

ARTICLE IV

A new play in two acts

By Jim Reyland

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Equal the world (7)

THE CAST

JONATHAN FORTY

He is the reluctant heir to the Forty Textile Empire, a forty-two-year-old music teacher who has discovered that he is rich, money enough to feed all of his eccentricities.

FAITH LOCKHART

Faith is a Twenty-one year old hillbilly dancer from N.C. who is hired to clean and other jobs around the Forty home.

JAMES FORTY

He is the fifteen-year-old son of Jonathan and Faith, has grown up with only his eccentric father as a role model.

MASON SCOTT

The fifty-year-old Forty family attorneys loyal to Marius, knows where all the bodies are buried. A rich judge who is bent on getting richer and protecting his client.

DAVID EVERS

He is an early thirties simple guy from Texas, a smart ass who gets caught up in his girl friends big ambition. All he really wants is to provide and live a good life.

CLAIRE EVERS

An early forties roommate of David who makes fun of Faith and who is so consumed with wealth she can't close her eyes at night for fear of losing it while she sleeps.

TV Announcers - PRE-RECORDED

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE:

The Forty's expensive New York City apartment.

AT RISING:

Jonathan Forty enters crossing to a television facing downstage, makes a drink and turns on a football game. We hear crowd noise and helmet cracking sfx.

TV ANNOUNCER #1

Joe they sure love their football here in New York. It's a beautiful day and oh my and that hit was brutal!

TV ANNOUNCER #2

Ouch is right Jack! Vinny's taking a beating and so are the Jets. They better do something quick if they want to win this game and climb to one and six for the season.

JONATHAN

With the money we've spent he should throw it across Manhattan!

TV ANNOUNCER #1

The Jets have spent a ton of cash on Vinny's new contract and at this rate he won't live long enough to spend it.

TV ANNOUNCER #2

Vinny goes back and Vinny goes down!

JONATHAN

What are you doing?

JONATHAN dials the phone.

TV ANNOUNCER #1

New York fans are concerned about the future of their beloved Jets, Joe, since the death of longtime owner, textile millionaire Marius Forty.

TV ANNOUNCER #2

Right Jack, the senior Forty shocked the world by willing his fortune and his team to an only son he put up for adoption forty-two years ago. That's correct sports fans; a bachelor piano teacher from Cincinnati Ohio is now in control of the New York Jets.

JONATHAN

Hello? Yes, this is Jonathan Forty. I'm fine, how are you? Would you please put me through to the coach? Yes, I know he's busy but I need to talk to him. Thank you.

JONATHAN crosses to the TV with the phone and waits.

JONATHAN

Jonathan Forty here. I'm having trouble hearing you. Listen Coach I sorry to bother you but I don't like the way the game is going and I think I can help. We pull Vinny and put in the rookie,

JONATHAN checks his roster.

Lewis. I know he throws up before every game but give him some Dramamine and get him in there.

JONATHAN turns up the volume to a chorus of boo's on the Television.

TV ANNOUNCER #2

What's this? Oh the fans don't like this move. They're handing Vinny the baseball cap. That's all for Vinny Jack.

TV ANNOUNCER #1

It looks like he's pulling him in favor of the rookie from Vanderbilt, number 17, Lewis. Lewis has never taken a snap in a professional game and now he's the Jets last chance.

TV ANNOUNCER #2

Jack you wonder how it would ever occur to the coach to make such a bone head move? Fifteen seconds left and Lewis is set, he drops back and Lewis is going for it all, Johnson has steps on the safety Joe, the ball is in the air, its complete! It's complete Jack!

TV ANNOUNCER #1

The thirty, the twenty, ten, touchdown! Jets win! Jets win!

TV ANNOUNCER #2

Lewis looked a little green around the gills but he sure can throw that ball!

JONATHAN puts down his glass and exits. FAITH enters taking his glass, cleaning then exits. JONATHAN returns see that the glass is gone and waits for FAITH to re-enter. JONATHAN taps FAITH on the back.

JONATHAN

Excuse me.

FAITH

(Southern accent)

Oh! You scared the dog outta me!

JONATHAN

(Amused)

Pets aren't allowed in this building.

FAITH

I wish you hadn't had done that Mr.!

JONATHAN

Who are you? Are you some kind of inappropriate gift?

FAITH

No!

JONATHAN

You'll be keeping your clothes on then?

FAITH

Yes! I'm waiting for somebody. Who are you?

JONATHAN

My name is Jonathan Forty.

FAITH

Oh my god! I'm Faith.

FAITH shakes repeatedly.

I'm here to clean your place. Mr. Scott, your lawyer he sent me about this ad in the paper?

FAITH shows JONATHAN the newspaper ad.

Wanted, Housekeeper, free piano lessons, I'm really sorry but he said I should just come on in.

JONATHAN picks up a piece of cut crystal and looks it over.

JONATHAN

Do you know what this is?

FAITH

No.

JONATHAN

Neither do I. Do you play the piano?

FAITH

If I knew how, why would I?

(Pause)

I play a little.

JONATHAN points to the piano.

JONATHAN

Show me.

FAITH plays the right hand part of Heart and Soul badly. JONATHAN puts his hand on the small of FAITH'S back.

You should have more arch. May I? Caress the keys gently.

JONATHAN starts to play but stops with pain in his hand.

Consider that the piano is a metaphor for life, Miss?

FAITH

Lockhart, Faith.

JONATHAN

You can coax from it every beautiful possibility, or let it sit unused, gathering dust.

FAITH

I need to learn how to play Mr. Forty.

JONATHAN

Yes I can hear that. How are you at house cleaning?

FAITH

I cleaned my momma's house in McAdenville North Carolina. That's where I come from. I only got to New York City two days ago; I'm a dancer.

FAITH demonstrates her dancing,
playing and twirling using a cane.

And a four-year twirler for McAdenville High; if I learn this here piano, I can play it while I'm dancing! I know they ain't got many girls here that can do that. What do you think Mr. Forty? I bet you're real smart?

JONATHAN

The rain in Spain falls mainly in the plane.

(FAITH is confused)

Never mind.

JONATHAN pops some aspirin.

FAITH

Are you all right?

JONATHAN

It's arthritis, my father's curse.

FAITH

My daddy used to say Dammit Molly, don't curse! I try but hell sometimes you just need to! I come from a big family. My momma raised my eleven brothers and me. You ain't worked till you've cleaned a bathroom left behind by eleven boys.

JONATHAN

(Interested)

Your mother had twelve children?

FAITH

She and her three sisters accounted for thirty-eight cousins.

JONATHAN

Imagine that Faith Lockhart, if that is your real name?

FAITH

My real name is Molly, Molly Crowder. Faith is my dancer name.

JONATHAN

Faith, I teach in the mornings; straighten up whenever you like.

FAITH jumps around in delight.

FAITH

No kidding? You won't be sorry. I could start tomorrow if that ain't too soon?

JONATHAN

(Mocking)

No, I reckon it ain't.

FAITH

(Hurt)

Are you making fun of me? I can't help how I talk and I don't know anyone here except for you. I desperately need for you to be my friend. Otherwise I'll be more alone here than I know I can stand. There are ten million people in New York and I've never felt so alone in all my life.

JONATHAN

(Comforting)

Here now. Where are you staying?

FAITH

I have a real nice room at the YWCA.

JONATHAN

Coming from good solid church going red state republican stock, you'll do just fine. I expect we'll have a long and fertile relationship you and me. I believe there's great potential here.

MASON enters quietly.

MASON

For mischief no doubt.

JONATHAN

Mason, we've been falling all over ourselves. A phone call from a certain judge could have saved us a moment or two.

MASON

A busy day at the courthouse; besides a surprise visitor can propel an astonishing encounter.

FAITH

We did not!

JONATHAN

Don't mind him, he's been reading too many Harlequins.

MASON

And isn't that you lurking behind this latest masquerade?

JONATHAN

Mason have you met Miss Lockhart?

FAITH

Hey.

MASON

Hey.

FAITH

(Nervous)

I really have to go. It was nice meeting you gentlemen.

MASON

Mr. Forty and I will discuss your hire and get back to you.

JONATHAN

I'm looking forward to seeing more of you Faith.

FAITH exits.

MASON

So it's settled then?

JONATHAN

If she still wants the job after you scared her to death.

MASON

What's frightening is that you've been liquidating your assets again. Do you think that's what daddy had in mind?

JONATHAN

I never met my father; I don't know what was on his mind. One minute I'm a screaming, pooping, puking little baby; the next I'm standing here with you. My father, he's still dead right? He's not stuffed or a frozen head somewhere?

MASON

It's his wishes I must protect, not his corpse.

JONATHAN

I may philanthropic my way into an altruistic coma and you'll just have to deal with it.

(Smile)

You were my father's oldest and closest friend; tell us another fascinating story about the old man.

MASON

(Monotone)

I've told you all I know.

(Pause)

Your father liked cottage cheese.

JONATHAN

He did, really?

MASON

Yes, by the gallon, straight with no sugar.

JONATHAN

And?

MASON

And, he only had one testicle.

JONATHAN removes the wrapper from a cough drop.

JONATHAN

My father was Adolph Hitler?

MASON

Sometimes, he also had terrible arthritis and bad breath.

JONATHAN

Did he talk about me?

MASON

No.

JONATHAN

Did my mother?

MASON

Your mother only talked to herself.

JONATHAN

They tell me she was a bit of an eccentric.

JONATHAN eats the wrapper and throws the cough drop away.

MASON

They were poor then. It's unlikely they could have raised you, they could barley raise themselves.

JONATHAN

Did you know I was sent to Cincinnati?

MASON opens a large file, reading.
MASON looks at a photo.

MASON

To a Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Gaston, she a red headed over-weight homemaker, he a thin bald Jr. High music teacher in what looks here likes the prison system.

JONATHAN

Have you ever cut the cover off of a golf ball? Little rubber bands explode in every direction. When I was a kid I was sure that's what went on inside of Stanley's head.

MASON holds up a picture.

MASON

Mary Alice Gaston, died November 1957 at age thirty, you were seven, the cause of death complications from obesity.

JONATHAN

A little boy could really get lost in one of her hugs.

(Sad)

Then there was just a little boy and a man he hardly knew.

MASON

Stanley Martin Gaston raised you alone until his death in 1971 when his car plowed through several yards into the side of a house. The cause of the accident was listed as alcohol.

JONATHAN

I called him Stanley, never daddy; Stanley without any friends who smelled like grandma's basement that loved Hollywood Squares and never went outside. Do you know what happens to a flower without enough sunlight? The neighbors would ask about me; somebody should check on that little boy. See if he's OK.

MASON

In 1972 you enrolled in the Cincinnati Conservatory, graduated in 1976 and like your adopted dad; you went on to

teach Jr. High School music supplementing your income with private students. Upon the death of your biological father Marius Forty you inherited the controlling interest in the New York Jets and the Forty Textile Empire while legally changing your name to Jonathan Forty. You are unmarried, unattached, and unwilling to listen to any advice regarding your financial affairs.

MASON closes file, JONATHAN hands
MASON another file, which he reads.

JONATHAN

That's enough about me.

MASON

It's all about you Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Where does it say that?

MASON

Oh for goodness sake! You gave give ten million dollars to some nuns?

JONATHAN

Rent!

MASON

You built a state-of-the-art homeless shelter?

MASON holds up a photo.

Why would anyone ever want to leave a place like this?

JONATHAN

How much money do I have left?

MASON

Why do you want to give your money away?

JONATHAN

I don't need it. Besides, they tell me there may be a problem with the eye of the needle.

MASON

There must be something you want?

JONATHAN

Yes. Yes there is, in time. We'll start with the poor.

MASON

Jonathan poor people like being poor it's what they know. If you give them too much you'll tilt the economic ecosystem.

(Amused)

I mean, who will serve brunch? It's natural to want to be a giver but take care of yourself and those around you first. Trust me; invest your money; it's better for all of us.

JONATHAN

And make more millions I can't spend?

MASON

Absolutely!

JONATHAN

When does it all end?

MASON

It doesn't. But they tell me that Bill Gates is working on a way to take it with him.

JONATHAN

What if someday I have a child?

MASON

You could leave it to them.

JONATHAN

Can they spend it?

MASON

No.

(Frustrated)

Your father and I worked very hard to build this fortune!

JONATHAN

Yes you did, on the backs of uneducated textile workers.

MASON

They made their choices.

JONATHAN

And I'll make mine! I don't want to talk about being rich anymore it's boring.

MASON

Fine, let's discuss your new friend. House cleaning, piano lessons, what else do you plan to teach her? Honestly, what could you possibly have in mind for a country mouse like Faith Lockhart, aka Molly Crowder?

JONATHAN

How was I to know she had an alias?

MASON

There may be a great deal more we don't know about Miss Lockhart. What are your intentions?

JONATHAN

I intend to have a clean house, and along the way if Miss Lockhart is willing to explore the possibilities; if she has unique ideas.

MASON

What women wouldn't do most anything to acquire your kind of wealth? They consider it kind of a legal prostitution. The wealthy control industry; we fund both sides of an election so we own both politicians. We put money into new technology and then control the results and the profits. We own all the buildings and the real estate they sit on. The rich are in control now and they always will be. What woman wouldn't want that?

JONATHAN

Do you mean that because I'm rich I can do whatever I want and get away with it?

MASON

Of course not, it's just that there are considerations made. We hold our power well trade on our connections.

JONATHAN

And the less fortunate?

MASON

They can have telethons and bake sales till Rush Limbaugh rides in on a Donkey. But when the last play is made, if it comes down to you or them, I'd put my rather substantial money on you.

JONATHAN

The golden rule, them with the gold make the rules?

MASON

You have no idea.

LIGHTS

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO:

It's New York City, two months later at Christmas time.

SETTING:

The same NY apartment decorated for the holidays, a tortured piano plays Jingle Bells. Jonathan directs the caterers who enter and exit setting for dinner while he attempts to give Faith her piano lesson.

JONATHAN

Put that over there please. OK, play it like you mean it this time.

FAITH

(Frustrated)

It's not my fault!

JONATHAN

The napkins are supposed to look like miniature volcanoes.

FAITH

You didn't tell me it would be this hard!

JONATHAN

Sit up straight and extend your arms. There, now curve your fingers like you're holding a small round fruit, a kiwi or an orange or something. Ready and.

FAITH plays badly.

FAITH

I could never dance and do this at the same time.

JONATHAN

Are there plenty of sweet potatoes?

JONATHAN tips the caterers.

Thank you, Merry Christmas.

FAITH

I gotta go; you've got a big deal going tonight and I'm in the way.

JONATHAN

Nonsense, now starting at middle C, please play the first five notes right hand only in ascending then descending order. One two ready play.

FAITH plays the notes and sings.

FAITH

They say that when you play Piano you can really make big bucks.

JONATHAN

Good, now the left hand. Pinky on the C! Play each note with the same intensity, connecting them together to make one smooth sound, ready and . . .

FAITH plays the notes and sings.

FAITH

But all the time that you are learning they don't tell you really suck!

JONATHAN

Not staccato! Legato, legato!

FAITH

How do you expect me to learn anything with you talking in that foreign language?

JONATHAN

Maybe we should stop for a while?

FAITH

Back home if we couldn't break the horse, we'd shoot it.

JONATHAN

I know it's challenging but you're making progress.

FAITH

Oh yeah, I can play two out of three blind mice.

JONATHAN

The piano takes a short time to learn a little but a lifetime to learn well.

FAITH

Well I don't have that kind of time.

JONATHAN

I've noticed lately you haven't had time to clean the apartment either?

FAITH

I have a cold. A cold makes me tired. You don't want me to drop over from tired do you?

JONATHAN

For goodness sake no, is there anything I can get for you?

FAITH

You're sweet, maybe a chair for my tired feet.

JONATHAN elevates her feet and nervously straightens the apartment.

JONATHAN

Faith, I was wondering.

FAITH

Yes.

JONATHAN

I've met a woman in the elevator a few times, Claire. She and her husband, David, the Evers live down on the first floor and I'm afraid they have invited themselves to Christmas dinner, here, tonight. So I was wondering?

FAITH

Yes.

JONATHAN

Would you join me, us, for dinner, here, tonight?

FAITH

Tonight?

JONATHAN

Yes. You don't have to.

FAITH

Is this a date?

JONATHAN

I don't know.

FAITH

I couldn't.

JONATHAN

I see.

FAITH

But that don't mean I wouldn't.

JONATHAN

Then you will?

FAITH

I can't.

JONATHAN

OK.

FAITH

I would but I don't have nothing to wear?

JONATHAN

You look fine!

FAITH

I can't meet your friends looking like this.

JONATHAN takes a package from under
the Christmas tree.

JONATHAN

I have an idea. I was saving this for later but considering
the situation; go ahead, open it.

FAITH pulls out a colorful silk dress.

FAITH

Oh Jonathan, for the first time in my life I don't know
what to say.

JONATHAN

It was designed by a man but made for a woman.

FAITH

Thank you, thank you, and thank you!

JONATHAN checks his watch.

JONATHAN

Oh my, I told the Evers seven o'clock, they'll be here any minute. Go and change in my room.

FAITH

You won't tell them I'm the maid?

JONATHAN

But you're not the maid.

(Calling out)

Don't look under the bed!

FAITH exits, re-enters barely dressed.

FAITH

What do you think?

JONATHAN

My mind is blank.

FAITH

I got something for you too. It's a copper bracelet, for your arthritis.

JONATHAN

How did you know my size?

FAITH

I sized you while you were sleeping.

JONATHAN

Really, that's how I measured your dress.

The doorbell rings. FAITH exits.

JONATHAN to the door the EVERS enters.

CLAIRE

Merry Christmas! Shalom! Whatever, how is everybody!

DAVID

I'm David Evers, nice to meet you; or should I say what floor?

JONATHAN

Are you a kidder Dave?

CLAIRE

That's why I married him. And because he's so fabulously wealthy, isn't that right baby?

DAVID

I'm sure Jonathan spends enough time counting his own money to worry about counting ours.

CLAIRE

David is from Texas. His parents are ass deep in oil.

JONATHAN

That sounds uncomfortable. Can I get you a drink, some champagne?

CLAIRE

Champagne for me, my husband will have tonic water. David is a recovering alcoholic but don't feel sorry for him.

DAVID

I understand you're in the professional sports arena?

CLAIRE

You are, really? What position do you play?

DAVID

Claire the man owns the New York Jets. I told you that.

CLAIRE

How exciting. I just love football, especially the players in those skintight uniforms with their firm little bottoms flexing across my wide screen in the warm sunlight.

FAITH enters wearing her new dress with her hair fixed and made up.

FAITH

Jonathan? Jonathan, I'm ready.

JONATHAN

Yes you are.

FAITH

Well, aren't you going to introduce me?

JONATHAN

Yes of course, may I present Faith Lockhart of the North Carolina Lockhart's, the Evers, David and Claire of the downstairs Evers?

CLAIRE

Hello dear.

DAVID

(Taken with FAITH)

It's a great pleasure, a great big Texas pleasure.

FAITH

Hey. Hello.

JONATHAN

The Lockhart family is in the textile business too.

CLAIRE

Oh really? Manufacturing or design?

FAITH

Underwear.

JONATHAN

What would you like a drink Faith?

FAITH

Brandy please.

CLAIRE

You're smart getting into a product like that.

FAITH

They have to get into them by themselves.

DAVID

I don't wear em myself.

JONATHAN

I think we're all out of brandy.

FAITH

There's a bottle of Napoleon on the left, behind the mixers, inside the broken ice buckets.

CLAIRE

So tell me, how do two high-powered textile families find themselves on a date? Should I ring my stockbroker?

JONATHAN

Faith is actually a piano student of mine.

FAITH

Not a very good one.

CLAIRE

I think that's sweet, giving piano lessons to the less fortunate. Don't you think that's sweet? David? David?

FAITH

How did you two meet?

DAVID

We met at Claire's sister's...

CLAIRE

(Interrupting)

At my sisters Cactus Jack Country Club in Scottsdale, I was sunning by the pool in my plunging Liz wear and David was on his usual prowl dressed up in a Cowboy hat and boots with his red Speedo, showing off. Well, I grabbed the club pro and ask him to make an introduction and then pretend to be called away to a tennis match with a sultan.

DAVID

(Playing along)

That's right and the best part; there really was a sultan at the club that day. It sounded right to me.

CLAIRE

With David in my snare, one on one, the sun deep-frying his libido I turned up the heat.

CLAIRE gives JONATHAN a good peek down her blouse.

I captured his attention with a girl's secret weapons. A wink and a drink! Dave was a big drinker in those days isn't that right baby?

DAVID

You're right gain baby.

CLAIRE

The next day we drove to Vegas for a meeting with David's publisher. David had written this book, I can't remember what about. Anyway, while we were in Vegas his publisher proceeded to just love it! He kept using words like best and seller and six figure advances. He said David was Stephen Mitchner and James King all rolled into one.

DAVID

He said I had the head of Faulkner, the body of Shakespeare and the balls of Tolstoy.

CLAIRE

We went out and got drunk and got married, in that order.

JONATHAN

And the book was a huge success?

DAVID

No, not really.

CLAIRE

David's publisher got fired a week later and the new guy thought David's book was crap!

DAVID

Juvenile, he said it was juvenile.

CLAIRE

Whatever, by then it was too late we we're already married.

FAITH

Do you have any children?

CLAIRE

Please!

FAITH

I'd like to have children someday.

JONATHAN

A child you wouldn't leave at the bus station. Stanley raised me to understand that children don't know so we must regulate them, supervise, govern and repress, subdue and dominate them, and the rest of the thesaurus.

DAVID

I'll take guardians from Hell for two hundred Alex.

JONATHAN

Stanley said that children should not engage in mindless activities but should develop their minds for serious things like learning to play the piano.

CLAIRE

(Uncomfortable)

You know what, I'm hungry; this is a dinner party isn't it?

FAITH

I'm starved too. Can we eat now Jonathan?

JONATHAN

Yes, by all means let's eat. I hope you don't mind but I've given the maid the night off.

FAITH

She deserves it; the poor girl is tired all the time.

The group crosses to the table.

CLAIRE

David you should give your people some time off, you're such a slave driver.

DAVID

You my dear are the driver; I'm merely a passenger.

FAITH

What do you do now, are you still writing?

DAVID

No, but I'm still in pain.

CLAIRE

His parents are ass deep in oil remember?

JONATHAN

Would you like some yams?

CLAIRE

My god no, I'm a vegetarian. Yams are vile disgusting little creatures and I refuse to associate with them.

JONATHAN

They're potatoes, sweet potatoes with an orange sauce.

JONATHAN dips his finger.

They're pretty good too.

DAVID

Load me up their Johnny.

JONATHAN

Ever wonder how many potatoes you'll eat in your lifetime?
Have you heard about the 'The Perpetual Potato Pyramid?'
It's the latest thing in Europe.

CLAIRE

(Flirting)

How fascinating.

JONATHAN and CLAIRE turn to each other.
DAVID and FAITH do the same. JONATHAN and
FAITH play footsies under the table.

DAVID

So you're from North Carolina?

FAITH

Yes, McAdenville, they used to have a big mill there. My
brothers and I worked there summers and after school.

DAVID

I like the south. It's so southern. Christmas must be
different, from the Big Apple I mean?

FAITH

In McAdenville they used to hand out Christmas lights to
the whole town every year. We put them on the trees and
bushes; we'd put em on my little brother if he sat still
too long, billions of em.

DAVID

(Flirting)

Were they a billion times the color of your eyes?

FAITH

I've got blue eyes, like my daddy.

DAVID

You know what I love?

FAITH

What?

CLAIRE

(Excited)

I love potatoes.

JONATHAN

The Potato Pyramid is based on the fact that in our lifetimes each of us will consume thousands of pounds of God's little footballs. And every time you or one of your friends eats one of America's favorite vegetables you make money.

CLAIRE

I love money.

JONATHAN

There's profit in every creamy au gratin, every fry and tot, every casserole and cake, every loaded bake or potato skin served to a member of your diamond circle of spuds.

CLAIRE

Fascinating, what do I do?

JONATHAN

Shhhhhhhh.

DAVID

It must have taken along time to light up the whole town?

FAITH

It was so much fun. There were bright shinning green, red, yellow and white lights. You would have been amazed, David.

DAVID

That's a good word.

FAITH

People would come from as far away as Rockhill South Carolina and the whole town would stand outside their homes and wave to the world as it drove by.

DAVID

Why would anyone spend so much time and money building a Christmas town from old mill houses and hackberry trees?

FAITH

We didn't have much but for a few days we had Christmas real good.

CLAIRE

So every potato is a hot potato?

JONATHAN

If the Irish had thought of the pyramid a hundred years ago, they'd own California right now.

CLAIRE

How do I climb this pyramid of potatoes?

JONATHAN

You call your friends and family and say, "Hey, you got to buy your spuds from somebody, why not buy em from me!" Who wants more wine?

FAITH

We used to call my little brother tater.

DAVID

(Standing)

I'd like to propose a toast. To the Christmas spirit, in towns big and small, anywhere it lives. May it shine through our lives like a billion colored lights?

CLAIRE

To Mr. Potato head, the next big thing.

JONATHAN

To all the girls I've loved before.

DAVID

Would you like to make a toast Faith?

FAITH

(Embarrassed)

Me? To the truth.

The group clinks glasses.

CLAIRE

Jonathan, tell me, those commercials on TV where you learn to play the piano through the mail? Isn't that a scam?

JONATHAN

No, if you don't mind paper cuts.

CLAIRE stares then laughs.

CLAIRE

Ha, ha, ha!

FAITH

Momma had a friend; she learned to play the xylophone through the mail. It worked so good that after a while she paid extra and got her some private lessons. What?

The lights fade with the passage of time. When the lights come up everyone is drunk & laughing except DAVID who checks his watch. JONATHAN is drunk finishing his joke.

JONATHAN

And then the podiatrist said stop pussy footing around what you need is a gynecologist!

CLAIRE

(Drunk)

Johnny you kill me!

JONATHAN

I love that joke.

DAVID

(Bored)

Look at the time. Santa will be here soon; I should go downstairs and put out the fire. This has been a delightful evening.

JONATHAN

I can't feel my leg.

CLAIRE

I can feel your leg.

FAITH

Some people have to work tomorrow.

DAVID

On Christmas?

FAITH

Not me, some people.

JONATHAN

I'll see you in the elevator.

CLAIRE

Anything can happen in an elevator.

JONATHAN

David.

DAVID

Jonathan, it's been a pleasure. Good night Faith. I hope to see more of you.

CLAIRE sings as she pulls DAVID out.

CLAIRE

How much more would you like to see? Oh you better watch out, you better not cry, better not pout I'm telling you why, Santa Clause is living upstairs.

CLAIRE and DAVID exit.

JONATHAN

What do you make of that Claire?

FAITH

I don't think she liked me.

JONATHAN

That's because I like you.

FAITH

We better at least wash those plates tonight, that sweet tater will be hard as rock candy by tomorrow.

JONATHAN

Do you like me, Faith?

FAITH

Are you going to help me?

JONATHAN

I hoped they wouldn't stay. I'm glad you didn't go with them.

FAITH

Why would I do that? I work for you.

JONATHAN

You're cute when you're charming.

FAITH

It's getting late.

JONATHAN

I thought our first date went very well, didn't you?

FAITH

Yes?

JONATHAN

Did I frighten you with my reference to children?

FAITH

No?

JONATHAN

Good. Well, good night then.

FAITH

Good night.

(Pause)

How will I get home?

JONATHAN

Yes, well, I'll call Mason.

FAITH

I don't want to be a bother; I'll take the subway.

JONATHAN

And have total strangers relieve themselves on your leg?

FAITH

Would it be any better if it were somebody I knew?

JONATHAN

Why don't you stay here?

FAITH

What would people say?

JONATHAN

I've never had a sleep over before. Come on it'll be fun.

FAITH

I don't know if that's such a good idea?

JONATHAN

Nonsense, later we'll have a pillow fight. I have a pillow here somewhere.

FAITH walks to the tree and cuts some mistletoe, putting it behind her back.

FAITH

Are you sure about this?

JONATHAN

No? I don't know, I'll tell you tomorrow.

FAITH holds the mistletoe over
JONATHAN'S head.

FAITH

Am I frightening you with my reference to kissing?

JONATHAN

Yes.

FAITH leans over and kisses JONATHAN.

LIGHTS

ACT ONE

SCENE THREE:

Stage right represents fifteen years in the future. JAMES, JONATHAN and FAITH'S future son is playing the piano; JONATHAN sits listening, completely hidden in his chair.

Stage left is the Evers basement apartment moments after the party. While CLAIRE and DAVID speak, JAMES plays the piano and while JONATHAN and JAMES speak, the EVER'S fume and ignore each other. Lights come up right first.

SETTING:

A winged chair and a piano in dim light are right. A small room furnished with crates is left. JAMES plays his piano as the action starts on the right side.

JONATHAN

Why do you slur the notes in your left hand? Do you do it to torture me?

JAMES

It would be silly for both of us to torture you father.

JONATHAN

Clever, wit from your mother's side no doubt.

JAMES

I don't have a mother or a mother's side.

JONATHAN

Yes you do, as far as you know. And despite your lack of practice and your heavy left hand you show improvement.

JAMES

I thank you sir.

JONATHAN

At your age I'd spend hours listening to your grandfather play, pitched on my little knees praying for the inspiration to choose with such grace. Do you know what I learned?

JAMES

Was it the scales?

JONATHAN

That sitting is more comfortable than kneeling and that inspiration doesn't mean shit! It's the work! It's doing it over and over again until its right, all the inspiration in the world means nothing if you don't put in the work.

JAMES

Yes sir.

JONATHAN

All right now play something else, something worthy of you.

JAMES plays piano as the action moves left. CLAIRE and DAVID enter in the dark stumbling around.

CLAIRE

(Upset)

What the hell was she talking about, to the truth?

CLAIRE turns on a light then pulls off her long red wig to reveal a skullcap with short black hair under it. DAVID kicks off his lifts.

It made me want to blow yam chunks; she's up to something.

DAVID

And you're not, falling all over Forty like that, it was embarrassing.

CLAIRE

I think he liked it! Besides, I doubt he gets much attention from that semi-girl friend of his.

DAVID

Is that semi-girl, or semi-friend?

CLAIRE

I could see you figured it out.

DAVID

At least I displayed a few honest emotions. You've got us so painted up no one can see who we are? The rich sit poolside; we're at the bottom of the deep end with the pennies, drowning!

CLAIRE

Listen to me! Tonight was about our future, about you and me in the same room with the rich and the famous. Do you know how many hours I had to ride that elevator just to pretend to meet Jonathan Forty enough times to invite us to dinner? How else do you think a handy man from Wayne, New Jersey who made twenty-two thousand dollars last year and his attractive but socially mis-connected roommate could have had Christmas dinner with one of the richest men in America? I did that for you Charlie, and you suck because you can't see it!

DAVID

My name is David and I'm impervious to manipulation.

CLAIRE begins to cry.

Please don't cry you'll water down your drink.

CLAIRE

See, you do care; you do want me to be happy.

CLAIRE tortures DAVID with her drink.

I love a good beefy drink. It pops and sparkles over the ice and crackles like a small warm fire in your hand. It's strong and sweet at the same time, bitter, smooth and all the while it's inviting you in.

DAVID pulls away as the action moves right JONATHAN rubs his hand.

JONATHAN

My hands are a vengeance today.

JAMES

Soon you won't be able to use them at all. You promised to take your medicine.

JONATHAN

You promised to practice four hours every day and if you manage three I'd be delighted.

JAMES

How would you know how much I practice? You sleep all day. What's so interesting about the middle of the night?

JONATHAN

It's all the same to me boy, middle of the day middle of the night. Behind these eyes lies every kind of darkness; now play.

JAMES begins to play the piano.

JAMES

Was Grandpa Stanley an alcoholic?

JONATHAN

Yes, he was an overbearing under achieving frightened alcoholic, a genius that never left the house.

JAMES

We never leave the house, sir.

JONATHAN

Ah, but you're not overbearing and I'm not an alcoholic, as far as I know. Fear killed your grandfather; it froze him in his tracks while life ran him over.

The action moves left.

DAVID

This Forty guy; we can't breathe his air. Look at this place; if anybody saw us they'd think we were crazy.

CLAIRE

I am crazy, crazy for you baby.

CLAIRE gropes DAVID.

DAVID

Just because you tell people we're married don't make it so.

CLAIRE

You were the one who wanted to play house.

DAVID

Well from now on in this house we tell the truth.

CLAIRE

I was just trying to be a good side view mirror and make you appear closer to success than you really are.

DAVID

You know we didn't meet at a country club; we met at your sister Darlene's wedding in Chicago, at the union hall.

CLAIRE

Semantics.

DAVID

And it wasn't a tennis pro that introduced us it was a teamster.

CLAIRE

Oh for Christ sake I was just being dramatic! You were a hack once; you know everything writers write isn't the truth. There's no telling what kind of tawdry lies and moronic dribble enters their brains after a case of cigarettes, a pound of coffee and six months without sex! But people believe it because their own lives are so incredibly dull. Face it, our lives don't have a very

impressive plot, we need a fuller back-story and a stronger through line, so I'm making one up.

JAMES plays the piano; JONATHAN listens as the action moves right.

JONATHAN

You're in the Key of E but you've chosen to use the F natural in place of the F sharp, explain that to me if you can?

JAMES

It sounded good to me.

JONATHAN

What makes you think you can just pack up and leave the signature key and strike out on your own?

JAMES

I modulated to take advantage of the dramatic possibilities.

JONATHAN

So now you know what the composer was thinking?

JAMES

I was only trying to . . .

JONATHAN

If you have some special insight, I wish you would share it with the rest of the class!

JAMES

(Frustrated)

I play like that way because I like how it sounds. If I don't find different ways to play the same shit I'll go crazy!

Angry, JONATHAN raises his cane from the darkness.

I'm sorry!

JONATHAN slaps JAMES with the cane.

You said it!

JONATHAN

If I took an axe and chopped off my hands, would you? Again!

JAMES plays, JONATHAN listens.

Triplets, each note must be equal. Articulate them correctly or they'll run together.

(Listening)

That last passage should have been much softer, and measures 36 and 37, the tempo dragged like a bad second act.

JAMES

I'm doing the best I can.

JONATHAN

Well it's not good enough!

JAMES

Will it ever be?

JONATHAN

Yes, yes it will. That's why we have to continue working even though we might be tired and want to go to bed. That's why I am the teacher and you are the student.

JAMES plays action to the left.

CLAIRE

Oh quit pouting; you should be proud of me, after all I am the mistress of mis-direction.

DAVID

I don't need your smoke and mirrors to get what I want.

CLAIRE

What do you want, a little Faith? Tell you what, whichever one of us gets what we want first can share it with the other.

DAVID

I thought you might be into that.

CLAIRE

I'm tired of sucking on ice and eating stale popcorn. All my life I've been surrounded by liars and losers. I can still lie with the best of them but I will no longer lose. I'm going to fight my way to the top, then turn around and piss down the ladder. If you want to come along, buckle up. OK sweetie?

DAVID

I'm going out. I need fresh air, and some postage.

CLAIRE

You'll leave me alone on Christmas Eve?

DAVID exits CLAIRE calls after him.

Men don't write letters?

LIGHTS

ACT ONE

SCENE FOUR:

It's the Forty's apartment present day, two months later.

SETTING:

FAITH and JONATHAN enter tired, hanging their coats and dusting off the snow.

JONATHAN

New York is so charming in the dead of winter.

FAITH

(Huffing)

You cheated! You ran before that drunk fell over.

JONATHAN

(Puffing)

I'd need a twenty-year head start to catch up with you.

FAITH

Age is in the mind.

JONATHAN

And in the legs I'm afraid.

JONATHAN pulls a letter from his pocket.

FAITH

At least I got you out of this apartment for a while.

JONATHAN

This came today. It's for you. No return address?

FAITH

It must have come from nowhere.

FAITH reads it, pulls out a picture and giggles.

JONATHAN

Since when does the gas company send out porno with their bill?

FAITH

It's from the YWCA silly. They want to know if I still want my room. What should I tell them?

FAITH exits to kitchen.

JONATHAN

Tell them whatever you want.

The intercom sounds and JONATHAN crosses to the doorway to answer it.

This is Jonathan Forty, who's calling?

MASON

(Through the speaker)

You called me?

JONATHAN

Mason is that you?

MASON

(Through the speaker)

I'm downstairs, I've punched in my code but it won't open the door. Is there something you're trying to tell me?

JONATHAN

We've been having trouble with the security, stay there.

(Calling out)

Faith, I'm going to get Mason. Call maintenance and tell them if they don't fix the door I'm selling this building to Donald Trump and they won't like the pay cut!

FAITH enters.

FAITH

OK, but I won't be here when you get back.

JONATHAN exits FAITH dials. Lights up
in the Evers apartment, DAVID answers.

DAVID

Hello.

FAITH

I got your letter. I got all your letters.

DAVID

Who say's you can't have fun for thirty-nine cents anymore.

FAITH

Was that you in that cowboy hat and red underwear?

DAVID

Don't you know a Speedo when you see one?

FAITH

(Laugh)

But I don't want to see one.

DAVID

I don't now why; you've seen everything else.

FAITH

David, what if someone is listening?

DAVID

I don't care I miss you.

FAITH

Well stop missing me because it won't happen again. Oh, and
nice try, I found out Claire's not really your sister.

(Pause)

I can't see you anymore. Things are changing between
Jonathan and me, important things.

DAVID

When were you going to tell me?

FAITH

I just told you. I really like you and I wanna be friends

but I have to start thinking about my future.

DAVID

Really, what are you going to do marry him?

(Pause)

Do you even love him?

FAITH

Are you gonna make me say it?

There's a sad moment as both FAITH
and DAVID consider their feelings.

How do you like your new job?

DAVID

It's OK.

FAITH

Well Jonathan said that the security on the front door is
busted. He wants someone down there to fix it right away.

CLAIRE

(Enters)

I need to use the phone. Who are you talking to?

DAVID puts on a maintenance hat, hangs
up the phone and exits.

CLAIRE

Don't let anyone see you in that hat.

CLAIRE picks up the phone and dials
holding a catalog.

CLAIRE

Hello Tiffany's, this is Mr. Jonathan Forty's personal and
private secretary, Mrs. Eleanor Rigby. Listen dear, could
you please send over that gold and silver brooch on page
fifty-one of your catalog. Large. Mr. Forty would like to
give it to the crown princess of Carmel. Isn't he a peach?
Have them deliver it to Mr. Forty's penthouse on central
park west. That's right, on account.

CLAIRE dials the phone again.

Hello Sachs Fifth Avenue, this is Mr. Jonathan Forty's
personal and very private secretary, Mrs. Penny Lane. Yes.

He'd like for you to send over a half dozen assorted Versace originals, size six, for a formal volleyball team he's particularly fond of. Isn't he grand? That's right, his central park west address, the penthouse, on account.

CLAIRE dials the phone again.

Hello Pizza Hut, this is Jonathan Forty's very personal secretary, Mrs. Lady Madonna. I'm fine, how are you? Oh well Mr. Forty thinks the Jets are going to win every year. Listen Mickey, could you please send over two of those extra large pies and a six-pack, diet. I have a coupon. And Rickey, if Manuel is working tonight, send him too.

CLAIRE hangs up. MASON and JONATHAN enter the Forty Apartment.

JONATHAN

That maintenance man looked familiar.

MASON

I'm a very busy man, speak now or forever get my voice mail.

JONATHAN

I need your advice.

MASON

Good, I need your signature. This apartment is a mess. Is Faith sick again?

CLAIRE dials. The phone rings in JONATHAN'S apartment.

JONATHAN

She's tired she's always tired. Excuse me. Hello.

CLAIRE

Jonathan, this is your favorite neighbor Claire Evers calling. How are you? It's been such a long time.

MASON opens a folder and puts it down in front of JONATHAN.

JONATHAN

Yes Claire.

CLAIRE

Listen Johnny, could you do a pretty girl a huge favor. I must go to an emergency meeting at the Junior League and I'm expecting some special deliveries. If I had them sent to the penthouse in your name, could you be a hero and sign for them until I return?

JONATHAN

I'm kind of busy right now.

CLAIRE

I'll send my valet for them I promise. Bye now.

JONATHAN hangs up and signs papers.

JONATHAN

What am I signing?

MASON

It's a power of attorney. It's word salad that allows me to make legal maneuvers on your behalf without having to bother you with silly contracts and boring facts.

JONATHAN

Did my father have one these?

MASON

No. But he only had one testicle; you've got plenty of balls.

JONATHAN finishes signing.

Thank you, right there and there. Now, what's on your mind?

JONATHAN holds up the cut crystal and looks it over.

JONATHAN

I'd like to know what this is.

MASON

It's ninetieth century Baccarat. It's old and it's valuable. What are you going to do with it?

JONATHAN puts it down.

JONATHAN

You may find this hard to believe but I've never been very good with women, with good woman. Hypothec ally, if I became involved with my piano student which lead to a physical relationship and as a result she became?

MASON

Dead? Knocked-up?

JONATHAN

What would I do?

MASON

Well, legally speaking you could lose her phone number. Or try living together until your conscience catches up with your libido. Medical science has made great strides in dealing with unplanned and unwanted.

JONATHAN

No child that is part of me will ever be unwanted. I know what that's like. Who would raise it?

MASON

If you marry it's shared. If you chose not to marry she would most certainly get custody. If you were married then divorced it could go either way. The advantage is usually to the mother but it would be up to a judge to decide.

JONATHAN

You're a judge.

MASON

Some other judge.

JONATHAN

I would marry her then.

MASON

Congratulations. But if you want to take the long leap into the dark deep, if you insist on a never lasting embrace, you'll need protection.

JONATHAN

Isn't it a little late for condoms?

MASON

Better. A pre-nuptial agreement; the good ones rarely leak.

JONATHAN

(Excited)

That's . . .

(Pause)

That's probably the best idea I've ever heard. Do you think Faith would go for it?

MASON

(Excited)

She'll have no choice. Your holdings are as diverse as the finest mutual fund from automotive to textiles. Your real estate alone constitutes more land area than Rhode Island. You own planes in the air and ships at sea. You are worth in excess of, a lot. Faith is the beautiful but poor daughter of a mill worker from North Carolina. If you don't want to lose it all in a very nasty way, if you don't want to wake up one day back in Cincinnati testing tooth paste for Proctor & Gable instead of owning a twenty-one percent share, then you must protect yourself!

(Calm)

At least long enough to give it away.

JONATHAN

OK.

MASON

(MASON with a note pad)

Good. I recommend the standard forever and ever amen treaty. Whatever happens regardless of fault, the ex-wife gets say ten million.

JONATHAN

This agreement, could we make it say anything we want?

JONATHAN writes on MASON'S pad.

Can we? Could we make a request?

MASON

Sure, as long as it's within reason.

JONATHAN

How much reason?

MASON

Shall I include a part time mistress provision?

JONATHAN

This would be a permanent provision.

MASON

Anything goes as long as she agrees, and it's not illegal.

JONATHAN

Would that be legal for the rich or legal for the poor?

MASON

I've always been in favor of what is legal for the rich, to remain the rich.

JONATHAN points to note pad.

JONATHAN

Can it say this?

MASON

(Reads and reacts)

And whatever will compensate the poor for their time.

JONATHAN

It's my dream, I wake up across the room screaming inside my head, don't, please don't! I'm breaking for the door, "come on, we gotta get out of here!" Halfway down the hall Stanley is standing there. "Why are you so troubled boy?"

MASON

Faith will most certainly object.

JONATHAN

I object; most men don't see what women see; they can't spot a blemish on a little boy's heart through an acre of pain. But the trouble with women is that you can't trust them. All you have to do to ensure that a woman will leave you is to love her. Men are too exhausted with themselves to look after you, too tired to protect you from a dangerous world that will leave you with nightmares.

MASON

Are you sure you want to do this?

JONATHAN

I'm sure that I'm not most men.

MASON

OK. Call me if you change your mind. It's a busy day the criminals are everywhere.

MASON exits and a few seconds later
FAITH enters.

FAITH

What's wrong with you?

JONATHAN

Where have you been? It's time for your lesson.

FAITH

I don't feel like a lesson today, I'm tired.

JONATHAN

Why are you women always so tired?

FAITH

It might have something to do with you men!

JONATHAN

All women are either tired or gone or dead, how do you ever get anything done? We have a deal, house cleaning for piano lessons. You agreed and since you don't clean the house any longer I insist you hold up at least part of the bargain.

FAITH

Tomorrow, I'll hold it up tomorrow.

JONATHAN

Will you sit down? Please.

FAITH plays an angry Heart and Soul.
JONATHAN plays with her. FAITH'S part becomes softer. JONATHAN retreats holding his hands. FAITH goes to him.

FAITH

All that aspirin is ripping a hole in your heart and your stomach. You need treatment for your hands.

JONATHAN

I need a lot of things.

FAITH

A well-adjusted eccentric like you, I don't believe it.

JONATHAN

(Softens)

I need trust, compassion; I need someone to share all; or at least part of what I've been given.

FAITH

What are you saying Jonathan?

JONATHAN

Someone like you who won't judge me; Faith, not long ago you were just one of my piano students.

FAITH

I was your only piano student.

JONATHAN

We've become close in so many ways.

FAITH

That was you?

JONATHAN

This is serious. I have something to ask you. Would you marry me? Don't give me an answer right away. You'll want to think about it for a while.

FAITH leaps in to JONATHAN'S arms.

FAITH

OK. I'll marry you! I can't wait to tell my momma and daddy and all my brothers that I'm marrying such an honorable man.

JONATHAN

Who can see the future? Faith, there is one small thing. I told Mason he was crazy for even suggesting it, two people in love don't need a contract but he thinks that a man in my position should have a pre-nuptial agreement.

FAITH

What's that?

JONATHAN

It's a document that outlines details about our marriage before it takes place. It's meant to protect me, and you.

FAITH

And your money?

JONATHAN puts a hand on FAITHS stomach.

Jonathan, are we going to live happily ever after?

JONATHAN

I wonder it's such a crazy world.

FAITH

Full of bad people who do bad things?

JONATHAN

The criminals are everywhere.

LIGHTS

ACT ONE

SCENE FIVE:

The Forty apartment fifteen years in the future, JAMES is alone playing the piano.

SETTING:

The apartment is cluttered and dark. JAMES gets up from the piano and turns on the television.

TELEVISION PREACHER #1

And the angel of the Lord did come down upon God's holy brother and did speak to him sinner? Is the almighty in your address book? Have you run fast from the devil for he is right behind you? Can I get an amen brother Israel?

TELEVISION PREACHER #2

Amen! I will lay upon the faithful at home who cannot help but to abide us with Gods holy laws of abundance, a helpful tithing toward a true and promising, promised land!

JAMES walks to the mobile phone and back to the TV.

TELEVISION PREACHER #1

Lay upon them this special prayer clothe blessed by the holy water of Queens, blessed I say from the holy brook of Brooklyn and bathed in the scenta of Staten Island. It's yours with a single mighty donation!

JAMES

This is James Forty. Can I speak to the person in charge of the program on now? Hello, when will your program about God be over? I'd like to watch Jeopardy. You will? Thanks; I'm glad you got saved from what was chasing you.

JAMES turns up the TV volume.

TELEVISION PREACHER #1

The riches of the world rained down upon the faithful, excuse me, glory, glory Brother Israel we have received the call!

TELEVISION PREACHER #2

He said what? Glory, the call has come and it is time to go! Go to the streets and the alleys of the multitudes, to the backyards and sun porches of despair, spreading the good word across this land.

ANNOUNCER

We now return to our regularly scheduled program.

The Jeopardy theme plays.

JAMES

Cool!

JONATHAN enters wearing a robe and using a cane, showing the stress of fifteen hard years he walks behind JAMES tapping him, turning off the TV.

JONATHAN

Watching television in this house requires supervision.

JONATHAN gives JAMES an awkward hug.

Do you forgive me?

JAMES

Maybe, but will God forgive you?

JONATHAN

Oh for goodness sakes.

JAMES

God was on television just now, he sounds pretty popular.

JONATHAN

Yeah, he's very big in Italy.

JAMES

Why is it you've taught me languages, mathematics, science and even bridge but you've never once said anything about God? This God, is he a friend of yours? The man on TV says if you're not saved then you'll go to hell! Where is hell?

JONATHAN

It's in Midtown, Eighth Avenue at 42nd St.

JAMES

I don't think I've ever been there. Have I ever been to hell?

JONATHAN

Goodness no.

JAMES

I'd like to go there sometime.

JONATHAN

No you don't.

JAMES

Does God live there?

JONATHAN

I don't think so.

JAMES

Then he must live in a nice house like we do?

JONATHAN

I don't know James.

JAMES

It's no wonder you've never taught me about God, you don't know anything about him.

JONATHAN

I know as much as anybody else. God isn't exactly an exact science you know.

JAMES

Well?

JONATHAN

Well, we're created by God and the world was set in motion for our benefit to sustain our spirit while we run this kind of race to impress him.

JAMES

A race, you mean like in cars?

JONATHAN

No, we use our bodies instead of cars.

JAMES

I've seen on television, if you have a good body someone will give you a car.

JONATHAN

That may be but without bodies we can't tell if someone is a blue eyed blonde football hero with a ford modeling contract or an over weight black lesbian with bad skin who works the drive up at burger world. We couldn't judge or discriminate against others for their color, love them because they are beautiful, or hate them for their money, you must have the bodies to make it work otherwise you can't race.

JAMES

So what happens at the finish line?

JONATHAN

If you've run a good race you can party at God's house. We have wasted enough time on this.

JAMES

But what if I run a bad race?

JONATHAN

There's another party, at the Port Authority. That's enough.

JAMES plays a pretty piece on the piano, JONATHAN'S mood changes.

Bravo. You played that with such passion, such grace; technically it was almost perfect. I'm very impressed but not familiar with the composer?

JAMES

It's something I've been working on. It's nothing.

JONATHAN

You've been working on? No, it's something, something good, raw and truthfully done. But I wonder if it's wise to create when you have barely mastered the craft?

JAMES

You're right.

JONATHAN

James, do you forgive me?

(Silence)

I'm your father; I'm all you have so you must forgive me.

JAMES

More make believe dogmas to go along with our lives are all predetermined and other universal laws by Professor Forty from the University of the Dark?

JONATHAN

You may ridicule me if you like, but I'm convinced that your talent for piano was decided long before you showed up to play. Who you are, what you have, your world ranking all figured out before you were born.

JAMES

Written down in a book?

JONATHAN

Perhaps, imagine everyone in the world ranked all the way up to number one. What's your number? And if you didn't like your number how far would you go to improve your position?

JAMES

If you knew what your number was, and it wasn't going to change, why would you even try and move up?

JONATHAN opens a book.

JONATHAN

Ah, a world full of apathy and indifference for a reason.

JAMES

There is no such book.

JONATHAN

Would you like for me to look you up?

JAMES

Let me see that.

JONATHAN

I'm sure it's here. James Forty, number one thousand two hundred fifty one, three spots behind Mother Teresa.

JAMES

Who is Mother Teresa? Is she on Hollywood Squares?

JONATHAN

My point is, even though our lives seem to be a final draft, we still have to play them out. For example, if you were walking along the street.

JAMES

When?

JONATHAN

And you looked up and saw a piano falling from the top of the Empire State building. If you scream out a warning, or stand there in silence, you decide who will live or die.

JAMES

What do I do?

JONATHAN

Whatever it is the decision has already been made. You and I, we're involved in each other's scripts. The fact that you and I live here alone was our destiny; when it was determined by me. It was in our script.

JAMES

So, mother leaving us was in our script?

JONATHAN

That was her decision.

JAMES

Determined by her?

JONATHAN

Of course, there were choices made and the outcome was you and I as we were meant to be. Do you understand?

JAMES

How do you know?

JONATHAN

I believe it. Even that silly writer had a part to play.

JAMES

What writer?

JONATHAN

Didn't I tell you? A friend of your mothers, David shows up here one Christmas quite taken with her; she couldn't get ride of him.

(Aside)

I think they may have skipped off together.

JAMES

This is the first I've heard of this.

JONATHAN

Is it? Don't worry about it, you're mother was a good woman.

JAMES

What part of her is good all of the sudden?

JONATHAN

She was dedicated; did you know that she visited the same squirrel in the park every Tuesday for over a year?

JAMES

I thought she was kind and capable, of almost anything?

JONATHAN

That and more until the day she left us and in a way that I can't explain, I miss her.

JAMES

(Upset)

Well I don't! You can't miss what you don't know? Like chocolate or friends your own age or television or God!

JONATHAN

Well, we've had our fun haven't we? It's a good thing we get along so well.

JAMES

It's surprising considering how different we are.

JONATHAN

Nonsense, we're like two greens in a bean; Siamese brothers; so alike it's scary.

JAMES

How can you say that? I'm tall you're short. You're bright I struggle. Our hair color and our piano style's are miles apart. I play in a flowing, confident blonde way. You're technically good but you play piano like a read-headed engineer.

JONATHAN

You'd be lucky to play like me with my arthritis. It's a family curse. My father had it; I have it and you.

JAMES wiggles his fingers.

JAMES

Don't.

LIGHTS

ACT TWO**SCENE ONE:**

It's New York City back to present day, two months later.

SETTING:

Jonathan's apartment decorated for a wedding. Jonathan is sitting in his winged chair watching football.

JONATHAN

With all the money we pay number twenty-seven; shouldn't number twenty-seven know where the goal line is?

JONATHAN dials as MASON enters.

MASON

Put that phone down! The coach says he'll quit if you call him on the sidelines again. The media thinks he's talking to his girlfriend.

JONATHAN hangs up the phone.

JONATHAN

I'll be his girl friend if he takes me to a Super Bowl.

MASON

Soon you won't be available; you'll be an old married man.

JONATHAN fights with his necktie.

JONATHAN

Right, I've been trying to figure out how to fasten a half hitch in this noose around my neck all morning.

MASON

And what about your bride?

JONATHAN

Faith has been completely uninterested in the process. Whatever you want Jonathan; I like it if you like it Jonathan.

JONATHAN gives up on the necktie and
MASON helps him.

I can't do this! I'm not cut out for commitment.

MASON

Relax; I have your safety net.

JONATHAN

Is it legal for the rich?

MASON

It must be. I couldn't find a single legal precedent. Not one mention in any legal volume available to my office yesterday.

JONATHAN

Really, it's probably all over the Bible.

MASON gives JONATHAN the file.

MASON

The final draft was delivered to Faith this morning. I'll answer any questions when she arrives and, why are you still here?

JONATHAN

Where should I be? This is my wedding day.

MASON

It's your wedding hour, until then get lost. I need time to get this contract signed and it could get uncomfortable.

JONATHAN

What could be more comfortable than ten million dollars?

MASON

That's how you and I see it. But don't be surprised if she doesn't agree with us.

JONATHAN

I'm not going anywhere.

FAITH enters upset, pregnant and holding the contract as JONATHAN hides.

FAITH

Where's Jonathan?

MASON

Faith, please come in.

FAITH

Where is he?

MASON

He went to the store, to buy some rice. You must be tired?
Can I get you something?

FAITH

Some water please.

MASON

Certainly, are you feeling all right?

FAITH

Why does everybody keep asking me that?

MASON

You lack the glow of a woman about to be married to one of
the richest men in America.

FAITH

Jonathan said I should sign this. What do you think?

FAITH throws her contract on the table.

Or should I blame you for this awful feeling of conditional
love I'm feeling on my wedding day?

MASON

If there's anything in here that's not to your liking,
anything at all, now is the time to object.

FAITH

He's got balls asking me to do this. Or was this your idea?

MASON

Remember, once you sign this document, legally you must
abide by it or risk. You would risk.

FAITH

What? Execution? I'll already be dead.

MASON

And the money, it's sufficient?

FAITH

Fine, you haven't told me what you think about this?

MASON

I know this may seem an insensitive procedure in light of such a joyous and hopeful occasion but I'm sure you understand that Mr. Forty must protect his considerable interests.

MASON shows FAITH the pages.

It's a simple pre-nuptial contract with articles listed as one through four. It addresses the marriage, the children and upon the dissolution of the marriage, for any reason, you will receive ten million dollars as one large sum; any questions?

FAITH

(Pause)

It's mine no matter what?

MASON

The exact reason for the dissolution is not critical. Jonathan feels, as I do that financial gain is not the motivation behind this union, therefore unimportant as an outcome. Obviously you two have something very special.

FAITH

Give me a pen!

MASON

You are twenty-one years of age?

FAITH

Bite me!

FAITH signs.

MASON

I know you'll be very happy. There and there and there, twice. Thank you and thank you.

JONATHAN bounces in excited.

JONATHAN

It's a great day for a wedding!

MASON

Faith is feeling a bit vulnerable. I assured her that everything would be all right.

JONATHAN

Everything will be fine with time. Mason, you're on.

MASON

I'll get my book.

JONATHAN

Where are all the guests? Oh right, I didn't invite any!

MASON

No guests? Then we have a small problem. State law requires there be at least two witnesses.

JONATHAN

Well, we are in a bit of a tight. Claire! She owes me a favor; I'll call the Evers.

JONATHAN dials the Evers on speakerphone.

CLAIRE

Hello, Claire Evers, speak to me.

JONATHAN

Claire this is Jonathan Forty, your favorite neighbor from upstairs. Is David there with you?

DAVID

You bet Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Faith and I are getting married today and New York state law requires we have two witnesses.

CLAIRE

Sounds like fun! We're naked right now but we could be up there in say, two minutes?

JONATHAN

Tell you what, why don't you just stay right there on the phone and you can be naked witnesses.

MASON vigorously shakes his head no!
JONATHAN reaches for a boom box and starts some bad wedding music.

CLAIRE

Johnny you are a bad boy.

JONATHAN

OK, it's all yours Mason.

MASON

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to unite this man, Jonathan Forty and this woman, Faith Lockhart in the bonds of holy matrimony.

JONATHAN

Are you two still there?

CLAIRE

We're here!

DAVID

You don't have to do this Faith.

MASON

If anyone present, or on the phone can show just and legal causes why they may not be joined, speak now or forever hold your peace.

DAVID

As a matter of fact I would like to say.

CLAIRE

Shut up David! This is so beautiful. Go ahead judge.

MASON

Who gives this woman to this man?

DAVID

Don't say another word Faith; I'm coming up there!

JONATHAN

Keep going Mason.

CLAIRE

David you get back here! And put some clothes on.

MASON

Please join hands.

CLAIRE

You all better hurry up.

MASON

Jonathan, do you take Faith as your wedded wife, to have to hold, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer; in sickness and in health till death do you part?

JONATHAN

Sure.

MASON

And do you Faith, take Jonathan as your wedded husband, to have to hold, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do you part?

FAITH

I'm so unhappy!

JONATHAN

That's a yes!

DAVID is pounding on the door.

DAVID

Don't do it Faith! Open this door! Open the door!

JONATHAN

Do you think we can hurry this us please?

MASON

By the powers vested in me by the state of New York, I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss the bride.

DAVID

Let me in! Faith, open this door.

LIGHTS

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO:

It's New York City, nine months later.

SETTING:

The basement apartment of the Evers, Claire is pushing small dumb bells into the air with very loud headphones on. David breaks down the door and enters, standing over her.

CLAIRE

(Sings)

I want a man with a slow hand.

DAVID

I saw Mrs. Forty in the park this morning.

CLAIRE

(Sings)

I want a lover with an easy touch.

DAVID

She was walking her new baby; the doorman said his name is James. Claire, why did you change the locks?

DAVID pops one earphone.

You've been building your pecs and tightening your abs for over a year. You're starting to look like Jack LaLane.

CLAIRE

It's better than not being able to get into your own Speedo.

DAVID

As opposed to someone else's?

CLAIRE

If necessary; if you want to attract you've got to be attractive Charlie, I figure Jonathan Forty will light me up with a line of credit, no interest and a million years to pay!

CLAIRE goes through the mail.

Which reminds me, Christmas is almost here and still no invitation to dinner, did you piss him off?

DAVID opens a bottle of wine.

I wonder; I've been following you and Faith every Tuesday in the park. Same time, same place, same lie.

DAVID

What?

CLAIRE

Long lingering walks by the pond and all the time she's as pregnant as a country cousin!

CLAIRE holds up some pictures.

What will the New York Post think?

DAVID

I thought we agreed we wouldn't kill anybody.

CLAIRE

It's only a senseless public relations death.

(Pause)

But nobody has to die; everything is avoidable at a price.

DAVID

I know what you're thinking and it won't work.

(Pause)

Faith and I have been close for a long time.

CLAIRE

All's fair in love and war and cowboys and farm girls and millionaires and me.

DAVID

Closer than you think Claire and I won't hurt her!

CLAIRE

Are we growing apart David? Have we lost the fire? What's she got that I ain't got? See you later lover boy.

CLAIRE exits. DAVID pours a drink then picks up the phone and dials FAITH.

DAVID

You better come down here.

FAITH

Are you all right you sound funny? Are you drunk?

DAVID

Claire's on her way up.

FAITH exits. There's a knock at the door. JONATHAN enters and answers it.

JONATHAN

Well, look who it is.

CLAIRE

Hello Jonathan, it's awful quiet in there.

CLAIRE pokes her head in the door

and then pushes her way in.

Anything you want to tell me?

JONATHAN

Like what?

CLAIRE

I've read about you guys, one day you just snap and bam!
Silence of the Yams!

JONATHAN

James is sleeping. It's been a while since I've seen you up
close you look rested.

CLAIRE

I hate to be the bearer of good news but it seems your wife
and my David have been frolicking in the park on Tuesdays
and God knows what else the rest of the week. What do you
think about that?

JONATHAN

Excuse me.

JONATHAN crosses to the phone, enters
a pager number then returns.

Well, I find that hard to believe.

CLAIRE

I don't care if you believe it, I know someone who will.

CLAIRE hands JONATHAN the letters.

I found these letters stashed behind the toilet, to Faith
from David, nothing to shocking but enough to start a fire.

JONATHAN

Faith with David, we've only been married a year and she's
been pregnant the whole time.

CLAIRE

He's a kinky little monkey isn't he?

JONATHAN and CLAIRE pause and stare.

JONATHAN

So, how are things? Excuse me.

JONATHAN goes back to the phone and enters the same pager number.

CLAIRE

I'm good.

JONATHAN

What do you want Claire?

CLAIRE

What makes you think I want something?

JONATHAN

You don't?

CLAIRE

I want you to make a large cash donation to the Claire Evers benevolent fund or watch me tell the world about your wife's little inside the park home run.

JONATHAN

That's blackmail.

CLAIRE

Say a cool millions worth, small bills in a nice black designer suit case, leather with a matching hand bag, everyday stuff, nothing too flashy.

JONATHAN

Then what?

CLAIRE

Then these pictures won't end up on the front page of the New York Post.

JONATHAN

So if I give you money, you'll destroy those?

CLAIRE

That's the idea, as far as you know.

JONATHAN

And what about David?

CLAIRE

I won't tell the Post but you have to get your own wife back.

CLAIRE exits. JONATHAN enters another pager number. MASON enters and hands JONATHAN a gift box.

MASON

I now have all three of your pages. Here, please tell James it's from his Uncle Mason.

JONATHAN

What is this?

MASON

A gold plated abacus and a bust of Norman Rockefeller.

JONATHAN

James is sleeping.

MASON

And Faith?

JONATHAN

I can only watch one kid at a time.

MASON

My associates have been following Claire Evers, who's been following David Evers, who is not actually her husband for the past twelve months.

MASON opens a file.

Faith has been meeting Mr. Evers in the park on Mondays.

JONATHAN

No, Tuesdays.

MASON

And Tuesdays, they're a bit grainy but it's definitely Faith.

JONATHAN

It's nothing; they're just sitting there like friends would.

MASON

Look closer; those two are in training for something.

JONATHAN looks again, closely.

JONATHAN

You're right they're practicing. And now that Evers bitch shows up here and tries to blackmail me.

MASON

She didn't? Well that's not all bad.

JONATHAN

Which part of it is good?

MASON

It saves us from having to issue a press release. The bigger this whole nasty picture gets, the clearer the world sees your justification for dumping that lying, manipulating gold digger.

JONATHAN

(Hurt, unsure)

Yes, we must dump the gold digger.

MASON

That's what you want right? That's why we're here?

JONATHAN

Our money and our power are why we're here. I don't want James hurt by an ugly mess so wrap it up.

MASON

Sure. This must be very hard on you?

JONATHAN

(Reflective)

Hard? At first you feel nothing. Then anger, depression and then it's just funny. James will need his father more than ever. It's my dream. A chance to mold my son into the man he'll need to be to live in a world that's unkind. James!

JAMES cries from the bedroom.

MASON

Should I arrange for the money?

JONATHAN

Well I'm not going to do it.

JONATHAN hurries off stage.

MASON

Of course, ten million dollars, the most expensive piece of ass in the long and furrowed history of ass.

MASON exits, the lights up in the Evers apartment. DAVID'S drunk on a box. Faith appears with suitcases in each hand. FAITH knocks then opens the door, leaving the suitcases outside.

FAITH

Hello, anybody home? Are you OK?

DAVID

I don't know what have you heard?

FAITH

I hear you're a drunk.

DAVID

I was wondering why the floor kept hitting me in the face.

FAITH takes the bottle from DAVID and lights up a smoke.

FAITH

Why do you want to go and start drinking again?

DAVID

You don't care. Hey, leave some for me.

DAVID retrieves his bottle.

Claire knows about our letters and the park, maybe that time too. She's going to try and black mail Jonathan. When did you start smoking?

FAITH and DAVID laugh.

Why are we laughing when it's all so sad?

FAITH

I'll tell you one thing; Jonathan doesn't care if we do it on a swing set! All he cares about is his precious James. He'd just as soon Claire tells everybody, save him the trouble.

DAVID

I told her we were just friends.

FAITH

Lair! I'm bored; I want to go out dancing. I'm tired of these people and this place.

DAVID

You have a beautiful new baby and your husband can buy Maryland, what are you whining about?

FAITH

You don't know what it's like. If I wanna go out I have to sneak out. He doesn't want me spending time with James; he keeps him covered up all the time and his hands are getting so bad I swear he's gonna drop him. I know he'd like it better if I was gone.

DAVID

Gone? You mean like gone?

FAITH

This morning while he was sleeping I ran out of the house. I kept running till I got to the end of the pier, way out into the harbor. I turned around and looked back at all those tall buildings and all those small people and for one short second I was out of this city, away from Jonathan. It ain't working out like I planned. You gotta get me outta here, out of New York David; can you do that?

DAVID

I could do that. Where do you want to go?

FAITH

Arizona. Remember you said they got all those colors in the sky? They got deserts you can look at and never see the end of.

DAVID

That's what it's like all right.

FAITH

Take me to see that sky.

DAVID

You better be careful what you ask for. What about Jonathan? What about your kid?

FAITH

It's just for a little while. I'll tell Jonathan I got a brother in Tucson. He won't know.

DAVID

Don't play with me, this isn't a walk in the park, this isn't doing it, this is really doing it. Are you sure this is what you want?

(Pause)

OK, we got one problem, money.

FAITH

Money isn't everything.

DAVID

It is when you don't have any and you want to take a pretty girl out west to see the colors in the sky, that shit ain't free you know.

FAITH

I can get money. What are you going to tell Claire?

DAVID

What do you think? Come here.

DAVID and FAITH kiss. FAITH jumps up and exits picking up her suitcases she exits the stage. The lights fade. JONATHAN enters with a crying JAMES pushing the pacifier repeatedly.

JONATHAN

Faith! Where are you? James, you're crying like you lost your last good dollar in you first bad poker game. There's plenty more where that came from son. Daddy knows what you need, love and discipline.

FAITH enters, drops her suitcases and turns in front of the mirror.

FAITH

I think I'm finally starting to get my shape back. Don't you think so? Jonathan?

JONATHAN

Where have you been? James has been crying for five minutes.

FAITH

I've been packing.

FAITH takes the baby.

I cry all the time and it doesn't hurt me.

JONATHAN

Packing for what? What do you have to cry about? I give you everything you could possible want.

FAITH

A trip; all the happiness money can buy?

JONATHAN

And what's wrong with that? What trip?

FAITH

There are things money can't buy Jonathan!

JONATHAN takes JAMES back.

JONATHAN

Oh, you're just not trying hard enough. What is all this, are you going some place?

FAITH

Don't you remember, you suggested I take a trip after the baby was born? I'm going out west to see my brother David in Tucson, that's in Arizona.

JONATHAN

I know where Tucson is!

FAITH

Good, then you'll know where I am. Do you think you and James will be all right for a while?

JONATHAN

Sure. We've got plenty of milk and cereal and diapers. If we need anything else I send Uncle Mason out for it.

FAITH

(Reconsiders)

You know this might not be such a good time to go.

FAITH takes JAMES from JONATHAN.

What if James got sick and needed his mother?

JONATHAN

No, I insist! The longer you wait the harder it will be.
You should take some time for yourself.

FAITH

A baby gets lonely for his mother.

JONATHAN

Your brother David, I've forgotten is he married?

FAITH

He's been living with this girl but it's not really working
out. Jonathan, I do have one last request.

JONATHAN

I don't have a blindfold.

FAITH

I need some cash.

JONATHAN

Mason will take care of it.

JONATHAN takes JAMES from FAITH who exits.

LIGHTS

ACT TWO

SCENE THREE:

It's winter in New York City, fifteen years later.

SETTING:

The basement apartment once used by the Evers is now a
storage closet. David stands outside trying to open the
door. FAITH walks up and she and DAVID enter.

DAVID

Wow, they fixed the place up.

FAITH

There's still no heat.

DAVID

Claire was the reason this place was so cold. We should move back here; I bet you could warm it up?

DAVID disappears behind some boxes.

FAITH

What are we doing?

DAVID

I want to show you something.

FAITH

We came all the way back from Arizona so you could show me something?

DAVID

No silly, it's because we came back that I'm showing you something, you're the only one who knows why we came back.

FAITH

Hurry up I want to get upstairs.

DAVID

What makes you think they'll be happy to see you? You're the one who left; I'm just saying it could be weird, fifteen years is a long vacation.

DAVID climbs through the boxes and emerges, giving FAITH the letters.

Claire got the ones behind the toilet but she forgot to check the medicine cabinet. Our love letters, I didn't have time to grab them before we left.

FAITH

There's nothing in here that has anything to do with love. We both wanted to be anywhere else but here. All these letters did was pass the time.

FAITH gives them back to DAVID who a little gets frisky.

DAVID

That wasn't the only thing keeping us busy.

FAITH

Oh grow up.

DAVID

After fifteen years of marriage I still feel like a teenager. I only wish we had a pile of kids to go with it. Damn my low sperm count!

FAITH

(Amused)

Who told you that?

DAVID

You did.

FAITH

No I didn't!

DAVID

You said it was my problem we couldn't have children. You wanted children didn't you? You wanted children didn't you?

FAITH

I haven't seen the one I have since he was a baby. What's he going to think of his mother?

DAVID

He's going to love her; just like I do.

FAITH

How sweet. David, before we go up I should tell you something about Jonathan.

DAVID

Did he hit you?

FAITH

No, it wasn't like that.

DAVID

If he hit you I swear I'll!

FAITH

He may say some things you haven't heard before.

DAVID

What kind of things?

FAITH

About you and me and James, and the money.

DAVID

I don't care about the money. It was nice for a while but now it's gone. No matter what happens we're still a family.

FAITH

I love you. That's why we need a plan. I'll go up first, you give me twenty minutes then come up and kick down the door and start making wild accusations.

DAVID

What kind of accusations?

FAITH

Oh I'm sure something will come to mind. Jonathan doesn't like confrontation; we'll get him back on his heels.

DAVID

Why can't you just be honest and tell him how you feel, that you want to see your son? He's a father, he'll understand. All those years are gone you can't get them back. James will be a man soon and a man can do what he wants. If we're smart that can include us. I love you Faith, and I love your son because he's a part of you.

FAITH hands DAVID a note.

FAITH

That's sweet. This came for you.

DAVID

There's no return address.

FAITH kisses DAVID and exits. David opens the note and reads it.

LIGHTS

ACT TWO

SCENE FOUR:

It's winter in New York City still later that day.

SETTING:

Jonathan's messy NY apartment, MASON enters in the dark and pulls the shades open. Light pours in. MASON calls out.

MASON

Jonathan, for God's sake come into the daylight. James!

JAMES enters quietly.

JAMES

Uncle Mason?

MASON

You too my boy, I won't bite.

JAMES

I wasn't expecting you.

MASON

Who were you expecting?

JAMES

No one, our last visitor was months ago from UPS. They had the wrong address.

MASON

You're the one who looks a little lost son; is everything OK?

JAMES

I'm fine. How are you?

MASON

Good. It's a beautiful day.

JAMES

Yes it is. Uncle Mason is there anything exciting going on? I mean down there, down on the street?

MASON

This is New York son, the most amazing city in the world. The arts, the theater, Wall Street is a six lane super highway. Street merchants, musicians and food vendors apply their trades while the right and left wings try and save the world

from both ends against the middle on Seventh Avenue. Is it exciting? You bet, twenty four-seven son, twenty four-seven.

JAMES

I want to go down there! I'll be a street vendor! Or maybe an actor on the stage!

MASON

(Amused)

An actor, I think you can shoot a little higher than that.

JAMES

Father is afraid if I go I won't come back.

MASON

He's such an uneven old bird. Well, soon it won't be an issue; you'll have the money to do what you want.

JAMES

If there's anything left?

MASON

What do you know about that?

JAMES

I know you've been dissolving his empire; giving it to charity.

MASON

Your father believes altruism is a giant step toward heaven; I believe it a threat to my very existence. So, if I am at all worth my compensation, and I am, my power of attorney and I will have set aside ample funds to sustain you.

JAMES

Where is it, the money?

MASON

I'll keep it for you, until you're man enough to spend it.

JAMES

And what will happen to him when he's poor?

MASON

You can take care of him if you want.

JAMES

I hope you'll serve me as well as you've served Jonathan?

MASON

It would be my pleasure sir. Let's start by hiring you a maid. This place hasn't been this vile since Faith was here.

JONATHAN enters.

JONATHAN

Faith isn't here. I don't know where she is.

JAMES

Mason says that it's very exciting on the street today.

JONATHAN

So what?

JAMES

I thought I'd go downstairs and see. What do you think?

JONATHAN

Absolutely not, you'll stay here and work on Theory.

MASON

Let the boy go outside Jon, make some friends, meet a girl. Would you like to meet a girl James?

JAMES

(Nervous)

You mean a real girl?

MASON

You could stand a little fresh air yourself old man.

JONATHAN

(Upset)

You will not go downstairs. You will not see how exciting it is. And you will not meet a girl! Girls will only break your heart. They'll leave crying and alone. Are you trying to kill me? Do you want me to have another heart attack?

MASON

Take it easy.

JONATHAN

I am not taking it easy!

JAMES

(Exits)

He's all right he likes attention. Goodbye Uncle Mason.

MASON

James.

JONATHAN

It's hard enough raising a teenager without you introducing him to girls. What were you thinking; stirring him up with notions of Catholic schoolgirls in plaid skirts and saddle shoes?

MASON

You look terrible. How much do you weigh?

JONATHAN

Buck naked, bowels empty, one twenty. That's with my scale, the one at the doctor's office lies you know it lies.

MASON

You should take better care of yourself you look like hell.

JONATHAN

Is that what you came here to tell me?

MASON

No.

JONATHAN

You're not dying are you? I hate it when people tell me they're dying.

MASON

No you?

JONATHAN

Yes. How do I look?

MASON

Is that a new sweater?

JONATHAN

Not me, my money! How much money do I have left? Have you given it away? I want you to give it away!

MASON

Yes, it's almost all gone.

JONATHAN

Really, how much more?

MASON

Another million or so and you'll be busted. Haven't you been reading the newspapers?

JONATHAN

I never read the newspaper.

MASON

"Eccentric millionaire Jonathan Forty is near bankruptcy."

JONATHAN

Why is it taking so long? Did it really say eccentric?

MASON

Faith is in town. She and her second husband David arrived yesterday. I'm sure they'll be paying you a visit.

JONATHAN

They want to see James; they won't like what they see.

MASON

Give her a polite hello and send her back to where she came from. Now try and get some fresh air, put on some new clothes and eat something green. I have to go; I have a friend waiting for me outside.

JONATHAN

A friend, what kind of friend? Is it a woman, that kind of friend?

MASON

It's something like that.

JONATHAN pushes MASON to the door.

JONATHAN

You should be ashamed of yourself, are you a gentleman? You don't keep a lady waiting in the hallway invite her in.

MASON

There's no time.

JONATHAN

There's always time for the scent of a women. Don't worry, I'm only going to stare; you won't have to share her or

anything kinky.

MASON exits and enters with Claire wearing a wig. Jonathan recognizes her.

MASON

Jonathan Forty, I'd like you to meet my friend, Claire.

CLAIRE

Charmed I'm sure.

CLAIRE holds out her hand and JONATHAN suddenly can't breathe dropping to his knees gasping.

MASON

Are you all right?

JONATHAN

I'm fine, just fine, a little reflex reflux.

CLAIRE

Would you like a back rub?

MASON slaps JONATHAN'S back and helps him up.

MASON

He's all right. Take it easy their old boy. Your major medical has lapsed.

JONATHAN

I'm fine, really. Can I get you something, Claire?

CLAIRE

A martini please, stirred not shaken and an order of fries.

Pulling MASON aside JONATHAN and MASON fix a Martini. JONATHAN'S hands shake.

JONATHAN

Will you excuse us? You're wrong Mason, you are going to die! Where in the world did you meet this woman?

MASON

It's the strangest thing; we kept running into each other on the elevator. We've become very fast friends and even faster lovers. I really think she's the one.

JONATHAN

She's the one all right!

MASON

What's wrong with you? She comes from a good family; with great personal wealth, her ex-husband was.

JONATHAN

Ass deep in oil?

MASON

I believe that's right.

JONATHAN and MASON bring the drinks.

JONATHAN

I'm sorry; I just found out a friend of ours is dying. So, what do you do Claire?

CLAIRE

As little as possible, you see I was born with money, married money and then made money.

JONATHAN gags and quickly takes
CLAIRE'S drink away.

JONATHAN

Are you done with that?

CLAIRE

Well I.

JONATHAN

It's been a pleasure, Claire. I hope to see you again soon. Be careful with this one he's an awful cheater at bridge. I'm hungry.

JONATHAN pushes and CLAIRE backs out
of the room.

MASON

I'll just be a minute.

CLAIRE

It's nice to see you again Jonathan.

MASON

That was rather abrupt.

JONATHAN

I'm sorry but she's much younger than you. She'll put you in the hospital and leave you with nothing.

MASON

You would leave me with nothing; at least she has a nice ass.

JONATHAN

Wrong again! She's shown her ass on many occasions and it's never been pleasant.

JONATHAN pulls a stale sandwich from the drawer and takes a bite.

Think Mason, do you remember the woman I told you about who lived down on the first floor some years ago; a ghastly wench, a dreadful bitch, a horrible female?

MASON

The one who blackmailed you and ran up your charge accounts?

JONATHAN

That's the one.

MASON

What was her name? Her name was Claire too, Claire Evers. She must be in jail by now.

JONATHAN

Did you ever meet her, face to face?

MASON

I'm sure I didn't.

JONATHAN

Well now you have. Good luck and goodbye dear friend. And don't forget your protection. Where is my special tea?

MASON, stunned, backs out the door.
JONATHAN exits. JAMES enters and begins to practice. There is a knock at the door and JAMES answers it.

JAMES

Hello, may I help you?

FAITH

Yes, I'm looking for Jonathan Forty, is he at home?

JAMES

Who's calling?

FAITH

Tell him its Molly, Molly Crowder.

JAMES

Are you lost?

FAITH

I don't think so.

JAMES

Would you like to come in then?

FAITH

Are you sure it's all right? I could come back later?

JAMES

It's OK with me. My father doesn't have many callers.

FAITH enters.

FAITH

Thank you. Does James Forty live here too?

JAMES

I'm James; did you look in the mailbox?

FAITH

You look like a James.

JAMES

My father thinks I look like a Stanley. Stanley was my grandfather, he taught piano. What do you do?

FAITH

Nothing; I was a dancer once, when I was younger.

JAMES

You look like a dancer.

(Pause)

How do you know Father? Did you dance for him?

FAITH

When I first moved to New York your father was my piano teacher.

JAMES

Me too! He's my piano teacher too.

FAITH

Then you must be pretty good.

JAMES

I am.

FAITH

Will you play something for me?

JAMES

Sure. I'm only fifteen but I've played the piano before I could walk. What do you want to hear? I know.

JAMES plays Heart and Soul and FAITH completes it. JAMES then reprises his earlier song as JONATHAN enters holding his teacup and watches.

JONATHAN

James Allen Forty, what is this about?

JAMES leaps to his feet.

JAMES

It's her fault! She came to the door while I was practicing. You have to go now.

JONATHAN

Who's your friend?

JAMES

She's not my friend; she's your friend sir. Her name is Molly she's a dancer.

JONATHAN

James, did you invite a dancer into our home? I don't think we need any dancing do you?

JAMES opens the front door.

JAMES

My father says we don't need any dancing today.

FAITH

That's because your father has two left feet.

JONATHAN

James your lesson has been cancelled, go watch television.

JAMES

Alone?

JONATHAN

It's all right son, just this once.

JAMES exits. FAITH plays piano badly.

State your business; I'm expecting the ghost of Christmas past any moment now.

FAITH

He's a polite young man. Is it me or is this piano as out of tune as the rest of your life?

JONATHAN

Just because the piano has eighty-eight keys doesn't mean you have to play them all at one time. Why are you here? Are you dying? Are you broke, or is it both?

FAITH

I'm in a twelve-step program and you're my first step. This place is a mess you could use a housekeeper.

JONATHAN softens to FAITH and sits close to her putting his hand on the small of FAITH'S back.

JONATHAN

I had a housekeeper once, it didn't work out. She was a tired young thing. Strangely, I've forgotten how she, how she looked, she smelled so. May I? You should arch your back more; try and caress the keys gently.

(Pause)

Have you forgotten everything I taught you?

FAITH

Not everything.

JONATHAN starts to play but is stopped with pain in his hands so he stands up.

JONATHAN

It's sad when you can no longer do what you were born to do.

FAITH

It's sadder when you've never had the chance to do it at all.

JONATHAN

Did you know the piano is a metaphor for life Miss Lockhart?

FAITH

Yes. It's so hard.

JONATHAN

But once you've learned your lesson it can be so beautiful.

FAITH

You look like hell. When's the last time you saw a doctor?

JAMES enters unseen and listens.

JONATHAN

I'm tired of doctors and they're tired of me.

(Pause)

Molly if the reason you're here is because the money is gone I'll gladly give you more but quietly, the boy doesn't need to know.

FAITH

I want to tell my son the truth.

JONATHAN makes a move on FAITH who does not flinch.

JONATHAN

What if there was a way for you to see both of us again? You could stay and talk for a while; catch up on some of your old lessons. I still have that pillow.

JAMES

(Interrupting)

Excuse me; I've finished watching television.

JONATHAN

(Angry)

So go and watch some more, it's free!

JAMES

There's a better show out here.

DAVID blows opens the door holding the letter from FAITH tightly in his hand.

DAVID

What the hell is this about!

JONATHAN

Oh for Pete's sake, what's he doing here?

FAITH

David, I thought we agreed?

DAVID

Is this true?

FAITH

Please go you're ruining everything.

DAVID

Me? I'm ruining. Hey, get away from her; you can't have my wife old man!

JONATHAN

Too late, I've already had her!

DAVID lunges at JONATHAN who evades.

FAITH

Stop it! I said stop it!

FAITH smashes the Baccarat, breaking the chaos, and then speaks softly.

FAITH

James, listen to me. This is David, he's my husband and we have something to tell you.

DAVID

Hey.

JAMES gives a weak wave. JONATHAN, freaking out, puts his fingers in his ears and he mumbles and screams throughout the conversation.

JONATHAN

I'm not hearing this. I'm not hearing this! My country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty let freedom ring. Four score and seven years ago, the correct way to repair a back-flow valve is to first remove the outer bolts, remove the tension springs and coat the seals with cooking oil. La, la, la, I can't hear anything. I'm not here; I'm invisible.

FAITH

I want you to listen carefully.

JAMES

(To David)

Is this something you did?

FAITH

Along time ago David and I fell in love. We had a relationship. David is your father.

JAMES

Jonathan Forty is my father.

FAITH

I know this is hard for you but he's not.

JAMES

Then what the hell am I doing here?

JONATHAN removes his fingers.

JONATHAN

Whatever she said it's a lie! You can't take him he belongs to me. I have irrefutable evidence; I have permanent provisions to prove it.

DAVID

What's he babbling about?

JONATHAN crosses to the desk, looking, pulling papers from the drawer; he puts on his glasses and reads aloud.

JONATHAN

Have you forgotten our agreement? James, I'm sorry you have to hear this but she has forced the issue, if I can find my glasses. Your mother and I agreed before you were born, here; article one. The marriage of Jonathan Forty to Faith Lockhart, aka Molly Crowder will take place for the sole purpose of producing an heir.

(Pause)

I realize now that that sounds a bit harsh.

DAVID

Is this some kind of joke?

JONATHAN

I'm sorry, no joke. Article two. An undisputed divorce will be granted to Jonathan Forty after the birth of said heir.

DAVID

You're right; the boy doesn't need to hear this.

JONATHAN

Wait for it! Article Three demonstrates my astounding generosity. After the dissolution of the marriage, Faith Lockhart Forty shall receive a one-time payment of ten million dollars.

FAITH

A young girl and desperate man traded lies.

JONATHAN

A rather large sum she has since wasted on unimportant things and unnecessary pursuits.

DAVID

She gave it all away; to people with nothing; like you.

The group gets very quiet. JONATHAN softens and reads Article IV starting fast, ending slowly and quietly.

JONATHAN

Article IV. In exchange for ten million dollars, Faith Lockhart shall forfeit all rights and or claims to this child and shall at no time now or in the future attempt any contact for a period of time to be termed, for as long as she lives. For as long as she lives.

FAITH

Let's go David.

JONATHAN

James go and wash up, I'll be in later to check under your bed for monsters.

JAMES

The monsters are out here.

DAVID

We're in the book.

JONATHAN

We have work to do and we are behind.

DAVID, FAITH exit, JAMES sits silently.

Well here we are the last of the revolutionaries. We've had our fun haven't we? A lot of excitement for one day and we've totally missed our lesson, that won't do.

(Angry)

Why are you so quiet? I know you want to go with them but your place is here, in our home. I need you here and whether you realize it or not, you need me. We're an odd team but a team all the same. It was predetermined!

JAMES

(Deadpan)

If you don't calm down you'll hurt yourself.

JONATHAN

What do you care? You and your friends can go to hell!
After all I've done for you, go straight to . . .

JONATHAN grabs at his chest.

I'm not feeling well.

JONATHAN slips to one knee then backs up to the couch.

JONATHAN

I'll just sit here for a while; see what you do to me? James, I need my pills. Hand me my medicine; on the table hurry up!

JAMES stops and stares, then moves slowly to the table, hands JONATHAN the bottle and backs away.

I'll be all right in a minute. Don't worry about me son.

JONATHAN can't open the bottle with his crippled hands.

It's a funny thing; I can't open the bottle. James, will you open this for me.

JONATHAN holds the bottle out to JAMES. JAMES stands still listening to his father's cries stepping further away. He turns to the piano and plays.

Will you help me?

JONATHAN pitches forward and lands face down on the floor.

I need you James.

JAMES goes to him, holding him upright he gives his medicine. He supports his head and helps JONATHAN to the couch. JAMES stands over him.

JAMES

I'm going out.

JAMES closes the piano lid and exits.

LIGHTS

The End
Article IV
Equal the world (7)