

THINGS THAT BREAK

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The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one is sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty, and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one's love upon other human individuals.

-George Orwell

All true stories end in death.

-Ernest Hemingway

CHARACTERS

- JACKIE DEMERY** In her late twenties. She is a glass maker. She dresses artistically.
- PETER DEMERY** Her twin. He's an investment banker. He's wearing an expensive suit with the tie loosened, and the shirt a bit too wrinkled.
- ELIZABETH DEMERY** Their mother. She is in her late forties. She is still a beautiful woman, and there is a great sweetness to her face. She is wearing a shirt waist dress in a jewel tone, the kind of dress women in cities wear.
- NURSE PITKIN** Head Story Nurse. One of those ageless looking angels of mercy. She carries a Lucite clipboard, with charts clipped to it. She wears one of those retractable pens that is pinned to her blouse.
- And her uniform is dazzling white. Pristine, starched, one hundred percent cotton--it looks slightly archaic, perhaps from the forties in some way. But not too out of style. She is also wearing one of those classic nurse caps. There is a little border of blood red around the rim of the cap. She is wearing the perfect amount of makeup, white hose, and white pumps--no sensible nurse's clodhoppers for her.
- VICTOR DEMERY** The twin's father, Elizabeth's husband. He is tall, and strong, and gentle, and under anesthesia.

DOUBLED CHARACTERS

JOSEPHINE AND STELLA	Professional old ladies, played by different actors each time, male and female
DR. GLASS AND THE OPERATING TEAM	Four doctors, mostly males, can sing
SINGING TELEGRAM	Youngish, male or female, can tap dance and sing
CANDY STRIPER	Youngish, can tap dance and sing

SETTING

PART ONE:

The waiting room of an old, big hospital. Along the upstage wall, a vending machine. The seating area down stage--a couch, a coffee table, a couple of comfortable chairs.

To one side, the restroom area. Two stalls.

Opposite side--a revolving door that leads into the operating theatre, which is not visible.

There are also tall upstage swinging doors, leading into an area of great heat and light.

The waiting room area is extremely shallow.

PART TWO:

The waiting room has been miniaturized, so that it is approximately one-third its previous size.

The rest of the stage is now the operating theatre--but one which incorporates state of the art elements of an operating theatre with anachronistic ones, so that some tools are antique, museum pieces, etc. And some aspects of the room do not directly suggest an operating room at all, but refer to other places, where men and women work with their hands.

PROLOGUE

(The three actresses playing Jackie, Elizabeth, and Nurse Pitkin appear, in front of the curtain. They are all wearing identical black velvet evening gowns, beautifully made, gorgeous to look at.)

The actress playing Nurse Pitkin is holding a beautiful, hand blown champagne glass. It is so thin, so fine, that it almost appears to float in her hand. It is a traditional champagne shape, with perhaps some threads or twists in the stem, but no color--it is clear, brilliant glass. There is champagne in the glass. She holds the glass up in her hand, as if at the beginning of a toast, and surveys the audience.)

NURSE PITKIN

This...is not the first word of this play.

(Jackie places the champagne glass on the floor, near the edge of the stage, out of her way.)

JACKIE

The first word of this play is glass.

(A large sheet of glass is handed to her from the wings/floats down from the flies/emerges from the floor, what-ever. The sheet is probably three feet high, three feet wide--however large safety requirements require it to be. She steadies the glass.)

NURSE PITKIN

But not that glass, or this glass.

(They reach into cleverly concealed pockets in their gowns. The gowns function as wondrously designed overalls--they are stuffed with tools, braces, hinges, everything they need to secure the sheets of glass to create a self supporting shield. They continue to work on the shield throughout this prologue.)

ELIZABETH

This glass is safety glass. This glass--

NURSE PITKIN

--and this glass is again not the first word of this play--

ELIZABETH

--this glass has been subjected to rigorous tests. Calibrations made to many decimal points have been duly noted, and written down, on official pieces of paper.

JACKIE

Documents have been signed, stating that this piece of glass--

(Another piece of glass appears, in the same manner as before--or perhaps, a more stunning or less stunning way.)

--and this piece of glass--are all absolutely safe.

NURSE PITKIN

We are assuring you of the safety of these pieces of glass because it is important that you are assured. This is the theatre. Should danger, or the illusion of danger occur at the theatre, it is important that it stay on its side of an illusory line, right here--

(She touches the edge of the stage with her toe.)

Danger--here. Safety--there. This is the theatre, and in the theatre, your safety comes first.

JACKIE

It is illegal to yell fire in a crowded theatre. Fortunately, the first word of this play is not fire.

NURSE PITKIN

If the first word of this play were fire, and if the first thing you were going to see were fire, and not glass, then the fire marshal, with rigorous tests and official documents not unlike the ones that I have assured you have been

rigorously conducted and officially signed concerning glass, would have certified the fire as absolutely safe.

JACKIE

It is not illegal to yell glass in a crowded theatre.

ELIZABETH

In fact, if a tornado of sufficient speed and destruction were about to descend upon us, it would in all likelihood be considered a courtesy to yell glass, so that you could all double over in your seats and cover your eyes, except there is rarely any glass in a theatre, crowded or otherwise.

JACKIE

Occasionally, in the chandeliers.

ELIZABETH

In the Broadway houses, at the bar, on the mezzanine.

NURSE PITKIN

But that, as a rule, is about it.

ELIZABETH

So there is rarely any reason for anyone in the theatre to cover their eyes.

NURSE PITKIN

It would be a counterproductive thing to do at any time, and completely unnecessary tonight, because this glass--

(A third sheet of glass appears.)

--is here for your protection.

JACKIE

Like the paper strips on motel toilet seats when we were kids.

NURSE PITKIN

Wasn't it nice to know they cared, back then?

ELIZABETH

Don't you feel the loss of that protection, now that it has been replaced with a foil wrapped chocolate mint, positioned carefully near the pillow on the motel sheets?

NURSE PITKIN

I would have liked to put a little chocolate mint on each of your seats, tonight. I would have liked that, alot. If the first word of this play were chocolate--well, it would be a different play.

ELIZABETH

I wish it were. It would be so much easier, to walk out on stage, knowing that each and everyone of you has got something dark--and sweet--and soft---melting in your mouth.

JACKIE

But you don't.

(The shield is completed, three sided, open on upstage side.)

NURSE PITKIN

The first word of this play is glass, and I couldn't put a little foil wrapped piece of broken glass on each of your seats tonight, even if I wanted to.

(She picks up the champagne glass, holds it up, toasting the audience. She is to one side of the barrier.)

To things--

ELIZABETH

To things--

JACKIE

To things that--

ELIZABETH

Break

JACKIE

Break

NURSE PITKIN

Break.

(Nurse Pitkin drains down the champagne in one grand gulp.

BLACKOUT as she lets the glass fall, behind the barrier, so that the audience hears, but does not see it shatter just at the moment of darkness.)

PART ONE

(Curtain up on the waiting room at St. Mary's Hospital. Peter Demery, wearing an expensive suit with the tie loosened, and the shirt a bit too wrinkled, is sitting on a chair, facing out. He is bending over the small glass coffee table in front of him, where a Scrabble board is in play. A folded up Wall Street Journal beside him.)

Elizabeth Demery, his mother, is sitting on the sofa. She is wearing a shirt waist dress in a jewel tone, the kind of dress women in cities wear. On the floor beside her is an ample knitting bag, filled to overflowing with yarn and half knitted projects. She is a beautiful woman, and there is a great sweetness in her face.)

PETER

(Putting his letter tiles down on the board.)

Glass.

G L A S S.

(He reaches for the scoring pad.)

ELIZABETH

(Looking up from her knitting, says directly into the air in front of her.)

This is killing me.

(And resumes knitting, calmly.)

PETER

4 for G. 1 for--

ELIZABETH

This is killing me.

PETER

Did you say something, Mom?

ELIZABETH

(Looks up. Surprised that he thinks she has.)

Me? No.

PETER

You're sure you didn't...I mean I...

ELIZABETH

I maybe cleared my throat. That's all.

PETER

(Shrugs)

Okay.

(Back to scrabble)

4 for G.

ELIZABETH

This is killing me. Except, of course, that it might not be killing me. Everything might turn out all right, in which case, this would not be killing me. In which case, this would just be--making me strong. After all, what doesn't kill you, makes you strong.

NURSE PITKIN

(She flings open the door leading into the theatre, from the back of the house, and sweeps down the aisle. Everything about her manner suggests that she is in absolute charge, and we will all be just fine.)

Hello. I'm Nurse Pitkin. And the first thing I'd like to say, is that all our patients are special.

But all their stories are the same.

PETER

1 for L.

NURSE PITKIN

(She has ascended onto the stage.)

I can say this, because I'm the Head Story Nurse here at St. Mary's.

PETER

1 for A.

NURSE PITKIN

St. Mary's. The hospital with the three C's--Care, Concern, and Compassion--engraved in granite on the admitting room wall.

PETER

And 2 total for the S's.

NURSE PITKIN

I wasn't always a Story Nurse. For a long time, I was June Pitkin, Head Dialysis Nurse. It was a rewarding, fulfilling charge.

ELIZABETH

I think that that's what's killing me. Yes. That's it. What is killing me is not knowing whether this is killing me, or making me strong.

NURSE PITKIN

I had the hands for the work. But not the temperament for the job. Kidney problems were too local, too limiting for me. And when a kidney breaks down--well, just look at the way the word breaks down. Kidneys--K-I-D-N-E-Y-S.

kid kids keys

den dens

din dines

sin kin

kind kinds

send ends

ski skid sky

ides side

dies...

You'd be amazed at how many words have dying in them. You really would. Almost as if the language had a death wish, built right in.

ELIZABETH

After all, if it turns out that this is killing me, rather than just making me strong, that's exactly what I'll have to be. Because if everything I have ever believed is true, I won't have any choice.

I'll have to be strong.

NURSE PITKIN

So I've put kidney work far behind me. And who wouldn't, really, if given the chance? What's dialysis all about, really...I'll tell you.

You clean out the machine, you hook up the patient, you clean out the patient, you unhook the patient, you clean out the machine. It's assembly line work.

PETER

That's eight all together. Triple word score. Twenty-four.

NURSE PITKIN

It's still just nuts and bolts. It's still just connect this to that. This to that. Thisness and thatness.

ELIZABETH

I think, now that I really think about it, that that's what is killing me. Yes. What is really killing me is--

(It just barely, precisely, eludes her.)

Damn. I can't tell the difference! This is killing me, and I still have to sit here and be strong! There's no difference! What doesn't kill you makes you strong...Bullshit!

(She covers her mouth with her hand, shocked at herself for even thinking such a word.)

Bullshit. Bullshit.

(She's enjoying it.)

Bull...shit. I never really thought the word bullshit before. Damn and hell were as far as I had to go.

(Peter throws down his scrabble score pad, and goes toward the Ladies Restroom. Nurse Pitkin follows him.)

NURSE PITKIN

(Revealing the interior of the Ladies Restroom in some ingenious way.)

But, to make a long story short--I got out of this and that. I traded all of that and this in, for the over all narrative. The scope, the scale, and the larger casts, that come with the duties of the Head Story Nurse.

PETER

(Tapping on the restroom door.)

Jackie? Jackie? It's your turn...Jackie?

(No response from Jackie. He sticks his head in through the door. Lights up on the Ladies Restroom. There are two stalls, or the suggestion of stalls, and women's legs are visible in each of them.)

Jackie is standing in front of the mirror, playing with her hair. She has a brush in one hand, and a handful of clips and bobby pins in the other.)

Jackie--NO! Jackie, not your hair!

(He rushes into the bathroom but Jackie ignores him, continues messing with her hair.)

Jackie, your hair looks fine. JACKIE!!! JACKIE THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR HAIR!

JACKIE

(Holding out her brush for him to hold.)

Hold this.

PETER

No way.

JACKIE

Why not?

PETER

I won't be an enabler.

JACKIE

An enabler? Oh, my God. You're in therapy.

PETER

I am not. I'm in counseling. Couples counseling.

JACKIE

You think I don't know what kind of word enabler is?

NURSE PITKIN

(Nurse Pitkin has entered the restroom as well, from a nonspecific entrance point. Her uniform has slightly transformed--she's hiked up her skirt, opened up her blouse, and is now pulling on a long white pair of

opera length gloves.)

Enabler, by the way--

(She folds down a hidden panel in the wall, which becomes a shelf for a

large white top hat. She takes the brush from Jackie, with great flourish.)
 --is not a word. Officially. Oh, I have no doubt that it will make its way into the dictionaries eventually. That is the beauty of the lexicon of illness. You cannot cure an illness until you have a name for it. Naming a disease is the first and most important step in the search for the words that will cure it.

ELIZABETH

Bullshit. It feels good. Glad I saved it for an emergency.

PETER

(Jackie is still working at her hair.)

Jackie--come on. Mom's sitting out there alone--

JACKIE

Then you go out and sit with her. I can't come. I can't come out until I get it right.

PETER

Stop it! Stop it NOW! Your hair looks fine. Stop trying to make it perfect. When it comes to hair there is no perfect. What would be the point of perfect? HAIR IS JUST HAIR!

JACKIE

(Nurse Pitkin assists Jackie in all her efforts with her hair, performing various magic act gestures with the pins, clips, etc., that Jackie needs or hands to her. Nurse Pitkin pulls an astounding variety of hair accessories from the hat throughout the scene--curling irons, blow dryers, falls, clips, clamps and nets. Anything electrical will function, its cord apparently plugged in the inside of the hat.)

If hair is just hair, then why were you always after me about it? Why were you and mom always saying "Can't you do something about your hair?" I HATED that. And now my hair is always the first thing I think about whenever I think about doing anything. Good things, bad things, great things--just running to the store for a quart of milk--I can't think about doing anything without worrying about what I'm going to do with my hair.

PETER

You think about your hair when you think about doing great things?

JACKIE

Yes.

PETER

By great things, you mean--what--curing cancer? Saving children from burning buildings?

JACKIE

Well...yeah. More or less.

PETER

People who do great things don't worry about how great their hair looks while they're doing them.

JACKIE

You never worry about your hair, do you?

PETER

Nope. I'm married now. I worry about Penny's.

ELIZABETH

So. "What doesn't kill you makes you strong" is bullshit. So. I'm an educated woman. Surely I can come up with a way of organizing my thoughts without resorting to a shopworn cliché. After all, as my father-in-law was so very fond of saying:

"It's a poor workman who blames his tools. But only an ass would try to blow glass out of his--

(This is a little too crude for her. But--what the hell--)
--asshole."

STELLA

(Both toilets flush, and two little old ladies fling the stall doors open. These are expertly dressed little old ladies--professional old ladies. They're wearing Chanel or Chanel style suits, expensive jewelry, scarves, fabulous handbags, fabulous shoes.)

So I said to him--you cannot undo what you did.

(Peter dives behind a door, to hide as they burst out of their stalls. Stella and Josephine head for the waiting room area. Stella gives

Peter a little sideways kick as they pass him. They travel deliberately, perhaps hanging on to each other's arms for support. In some way, they are small tanks. They stride through the waiting room.)

You cannot undo what you did. You gave up that locket.

JOSEPHINE

Frankie's children were whores.

ELIZABETH

This is not happening to me.

(Tries it another way.)

This is not happening to me.

(Another way.)

This is not happening to me.

STELLA

On his deathbed they squabbled. You could hear them in the next wing.

ELIZABETH

No. It doesn't feel like it's happening to me, but it is. And I don't believe in denial.

I just don't.

JOSEPHINE

What those doctors put him through. A crime.

STELLA

So? He came out of it all right, in the end. Surprised 'em all.

Of course, he died on the way to Arabia.

(Stella and Josephine exit.)

ELIZABETH

This is a nightmare. No, not specific enough. My stomach is on fire, my hands are numb, my heart is beating its brains out, my feet are--where are my feet, they feel like they're in Ohio, were they always all the way down there--

(She snaps back.)

No. A little too specific.

JACKIE

I just don't know how I'm supposed to look for this, Peter. I mean, maybe there is a perfect way to wear your hair while you're in a hospital waiting room, and if I could find it--I mean look at how important hair is to great men and women. Look at Cleopatra. Look at Louis the 14th. How do we recognize them? By their hair. Because their hair was great. So maybe, if I could get my hair absolutely right, I could recognize this.

PETER

Recognize what?

JACKIE

What is happening to me.

PETER

This is not happening to you, it's happening to Dad.

JACKIE

Peter you know what I'm talking about!

PETER

Yeah. Mom's sitting out there alone, and we're in here, talking about hair.

JACKIE

I'm not talking about hair, Peter. I'm talking about greatness.

PETER

Okay. Your hair looks great. So can we go back out now?
(He is headed for the door, Jackie pulls him back.)

JACKIE

Peter--if I asked you to help me do something--if I really needed your help--would you help me?

PETER

(Pause)

Sure.

JACKIE

Good.

PETER

So? You going to tell me what you want me to help you do?

JACKIE

Burn it down.

ELIZABETH

I really do need to get this right, I really do. I need a way to name what is happening to me, so I can do it right.

PETER

What are you talking about?

JACKIE

You know what I'm talking about.

PETER

Nope. Don't have a clue.

(Nurse Pitkin begins putting away all the hair accessories and closing up shop.)

ELIZABETH

I need a word or a phrase that--that...oh, hell, I just can't--

(Epiphany)

Hell. Yes, of course. That's it! It's obvious! I'm sitting in a three square foot piece of hell.

PETER

(As Jackie turns, heads into one of the stalls.)

Jackie where are you going?

JACKIE

Where does it look like I'm going?

PETER

I don't believe this.

JACKIE

Trust me, Peter. This is one of the easier things to believe.

(Jackie goes into the stall, closes the door, Peter looks at it,

dumfounded for an instant.)

NURSE PITKIN

This is just one example of why kidney work was just too limiting for me.

(She puts the top hat away, folds up the shelf, and begins to transform back into Nurse Pitkin.)

PETER

(Heading back into the waiting room area. muttering.)

My sister must have the smallest bladder in the world.

NURSE PITKIN

Don't get me wrong. There's nothing wrong with a kidney story. And it's not that kidney work isn't good, fulfilling, honest labor.

PETER

My sister must have a bladder the size of a pea.

NURSE PITKIN

But a kidney story is, in the final dialysis, a lot like a love story. Boy is born with kidney. Boy loses kidney. Boy gets the use of a pseudo kidney. It works out or it doesn't. The end.

I admit I sometimes find myself drawn in by the simple eloquence of a love story--but the sad fact is that the things in me that can be changed by love stories have already been changed.

PETER

I used to feel sorry for Jackie's future husband. I used to imagine her bankrupting him with her toilet paper bills.

(He takes out the Scrabble pad, and begins making computations.)

NURSE PITKIN

That's why I'm looking for a new story.

PETER

I imagined the headline "WOMAN'S TINY BLADDER BANKRUPTS HUSBAND." And then I met Penny.

ELIZABETH

No, I just can't work with this vague, imprecise "This is hell" shit.

PETER

I married the only other woman in the history of the species. Who also has a bladder the size of a pea.

ELIZABETH

Who the hell knows what hell looks like, right? Hell is just a state of mind. I need to--engage with this thing fully. Otherwise, a person just gets trapped in cheap sentimentality. In bullshit.

And what a person needs at a moment like this is something profound. I need something big, something brutal, something like--

(Jackie flushes the toilet. The sound erupts loudly, sounding a bit like an atomic bomb.)

Nagasaki! Yes! Nagasaki fills the bill! Nagasaki--the moment after the blast. The sudden absence of the known world. One moment--everything is fine. Everything is good, or bad, everything is killing or not killing you in ways you can understand. Life is good or bad, but it's there. And then--the next moment--there was no world left. Well, there was a world, but it wasn't any world they knew.

(Jackie leaves the bathroom and enters the waiting room area, going to the rack of vending machines. She has a large knapsack with her.

Nurse Pitkin hides or closes off the interior of the ladies room.)

NURSE PITKIN

We are all looking for a new story. Think about it. You know it's true.

ELIZABETH

Yes. Nagasaki. A word that means the absence of the known world will do.

NURSE PITKIN

We thought the bomb was going to be a new story. But in the end, it turned out that death was nothing new. It is a story, however, that contains a small chapter about glass.

(Jackie takes a free form green glass object, the color of tourmaline, out of her knapsack.)

Glass is basically just sand, and fire. Well, the testing site in New Mexico provided one and the bomb the other.

PETER

At sixty cents a roll, let's say one roll every other day...

NURSE PITKIN

Together they made a lovely green glass, the color of tourmaline. Left it scattered, like a miraculous bloom of emerald Easter eggs, hot and easy to hunt, on the scorched desert floor.

PETER

Three hundred and sixty five divided by two that's one hundred and nine dollars and fifty cents a year.

JACKIE

(Jackie holds the tourmaline green glass object up into the light.)

When I was seven or eight years old, I used to pretend that this was a very rare, very dangerous piece of atom bomb glass.

NURSE PITKIN

Technically speaking, the glass made by the atom bomb would be considered a whimsy, or off-hand glass.

JACKIE

I used to see it, there on the shelf with the other whimsies, and long to touch it.

NURSE PITKIN

Whimsies are pieces of glass that are not made to suit the factory's purpose. They are made after the general run has been completed, made by the workers, in fantastic shapes and shades to show off their skill, and to take home to impress sweethearts and mothers and wives.

JACKIE

I had a whole story I invented about it.

NURSE PITKIN

The scientists at Alamogordo--misplaced craftsmen, to the last--followed this offhand tradition and fashioned jewelry from the choicest bits of glass, harvested from the center of the blast. Their wives wore these pendants and chokers and bracelets proudly. And then their soft skin began to burn beneath the sparkling gemstones. Filled with a fire that lasts.

JACKIE

In the story, this piece of glass has magical radioactive properties that cure the sick, and, at the same time, fits miraculously into a device that defuses every nuclear bomb in existence and ends World War III.

(She puts the green whimsy in an empty compartment in the vending machine.)

NURSE PITKIN

It was actually made in 1894 by a man named Emanuel Strauss who was the master blower at the Demery Glassworks until about 1933.

JACKIE

Most of my stories end like that. It was my dream, after all. To someday make, with my hands, and my breath, a perfect, world saving piece of glass.

(Jackie begins pulling more glass objects out of her knapsack--it is necessary to have it rigged as a trick knapsack, so that she can take as many pieces of glass out of it as she needs to. She empties food out of the vending machine—it's one of those types with carousel mechanisms, with lighted windows to display the food--and fills the compartments with beautiful, brilliantly colored glass objects. The light from the vending machines should back-light these "whimsies" beautifully, shining through, radiating, turning the vending machines into a stained glass window.

The vending machines should be scaled larger than normal to make sure the glass objects read properly.

(Assisting Jackie, Nurse Pitkin hands the glass objects to her.)

ELIZABETH

I know there is something wrong with a woman comparing her husband's surgery to Nagasaki.

I am an educated woman. I am aware of the--profanity--involved in borrowing that hideous, unthinkable moment, and transplanting it here.

But I can't help it. And I don't see why I should. Because the moment that may or may not be the moment the sudden and absolute absence of the known world happens to me could happen to me any moment now.

(Through the two huge swinging doors that open out of the place of

extreme heat and light, the operating team bursts onto the stage.)

THE OPERATING TEAM

(They are dressed as All the King's Horses and All the King's men, with surgical gowns and caps as well. There should be four of them. The Doctor is at the head of the parade. They are singing in the best barber shop harmony.)

HUMPTY DUMPTY WORKED LIKE A SLAVE
THE FAMILY BUSINESS TRYING TO SAVE
HE WORE HIMSELF DOWN

(Oak Ridge Mountain Boys Bit here:)

DOWN

DOWN

DOWN INTO BITS

AND HUMPTY DUMPTY'S INSIDES JUST CALLED IT QUILTS

NURSE PITKIN

Enter Dr. Glass and Company.

TEAM

(Singing)

HUMPTY DUMPTY

DR. GLASS

(Reading from a clipboard.)

Pulmonary function--20 percent.

TEAM

(Singing)

HUMPTY DUMPTY

DR. GLASS

Blockage of main heart valve--100 percent.

TEAM

(Singing)

HUMPTY DUMPTY

DR. GLASS

Secondary valve blockage--60 percent.

TEAM

(Singing)
HUMPTY DUMPTY

DR. GLASS

Usable cardiac collateral--zip.
Looks like a job for—

DR. GLASS AND TEAM

(Singing together)
ALL THE KING'S HORSES
AND ALL THE KING'S MEN
WE'LL PUT HUMPTY DUMPTY
TOGETHER AGAIN.

DR. GLASS

Peter. Good to see you again.
(He shakes his hand enthusiastically, warmly)

NURSE PITKIN

Dr. Harold Glass. Yale undergrad. Yale medical. Cholesterol level:

DR. GLASS

(He takes Jackie's hand.)
And you must be--Jacqueline!

NURSE PITKIN

One hundred fifty-nine.

DR. GLASS

Ah! Mrs. Demery.!
(Shakes Elizabeth's hand.)

NURSE PITKIN

You can feel it in his handshake--he's got the healing hands.

DR. GLASS

We are going in!

ELIZABETH

Oh!

DR. GLASS

(He heartily shakes their hands again, in reverse sequence.)
We're about to begin!

ELIZABETH

Yes?!?

PETER

Look, Dr. Glass, there are still a few questions you never answered that I--

DR. GLASS

No time now, son.

(He and the team join hands with lightning speed, and in a low tone he invokes:)

Oh Lord. Give me the skill to do what can be done, the knowledge to know what can't be, and the malpractice insurance to cover them both. Amen.

(Rest of team murmurs: Amen. They drop hands, and sing call and response, with Dr. Glass singing the lead.)

WE ARE GOING IN.

(Rest of the team: GOING IN)

'BOUT TO BEGIN!

(Rest of the team: 'BOUT TO BEGIN)

WE ARE ALL THE KING'S HORSES

(Rest of the team: ALL THE KING'S HORSES)

WE ARE ALL THE KINGS MEN

(Rest of the team: ALL THE KING'S MEN. In unison:)

IF ANYONE CAN DO IT

THEN WE ARE THE MEN

WHO'LL PUT HUMPTY DUMPTY

--WHO'LL PUT HUMPTY DUMPTY

TOGETHER--AGAIN!!!!!!

AAAAAAAAGAIN!!!!!!

(They parade through the revolving doors that lead into the operating room.)

ELIZABETH

Well. That was nice of him, wasn't it? To stop by. To reassure us, like that? So we don't worry? So we know everything's going to be just fine?

JACKIE

I don't trust that doctor.

ELIZABETH

You don't trust anyone, Jackie.

JACKIE

Well why should I?

ELIZABETH

Because you can't go through life not trusting people.

JACKIE

Oh, yes. Let's not forget the Demery Family Golden Rules:

1. Always be overdressed
2. Always stand up for what's right
3. And always trust everyone

That way, we'll be well dressed, stationary targets who make it easy for people to shoot us down.

ELIZABETH

Jackie--

JACKIE

Peter doesn't trust people either, do you, Peter?

PETER

Hell no. They have to trust me.

JACKIE

See?

ELIZABETH

Don't encourage her, Peter.

PETER

Look, Mom, it's the truth. People have to trust me with their money. Well, you can't give your money to someone you can't trust, and you can't trust a man with your money if he's stupid enough to trust other people, right? It's just a fact of life.

ELIZABETH

Well, it shouldn't be. I can remember when everybody trusted everyone. When the biggest deals were conducted on a simple handshake. Your grandfather never signed a contract in his life. Always said that if his hand on a deal wasn't good enough, it was no deal.

JACKIE

I don't think that's what Granddad used to say Mom. Not exactly.

NURSE PITKIN

I love it when the story dovetails like this. Don't you? The healing hands of business and medicine. Great myths, separately--together like this they--well--they give the new story an old fashioned resonance.

JACKIE

What Granddad used to say, exactly was:

“My hands made the glass, and the glass makes the deal, and if my handshake doesn't seal it, then you can kiss my--”

ELIZABETH

Jackie, please.

JACKIE

Well I can't help it, can I? If Granddad loved the word ass. “PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN GLASS HOUSES--

JACKIE/PETER

--GET WATCHED WHILE THEY WIPE THEIR ASS.”

(They laugh, and Elizabeth sighs and shakes her head.)

PETER

Boy, he loved the fact that ass rhymed with glass. “What kind of an ass works at the Demery Glass Works?”

JACKIE

“A Demery Ass works at the Demery Glass works--”

PETER

--"at the Demery Glass Works the Demery ass works"--
(Faster, an old game, getting jumbled up.)

PETER/JACKIE

--at the Demery Glass works the Demery ass works the Demery glass at the Demery Glass works the Demery ass works the Demery glass for the ass working glass--"

ELIZABETH

That's enough, you two.

(She's been knitting away, and has finished the row she's working on. She tries to pull up more yarn--it must be stuck--she starts tugging it.)

NURSE PITKIN

You may be interested to know that we sell Demery Glass, here in the Ladies Auxiliary Gift Shop, located down the hall, past Pulmonary, take your first right. All proceeds from the gift shop help the Auxiliary purchase the infant car seats--

(She picks up an infant car seat, wrapped in a pink bow, from behind the couch or chair.)

--that we present to each baby born at St. Mary's. Over twelve hundred given out so far this year.

ELIZABETH

(She manages to pull more yarn up out of her knitting bag with a nice big tug. The string of yarn--it's a golden brown color--turns into a boa constrictor of approximately the same hue. The boa should be as life-like as possible. Elizabeth looks at it, continuing to pull up the yarn, transfixed, unbelieving. It begins to wrap itself around her. In a strangled voice as the boa starts to really strangle her.)

Jackie? Peter?

JACKIE

Yeah?

PETER

(Elizabeth waits for them to notice the snake.)

Yeah, mom?

(Elizabeth still waits.)

What--is something wrong?

ELIZABETH

(She realizes they don't see it.)

No. Nothing. What could be wrong?

(She dramatically rips the snake off her, stuffs it and the object she's been knitting back into the bag, and hurriedly pulls out another project, this one made of brightly colored yarn--stripes of red, yellow, and black.)

NURSE PITKIN

We think of glass as fragile. We are trained, from childhood, to handle it delicately, tenderly, because glass is, first and foremost, a thing that breaks. But technically speaking, glass is forged and fused in fire--which makes it metal. And metal is the last thing we expect to break.

(Elizabeth pulls out more yarn. A large coral snake snakes its way out of the bag. Elizabeth looks at it, looks around her.)

JOSEPHINE

(Josephine and Stella enter from the side of the stage they last exited from. They are played by two different actors. The actors playing them this time may be men, or not.)

You say she went in for a simple operation?

STELLA

Simple? Simple? Removing a hangnail would of been more complex.

NURSE PITKIN

And there is another secret about glass--a delicious secret, because it seems to be a secret that glass does not know about itself.

JOSEPHINE

They punctured her?

STELLA

Punctured her? Ha. The Hindenberg was just punctured, compared to what they did to her.

JACKIE

Glass is liquid.

STELLA

Like a sieve.

JACKIE

It melts. It flows.

(She takes out a very liquidy formed whimsy.)

That's why you see ripples in old plate glass, and those fat bulges at the bottom of stained glass windows.

STELLA

She was dead when they got her to the table. And she was somewhat worse than that when they were done.

(Stella and Josephine have crossed the stage, and gone.)

JACKIE

Glass is nothing more than a kind of ice—room temperature, present tense ice, made of a special water that freezes in time, not cold, and will melt, is melting now.

NURSE PITKIN

Glass begins as sand, becomes a little slow piece of flowing river, and returns to sand. That is the story of glass--sand to sand. It is similar in this respect to the ashes-to-ashes story of the body, but the body's story is always a short one.

ELIZABETH

(Stuffing the coral snake back into the bag.)

Well. This is a much more fascinating turn of events than I'd anticipated. But I guess that's the point.

(She pulls out another knitting project--a dark tan one.)

When the known world prepares to absent itself, there's no telling where it prepares to go.

JACKIE

(Taking out a blue whimsy.)

Here it is. The famous Demery Blue. Kinder than cobalt. Colder than turquoise. Oh, you can find glass that looks more or less like this--but nobody else has ever managed to duplicate the exact shade of Demery Blue.

(She puts the blue piece of glass into the vending machine.)

Peter?

PETER

(Reading the Wall Street Journal.)

What?

JACKIE

Don't you ever miss it?

PETER

Miss what?

JACKIE

The glass. Making it.

PETER

I can't believe you're starting in on this, Jackie.

JACKIE

I'd miss it, Peter, I'd miss it--a lot, so I was just wondering, you know, if you missed it, because--

PETER

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE BRINGING THIS UP AT A TIME LIKE THIS!

JACKIE

All I asked was if you missed making glass, Peter. Jesus.

(A rattlesnake emerges from Elizabeth's bag, rattling away.)

PETER

You just can't pass up an opportunity, can you--give you the smallest opening, you pile up the guilt, you pile on the abuse--

JACKIE

It's a simple question. I can't help it if you feel guilty. I can't help it, and I don't care. It's a simple question, Peter. Do you miss making glass.

PETER

NO.

JACKIE

Thank you.

(Elizabeth squashes the rattlesnake back in the bag, matter of fact, and takes out a white knitting project.)

So...how about the abuse? Do you miss that?

PETER

What?

JACKIE

The abuse I always pile on you. Miss that?

PETER

What do you think?

JACKIE

No, I guess not.

NURSE PITKIN

Sometimes, it is necessary to involve oneself more intimately. In a particular family, and their story. We at St. Mary's are here to help. A thousand cc's of the three C's--that's our motto.

(Pitkin grabs her Penny costume and holds it in front of her--it is a paper doll cutout version of the evening gown worn in the prologue, except that now it is white. She holds a champagne glass--also identical to the one used in the prologue.)

JACKIE

After all, if it's abuse you're after, you've got Penny for that.

PETER

(Peter stands, flings his Wall Street Journal down.)

You really are a piece of work, you know that? You really are.

(He turns, without looking where he is going, and runs right into Penny/Pitkin. He slams into her, crushing the glass between them.)

SHIT! PENNY!!

You are the last thing I need right now. The very last.

(He stoops down to start picking up the broken bits of glass that have fallen at their feet.)

ELIZABETH

(The white yarn has turned into a huge white king cobra. Elizabeth tries to push it back down, business as usual, but it just hisses at her, and rises high and higher.)

I suppose a doctor would just call this an anxiety attack. But from where I'm sitting, it sure as hell looks like a cobra to me.

PENNY

Why are you putting that glass in your pocket?

PETER

Go away.

ELIZABETH

What does it eat, what does it eat, it looks hungry. If I could give it something to eat, it might go away.

JACKIE

(She is about to throw away some food from the vending machines. She reconsiders.)

You want anything, mom?

ELIZABETH

(To Jackie, by accident.)

A mouse, or a gerbil, maybe--a small rabbit might do the trick.

JACKIE

What mom?

ELIZABETH

(Realizing her mistake, covering.)

Nothing dear. I'm fine.

I have always considered myself a resourceful woman. It is hard to imagine where a resourceful woman would be hiding the resources to rise to this occasion--but that's the definition of resourceful.

PENNY

(Watching Peter put the shards in his pocket.)

I said, why are you putting that glass in your pocket?

PETER

No! I don't want to think about you now. Go away!

PENNY

But you're putting glass in your--

PETER

(Gives up fighting her appearance.)

Yes. I am putting it in my pocket. I put it in my pocket, and you say--

PENNY

That's the stupidest thing I ever saw in my life.

PETER

--and then we get married, and we move 324 miles away from my parents--

PENNY

Breaking your mother's heart.

PETER

--and we have three children, and things go to shit--

PENNY

But we hang on to them anyway.

PETER

--and my father gets sick, and--

(He is still on his knees, at her feet. He starts to weep.)

Tell me you love me, tell me you love me, please tell me you love me.

PENNY

(Pause)

That's the stupidest thing I ever saw in my life.

(He stops weeping, wipes his nose with the back of his hand. Takes visible hold of himself. And continues to pick up the glass fragments, and put them in his pocket.)

Well?

ELIZABETH

That PBS special on the Sacred Snakes of India! Yes! I watched that series

religiously! They showed this wonderfully grainy black and white film clip of a high priestess, performing an elaborate ritual with a very similar--though much smaller--snake. She had to kiss the snake--peculiar, isn't it, that in a country where it's a crime to touch the majority of the population, it's a blessing to kiss a snake? Anyway, she had to kiss the snake, on its head, three times. Like this.

(She bobs and weaves from side to side along with the movement of the snake, and kisses it.)

That's one.

PENNY

Well, Peter? I said, that's the stupidest--

PETER

I heard you!

PENNY

Then you know what happens next.

PETER

Yeah.

(Ticking it off on his fingers.)

Marriage, move, mom's broken heart, children, shit--

PENNY

Oh, Peter. Don't be coy. You know what happens after you bump into me, spill the champagne and ruin my dress. You know what happens next.

(She drapes herself around his shoulders, from behind.)

Come on. It'll be just like it was, the first time.

PETER

(Penny takes his hands, starts to lead him over behind the couch.)

Here? Now?

ELIZABETH

(Kisses the snake again.)

That's two.

PENNY

Sure. Why not?

PETER

Right here? With my father lying on the operating ta--no, I won't-

PENNY

Sure you will. This is what you need. You know you do.

(He turns to her, they embrace passionately, and kiss, and sink down onto the floor, behind the couch.)

ELIZABETH

(Kissing the snake again.)

That's three!

(The snake immediately becomes docile, tame, and it begins to rain.)

Rain. Of course! Now I remember.

(It rains only on Elizabeth.)

Sounds of Peter and Penny kissing float up from behind the couch.)

The high priestess kisses the cobra for rain.

PENNY

(The amplified sound of Peter's zipper being unzipped.)

My, oh my!

PETER

---penny, penny please!---

PENNY

Darling you're tearing it--don't tear it--

JACKIE

(Holding up a beautiful clear and white cased glass object.)

This is one of mine.

PENNY

Oh, that tickles.

(She giggles.)

JACKIE

It's cased glass--two layers of glass, the clear, on the inside, then you pick up a gather of white.

PENNY

(She giggles some more.)

Stop it stop it stop it stop it!

JACKIE

You work them both and then you grind or carve off parts of the outside so the inside shows.

PENNY

Bad, bad boy.

(She slaps him. He growls.)

JACKIE

I was 18 when I made it.

PETER

---oh, jesus penny your skin is so smooth---

JACKIE

I made it to impress a boy named Dickie Shaw.

PENNY

Oh!

PETER

---yes---

PENNY

Now!

PETER

---please---

JACKIE

I don't know where I got the idea that something like this could be a viable part of a mating ritual, but he took one look at it, said, "You really made that?" and asked Sara Toombs to the prom.

ELIZABETH

(Opens her mouth, drinking in the rain.)

Rain, as it turns out, was the last thing I expected. But I can't really say that I mind. It's quite refreshing. A little warmer than it might be--but I can adapt. I have always prided myself on being an adaptable woman.

(She opens the neck of her dress a little, takes out a handkerchief, and gives herself a sponge bath.)

PENNY

Please!

PETER

---now---

PENNY

Yes!

PETER

---oh!---

JACKIE

It turned out that Dickie did ask me out a couple of times after we graduated.

PENNY

Don't stop!

PETER

---i can't stop---

PENNY

Don't stop!

PETER

---i can't---

JACKIE

And after him, there were a half dozen or so serious tries.

(She lines up six wildly different whimsies, lines them up on the end table. Then she puts them into the vending machines.)

PENNY

Stay there!

PETER

---i'm trying---

PENNY

Harder! Try there.

ELIZABETH

(Her spit bath well underway, enjoying it)

There. I've adapted. I've learned to like it. To use it. To--
(The rain abruptly stops.)

Bullshit. Even the rain is full of it.

(Flowers begin to grow around Elizabeth's chair, up out of her knitting bag, and out of her.)

JACKIE

But I just couldn't settle for less. The way Peter did.

ELIZABETH

Flowers. What a nice touch.

PETER

(His head pops up from behind the couch.)

Jackie I did not settle.

JACKIE

Of yes you did.

ELIZABETH

Flowers will come in handy, for the hospital room, during recovery, or for the-- well, they'll come in handy. Either way.

PENNY

Touch me there--

PETER

---okay--

PENNY

And there--

PETER

--okay--

PENNY

And there--

PETER

Jackie you're the one that settled.

JACKIE

For what?

ELIZABETH

I do hope they'll be tulips. Tulips would be nice.

PETER

For the glass.

JACKIE

Oh, right. Mr. Investment Banker. Mr. Man Who Makes Nothing But Money.
Mr. Man Who Makes Nothing That Stays.

PETER

(Gasping, out of breath)

Why do you always--

PENNY

AND THERE!!

PETER

---i'm trying!---

Why do you always try to make me feel bad about my job, Jackie?

JACKIE

You mean you don't?

ELIZABETH

(The flowers are starting to bloom--large, lush, jungle-like.)

Well, they're not tulips.

JACKIE

You mean you like what you do?

PETER

Of course I do--

JACKIE

You like your life?

PETER

I love my children---

JACKIE

Well, who doesn't.

PETER
And my wife--

JACKIE
Sad, but true.

PETER
And my job--

JACKIE
You don't have a job, my boyo.

PETER/PENNY
YES!

That's the point.

GOD!

You are just a conduit.

OH!

So that numbers, passing from one bank
account to another

OH GOD YES

have something to pass through

ELIZABETH
(The flowers continue to bloom--huge, and not tulip like at all.)

PENNY/PETER

No.

YES

They're definitely not tulips.

GOD

African violets, maybe.

OH

I don't care for violets. Too showy.

YES

But I have to admit

OH

they make a lovely corsage.

YES--YES--THERE!!!!!!

(They climax. Appropriate moaning, etc. All the flowers blossom, hideously. All have fang-like teeth, and scalpel like incisors. Elizabeth reaches out, and picks one of the flowers. It bites her. She screams.)

JACKIE

(Rushing to her mother's side.)

What's wrong!

(But she is interrupted by the revolving door thundering into motion. It is a terrifying, huge sound.)

THE SINGING TELEGRAM

(Dressed in equal parts surgical garb and singing telegram uniform, the singing telegram deliverer emerges from the revolving doors, after several terrifying revolutions, singing:)

Singing Telegram for the Demerys

Singing the Demery Telegram

(He/She is up to the area where the family is. Spoken:)

You the Demerys?

(All three nod, struck dumb with terror at what they may hear.

Sung:)

They're in. They're in!

His system stood up beautifully

to the trauma of the drama of the opening

And I've been sent to tell the tale

to report the patient hearty and hale

and chances are his heart won't fail!

(Spoken aside)

during the next seven hours of the operation

SO!

(He/She breaks into one of those show tune finale type dance kicks.)

That's all for now

No more to say

I hope I was clear

I know that you are

just sick with fear

but that's all for now

no more to say

sign here.....

(Jackie, Elizabeth, and Peter just look at him/her numbly, mouths open, uncomprehending. The singer looks at them all expectantly, holding out the form on the clipboard for them to sign.)

PENNY

(Hissing)

Peter. PETER!!

(Peter rouses himself, stands, quickly pulling up his pants, takes the clipboard, signs for the telegram. The singer puts out his/her hand out for a tip. Peter fishes into his pocket, gives him/her one. He/She taps off.)

NURSE PITKIN

(She is putting on her cap, getting back into her efficient Nurse Pitkin persona.)

I don't want you all to think I indulge myself often like that. I don't. Get too involved, and a story nurse loses her perspective. Her point of view. Still, a good story nurse does her best to straddle both worlds. To acquaint herself--intimately--with the hospital narrative from both sides of the story line.

JACKIE

Thank God. The hard parts over.

ELIZABETH

(Elizabeth stares at the place where the flower bit her. She is in shock.)
Poisoned.

PETER

See, Mom. It's all going to be okay.

ELIZABETH.

(She is rocking in her chair, back and forth.)
I should have expected the bite. I should have expected the venom. The sting.
The pain.

JACKIE

The hard parts getting in, and now that that's over, Dad should be--Mom--Mom?
You okay?

ELIZABETH

And I'm cold. So cold.

JACKIE

Mom--MOM!

ELIZABETH

What, dear?

JACKIE

Are you okay?

ELIZABETH

Of course I'm okay. Why wouldn't I be?

(To herself again, keening, rocking.)

This is the way the world ends. This is the way the world ends.

(Screaming)

THE GODDAMN FUCKERS LIED TO ME ABOUT THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS! THEY LIED ABOUT THE WHIMPER! THEY LIED ABOUT THE BITE! THEY NEVER MENTIONED THE POISON!

Damn. Now I've used up the word fuck. I've used the word fuck, and it's just the beginning. Just the first hour. When it gets to be hour number five, number seven--what am I going to have left?

JACKIE

(She and Peter are looking at Elizabeth, worried.)

Would you like us to get you something to eat? A cup of coffee, that might make you feel better?

ELIZABETH

(Sweetly)

No, no, I'm fine. Perfectly fine.

PETER

You sure, mom? You look kind of funny.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean, is there something wrong with the way I look---

JACKIE

No, no, of course there isn't-

(To Peter)

What is the matter with you?

PETER

What? What?

ELIZABETH

I don't suppose that windbag Socrates gave his appearance a second thought, as the poison from that hemlock cocktail worked its way north, up through his body.

JACKIE

You don't tell a woman she looks funny. Funny--tired--upset--you never tell her.

PETER

But Jackie--

ELIZABETH

Cleopatra, on the other hand, probably didn't think about anything else except the way she looked. Of course, she took the asp express--ten to twenty seconds from take off to arrival--which gave her little time, it's true for philosophical or cosmetic contemplation.

PETER

But she does look funny--

ELIZABETH

Obviously I have my choice of traditions. And, even while it seems deeply superficial to be concerned with how I look at a time like this--I have a responsibility to the children. So--for their sakes--

(She begins straightening her hair, her dress, the flowers growing out of her and the chair. To Peter and Jackie.)

I know I must look a little worried. After all, I am worried. I'm supposed to look worried.

PETER

(Lying)

Mom, you look fine.

(He kisses her cheek, and lies better.)

You look fine even when you're worried.

(Nurse Pitkin takes out gardening cum surgical instruments, and begins to do a little gardening on Elizabeth and her flowers.)

ELIZABETH

It's just...it's just that I was thinking about the sound it makes.

JACKIE

The sound what makes?

ELIZABETH

You know. The sound it makes when--you know. When they take your father and they uncover his chest and they...they cr_____

(She can't say the word, because it doesn't make sense.)

NURSE PITKIN

(To the rescue. She says the word crack for her.)

Crack--to decode, decipher, or decrypt.

ELIZABETH

(She's trying to say it, but--)

...when they cr_____

NURSE PITKIN

Crack--a joke, drollery, gag, or jest.

ELIZABETH

...open his...when they cr_____

NURSE PITKIN

Crack--to do in an instant, a jiffy, a flash--in the space of a twinkling wink of an eye.

ELIZABETH

...when they cr_____

(She is getting increasingly distressed about this.)

NURSE PITKIN

Crack--proficient at, cracker jack, masterful, expert, skilled.

ELIZABETH

...open his...Jackie? I can't--I can't--

NURSE PITKIN

Crack--take a stab at, a shot at, a whack at, a whirl.

JACKIE

What, mom, what is it--

ELIZABETH

When they--when they--

ELIZABETH/PITKIN

(Pitkin a definition delivery, Elizabeth feeling every syllable of pain.)

Smash and splinter and carve and split and rend and shatter and slice and--

JACKIE

Mom, what--what--

ELIZABETH/PITKIN

(Elizabeth exploding with it.)

--and slash and gut and spill and--

JACKIE

Mom, Mom, are you okay--MOM!!

ELIZABETH

Oh. I'm sorry, Jackie.

(Very rationally, calmly)

I was just wondering what it sounded like, when they cr--when they opened him up.

JACKIE

Let's talk about something else, okay? Get your mind off it.

PETER

Jackie, she wants to talk about it, let's talk about it.

(Jackie yanks him to the side for a little chat.)

JACKIE

This is the absolute last thing she should be thinking about.

PETER

Who made you the expert all of a sudden?

ELIZABETH

Everything is so cold. Everything is so slow. And thin. And far away. How did the world get so thin? And slow? And cold.

JOSEPHINE

(Josephine and Stella enter. They are played by two other actors, wearing the Stella and Josephine costumes. Stella is carrying a tray with glasses of orange, tomato, and apple juice on it. Both of them are wearing large orange buttons with the slogan "ST. MARY'S JUICES FOR YOU!" written on them.)

Well, he got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom after that little operation to remove that growth on his nose. Broke his leg.

PETER

Do me a favor, Jackie.

(Peter is still disheveled from his tryst behind the couch. He reknits his tie, straightens himself up, taking his time.)

JOSEPHINE

When they were setting the leg, they noticed he'd formed a clot.

PETER

Let me talk to mom the way I want to? And stop nagging me about the glass.

JOSEPHINE

Well, the medication they gave him to break up the clot started him hemorrhaging.

PETER

It upsets her. You know it does.

JOSEPHINE

They gave him something to stop the hemorrhage.

JACKIE

Oh--so now I don't have your permission to talk about glass, is that it? I can't even MENTION the word?

JOSEPHINE

Meanwhile, the clot broke up, lodged in his brain, he had a stroke.

(She offers them a glass of juice from the tray.)

JACKIE

Well here's a news bulletin, Peter--I'll say the word glass all I want to.
(She takes a glass of apple juice off the tray, drains it down.)

JOSEPHINE

He survived the stroke, the operation to reverse it, and the post-op trauma, but--he had an adverse to the anesthesia. Puffed right up.

JACKIE

(Holding up her empty glass, checking the touch mark on the bottom.)
Demery Glass. See? I said the word glass again.
(She puts the glass down on the tray, and returns to the vending machines.)

JOSEPHINE

Well, he developed a bad bladder infection from the medication they gave him to puff him down--had to catheterize him, the tip broke off. Bam. Back to surgery. Pre-op thought he was a Mister E. Brown, not Mister F Brown. And that's why they gave him the proctoscope. By mistake.

STELLA

And that's when they found the cancer?

JOSEPHINE

Yep.
(She puts the tray of juice glasses down on the coffee table.)
And just in the nick of time, too.

PETER

Mom?

ELIZABETH

Yes dear?

PETER

What do you say we take a little walk, maybe go down to the cafeteria--

ELIZABETH

All right, dear. That might be nice--
(She tries to stand, but her legs are entwined, prisoners of the vines and flowers.)

Actually, Peter--I'd just as soon not. If that's all right?

PETER

Sure it's all right. We can just say here and talk, all right?

ELIZABETH

All right.

PETER

Now. About that sound.

ELIZABETH

No, Jackie's right. We shouldn't talk about it.

PETER

But we should. Just in a different way. The way we should talk about that sound is--as sounding good.

ELIZABETH

(Looks at him as if he's from the planet Mars.)

Good?

JACKIE

(Putting more whimsies in the vending machine.)

Here's an interesting piece. From an order of custom bottles for General Grant during the Civil war.

PETER

See, we're looking at it as something horrible, but to the doctors, that sound is just a part of their job.

JACKIE

Has a hidden chamber in it. Looks empty, but it's really half full.

(She puts her head back, and tosses some liquid down her throat to demonstrate.)

PETER

I figure there's one way it sounds, when they do it right, and another way, when they do it wrong. And since these doctors are the best--I made it my job to make

sure that the absolute best is what they are--then the sound is not just good, it's the absolute best it can be.

NURSE PITKIN

(Taking a break from gardening, she sits back on her heels, wipes her brow.)

Nobody ever had to tell the Demery Twins that glass was good. It was obvious to them, at every turn, that the glass their family made was the most durable substance in the world.

PETER

Can you think about it like that? Can you do that, mom?

(Elizabeth hugs him to her as tightly as she can, with her flower covered arms.)

ELIZABETH

(Over his shoulder, to herself)

My son thinks I'm an idiot.

NURSE PITKIN

Their name was Demery, but in a town built on glass, they were known to everyone as the glass twins.

ELIZABETH

He's sweet, and wonderful, and he thinks his mother is an idiot.

(She kisses him on the top of his head.)

His wife thinks so too. Well, maybe she's right. Maybe she's--well of course! That's it! I'll be an idiot!

NURSE PITKIN

They were made from the finest, purest sand in the world--the famous Crystal City sand, the silica of dreams. And they would flow, perhaps, one day, back into the ground, melting gracefully, in the pull of time, like all good glass. But breaking, in any way, shape, or form, was out of the question.

ELIZABETH

Since being strong and and organized and resourceful and adaptable hasn't done me a damn bit of good--I'll be an idiot. I'll give up fighting to be strong, to get on top of this. I'll let it get on top of me.

(To Peter)

Thank you, Peter. I will try to think about everything that's...going on in there as good.

(She kisses him again, and lets him go.)

It's such a relief to be an idiot. I don't know why I didn't think of it before.

NURSE PITKIN

(Nurse Pitkin picks up a fragment of glass from Penny's broken champagne glass.)

St. Mary's is also a story built on glass. Most of our oldest hospitals are. In America--a land built on hard work--the first work was glass. Even before the Jamestown settlers had food to eat or huts to sleep in, they built a small glass works, for the production of glass beads, for trade with the Indians. Consequently, among the settlement's first recorded injuries and deaths, are those involving accidents that occurred during the manufacture of glass. It is no coincidence that the Glass Works is so convenient to the hospital. The story of hospitals and the story of glass have always gone hand in hand.

(She draws the shard across the palm of her hand. A line of deep red blood appears.)

PETER

(He sees what Jackie is doing at the vending machines.)

Jesus Christ--what the hell do you think you're doing!

(He rushes back.)

Goddamn it, Penny--

JACKIE

Penny? I hate it when you call me Penny.

(Nurse Pitkin has moved to a pre-set medical kit, and removes a piece of gauze.)

ELIZABETH

Well now. Let's see. What would an idiot be thinking about at a time like this.

PETER

You can't do this--they're all we've got left.

JACKIE

Wrong-o. I'm getting rid of them--so they're semi-left. At best.

PETER

This is crazy.

JACKIE

It's not my fault Granddad left you and dad the works. And left all the glass to me.
(Peter begins fishing around for some change in his pocket, to buy back some of the whimsies.)

NURSE PITKIN

(Bandaging her hand.)

Glass work was so hard on the men who gave the glass that for two hundred years, not a single glass house in America stayed in continuous operation for longer than five years.

PETER

They're mine just as much as they are yours--no matter what Granddad did--

JACKIE

Wrong-o again. But--I'm prepared to make you a deal. I am prepared to sell you my birthright. I am prepared to trade you your birthright--for mine.

(The entire upstage wall is now an entire wall of glass objects in the vending machine shelves.)

NURSE PITKIN

If the works didn't burn down, or the workers didn't strike, or the insatiable furnaces didn't reduce every available stand of timber within a hundred miles to mud and stumps--the glass works simply ran out of men. Or rather--used them up. Broke them, from the inside out. In the small sun heat of the crucible, their hearts exploded in their chests. Their lungs, coated with whisper fine silica dust, aching from the strain of pushing breath into molten metal, gave out, and gave out, and gave out.

ELIZABETH

Well, I might be worrying about whether I left the tea kettle on, or turned the iron off, but I wasn't an idiot when I left the house this morning, so I really can't justify worrying about that.

PETER

Tomorrow morning, when Dad's fine, and you've returned to the planet, you are really going to hate yourself for doing this.

JACKIE

No I'm not.

PETER

All right, then. I'll hate you.

ELIZABETH

Can't think about now. Can't think about later. Well, that leaves--before. Yes--I think that's just what an idiot would think about at a time like this--they'd think about their life before the known world announced its intention to just up and vanish--they'd think about the world when it was still whole.

JACKIE

(As she puts a purple piece of glass in the vending machine.)

Look, Peter. It's Granddad's heart.

(The door slides shut on it. She gets out some change, drops it in, and retrieves the purple glass piece.)

The last piece of glass he made.

(She holds it up to the light.)

Granddad's purple heart. I mean, it's not like it's this piece that killed him, you know, not really, that's cockeyed thinking, but the human race will romanticize things like this, like it's the bullet and not the war that kills a man, you know. I think it's because a bullet is easier to hold in your hand than a war.

PETER

Do you have any idea what a collector would give you for these?

JACKIE

Yeah. Money. Amazing, isn't it? How can that be right? That money--piles and piles of money is the only thing you can get for these. Here's the deal.

(She gives him some change.)

Pick one. Pick any one you like. It's yours--no matter what happens, it's yours to keep. I'll give it to you free, and clear. But if I can guess the one you pick--you win them all. Only one catch. I get the works, in return. It's a trade. You get the glass, I get the works. Oh, actually, there are two catches--you have to come with me and you have to--I guess there are three catches. You have to help me too. You have to come with me, and you have to help me. That's the deal.

PETER

Help you do what?

JACKIE

Is it a deal?

PETER

No, it's not a deal. What do I get if you guess wrong?

JACKIE

I won't guess wrong.

PETER

Of course you won't. You'll cheat.

JACKIE

I know you better than anyone in the world, Peter, I don't need to cheat. I know which one you'll pick.

PETER

Say I agree to do this. Say I pick one. Say you guess it right. Say I go with you—

NURSE PITKIN

(Comes downstage, and in her best stage whisper says:)

This is a simple story.

PETER

What happens next?

NURSE PITKIN

I believe in stylistic simplicity. At the beginning of the course of any disease, the scenario is always simple. Simple.

S-I-M-P-L-E.

Lips smile,
plies,
impels slime,
limp lies.

JACKIE

It's just a phone call, right? A dial tone. Seven numbers. Some man's voice, on the other end of the line. A simple phone call. And it's all gone.

NURSE PITKIN

In the beginning, the scenario is always simple. It is only later that complications set in.

PETER

You're not serious.

JACKIE

I am.

PITKIN

A simple story...going once...

PETER

This is a joke.

JACKIE

Yeah. On us.

NURSE PITKIN

Going twice...

PETER

Look, Jackie—

(Peter looks longingly at the whimsies trapped in the vending machines.)
--you want to throw the whimsies away--it's crazy, it's hurtful, it's mean, irrational, but doing that—that other thing—you've got no right to do it, Jackie. No right at all. The glass is yours. All the glass. Past, present, and future. The glass is yours. But the works. Are mine.

JACKIE

Funny guy, Granddad. To do that.

PETER

Yeah. Funny guy.

JACKIE

I don't want to do it alone, Peter.

PETER

Do it--I can't even believe we're talking about it!

JACKIE

Yeah. I'd much rather burn it down. Return it to the fire. That's what Granddad would say. Return it to the asshole fire. From whence it came.

NURSE PITKIN

In the drop of molten glass that falls, unnoticed, into the packing material--in the escaping spark from the roaring furnace--in the exploding shard from a flawed, red hot flask--the fire is always waiting. Fire, the glass man's greatest fear, is always there, waiting. To take back everything it gives.

JACKIE

I need you. What'd Granddad always say? Takes two to light the asshole furnace. One to hold the light, and one to watch out for the arms of the fire. The greedy, asshole fire.

PETER

I will not help you make that phone call! I won't do it.

JACKIE

Yes you will. You want these whimsies, don't you? So you will.

PETER

What if I need it to stay, Jackie? What if I need someplace—that stays?

JACKIE

To come back to?

PETER

You know I can't come back—you know Penny, you know she'd never—Jackie I think she'd leave me if I—you know I can't come back.

NURSE PITKIN

A simple story going once—twice—three times.

JACKIE

(Shrugs)

Then it's gone already. If you're not coming back—it's already gone.

NURSE PITKIN

A simple story--gone

PETER

But what about Dad—what about—

JACKIE

You heard mom last night.

ELIZABETH

I don't know why I'm torturing myself like this. It's really very simple. I'll just think about when I was young, and nothing bad had ever happened to me, or ever would.

PETER

Yeah.

JACKIE

She meant it.

PETER

She didn't mean this.

JACKIE

It doesn't matter what she meant. He promised her. He never sets foot in the Demery Glass Works again.

ELIZABETH

I'll think about the day I met him. How strong and handsome he looked. And nothing bad had ever happened to him, or ever would.

(Peter plays with the coins in his hand for a moment.)

I'm going to start with him walking toward me. From far down the street. I'm visiting my cousin, Betty, and I look up and there's a man, walking toward me. I can't quite see his face.

JACKIE

(Jackie turns her back on him, so she can't see the glass object he chooses.)

He puts in the money, and selects a goblet--Nile blue, partially cased in ruby glass, a magnificent goblet with ropes and swirls, heavy and

delicate at the same time.)

Got it?

PETER

Got it.

ELIZABETH

I watch him walking towards me. I like the way he walks. I turn to Betty and I say, "I like the way he walks." And Betty says, "that's Victor Demery." And I say "who's that?" And she says, "everybody knows who the Demerys are."

JACKIE

You've picked Red Demery's Egyptian Goblet--presented to his wife, our great-great-great-great grandmother Louise upon the birth of their first son, Peter MacDowell Demery. January 17, 1810. The King's Cup.

(Jackie turns, sees that she's guessed correctly.)

Let's go.

PETER

But I thought they were mine now--

JACKIE

Not until after--

PETER

But what if somebody takes them--we can't just leave them here like this!

JACKIE

Why not? Because they're beautiful? Because they're history? Because they're ours?

PETER

Yes.

JACKIE

No. Because they're beautiful, and historical, and ours. That's why I have to leave them. I have to, Peter. I have to leave them all behind.

(Nurse Pitkin hands her another glass object.)

You ever destroyed anything beautiful? No? Me either. The perfect glass twins never had a destructive impulse in their lives.

NURSE PITKIN

Something truly lovely--to hold it in your hand--to feel the weight of it, the work in it, the care, the spirit of the maker, the special--oh, the Japanese have a word for it, Wu or Li, my notes, it seems, are not precise on this--a small word--for the being of the object--made in harmony. To hold something lovely in your hand, and feel the Wu, or the Li, completely--and then--

(Jackie smashes the glass piece she is holding against the side of the vending machine. Peter moves to stop her, too late.)

JACKIE

This is not the kind of thing a Demery does, of course.

(Peter stoops down and begins picking up the broken glass and putting it in his pocket.)

Believe me, I know that. I am well aware. A Demery does not ever destroy something beautiful. The Demerys prefer to let something beautiful destroy them.

ELIZABETH

I'm going to just stand here, waiting.

(She smiles.)

It's a beautiful day, and I can't think of a better place to wait.

JACKIE

Let's go.

(She goes over to Elizabeth.)

Mom?

ELIZABETH

(Calm, serene)

Yes, dear?

JACKIE

You all right? You need anything?

ELIZABETH

Not a thing, darling.

JACKIE

You're sure? Because Peter and I, we thought we'd take a little walk. Stretch our legs.

ELIZABETH

A walk? What a good idea. It's such a beautiful day. You go on, I'll stay here.

JACKIE

You sure you'll be okay?

ELIZABETH

I'm perfectly fine.

JACKIE

(Kisses her. Peter gets up from picking up the glass, kisses her too.)
We won't be long.

ELIZABETH

Yes. He's walking toward me, on his long, strong legs. I can see his face now. He's almost here.

(As Jackie passes by the coffee table, she notices the scrabble board.)

JACKIE

Glass. G L A S S. Eight points. Triple word score. Twenty four.

(She scoops up the letters.)

You made glass, Peter. What do you know.

(She puts them in her pocket as Peter puts the shards of glass in his.)

For the last time. A Demery made glass.

(They move toward the doors that lead to a place of great heat and light. As they go through the doors, the hospital waiting room walls begin to roll down, revealing the operating theatre, which takes up most of the stage.)

Dr. Glass and the team are dressed as part surgeons, part heavily romanticized boatmen. They toil over the body on the table which in some way is a barge on a canal. They are bailing, and singing in lusty full-throated harmony.)

DR. GLASS

I FEEL JUST LIKE
THAT GUY LA SALLE

TEAM

FIVE CC'S
FROM THE VENTRAL CANAL

DR. GLASS

I'M EXPLORING DEEP
INTO EVERY VALVE

TEAM

FIVE CC'S
FROM THE VENTRAL CANAL

DR. GLASS

WE'VE CLEANED SOME CLOGGED VEINS
IN OUR DAY
FILLED WITH PLAQUE
BLOCKED BY DECAY
AND EVERY INCH OF THE WAY WE KNOW
FROM THE A-OR-TA
TO THE CHAMBERS BE-LOW...OH...
SUCTION--EVERYBODY NOW!

DR. GLASS AND TEAM

SUCTION--SUCK OUT ALL THAT BLOOD AND BILE
CAUSE THE BODY IS A VENICE
SINKING FAST, YOU KNOW THAT NOW
IF YOU'VE EVER NAVIGATED ON
THE VENTRAL CANAL

(Lights fade on the operating theatre.

BLACKOUT)

END OF PART ONE