORGE. *(Without looking up.)* Wanna bet?

EVELYN. Your attitude is hurtful and disappointing, but I intend to rise above.

GEORGE. Rise away. Far, far away.

EVELYN. Please! I am not some parlor-trick poltergeist. I won't be floating around the room causing lamps to flicker or paperweights to float to the amazement of your guests.

GEORGE. Instead, you'll just be keeping me on edge.

EVELYN. There must be something I can do to help you.

GEORGE. Martin is right. I need to see someone. I need professional help. I knew it was bad ... but this ... you ...

EVELYN. What?

GEORGE. Words I never thought I'd say.

EVELYN. Yes?

GEORGE. I can't do it alone. *(The sound of a toilet flushing is heard.)*

EVELYN. God damn it! *(The UL bedroom door opens and a bleary-eyed Joe stumbles out in a ratty pair of sweatpants and an equally disreputable t-shirt.)*

JOE. Jesus. Is everyone up?

GEORGE. Looks like it.

MEMORIAL DAY

EVELYN. If I could do haunted house shtick, you'd be looking at a pile of ash.

JOE. What's with you guys? This is a vacation. People in prison don't get up this early.

GEORGE. Can I get you some coffee?

JOE. I'll get it. You want a refill?

GEORGE. No thanks. This is already my second cup.

JOE. I don't mean to push, man, but your color is bad, your breathing is off, are you sure you shouldn't see a doctor?

GEORGE. I see a doctor every time I pass a mirror; it never seems to help.

JOE. You are a true asshole, George.

GEORGE. I appreciate the salute from a peer, Joe.

JOE. *(Coming out of the kitchen with his coffee.)* Can we sit outside?

GEORGE. Lead the way. *(Joe stumbles out onto the porch and collapses into a chair. George clomps out a bit more steadily. Evelyn follows moodily.)* And you're worried about me?

JOE. I have never felt like such a geriatric case in my life. Ya don't like to think ... y'know ... that 16 years is such a big difference.

GEORGE. It doesn't seem like it's an issue for Nate.

JOE. He's amazing. And inexhaustible. He's a sweet, good-natured kid. And he can get it up 37 times a day.

GEORGE. It's nice to see you happy.

JOE. I'm grateful. And amazed. I mean, he would have been out of my league when I was the right age!

GEORGE. That's just silly.

JOE. It's like another cosmic joke.

GEORGE. Oh, no.

JOE. It's a relief not to be alone.

GEORGE. But ...

JOE. But I'm not ready. *(George nods.)* I haven't begun to get over Ray.

GEORGE. You never do. That's not the goal.

JOE. The apartment is still like a haunted house. Specters pop from the strangest places at the strangest times.

GEORGE. *(With a nod to Evelyn.)* Amen to that.

MEMORIAL DAY

JOE. And I hate when it happens with Nate there. It doesn't happen as much when we're out.

GEORGE. I'm only going to say this because I know you wouldn't hit an invalid.

JOE. What's that?

GEORGE. Give it time.

JOE. Ha. Ha. I mean, it's great to be having sex again ... but I had a life with Ray.

GEORGE. It's a step forward.

JOE. Christmas was pretty awful, wasn't it?

GEORGE. It was horrendous. It had only been two months. We were all missing him.

JOE. Y'know what I do like about it?

EVELYN. There's a mystery?

JOE. He makes sex feel young again. Not me. Sex. Sex that's just sex. No emotional baggage. Like before, only with condoms.

EVELYN. Condoms? What kind of daddy kink is that?

JOE. And part of me doesn't like it at all. Part of me wants to be able to offer more than numb from the neck up and overdrive from the waist down.

GEORGE. And you will, in time.

JOE. I'm glad I'm with a kid who's going to be able to go with the flow. Who's too young to want another big commitment thing.

EVELYN. I know two people younger than him who were capable of a big commitment thing.

GEORGE. He seems pretty grounded. Maybe you'll end up with a real friendship in the end.

JOE. Are you getting optimistic in your old age?

GEORGE. That's not the consensus view.

JOE. Not surprising with what you face every day ...

GEORGE. (*Holding up a hand.*) Not here. We don't have those conversations here.

JOE. Right. Sorry. I'll be more alert after a shower.

GEORGE. I have an article I should finish back in the house ...

JOE. I brought a couple of manuscripts to review ...

MEMORIAL DAY

GEORGE. Then we're good. At least until the boys get back.

JOE. Let's get to it. *(Joe crosses up to his bedroom. George takes both coffee mugs into the kitchen and rinses them in the sink. A somewhat deflated Evelyn follows him in. Evelyn starts toward the kitchen, then stops and watches dejectedly as George putters through a familiar domestic routine in a familiar environment. Evelyn turns and drops dejectedly into a chair. After a moment, George notices.)*

GEORGE. *(From the kitchen.)* What?

EVELYN. Nothing.

GEORGE. Oh god, what?

EVELYN. Nothing.

GEORGE. *(Holding up a 10" Chef's knife.)* Here.

EVELYN. What?

GEORGE. Just run this through my heart now. It will be quicker and less painful than dealing with "nothing."

EVELYN. Your wit has not aged well.

GEORGE. It's in good company. *(George sits and picks up his medical journal. Evelyn watches him for a moment, then begins to fidget, finally letting out an ostentatious sigh. George lowers his journal, glares, and returns to reading. Evelyn deflates for a moment, then rises and crosses to stand behind George's chair.)*

EVELYN. What'cha readin'?

GEORGE. Journal article.

EVELYN. Is it good?

GEORGE. Want to hear some?

EVELYN. Sure.

GEORGE. *(Reading from the journal.)* "The data presented in this study show that HIV-infected homosexual men suffering from AIDS, even though maintaining a measured food intake (energy and protein) similar to control subjects have reduced lean body mass, extrapolated from MAMC. The loss of MAMC is not surprisingly paralleled by reduced grip strength. However, this study also showed that the HIV-infected subject group did not have TSF thickness significantly different from the control group which suggests depletion of protein stores rather than fat stores."

EVELYN. Now you're just being mean.

MEMORIAL DAY

GEORGE. No, I'm not. I have to get this read before Martin gets back.

EVELYN. Fine.

GEORGE. If he finds me reading a medical journal here his head will explode. And brain matter is really hard to get out this awning stripe fabric.

EVELYN. I feel so lost. Your life has gone on without me ...

GEORGE. Well ...

EVELYN. And it should have. But this doctor stuff is beyond me. And you have Martin and all these friends ... I don't fit in.

GEORGE. No. I'm sorry. But no. *(Evelyn is near tears.)* You're always a part of me. You're always in my heart. But you don't belong here ... like this.

EVELYN. Yet here I am ...

GEORGE. And if you're still around when I get back to DC, I will see a neurologist ... I will see a psychiatrist...

EVELYN. Do you honestly think there's a pill that can get rid of me?

GEORGE. I live in hope.

EVELYN. Do you?

GEORGE. *(Quietly, after a moment of absolute stillness.)* Touche.

EVELYN. No. I didn't mean ...

GEORGE. But you're right. I don't have a spec of hope.

EVELYN. Wait. No ...

GEORGE. What?

EVELYN. I thought ... I have to be here to do something ... comfort ...you.

GEORGE. It's not about comfort. Or hope. Or any of that. It's about head down and charge forward. Trudge through it. And what I need to do now is trudge through this article before Martin gets back. Because my life is full of men of who are wasting away and I have to figure out ... if it's nutrition or side effects ... or what. Somehow, I have to find some way to do something that helps someone. And I have to find it soon or this crack up is only going to get worse. *(holding up the journal)* So, you'll excuse me? *(Evelyn nods and George resumes reading.)*

MEMORIAL DAY

SCENE 3

About ninety minutes later. Joe, with reading glasses and pencil, is intently reviewing a manuscript. Evelyn is on the porch moodily smoking a cigarette. George, freshly showered and changed, enters from the UR bedroom carrying a paperback. Joe looks up at him.

GEORGE. It's been three weeks, and I'm still not used to how long it takes to shower with the cast.

JOE. How much longer ...

GEORGE. Another three weeks. It's a simple lateral malleolus fracture.

JOE. Is that your own diagnosis or did you actually see an orthopedist?

GEORGE. Do you come up with your material on your own or does Martin coach you?

JOE. Nice evasion.

GEORGE. I wasn't given a choice. I'll let you get back to work.

(George steps toward the front door and sees Evelyn. HE looks disapprovingly at the cigarette.)

EVELYN. *(Waving the cigarette.)* Best part of being dead.

GEORGE. *(Turning back to Joe.)* Will it disturb you if I read in here?

JOE. Depends on how loudly you turn pages. *(George moves an ottoman so he can elevate his ankle, sits, and begins to read his novel. Joe returns to work and is immediately absorbed. Evelyn enters the living room. George is aware but tries to focus on his book.)*

EVELYN. I've learned my lesson. I'm not going to ask you to read to me. *(Martin and Nate come in from L, finishing up a conversation as they come onto the porch and into the house.)*

MARTIN. It turns out that someone had put drywall over both sets of bookends in the fifties. So, for 35 years and at least four owners, no one had a clue they were there.

NATE. Ouch.

MARTIN. "Ouch" is what they did to some of the molding putting up the drywall.

NATE. It protruded so they just sanded it down?

MARTIN. Bingo.

MEMORIAL DAY

NATE. Savages.

MARTIN. *(to George and Martin)* I don't know if I approve of this sort of thing here. I want frivolity and indulgence.

JOE. Well, now that you've returned my muse of frivolity and indulgence.

GEORGE. *(Holding up his book.)* It's a novel!

JOE. *(Seeing that it is Alexandra Ripley's "Scarlett.")* That's debatable.

MARTIN. *(Swatting at Joe.)* Do not discourage him!

EVELYN. Is that my Scarlett?

MARTIN. And bonus points for having your leg up! *(Nate's fanny pack begins to beep. Nate removes a small plastic pill case and shuts off the alarm.)*

NATE. Jeez. Eleven o'clock already? We were gone longer than I thought. *(George and Martin exchange a look as Nate crosses to the kitchen. He returns with a glass of water and takes his pill.)*

EVELYN. Vigilant about his vitamins, isn't he?

JOE. *(Returning the manuscript to his briefcase.)* Is there still a branch of Lambda Rising over on Baltimore Avenue?

MARTIN. Oh yes.

JOE. Anyone up for a little shopping?

GEORGE. You don't see enough books day in and day out?

JOE. I want to see how many of our titles are out and how they're displayed.

NATE. Some might say a busman's holiday is no holiday at all. *(Joe blows him a raspberry.)*

MARTIN. I'll go with you. The post office is open 'til noon. I can grab the mail they're holding.

GEORGE. I'm going to stay here and see if this ever gets any better.

JOE. You want me to save you some tsuris?

MARTIN. It's going to keep him still with his leg up, it's the best book ever written.

JOE. Compromise? I'll bring something better back from the bookstore.

MARTIN. Fine. Meanwhile, you keep reading! *(Joe takes his briefcase back to the bedroom.)*

NATE. I think I'll stay here. Grab a shower.

EVELYN. And you can scrub HIS back!

MEMORIAL DAY

NATE. If that's okay.

EVELYN. That will even be worth getting your cast wet!

GEORGE. Maybe I'll come along.

MARTIN. You shouldn't be walking that much. Stay here and finish ...

GEORGE. Come on. The book's not that absorbing.

NATE. I made it about 50 pages.

GEORGE. Life's too short to go much further? *(Nate, Martin, and George all freeze. This should be a moment of extreme discomfort for all three.)*

EVELYN. Did someone fart? *(George is able to suppress a laugh but can't quite hold back a snort. Martin turns to glare at him. George sneezes ostentatiously.)*

GEORGE. Sorry. Allergies, I guess.

NATE. Well, that was a terrible save.

GEORGE. And you would think with the number of stupid things I say every day, I'd be better at recovery. *(Joe emerges from the bedroom in deck shoes and polo shirt.)*

MARTIN. I didn't realize this was a dress occasion.

JOE. It's just a clean shirt.

MARTIN. Mmmhmmm.

JOE. And this "fresh from a run look" is any less deliberate? You play to your crowd; I'll play to mine.

GEORGE. Nate and I are right here.

JOE. And he's no more threatened than you are.

GEORGE. Are you going to bring back lunch or should I start something here?

EVELYN. I know how I'd vote!

MARTIN. We'll bring something back. I don't want you up if it's not necessary.

GEORGE. Cooking relaxes me!

MARTIN. Please, please stay off your ankle while you can. Promise you'll sit with your foot up 'til we get back. *(To Nate.)* Please promise me you'll knock him down if he tries to stand up.

GEORGE. I won't budge.

JOE. Shall we? *(To Nate.)* Anything I can bring back for you?

MEMORIAL DAY

NATE. I'm good.

EVELYN. That would be my first guess.

MARTIN. *(To George.)* Do you need something for indigestion?

GEORGE. Go. I'm fine. *(Martin and Joe exit. Nate crosses to the door to watch them head off the porch and away from the house.)* So, is this your dream vacation? Babysitting ole gramps?

NATE. Just making sure they're gone. Want me to get your walker so we can go out on the porch?

GEORGE. *(Rising.)* Lead the way, wise guy. *(A beat.)* Since I've already stepped in it ... How long have you been taking communion from Burroughs Wellcome?

NATE. Eighteen months. Maybe nineteen by now. And, to save you the trouble: 354 and pneumonia

GEORGE. 354 isn't bad. I suppose the question isn't much of a conversation starter.

NATE. Better than "Do you know who you got it from?"

GEORGE. That's a horrible question.

NATE. I want to ask you a favor.

GEORGE. Professional or personal?

NATE. Personal.

GEORGE. Okay.

NATE. Joe really thinks the world of you ...

GEORGE. I doubt that. Parts of Eastern Europe, maybe ...

NATE. He thinks that Ray would still be alive today if you had been his doctor.

GEORGE. Then he is entirely delusional.

NATE. Probably. But that's how much he thinks of you.

GEORGE. And why does that matter?

NATE. I need this to work.

GEORGE. You don't need my endorsement ...

NATE. You can tell him that he's not betraying Ray by being with me.

GEORGE. You're serious about Joe? *(Nate nods.)* And you are ...

NATE. I am?

GEORGE. Are you usually drawn to older men?

EVELYN. Smooth!

MEMORIAL DAY

NATE. Oh. I am 28. Casey was 41 when he died. He was 33 and I was 19 when we met.

GEORGE. So, there's a pattern ...

NATE. We can come with our good right hands. Doesn't involving someone else always include other needs? I've never pretended that something like a father wasn't one of mine.

GEORGE. What does Joe have to offer besides sufficient mileage?

NATE. I saw him with Ray.

GEORGE. I thought you met in a bereavement group.

NATE. We're in the group, but Casey and I knew them before. We were part of the same share at Cherry Grove for two summers. We saw them in the city for dinner once in a while. They visited Casey before he died, and I saw Ray at home a couple of times ... I don't want to sound mercenary; I do love Joe, and we have some laughs, but I want someone around when my decline starts ... I've seen Joe. I know I can trust him.

GEORGE. Things aren't as grim as they were, you know. We're nowhere near where we should be and for that we can thank every single Reagan voter personally. But things are starting to move. We're developing more effective treatments. We're coming to understand co-factors and complementary courses of treatment.

NATE. Is this the it's not a fatal disease anymore, it's a chronic manageable illness speech?

GEORGE. I think that's becoming the case.

EVELYN. You are still the world's worst liar.

NATE. No, you don't. You think it gives people hope to say you do.

GEORGE. And hope is a bad thing?

NATE. When it's not reality based, it's lying isn't it?

GEORGE. I'm not just saying it ...

NATE. Doctor, if you look at the actuarial tables, I believe you'll find a significant discrepancy between the life expectancies of twenty-eight-year-olds with and without this particular chronic manageable illness.

GEORGE. It's not imminent, not for you.

NATE. I think Christmas is looking doable, but I'll never be a Communist.

GEORGE. What?

NATE. I can't commit to a Five-Year Plan.

MEMORIAL DAY

GEORGE. I don't think you have to rush into finding a caretaker.

NATE. You're a good friend and you don't want him stuck with another

...

GEORGE. No!

NATE. No?

GEORGE. But you may be overestimating his capacity ...

NATE. Has he said something?

GEORGE. Only how much he enjoys being with you.

NATE. Sure.

GEORGE. I'm not going to repeat the entire conversation, but that was truly the gist.

NATE. Can I ask a different favor, then? (*George nods.*) Don't tell him about this conversation.

GEORGE. Of course not.

NATE. Thank you. (*A beat.*) I guess I will grab a shower. Do you want me to bring your book out?

GEORGE. (*Standing.*) No. Martin will be happier to find me in the same chair. I'll go back inside. (*Nate begins to exit to his bedroom as George crosses to the door.*) Nate ... (*Nate stops.*) Believe me, I would never do or say anything ... to discourage Joe from being what you need.

NATE. That will have to do, won't it?

GEORGE. I get your frustration.

NATE. Oh? What are you dying of?

GEORGE. I was in a meeting at the clinic three weeks ago. A budget meeting. And one of the senior administrators said that it was regrettable that some people slipped through the safety net, but that if we didn't draw lines and enforce them we wouldn't be able to afford to provide the service we do to the people we do. And I had one of those out of body experiences where I watched myself stand up and scream, "Listen you stupid, heartless, bean-counting fuck, your lines are drawn in blood." When someone else asked me to calm down, I picked up my chair and smashed it on the table. Unfortunately, our facilities budget has been cut to nothing and I didn't see the piece of carpet sticking up as I stormed out of the room, so my big exit was reduced to a flying tumble that ended in a broken ankle. Even more unfortunately, we are so short staffed, and our patient load is so urgent that

MEMORIAL DAY

my tantrum had no consequences, as well as no effect, and they were waiting for me to be back for my regular clinic hours two days later.

NATE. Did you go?

GEORGE. What else would I do?

NATE. That helps.

GEORGE. What does?

NATE. Knowing that you really don't have any more hope than I do.

(Nate closes the bedroom door behind him. George looks toward Evelyn.)

GEORGE. Well?

EVELYN. What?

GEORGE. No smarmy jokes about following him to the shower?

EVELYN. Is what he has contagious?

GEORGE. Yes.

EVELYN. Why would I want that for you? Why would you want that for Joe?

GEORGE. That's what the condoms are for.

EVELYN. Do they work?

GEORGE. Yes. *(Evelyn shoots him a look.)* They're better than nothing and they're all that we've got.

EVELYN. There's still something missing.

GEORGE. What do you mean?

EVELYN. Something that would tell me why I'm here and what I'm supposed to do.

GEORGE. If you're not just a delusion, I can't believe you don't know.

EVELYN. I don't suppose you'd like to know what life would be like for the people of Bedford Falls if you had never been born? *(George glares.)* Just a thought. You're holding onto something. Something big

GEORGE. You honestly don't know?

EVELYN. I got nothin' between the day I died and last night. I swear.

GEORGE. After you died, I had no one to talk to ... about any of it. Caring for you. Missing you. The ache was my little secret. I left the city after a few months, made up with my father, and went to Johns Hopkins. Met a woman and decided she was the answer. At least with a woman everything wasn't shameful and secret, and the aches didn't have to be

MEMORIAL DAY

sealed away. I tried not to hurt her, and it didn't work at all. Then came three wild years. And for the last eight there's been Martin.

EVELYN. Until?

GEORGE. What?

EVELYN. Something changed.

GEORGE. I broke my ankle.

EVELYN. I'm not here for orthopedics. What broke your spirit?

GEORGE. That young man is very sick and will soon be dying. That's all I see, every day, by the dozen. And you ask what broke my spirit?

EVELYN. You don't have to tell me. But you have to tell someone. And I know you remember just how well I can badger. You have people to talk to now and you are choosing not to talk to them.

GEORGE. You have no idea. You have no fucking idea.

EVELYN. And I won't until you tell me. Or someone.

GEORGE. I wasn't raised Catholic, but you're still not what I'd look for in a confessor.

EVELYN. I'm sure I can rustle up a nun's habit ...

GEORGE. No, thanks.

EVELYN. Then you owe it to Martin.

GEORGE. Yes. You're right. I do. You better hope ... I have to trust he's up to it.

EVELYN. I hate suspense.

GEORGE. Sorry.

EVELYN. Mind if I smoke?

GEORGE. On the porch.

EVELYN. You want one?

GEORGE. More than you will ever know. *(Evelyn exits onto the porch. George sits staring anxiously ahead, unopened book in his lap.)*

END OF ACT 1

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