

ABOUT SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

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CHARACTERS

AMALIA...unmarried, unemployed 25 year old
ROB...Ex-Assistant DA, late 20's
VICTORIA...Amalia's mother
GLEN...Amalia's father
AUNT EMILY...Glen's maiden aunt, over 80
MARY CATHERINE...Amalia's older sister, early 30's

SETTING

Amalia's bedroom is downstage, off center to the right. The kitchen is elongated, fish-lensed up stage around the bedroom, and is visible through the suggested walls of the bedroom.

The backdoor is downstage left, feeding off from that edge of the kitchen, and opens onto steps and a small patio.

Wedged in-between the stage right side of Amalia's room and the kitchen is a good sized bathroom, opening into the bedroom.

Following the outer perimeter of the kitchen, slightly elevated, is a hallway, containing a string of closets: linen closets, clothes closets, and a sporting goods closet.

ACT ONE

Morning

ACT TWO

The next day

ACT ONE

(Lights on in Amalia's room. Her bed is made, and on the floor is a pile of 30 to 40 pieces of her clothing. The door to the walk-in closet is open, and the light is on.)

Aunt Emily hurries along the upper hallway carrying a stack of laundry. She enters the kitchen and loads the washing machine.

Glen, wearing his bathrobe and slippers, switches on the light and steps out on the back porch. He holds his hand out, checking for rain.

Victoria switches on the kitchen light and places a small grocery bag on the kitchen counter.

Amalia steps out of her closet, holding a handful of clothing. She throws it on the pile.)

AMALIA

Of course, I'm not going to burst into flames right before your very eyes.
(She looks down at the sweater she's wearing and struggles to take it off and throw it on the pile.)

Still, there is the possibility.

(She selects another sweater from an open drawer, hesitates,
throws it on the pile and puts another one on.)

It's the possibility.

VICTORIA

I'm not saying it had to be the biggest, they were 3 for a dollar, well they say that the odds are always stacked against you so the house wins no matter what your system. No, I didn't mind if my three for a dollar did not represent for me, the most per penny...not that I wouldn't have minded winning that extra bite, that additional slice, that ounce or two, that...victory. For my family. That very small, it is always very small--victory.

GLEN

(He sticks a wet finger in the air to test the breeze, and
uncovers a massive panel of weather instruments.)

This won't hurt a bit, never does, does it, I know, I know that by now.

VICTORIA

Of course there is that sense of pride, other women sneaking looks into your shopping cart. There have been times in my life when their jealousy...other women's jealousy,...has been enough for me. But this morning, at the supermarket...

(She falters, then regains her composure.)

I did not care that it be without a bruise, or a cut, or a soft place that would become a bruise, in secret, in the bag in the trunk on the way home. I didn't care.

(Aunt Emily continues sorting laundry, giving no sign that she is listening.)

All I wanted...all I wanted...

(She pulls a medium sized cantaloupe out of the bag.)

Well, all right, you say, so you develop a keen eye, a sense of touch and smell, you adapt, you prepare yourself for that relationship you must have with a piece of fruit...a piece of fruit...you get yourself what you need. And you walk into that supermarket and you present yourself to the rows and stacks and refrigerated cases, graded and inspected and so, so easily yours...

AUNT EMILY

What did you get?

VICTORIA

A cantaloupe. I picked out this cantaloupe, and I was sure...reasonably sure...that this cantaloupe would be...that it would be...and so I was reaching for the next, the second cantaloupe, reaching the same way, I knew, I would reach for the third, reaching to touch and smell and feel and shake when...when...

AUNT EMILY

(Hefting the cantaloupe.)

Nice lookin' melon. Not a Rocky Ford, though, your Rocky Fords come later in the season, you wait and you wait for them and one day there's a whole bin of 'em and the next there's none. That way with your Temples too, and your Bings.

(Poking her head in the refrigerator.)

You get anymore or just the one?

VICTORIA

This one.

AUNT EMILY

Just the one?

VICTORIA

I'm telling you...I reached out my hand but I couldn't tell. All of them stacked up there but who could really tell? I pulled back my hand and I said, I said out loud, "I HAVE LOST THE WILL TO LIVE HERE IN THE PRODUCE DEPARTMENT."

(She starts to cry.)

AUNT EMILY

You said it out loud?

VICTORIA

I lost the will to live in the produce department at Safeway and I said it out loud.

AUNT EMILY

No one answered you.

VICTORIA

No.

AUNT EMILY

Well they shouldn't have heard you either. Of course, whether they did or not or whose fault it would be is 6 of one half dozen of the other.

(Victoria sobs louder.)

Now you stop that crying. Glen shouldn't see you crying, you crying like this. He shouldn't, he knows better, but if you don't stop crying then he will.

AMALIA

(Holding a dress up in front of her.)

One hundred percent rayon. Believe me, nothing burns as fast as some of these synthetics. Just because there's been no official government testing on the fire retardant qualities of garments during spontaneous combustion is no reason why, as consumers, we shouldn't all be more aware.

(She throws the dress onto the pile.)

The fire starts internally. Inside, all at once.

GLEN

(Reading dials and making notations. He speaks in a buddy-buddy, man to man tone of voice.)

Used to make me mad as hell, to wake up and come outside of a morning to a clear blue sky that was sure to cloud up into soup by noon. Felt like there was some kind of promise broken. Expecting, assuming--you know what assuming makes? The word? It makes an ass of "U" and me. (Laughs at his own joke.) Well, but it's the weather that makes asses of men and not the other way around. Always assuming some kind of correlation between that moment you look out your bedroom window and the weather...my god, you look at all the items you've got to consider determine the exact moment that you'll wedge you fat up on one elbow and you'll make the effort to focus out the window you promised your wife you'd wash last weekend so you can decide--declare--believe what kind of day it's gonna be from that one instant of weather?

Or to put it all more simply, the weather does not get up in the morning when you do, sir, and since you cannot be on hand constantly to watch, to test, to monitor, to decide--this baby--

(He proudly touches the weather panel.)

--this baby does it for you. We have a complete line of household models...

(He snaps out of his salespitch.)

But none as complete or as household as this. Built the whole damn house around it.

(He shines up a dial with his robe.)

AMALIA

All this would be a meaningless precaution, if it were a precaution. But it's more than that. It's an understanding. Between me and what's inside me. An understanding that feels like the moment when one of a pair of Siamese Twins, sharing the same body from the waist down, manually discovers masturbation.

ROB

(Poking his head out from under the pile of clothes.)

You mean it feels like it feels to the other twin?

AMALIA

Yes.

ROB

Then this understanding of yours must feel real good.

AMALIA

You know that's not what I mean.

(She flings a dress in his face.)

VICTORIA

(Glen enters the kitchen. Aunt Emily returns her washing machine.)

Well? How's the weather?

GLEN

35 years we've been married, 35 years, the 35 just previous to this one, and you can ask me that question?

VICTORIA

I just meant for golf, Glen, the weather for golf, that's all I meant--

GLEN

It looks fine out there, Vickie, I know my business, a man retires, his business doesn't stop being his business.

VICTORIA

Then you'll be leaving for the course right away?

GLEN

Vickie, darling, I said the weather was fine. Which is to say, as I have always said: Bad weather is better than no weather at all.

VICTORIA

Then--it's not fine?

GLEN

(Softly, so Victoria can't hear)

I've seen a day like this before.

ROB

Not that one! Come on, please, not that one too.

AMALIA

This one?

ROB

It's my favorite.

AMALIA

This old rag?

ROB

You look...you look so special in it.

AMALIA

Special?

ROB

Very special.

AMALIA

(Drops it on the pile like a hot potato)

That settles it. It's the most dangerous of them all and it has to go.

ROB

Couldn't you--couldn't you put it on one last time? Just so I could see you in it?

AMALIA

I certainly could not. It's not safe.

ROB

You wouldn't have to wear it for long...just for a minute or two.

(Amalia shakes her head, no. Rob picks up the dress.)

AMALIA

Oh, I know what you're thinking, buster, you're thinking you can maybe talk me into wearing it a little, then a little more, well you can't. Put it back. I said I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.

(Rob drops the dress.)

VICTORIA

I'll start breakfast, then. I'll just open up this cantaloupe, cut it open, and then we'll see--then we'll know what's inside it.

AUNT EMILY

Don't go cutting any for me. It's a good looking melon, there's no saying it isn't, but isn't cantaloupe the thing that fat people are always eating to lose weight? A curious way to lose weight, always eating things, they should stop eating altogether, it's eating that's gotten them into trouble in the first place. It's a good looking melon but it reminds me of fat people who want to be thin people, it's what they're always eating, after all.

GLEN

You mean after all the trouble Victoria took shopping for that cantaloupe--

AUNT EMILY

There's only the one. She only got the one.

VICTORIA

It's a large one, all of us can--

AUNT EMILY

Large? It is certainly not large, it's a good sized melon, but you couldn't say it was any too big.

VICTORIA

I would have bought a bigger one, Glen, I would have, only--

GLEN

You mean to tell me they had them bigger?

VICTORIA

Yes.

(She starts to cry. Aunt Emily tries to keep Glen from seeing.)

AUNT EMILY

Now Glen, it's really quite a fine melon and I'm sure that you've got better things to do than listen to women talking about cantaloupe.

GLEN

(Pushing Aunt Emily aside)

Then why didn't you get a bigger one?

VICTORIA

I reached out my hand--

AUNT EMILY

(Shields Victoria)

Shoo, shoo, Glen, let us women get about our business.

GLEN

Vickie, tell me--

VICTORIA

(On the verge of a complete breakdown)

I reached out my hand to touch that bigger cantaloupe, to select, to touch and smell and shake and tell--

AUNT EMILY

(Cutting Victoria off so Glen doesn't hear.)

There's not enough to go around and anyway it's not what I want, what I have a taste for. Macaroni and cheese, pumpkin pie, varieties of Danish. That's what I want. That's what I want and I don't know why I don't eat it. My mother was fat and so I thought all mothers were fat, had to be fat, that's the way mothers were, fat. But anyone could see I wasn't that.

(Victoria sobs quietly, gradually composing herself.)

GLEN

Wasn't what?

AUNT EMILY

Wasn't fat. Like mother Parker. Lord, Lord, did she eat the cantaloupe. Well, if I were fat it would be because I decided to be fat, not because I wanted to be thin.

GLEN

It wouldn't be such a good decision, Aunt Emily.

AUNT EMILY

I'm thinking, maybe I've missed something.
(She returns to her washing machine)

AMALIA

It could happen to me right now, you know. Your body doesn't warn you when it decides to take itself into its own hands. When it consumes itself in a flame of its own making.

ROB

Suicide for the indecisive? Wishy-washy--WOOSH!

AMALIA

It is the exact opposite of suicide. It is as far as you can get from suicide and still be dead. Why, murder and suicide are practically the same thing, compared to spontaneous combustion.

ROB

You can't name me one person it ever happened to.

AMALIA

The possibility runs in the family. There have been some very close calls. My grandmother Amalia Parker was one. She was 95 years old when she died of old age, which is as close to dying of nothing as you usually get. Of course, old age is the body turning on itself little by little, consuming itself by degrees. But that's not a war or a car or a fall from a high place, or any other person. None of the Parker women have died that way. We've all of us died from what is inside us. Or isn't.

ROB

If one of these sex-crazed Siamese Twins spontaneously combusted, would the other one burn up too?

AMALIA

You haven't heard a word I've said.

GLEN

(Standing up from table)

Today is the day I'm going to ask Molly to go out on the course with me.

ROB

All you've been telling me about is that one of the genetic traits you've inherited is dying. In fact, every woman in your family who isn't alive has died. I believe the laws of probability will probably back you up on that one.

AMALIA

But spontaneous combustion is one of those times when possibility is complete without probability.

ROB

What????

AMALIA

The odds are in the neighborhood of a billion to one, but who cares how many times it doesn't happen, if it's possible for it to happen at all. The book says--

ROB

The book says--you read this in some gender specific magazine, didn't you? Didn't you? My life is being destroyed by Cosmopolitan, Redbook, the Ladies Home J. Now if you're looking to find out about spontaneous combustion from a magazine--Playboy. Penthouse. Hustler--now they're about the old spontaneous--

AMALIA

The magazine only confirmed what I felt. Identified it. Defined how I felt the heat inside me.

(Glen stands outside Amalia's bedroom door, about to knock. Instead, he listens)

ROB

30 years early for hot flashes, sweetheart.

(Amalia dumps a drawer full of sweaters on his head.)

But when you do get them, when you do start burning up for real--well, it will feel real, so they say--that's when I'll be so understanding. Here's the way it works: You marry me now--and you get delivery on belief in internal flames later. Sort of the layaway plan. Amalia Parker Leyland. Nice ring, don't you think?

GLEN

(Shocked, upset. He barely whispers.)

Amalia Parker Leyland.

ROB

And the monogram on the towels - with the initial of the last name in the middle--ALP.

GLEN

(Muttering to himself as he returns to the porch)

A.L.P.

ROB

Like the mountains, get it?

AMALIA

Like a molehill. I'm not going to marry you, Rob. Not with this thing inside me.

GLEN

Well, we knew it would happen someday. No, not that we built Molly's room with time capsules embedded in the cement, ready to dissolve away the walls when Molly reached 25, 26, 27--old maid years, some would say, I wouldn't say that. And after all, we knew it would happen, we knew, it happened to Mary Catherine, didn't it, been 5 years since we swept up all that rice and ate the leftover wedding cake and could be sure. We could be sure that it was happening to us. That it had happened.

AMALIA

I'm afraid.

ROB

Afraid? Afraid of spontaneous combustion? If I were you I'd be more concerned about the tragedy of immaculate conception. A terrible burden for a young virgin to have to carry around. But what I'm suggesting we do is the time honored cure.

(He tries to pull her down with him. She throws clothing at him.)

AMALIA

What are you talking about?

ROB

Your virginity.

AMALIA

My what?

ROB

Your virginity. You are a virgin, aren't you?

AMALIA

What made you think I was a virgin?

ROB

You're not?

AMALIA

Not for years.

ROB

Years?

AMALIA

What made you think--

ROB

Every single night for the past--

AMALIA

Oh, that. What does that have to do with it?

ROB

What do you mean?

AMALIA

And so that's supposed to mean I'm a virgin?

ROB

Well why else wouldn't you?

AMALIA

You're not one are you?

ROB

What?

AMALIA

A virgin?

ROB

What would make you think--

AMALIA

Well it's just that you wanted to so bad.

ROB

What?

AMALIA

If you can assume I won't because I am one, why can't I assume you are one because you will?

ROB

That's ridiculous--

AMALIA

Yes.

ROB

Amalia, why -- why, if you did before, why won't you with me.

AMALIA

I'm trying to tell you why not.

ROB

No you're not. Me, you're telling me about spontaneous combustion. That's what you're telling me. If you did before--

AMALIA

I was younger then, that's all, and things seemed less important--more important...I didn't love them, the ones I...okay?

ROB

Okay? How can that be the end of that sentence? Okay? How can that word--

AMALIA

I didn't love them. But...

ROB

Then do I assume correctly, that if you, ah, "did" with them because you didn't love them, then you don't with me because you--

AMALIA

(Softly)

Yes.

ROB

You remind me of the city of St. Louis, which has more stop signs per capita than any other place in America. Each alderman in the city is allotted a certain number of stop signs, but they have to use all of them, and since stop sign allotment is a sign of prestige, and they have run out of intersections that are not already stopped, they literally build new intersections in order to use them. Their stop signs.

GLEN

(Monitoring the weather, pleased)

A day so completely magnificent I wouldn't believe it myself if I didn't have the facts right here to back me up. Perfect. Clean. And fair.

(He returns to kitchen.)

VICTORIA

Did you ask Molly about golfing yet?

GLEN

Can't, Vickie. There's a big storm front moving in.

(Pause)

A.L.P.

VICTORIA

What?

GLEN

Don't these things traditionally happen at night? Of course, I'm happy to see it happen during the day, it's much safer in daylight. So much easier to make mistakes, in the dark.

VICTORIA

What mistakes, Glen, I don't--

GLEN

There's something I've got to tell you.

(He puts his arm around Victoria)

There is a large pile of clothing on the floor in Molly's room.

VICTORIA

Yes?

GLEN

She's leaving us.

VICTORIA

She's just rearranging her closet. She's decided to unfold some things and hang them in her closet, and fold some other things and put them away.

GLEN

No. She's packing.

VICTORIA

She's lining the drawers of the chest with patterned paper and hanging her dresses in treated plastic bags.

GLEN

It's too large a pile for that, Vickie, it's --

VICTORIA

She will slip bars of scented soap into the pockets of her suit jackets. To keep away the moths. Her clothes will smell like lavender. And if she finds a button missing off a shirt, she'll put it on a pile. And if she finds a dress that needs hemming, she put it on a pile, maybe the same pile. And they'll be clothes with stains and spots...we won't be able to get all of them out, you know. But we'll try. Because she will come in here. Yes, she will come in here, when she's ready, and she will ask me to come with her, and the two of us, together, we will go to her room and I will help her decide what will be lengthened and sewed and cleaned and given away.

GLEN

No.

VICTORIA

She will come in here.

GLEN

No.

VICTORIA

When she's ready.

GLEN

She's leaving. She's getting married.

(Pause)

Does she have enough warm clothing?

VICTORIA

We don't know where she's going. They might be headed south.

GLEN

Won't need warm clothing, if they're headed south.

VICTORIA

No, she won't.

GLEN

And what about shoes? I didn't see any shoes on the pile. Does she have a decent pair of shoes? Aunt Emily once read me a fairy tale, it was about a little princess and she had to wear out 3 pairs of stone shoes, wear down 3 granite walking sticks, and suck 3 loaves of marble bread down to pebbles in order to find a husband. Some kind of evil spell she had to break. And she walked around the world 3 times searching for him, all the way around, well, they didn't have around when this fairy tale was written, it was mostly back and forth, but she did it. Think how hard it would be to wear out 3 pairs of stones shoes. Especially for Molly. All those caps and matching dresses and her little pairs of shoes, could fit both of em in your hand, all those things we gave away good as new, she never soiled a one of them, never ran them down or scuffed the heels or--

VICTORIA

(Starting to cry)

No!

GLEN

I was just pointing out that it's a good thing Molly doesn't have to wear anything out searching for a husband.

ROB

These others--all these others...however many there were, it doesn't matter to me, naturally, how many there were of them that you did not love, well, what did they look like? Were they, for instance, my height? Shorter?

AMALIA

Some.

ROB

They were taller?

AMALIA

They were shorter and taller.

ROB

How can they have been shorter and taller at the same time?

AMALIA

Not at the same time. One at a time. Some shorter, some taller.

ROB

Oh. And their hair, how did they wear their hair--

AMALIA

On their heads. Rob, what does this have to do --

ROB

Did they wear it like I wear mine?

AMALIA

Some, but--

ROB

And you weren't afraid of them?

AMALIA

I am not afraid of the way you wear your hair, Rob.

ROB

I didn't think you were. Still, we have to start somewhere. So let's start at the scene of the crime.

(He brushes his hair back, hunches over, makes a funny face.)

AMALIA

What are you doing?

ROB

Getting rid of the evidence. No evidence--no crime.

AMALIA

It doesn't matter what you look like. I'm still exactly as afraid of it.

ROB

You're not afraid of the way I look?

AMALIA

No.

ROB

Why not?

AMALIA

Why not?

ROB

Let's face facts, Amalia. If you're not afraid of me because of the way I look, it follows that you do not love me for the way I look. That's assuming a cause and effect relationship between love, fear, and spontaneous combustion.

AMALIA

Why would you want me to love you for you looks?

ROB

Because there's a certain beauty about being loved for your looks. A certain--certainty. If someone loves you for your looks, chances are they are not going to change their mind. How could they change their mind about your looks? You look the way you look. They either love you for it or they don't. And your looks are something you can be sure of, because--there they are, self evident fact, anybody can see them, you can see them too. The further beauty of this system is that if you loved me for my looks but there was this one particular part, or two parts, even, of my looks you didn't love--say these were the parts that frightened you--I could, without too much trouble, change them. If you loved me for my looks I'd be crazy not to. But if you don't love me for my looks I don't know where to start.

There is limit, a range, a -- certainty--to the sound of my voice, in the color of my eyes. If you loved me for that particular sound, that shade of color-- I'd be safe, secure. But there's no telling what the rest of me--if it's the rest of me you love--can do.

If it's something inside me--something I can never see and can never know, how will I identify it? How will I ever be able to make it go away?

And if what has got you frightened is also what you love--then why should I?
(He tries to take her in his arms.)

AMALIA
Stop it! You don't know what you're doing!

ROB
Of course I know what I'm doing.

AMALIA
(Struggling to get away from him)
There is something inside me. Something like a match.

ROB
Your insides are nothing like a match.

AMALIA
Like a match in that split instant when someone is about to strike it. Only, it strikes itself. Rob, get back, it isn't safe!

ROB
Then spontaneous combustion can only happen if the match strikes itself?

AMALIA
Rob, look out--Rob, don't--don't--

ROB
Amalia, that match doesn't stand a chance. Not with me here. Not with old--
(She knees him in the groin)
Oh my God--oh, my God,...oh, my...

AMALIA
I didn't do it that hard.
(He continues moaning)
It's just a myth. Just a myth. Well, no woman has ever believed that it hurts that much and neither do I.
(She reaches out to touch him)
Let me see. Rob, let me see. Are you all right or aren't you?

ROB

I don't know.

AMALIA

What do you mean you don't know? How can you not know?

ROB

I mean they can't test parachutes on the ground, Amalia, that's what I mean.

AMALIA

Why do you want me to think that I've hurt you?

ROB

Amalia, you have hurt me.

AUNT EMILY

(She drags a bulky, bright red bedspread out of the dryer and heads for Amalia's room. She arrives engulfed in the bedspread, and trips into the room, unable to see a thing. Her face completely covered, she turns toward the pile of clothing, and her body goes stiff beneath the spread.)

Molly...my God Molly...what has come over your room?

(Now she pulls the spread down so that it is no longer covering her face.)

Once I saw the way Gloria Henderson's one room with cooking privileges looked. My mother let me take the Christmas basket to her. I was very young couldn't help seeing it.

(Whispers)

It was 9 o'clock in the morning and her clothes...they looked just like this. Just like this. Well I ran home and asked my mother. What it was in a woman that could make her keep her room like this? It was what she had for breakfast.

(Imitates her mother.)

Every morning...a double. Every morning--

(She drops part of the bedspread to indicate an enormous glass.)

--a glass like this. Every morning--

(She looks around the room with renewed horror and clutches the bedspread.)

Here, Molly, help me, it's swallowing me up!

(Amalia goes to her and takes an end of the spread, but is looking for the label rather than helping.)

AMALIA

(Finding the label.)

One of those blends.

AUNT EMILY

What?...What?...

(She works her way out of the spread.)

AMALIA

I cannot sleep with that on my bed.

AUNT EMILY

You can't?

AMALIA

No.

AUNT EMILY

Bright red, I've always felt, was a very common color, but it shows up some things and hides others, you understand, and on a young girl's bed, I've always felt, red was just the--

AMALIA

No, that's not--

AUNT EMILY

It isn't the color, is it? It's the masculinity of the spread, the way it looks too much like a bedspread bought, if you had a brother, for you brother--

AMALIA

NO. IT'S BECAUSE OF SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION.

AUNT EMILY

(Sits down on the bed, confused and disoriented, whispering loudly to herself.)

I can't see what's wrong with it, there's nothing wrong that I can see...

AMALIA

(Gives in)

Of course you're right, here, there isn't a thing wrong with this spread, give it to me, I'll take care of it.

(She takes it, holding it gingerly. Aunt Emily is breathing with difficulty, she's exhausted, but this doesn't stop her from bending down and picking up a shirt off the pile. She folds it neatly. Amalia hides the bedspread under the other end of the pile.)

ROB

(As Aunt Emily grabs for a shirt to fold and grabs Rob's leg instead. She does not see Rob.)

And a very good morning to you, Miss Parker.

AMALIA

Aunt Emily--lookout--those clothes aren't safe!

ROB

Look at me sitting in Amalia's clothing, her most personal, intimate, most intimate and personal--

AMALIA

Aunt Emily! I'm looking for my blue dress, but I think it's in the wash--
(She tries to get Aunt Emily out of the room. Rob grabs her leg)

ROB

Maybe you didn't get a good look at me, Miss Parker--

AMALIA

(To Rob)

Stop it!

AUNT EMILY

I've got so I can hear the wash from every room in the house. You don't have to tear your room apart hunting your blue dress any longer. Your blue dress is in--

(She concentrates)

--is in the rinse cycle.

(She hurries to the washing machine)

AMALIA

You know it isn't safe for her to be so close to all this flammable clothing. What if something happened, you'd be responsible.

ROB

She saw me, she felt me, she heard me. She probably smelled me too. That's the five senses--no, only 4, but isn't that enough? 4 senses are enough. You know, I really make an effort. Like at meals, making my table manners, just like hers, that ridiculous business with the bread and butter, those damn crescent rolls--

AMALIA

You know she won't talk to you when you're in my bedroom.

ROB

That's a room with a bed, your bed. That's why she wouldn't see me, I suppose? I'll have to ask her if I fade in and out of focus in the living room...the couch folds out to a hide-a-bed.

AMALIA

It's the way she is, the way her mother was, the way--

ROB

The way you are, is what. With your own personalized variation. You see the bed and you see me and you can see me, even, on the bed but you cannot see you with me on the bed. Even a marriage bed. Now that's the bed Aunt Emily would be happy to see and see me on and see you with me.

(Softly)

Marry me, Amalia.

AUNT EMILY

(Approaching Glen and Victoria)

I must talk to you about Molly.

VICTORIA

Then you've seen?

AUNT EMILY

She has thrown her clothes all over the floor. I have seen clothes like that before, yes, and I know what it means.

VICTORIA

Then you know.

AUNT EMILY

I've always known. Impatience. Close enough to a bad habit to be the real thing. Can't wait for the time of one cycle, has to have her blue dress right now.

GLEN

Aunt Emily, it's not what you think.

AUNT EMILY

It's not? Well, I know what I see. Not that I want to see it. We never want to see bad things like that in those we love but there it is. There it is.

(She returns to her washing machine. Glen follows her.)

GLEN

Aunt Emily, you remember the problem Mary Catherine had telling you she was getting married?

AUNT EMILY

The problem in these marriages is they want to be happy all the time. They want to be happy when they wake up in the morning and they want to be happy at noon. They want to be happy when they go to bed at night. Oh, it's disgusting.

GLEN

Yes, of course it is, but Amalia and Rob--

AUNT EMILY

Who's Rob?

ROB

Marry me, Amalia. Why should Aunt Emily be the only one who sees that particular, that white linen and lace, that legal, lawful wedded married bed every time she tries so hard not to see me? Marry me.

(Amalia shakes her head, no.)

AUNT EMILY

Is Rob the one who eats his roll and butter with a fork?

GLEN

What? Eats his bread and butter with a knife and fork?

VICTORIA

But you're the only one who eats--

AUNT EMILY

I can see that Rob is a very well brought up young man, if perhaps a bit too delicate in his eating habits.

GLEN

Well, Rob is in Molly's room right now, and he's asked--
(He realizes what he's said.)

AUNT EMILY

I didn't quite catch that. Where is he now?

GLEN

He's...he's...

VICTORIA

Helping Molly pack. In her room. Her bedroom.

GLEN

Vickie--don't--

VICTORIA

Robert Leyland is in--

AUNT EMILY

Naturally there is no Robert Leyland in Amalia's bedroom. I was just there. He is such a polite boy. And so prompt for dinner, I've noticed.

VICTORIA

He's on time for dinner because he never leaves after lunch. Or breakfast either, which he is also never late for because he never comes out of Molly's room except for meals.

AUNT EMILY

VICTORIA, REALLY!!!

(Controlling herself)

Perhaps the young man is supposed to be here now for breakfast, but isn't yet. Perhaps even though he is polite, he is also late. Perhaps--

(Horried)

Coming over for breakfast and they aren't even engaged! It's a disgrace!

(She dashes off to finish the laundry)

The state of Molly's room--her dresses, her slacks, her pretty shirts. Her dresses, her slacks, her pretty shirts. Wrinkled, wadded, into little balls, stepped on.

VICTORIA

I don't care what you say, Glen. It's always worried me and it's getting worse. A person can't pick and choose what they see by what they want to see.

GLEN

She doesn't pick and choose. All this time and you still won't believe me. She cannot see Rob when he is in Amalia's bedroom.

VICTORIA

It's just stubbornness or senility and I don't know which one's worse.

AUNT EMILY

Her sweaters, her scarves, her bathing suits. Her sweaters, her scarves...

VICTORIA

(As Glen heads for the back porch)

Glen, when are you going to tell Aunt Emily? Glen? Glen?

AUNT EMILY

(Muttering faster)

Winter and summer, piled up in heaps, just left there, left there to lie.

GLEN

(Looking up at the sky)

What a perfect day for golf. What a perfect day. A day when there is no possible connection between the shaft of your golf club and a lightning rod.

VICTORIA

(Looking out her kitchen window)

It looks so lovely out there from here. Of course, I know that's no way to tell about the weather.

GLEN

The kind of day I might have taken Molly golfing. I would have risked it. I have always wanted to take Amalia golfing.

VICTORIA

It looks exactly like the kind of day when he would come home from the course. I remember cooking special for that. Whole meals that could stand and cook for an hour, 2 hours, 3 or 4 extra hours, meals that could compensate in the event of crowds on the course.

GLEN

I meant to someday, take her golfing. But right after she was born, the crowds-- they stopped bowling or drinking or poker playing, they stopped doing whatever it was they had done before and they all started golfing. And then, the weather. It wasn't the same. It wasn't reliable.

VICTORIA

And the same exact meal had to be ready on a moment's notice if the weather blew up and turned bad and he came home early.

AUNT EMILY

(Softly, growing horror)

Her slips...her panties...her brassieres...

GLEN

Well, the clusters of people, the mobs of them and the weather together...who could insure that Amalia and I would be able to get in even one safe round? That's when I got into the weather business. I was called, so to speak.

(He takes off his robe and basks in the sunshine.)

Clear and clean. A day like it used to be.

VICTORIA

I remember--I remember. I remember him coming home.

(Pause)

Glen--Glen--what about it?

GLEN

About what?

VICTORIA

The weather and Aunt Emily.