

THE LAST OF THE DAYTONS

by

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What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.

-Crowfoot, Native American warrior and orator (1821-1890)

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THE LAST OF THE DAYTONS

Cast of Characters

Melina Biddle:	A grandmother
Bob Biddle:	Melina's husband
Patti:	Melina's invisible friend
Devon Biddle:	Her grandson, seventeen
Jodie Biddle:	Her daughter, thirty-four
Matthew Dayton:	An antique dealer, a stranger, thirty

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

SETTING:

A large almost empty living room in an old house. There is a large lamp shaped like an angel, a sofa with large cushions, and a wastebasket. (The setting is such that the action can be continuous, without pause to take on or add set pieces. The park and cemetery can be suggested by light and sound.)

TIME: The present. Late afternoon.

AT RISE: Offstage, we hear a loud pounding on the front door. Then, again. The door opens and Melina Biddle enters. She's wearing a beret and a leather jacket.

MELINA

The door was unlocked! How many times have I told that kid to lock the door?

(to Patti)

Patti? When didya get here?

(listens)

Me, too. Starving. Want a Twinkie? I know where she hides them.

(exits. We hear offstage noise of cupboard doors opening and closing.

Offstage, Melina sings.)

“There was blood on the saddle

There was blood on the ground

And a great big puddle of”

(speaks, offstage)

Found em!

MELINA (continued)

(re-enters with two Twinkies in a box, puts the box on one on the arm of the sofa.)

Here we go. Two left.

(eating)

Listen, we've got to eat. After we get out of here, let's go to Carl's, get us a couple of Super Stars. My treat.

(listens)

Do I care? High cholesterol. What a crock.

(Devon enters, smoking a joint. He's wearing a Beckham jersey with a bustier over it, spandex tights and Nikes. He has earphones on.)

DEVON

(exhales)

Hidiliho, Grandma. I didn't hear you come in.

(puts the earphones on his shoulders)

MELINA

Sleeping, weren't you, Bub? With the door unlocked.

DEVON

I forgot.

MELINA

You could be murdered in your bed.

DEVON

Grandma. Be nice. I was surfing.

MELINA

We can't stay long. Bid's in the hospital.

DEVON

Gramps is sick?

MELINA

They're taking his leg off, tomorrow morning.

DEVON

He's tough, Gram.

MELINA

Not anymore. He's a dandelion clock. Breathe on him and he'll blow away.

DEVON

You found the Twinkies.
(picks up the Twinkie)
Mother's going to freak.

MELINA

Put that down! That's Patti's.

DEVON

(chewing, to Patti)
You don't need this, do you, Patti?
(to Melina)
She's getting a big butt.

MELINA

Better than a big mouth. Where's your Mother?

DEVON

At the cemetery. Did you tell her you were coming over?

MELINA

Nope.

DEVON

Ooo,ooo,ooo. Sugar rush.

JODIE

(calling offstage)
Why is the pickup parked out on the lawn?

DEVON

Merde! She's here.

(He waves his arms about, flaps a tea towel, hides the Twinkie box. The door opens and Jodie Biddle enters, wearing a tangerine dress and tangerine slingbacks.)

JODIE

Whatever it is, Mother, the answer is, "No."

MELINA

The door was unlocked when we got here.

JODIE

(to Devon)
You know how I feel about that.

Are you working this weekend?
DEVON

Café Robert, two shifts.
JODIE

DEVON
(using the French pronunciation)
It's Café Robert.

OK. Robert. Two shifts.
JODIE

DEVON
I've got a game on Saturday. Aren't you coming?

JODIE
Can I do both?

MELINA
What makes you think I want something?

JODIE
You always want something, Mother.

(She gestures "Gimme," to Melina.)

MELINA
What?

JODIE
Just hand it over.

(Melina takes a gun out of her jacket and hands it to Jodie.)
I knew it. What did I say about carrying a gun?

MELINA
It isn't easy giving up something you love.

DEVON
She's in a twelve step program.

JODIE
And what step does this represent?

DEVON

Six?

JODIE

Step one. Get rid of the gun.

MELINA

I've had that gun since you were seventeen years old.

(Jodie puts the gun in the wastebasket.)

It's every woman for herself. Are they going to help the little guy? Did they help the postmen who inhaled all that anthrax? Take a Tylenol and go home. You'll be fine.

You'll be dead.

JODIE

You're always on alert! Turn off Fox news. Cancel the newspapers, collect postcards, play bingo, go ballroom dancing. What's that smell?

MELINA

I can't smell anything.

JODIE

That's because you have no sense of smell. But I do.

(to Devon)

How dare you light up in here?

(pulls a piece of paper from her pocket)

And how dare you write a note to Mrs. Beates?

(reading)

Il pleure dans mon coeur comme il pleut sur la ville.

DEVON

It weeps in my heart like it rains on the town. Paul Verlaine.

JODIE

Thank God, she doesn't speak French.

DEVON

She's a babe, Mom.

JODIE

She's a forty-five year old Before Need Counselor, and a bottle blonde.

DEVON

I love her.

JODIE

She works on commission. If you're going to fall in love, fall in love with a salaried employee.

(to Melina)

Why is your old furniture in the pickup truck?

(She sits down.)

MELINA

Don't sit on Patti! She's just had her hair done.

JODIE

I'm nowhere near her. What kind of perfume is that?

MELINA

Summer Breeze.

JODIE

She wears far too much.

(sighs)

Why do I come home?

(Jodie takes off her shoes)

My feet are on fire. At lunchtime, I walked all the way from the Duck Pond to the Hall of the Crucifixion.

MELINA

Patti bought you something.

(She pulls a tangerine scarf out of her pocket.)

It's tangerine.

JODIE

I can see that Mother. How come?

MELINA

It's for your birthday. Belated.

JODIE

My birthday's tomorrow.

MELINA

Do you want it or not?

(Jodie tries it on, and admires it.)

JODIE
It's very pretty. Thank you, Patti.
(suddenly alarmed)
Why'd Patti have her hair done?

MELINA
We went to the hospital to see Bid.

JODIE
Why's he in the hospital?

MELINA
He fell in the bathroom.

JODIE
How?

MELINA
He got up about four this morning. I heard a huge thunk, went in and found him out cold on the floor. He'd cut his head and there was blood everywhere. So I called the ambulance.

DEVON
They're taking his leg off.

JODIE
What?

MELINA
Tomorrow morning.

JODIE
Why are they going to take his leg off?

MELINA
I don't know.

JODIE
Who told you? The doctors?

MELINA

They never talk to me. I heard them whispering in the hall.

JODIE

Which one?

MELINA

There were two of them. Shugalter and Slack. It was on their name tags.

JODIE

Which leg?

MELINA

The left.

DEVON

I wonder what they do with the parts?

MELINA

He hasn't had any feeling in his feet for years.

JODIE

What did Dad say about it?

MELINA

He wouldn't tell me anything. He said he didn't want me to know.

JODIE

You'd know tomorrow.

DEVON

I bet they throw them into a big furnace in the basement.

MELINA

He'll have to live on the ground floor, now. Won't be able to do the apartment stairs.

DEVON

Whoosh!

JODIE

(suddenly understanding)

Oh, no! Absolutely not.

MELINA

Did I ask you to take him in?

JODIE

I'm not stupid, Mother.

DEVON

She could tell the time when she was nine months old.

JODIE

I can't take care of Dad. I can barely take care of Devon. Look at him.

DEVON

What? I'm cool.

MELINA

Who bought us a mansion in the Bel-Air Hills?

JODIE

Who moved us to a trailer park at the top of Topanga?

MELINA

Who gave you this house?

JODIE

He'd make me crazy in three days.

MELINA

Don't you care about him?

JODIE

Ask me a question I can answer.

MELINA

It's a big house, Jodie.

JODIE

Why is the furniture in the back of the truck?

MELINA

I took it out of storage.

JODIE

Why?

MELINA

It's for you.

DEVON

(looking out the window)

Gram, that's huge.

MELINA

Happy Birthday, baby!

JODIE

I don't want it.

MELINA

Why?

JODIE

Why can't I have a normal life? A man who loves me, a son who speaks English, a mother who watches *One Life to Live* and does a little shopping on the weekends. That's all I dream of.

(She exits.)

MELINA

She's gonna love it.

DEVON

Can you come to my game, Gram?

MELINA

Got to be with Bid, boy.

(Offstage, we hear cupboards opening and banging shut.)

DEVON

You always come.

MELINA

It's only this once. He'll need me after the operation.

DEVON

Ce ne fait rien.

JODIE

(screams, offstage, enters, to Melina.)

You took my Twinkies!

MELINA

You could get diabetes and you know where that leads to.

JODIE

You have no respect.

MELINA

Jodie, look at that truck. There's a lot of fine furniture in there. Just say the word and we take everything out of the truck and move it in. Chairs and tables. Shelves. Lamps. In two days, we'll have this place full of stuff and looking good.

JODIE

I don't want it.

MELINA

(yells out the window)

Hey, you. Yeah, you. Get away from that stuff.

JODIE

(looks out the window)

Mother. It's just somebody passing by.

(She leaves the window.)

MELINA

(yells out the window)

Get away from it or I'll blow your head off!

(to Devon)

Quick! He's taking off.

(Devon looks out the window.)

DEVON

I don't see anybody.

MELINA

(looks out the window)

You missed him.

(to Patti)

What d'ya mean, he looked alright?

(to Devon)

She trusts everybody. He was staring at the house.

JODIE

(amused)

He's coming for you, Mother. Somebody tipped off Homeland Security.

(She exits.)

MELINA

She's laughing. We're breaking her down. You wanna come with us, Bub?

DEVON

Where're you going?

MELINA

We're hitting Carl's for a Superstar. My treat. Then, we'll go see Bid.

DEVON

Fantastique!

MELINA

(looking out the window)

Do me a favor, will ya? Bring in that table.

DEVON

(looking out the window)

Which one?

MELINA

The one at the top of the pile.

(Devon exits. Melina keeps looking out the window.)

MELINA

(to Patti)

You know when we bought that? Jodalina was about eleven, in sixth grade. She used to sit under it and do her homework. Cute as a bug.

(calling out to Devon)

Bring it in.

(to Patti)

Give me wood any day. You can take your chrome and glass tables. Have a toddler over and you're nervous as a cat.

(opens door and Devon enters, carrying a small table)

Beautiful. Let's put it over here.

(Devon puts it down.)

DEVON

How's that?

(Jodies enters, wearing a jogging suit and carrying her Nikes.)

JODIE

(to Melina)

Dammit, Mother. What did I tell you?

DEVON

It was falling off the truck.

(Devon and Melina head for the door.)

JODIE

(to Devon)

And where do you think you're going?

DEVON

I'm going to see Gramps.

JODIE

Not in my bustier, you're not.

DEVON

You never wear it.

(He tries to take it off and can't. Jodie undoes the back.)

MELINA

I'm going to wash my hands.

JODIE

Gunshot residue?

(Melina exits.)

You wear this just to torture me.

DEVON

I'm searching for myself.

JODIE

In my underwear?

(Jodie yanks on the back of the bustier, gets it off.)

DEVON

Ow! Jodie, I've asked somebody over tomorrow.

JODIE

On my birthday?

DEVON

It was the only time he could come.

JODIE

Well, if you've asked him, you've asked him.

DEVON

He's really important to me and I want you to be nice to him.

JODIE

I'm nice to everybody.

DEVON

It's someone I met online.

JODIE

What!?

(Melina enters.)

MELINA

(to Devon)

Come on, Bub. We're moving out.

(throws him keys)

Start the truck, will ya?

DEVON

Sure.

(to Jodie)

See ya.

(He exits.)

JODIE

(calling)

On the Web?

MELINA

We'll bring the rest of the stuff in when we get back.

JODIE

Do and you die.

(Jodie sits on sofa, and puts on her Nikes, to Patti)

Your hair looks very nice.

(to Melina)

What time will you be home?

MELINA

Nine o'clock.

JODIE

He has homework.

(Offstage, the truck starts up. Melina starts for the door, then races to the wastebasket. Jodie beats her to it and puts her hand over it.)

MELINA

That gun is mine.

JODIE

It's dangerous.

MELINA

I'm an expert marksman.

JODIE

(quoting)

Here lies a man named Zeke.

Second fastest draw in Cripple Creek.

MELINA

(to Jodie)

You leave that boy alone on weekends, he'll grow up to be a bum.

(to Patti)

Patti. What are ya still sitting there for?

(Melina exits. Jodie sniffs the air, runs to the sofa and looks behind the cushions. She finds the empty Twinkie box.)

JODIE

Oh, I hate that!

(Offstage, we hear the truck leaving. Jodie sits on the sofa. Quoting)

Here lies

Johnny Yeast

Pardon me

For not rising.

(She gets up, takes the box and exits to the kitchen. There's a knock at the door.)

JODIE (offstage, continued)

What do you want, now?

(The knocking continues.)

Just come in!

(Jodie enters. MATTHEW DAYTON enters, carrying a gift wrapped parcel.)

MATTHEW

Jodie?

(Jodie screams, grabs the gun from the wastebasket and points it at him.)

JODIE

Get back. Don't come near me.

(Matthew drops the parcel and puts his hands in the air.)

MATTHEW

Don't kill me. Don't kill me.

JODIE

Come any closer and I will.

MATTHEW

You're Jodie, aren't you? Jodie Biddle?

JODIE

How did you know my name?

MATTHEW

I'm Matthew.

JODIE

Get out of here, Matthew.

MATTHEW

Don't you know me?

JODIE

(shouts)

Get out of here or I'll shoot!

(Matthew freezes, then backs out the door. Jodie looks at the gun in her hand and carefully puts it in the wastebasket. Faints. Matthew looks around the door, sees her. He picks up the parcel, puts it on the sofa and then kneels beside her.

She comes to, sees him, gasps.)

MATTHEW

Are you all right?

(Jodie stares at him.)

JODIE

I forgot to lock the door.

MATTHEW

I'm sorry I surprised you. I didn't know exactly what to do when you said, "Come in," so I came in.

JODIE

How did you know my name?

MATTHEW

You're Devon's Mom, aren't you?

JODIE

You're a friend of Devon's?

MATTHEW

We met online.

JODIE

On the Web! Of course.

MATTHEW

Are you sure you're all right?

JODIE

You're not what I expected.

MATTHEW

You look great...

(indicating her jogging suit)

That's...

JODIE

This? It's from Ross, Dress For Less. Seventy-five dollars, marked down to twenty-nine, ninety-five.

MATTHEW

Your hands are shaking.

(Matthew takes her hands and they look at each other with warmth and mutual attraction. Suddenly aware, Jodie takes her hands back and gets up.)

JODIE

Would you like a drink? Some milk or a soda?

MATTHEW

A soda would be great.
(looks around)
That lamp is really something.

JODIE

It's from the memento shop at the cemetery, where I work. It has a slight flaw in the back, so they let me buy it. Cheap.

(Jodie exits, then reenters.)

Wait a minute. I saw you out in front. You were going to steal our furniture.

MATTHEW

No.

JODIE

You were going through our things.

MATTHEW

I always look, that's all. It's a bad habit. I'm an antique dealer.

JODIE

Antique dealer?

MATTHEW

I'm an appraiser. There were a couple of very good dining room chairs in there.

(looks)

Somebody yelled at me through that window.

JODIE

My Mother.

She's.... MATTHEW

(ironically)
Isn't she? JODIE

I had no idea. Is she here? MATTHEW

She's gone. She'd never sell them. JODIE

Who? MATTHEW

Mother. The chairs are hers. JODIE

I'm not here about the chairs! MATTHEW

Why are you? JODIE

Didn't Devon tell you? MATTHEW

He never tells me anything. JODIE

I'm Matthew Dayton. MATTHEW

Dayton? JODIE

Matthew Dayton. MATTHEW

Are you related to George Remington Dayton? JODIE

I'm his kid brother. MATTHEW

JODIE

Georgie's brother wasn't called Matthew.

MATTHEW

I'm Walter Matthew Dayton.

(shows her his license)

See.

JODIE

He called you Wally.

MATTHEW

Or Walnut or sometimes just Nutty.

JODIE

(looks at licence)

Bellingham, Washington. So that's where he went.

MATTHEW

(He gives her an envelope, which she opens. Jodie takes out contents and looks at them.)

My birth certificate.

(about the photos)

That's George and me sailing. There we are at the park, playing ball. See. That's George in his uniform. Just before he left for the Army.

JODIE

He was in the Army?

MATTHEW

Yes.

JODIE

Why?

MATTHEW

To be all he could be, I guess.

JODIE

Does Devon know about George?

MATTHEW

That's why I'm here! We met on *LostRelatives.com*. I saw his post and answered it.

JODIE

What post?

MATTHEW
Bastard son searching for George Remington Dayton.

JODIE
(alarmed)
Oh! Is George coming, too?

MATTHEW
No.

JODIE
Why?

MATTHEW
He died.
(Silence.)
He was found dead in his bunk in the barracks. He'd just turned twenty-one.

JODIE
Poor Georgie.

MATTHEW
I'm Devon's uncle.

JODIE
Uncle?

MATTHEW
We're the last of the Daytons.

JODIE
Your Mom and Dad?

MATTHEW
They died in a car accident three years ago.

JODIE
You don't look like George.

MATTHEW
I was the goofy looking one.

JODIE
No, I remember now. You were the charmer.

MATTHEW

I had to be charming. I was the goofy looking one.

JODIE

What do you do in Bellingham?

MATTHEW

Did. I managed a *Lamps-R-Us*.

JODIE

That's nice.

MATTHEW

It was terrible. Every chance I got, I'd drive to the country, buy all kinds of antiques, throw them into my truck, and sell them in the city. Have you heard of *Boylan's Antiques*?

JODIE

No.

MATTHEW

It's well known in the trade. Mr. Boylan hired me.

JODIE

Here?

MATTHEW

It's my first big break. If I do well here, he wants me to manage his Seattle gallery.

JODIE

You're moving here?

MATTHEW

Everything I own is in the truck.

JODIE

You and Mother are going to get along.

MATTHEW

Excuse me?

JODIE

Just a joke.

(Matthew picks up parcel, offers it to Jodie.)

MATTHEW

It's a present. For your birthday.

JODIE

My birthday's tomorrow.

MATTHEW

I know. Devon told me.

(Jodie gives him the parcel.)

JODIE

Would you open that for me? My hands still aren't working.
(Matthew opens the parcel.)

Ho Hos!

MATTHEW

Gelsons was out of Twinkies.

JODIE

How did you know? Don't tell me.
(about the Ho Hos)
Would you like one?

MATTHEW

Thanks.

JODIE

I'll get that soda.

MATTHEW

If we're having Ho Ho's, make mine milk.

JODIE

Right.

(Matthew collapses on the sofa, looks around. He puts the bag in the wastebasket, sees the gun, gingerly picks it up.)

The door opens and Bob Biddle enters, in his pajamas, with a gauze bandage on his forehead. Matthew swings around, pointing the gun at him.)

BOB

Don't shoot!

(Matthew looks down at the gun. Bob, yells, races across the room, grabs it and wrestles it out of Matthew's hand. He throws Matthew to the floor and puts his foot on him.)

MATTHEW

Get off! Get off!

(Jodie enters.)

JODIE

Let him go.

(Bob takes his foot off Matthew. Matthew gets up, to Matthew)

Are you all right?

MATTHEW

(to Jodie)

You should get rid of that gun.

JODIE

(to Bob)

Give me that.

(Bob gives her the gun. Jodie puts the gun in the wastebasket.)

Your leg looks fine. I thought it had to come off.

BOB

Dicky bird, the feet aren't so hot but the leg is hunky-dory. How much money you got?

JODIE

None.

BOB

My plastic is maxed, chicken. I need you.

JODIE

Why'd she think it was coming off?

BOB

Who?

JODIE

Mother. She thought you were losing your left leg.

BOB

I wasn't. Arsenio was.

JODIE

Who is Arsenio?

BOB

The guy in the room next to me. Gangrene. The smell was something fierce.

JODIE

You let her believe it was you, didn't you?

BOB

I didn't want to spoil her fun.

JODIE

That is so mean.

BOB

It gets her juices flowing. She likes that.

(offers his hand)

I'm sorry about the attack, buddy. I'm Bob Biddle.

MATTHEW

You're Devon's grandfather!

BOB

He's my boy.

MATTHEW

You must be so proud of him.

BOB

I am.

MATTHEW

He's really something - straight A student, President of the Debating Society, Editor of The Sentient Voice, MVP in soccer, two years in a row?

BOB AND JODIE

Devon?

JODIE

(to Bob)

How did you get here?

BOB

I walked.

JODIE

In your pajamas?

BOB

Nobody even looked at me. No, that's a lie. I fell asleep on a bus bench and somebody put five bucks in my pocket. You got anything for thirst, tweetie?

JODIE

Do you want some milk?

BOB

Soda.

JODIE

No soda for you. You know that.

BOB

What happened to the living room furniture?

JODIE

There were too many things in here. I want one room that isn't full of stuff.

MATTHEW

Why?

JODIE

I can't breathe in a crowded room.

MATTHEW

When my ex moved, she took every stick. She even took the doorknobs.

JODIE

What a shock.

MATTHEW

They were good looking doorknobs.

JODIE

(to Matthew)

I'll be right back. Don't give him any money.

(She exits. Matthew sits on the sofa.)

BOB

You got any money?

MATTHEW

No.

BOB

Fifteen years ago, I had six apartment buildings, each approximately ninety units, each one with an average of twelve hundred dollars a month rent, nearly always full, with a market value of eight million, nine. When I think about what they'd be worth today.

MATTHEW

Three times that.

BOB

More. I had a mansion in Bel Air with a guest house at the edge of the ravine.

MATTHEW

That must have been magnificent.

BOB

I could have done without the guest house.

MATTHEW

All your relatives came to stay. Right?

BOB

Something like that.

MATTHEW

Wow. So you're Bob.

BOB

That's what I'm told.

MATTHEW

It's a pleasure to meet you, sir.

(Puts out his hand and Bob shakes it.)

BOB

I would have put my tie on but I was getting out fast.

MATTHEW

The magic man of real estate.

BOB

I'm an ex magic man, Matthew. Today, I've got diddley-squat.

MATTHEW

You've got this beautiful house.

BOB

I bought this for Jodie. I rented it out until the mortgage was paid off and now it's hers, free and clear. She and the boy moved in on her birthday two years ago.

MATTHEW

That's a very nice birthday present.

BOB

Yep. And I do have one choice piece of property left. It's in Needles.

MATTHEW

Needles?

BOB

It's a town on the Colorado River, at the foot of the mountains, off Route 66. After I get myself a small infusion of cash, I'm headed that way. Have you ever been there?

MATTHEW

No.

BOB

Neither have I.

MATTHEW

Why do you want to go?

BOB

It's a fisherman's paradise.

MATTHEW

That good, huh?

BOB

That's what they tell me. And it's smog-free, hot in the summer, mild in the winter. Every breath of air a dollar in the bank of good health.

(sits on the sofa next to Matthew)

I feel like I'm waiting for the Downtown Express. Wouldn't you think she could buy a chair?

MATTHEW

When I got here, there was a pickup truck on the lawn full of furniture. There was a dining room table, some rugs, and a diamond pattern cut crystal desk lamp with a pleated shade.

BOB

No kidding.

MATTHEW

There were some good chairs under the rugs but I didn't get a really good look at them.

(Jodie enters with a soda for Bob, gives it to him.)

JODIE

Did you ask him for money?

BOB

He doesn't have any.

(She takes a cushion and puts it on the floor. Matthew picks up the wastebasket.)

MATTHEW

Could I take this somewhere else?

JODIE

Why don't you put it in the kitchen?

MATTHEW

O.K.

(Matthew exits.)

BOB

Who is this bozo? He thinks he knows me. Does he?

JODIE

In a way.

BOB

He reminds me of somebody. Something about the nose.

JODIE

He's Georgie's brother.

BOB

Georgie?

JODIE

Dayton. He's George Dayton's kid brother.

BOB

Are you kidding me?

JODIE

He's four years younger than George. He was still in middle school when we were going together.

BOB

It's the same guy?

JODIE

I think so.

BOB

What does he want?

JODIE

I don't know.

(Lights down on their area.)

SCENE TWO

SETTING: A Park

TIME: Late afternoon.

AT RISE: SFX: a pickup truck coming to a stop, then birds, a water fountain, children playing in the distance. Lights come up on Devon and Melina, who enter, carrying two dining room chairs. Devon's drinking a jumbo soda through a straw.

DEVON

(putting down the chairs)

Here you go, Gram.

MELINA

(listening, to Patti)

Hold your horses. Sit on that one.

(to Devon)

Some chairs, huh?

DEVON

Yeah. *La vie en rose*.

MELINA

One time, we had eight of them around the dining room table. Why are you so antsy today? Get yourself something to sit on.

DEVON

I'll sit on the grass.

MELINA

You'll catch your death. I don't believe all that junk about global warming. The glaciers are melting in Montana. Says who? By the end of August, I'm turning on the gas furnace in the morning.

DEVON

I can stand.

MELINA

Just get the chair, Bub.

(He exits. Melina's holding a Carl's takeout bag, to Patti)

I spoil you. I really do.

(pats the cushion of the chair)

Isn't this cushion pretty?

(listens, to Patti)

You always see her side of things. She'll get used to it. I can't pay the storage. Do you know how often they raise those rates?

(Devon enters, carrying his jacket.)

DEVON

I found my jacket. I can sit on it.

MELINA

Suit yourself.

(Devon puts his jacket down. Sits on it.)

DEVON

Is Patti going to eat that?

MELINA

You already had two Superstars and a large fries.

I'm dying of hunger.

DEVON

There are worse things you can die from.

MELINA

Like?

DEVON

Mad cow disease, for one.

MELINA

Imagine your brain melting with little holes all through it.

DEVON

I don't have to.

MELINA

(listens, to Patti)

What?

(listens)

It's your lunch. You can do what you want.

(hands him the bag)

Here you go, bub.

(Offstage bouzouki music from a boombox.)

Listen to that music. You can dance to that. Bid and I met at a dance. Did I tell you that?

That's music?

DEVON

Haven't you ever heard bouzouki music before?

MELINA

No.

DEVON

It's Greek. Like me.

MELINA

You're not Greek.

DEVON

I've got a Greek name.

MELINA

Doesn't mean you're Greek.

DEVON

MELINA

I can pretend, can't I? I was named Emily for my mother but I changed it to Melina after I saw this movie, *Never on Sunday*. You ever see that?

DEVON

No.

MELINA

You should watch AMC once in a while. You'd learn something. It was about this Greek hooker and the actress who played her was named Melina. I thought that's the name for me.

DEVON

You wanted to be named after a hooker?

MELINA

I wanted to be from a place where it's always warm.

(Bouzouki music. Softly)

DEVON

Gram? Why don't I have my own name?

MELINA

You do.

DEVON

It's Gramp's and Jodie's name.

MELINA

You're Devon Archibald Biddle. Archibald after my father. You're a lot like him, you know.

DEVON

I am?

MELINA

You've got his grace and his rhythm. He was a great dancer. He used to put little tricky steps into the foxtrot so you had to be on your toes. Ha ha.

DEVON

Ha ha.

MELINA

Sometimes, after dinner, we turned on the radio and danced. I felt like I was in a big ballroom in a long turquoise gown, with a gardenia corsage and white gloves and four-inch heels with bows on the toes.

DEVON

He was a great guy, wasn't he?

MELINA

The best. He was the top Watkins salesman in the territory three years in a row. He was making his rounds when he died.

DEVON

Si triste, Gram.

MELINA

He was so young. The highway patrol found his Chevy the Tuesday before Christmas, stopped in the middle of nowhere. It was twenty below and he was under a blanket in the back seat, frozen to death. All his stuff was in there...

DEVON

...Watkins Red liniment, Petro-Carbo ointment.

MELINA

He'd had a lot of Beef Iron and Wine tonic but it didn't save him. You know what else was he had in there, don't you?

DEVON

A box of tangerines.

MELINA

He bought us a box every Christmas. I was crazy about tangerines.

DEVON

What are they like?

MELINA

They used to come in a wooden box. And they came all the way from Japan. Every tangerine in the box was wrapped in tissue paper. You'd pick one out of the tissue and the skin was so thin, sometimes you could take the whole peel off in one go. You'd eat the pieces one by one and the juice was so sweet. You'd feel like you had summer in the palm of your hand.

Bid and I bought them every Christmas for Jodie. Those tangerines were always the first things she saw under the tree. It's been her favorite color ever since.

DEVON

Nice.

MELINA

Happy times.

(The music stops.)

There must have been two hundred people at the funeral. After it was over, Mother took off.

DEVON

You never found out where she went, did you?

MELINA

I was fifteen so they put me in foster homes.

DEVON

That's tough.

MELINA

You know why? You don't know what the rules are. What gets you a laugh in one family gets you a swat in another.

DEVON

You got swatted.

MELINA

And thumped. It's strange. When someone in your family dies, part of you dies, too. Your history's gone. There's no one to say, "Remember when?" Did this really happen? Or am I just making it up?

Then, I met Patti. I got a job in a dairy, cleaning out the ice cream vats, there she was at the bottom of an ice cream vat.

(listens, laughs)

Twenty-one bucks a week and all the ice cream you could eat.

(to Patti)

You knew everything about me, didn't you? The old stories, the jokes, the songs.

DEVON

I know a lot of them, now. They are so cool.

MELINA

And we've got our own stories, too, haven't we?

DEVON

Yeah.

MELINA

(to Devon)

Patti and I had a ball. She left me for a while. But she came back when I needed her.

(to Patti)

Didn't you, kid?

DEVON

Gram, I want my father's name.

MELINA

What for? He was a bum.

DEVON

Did you know him?

MELINA

I knew he was a bum.

DEVON

I have his genes, don't I? Does that make me a bum, too?

MELINA

You've got all sorts of genes. Great ones.

(to Patti)

You butt out, Miss Patticakes. This is between me and Dev.

DEVON

He doesn't look like a bum. He looks smart and nice.

MELINA

What do you mean?

DEVON

I found his photo.

MELINA

Whose?

DEVON

My father's. I found it in Jodie's things. A year ago. In her underwear drawer.

(He takes a photo out of his fanny pack.)

MELINA

You went through her things?

DEVON

She goes through mine. She's got a secret compartment in there. It's got her yearbook and a class ring and his football letter. And some dried up flowers.

(hands her the photo)

Look. He was my father.

(Melina looks at the photo.)

Read the back.

MELINA

(reading)

I'll love you forever. Your one and only. George.

DEVON

He's in her yearbook in the senior class, too.

MELINA

That doesn't mean he was your father.

DEVON

She got pregnant in her senior year. I was born right after she graduated. Look at his eyes. They're mine. Look at his chin. It's mine.

MELINA

Bushwa. You've got my eyes. You've got your grandfather's chin.

DEVON

No. He was my father.

MELINA

How do you know? Did you talk to him?

DEVON

I couldn't. He's dead.

MELINA

George died?

DEVON

You did know him!

MELINA

I knew who he was.

DEVON

Why didn't I meet him?

MELINA

I don't want to talk about it.

DEVON

I do. You had your father. I want mine.

(Bouzouki music up. Lights fade. They exit.)

SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP in main area.

SETTING: Bellini's Restaurant. Twinkling lights. Muted sounds of conversation and people dining.

TIME: Evening

AT RISE: Jodie, still in her jogging suit, and Matthew enter. Matthew's carrying a sign that says Number 54 and Jodie's carrying two glasses of wine. Matthew puts the sign on the table and the chairs at either end.

Jodie puts the glasses on the table. They are a little awkward with each other but Matthew is eager to please.

MATTHEW

Why do astronauts always say, "When I get back, I'm going to order a pizza?"

(Jodie gives him a glass of wine.)

JODIE

They've all been to Bellini's.

MATTHEW

That must be it. This is really nice of you, Jodie. Right now, I'd be sitting all alone in my room at the Best Western. When did you say Dev'd be home?

JODIE

Nine.

MATTHEW

God, I saw his first message at two in the morning. I was up getting some hot milk.
(sips his wine)

Mmm.

JODIE
Good, isn't it?

MATTHEW
You look just the same, Jodie.

JODIE
Oh, right.

MATTHEW
OK, not exactly. You're wearing shoes.

JODIE
I always did, didn't I?

MATTHEW
No. Don't you remember? You went barefoot most of the time. I went to the park with you and George once...

JODIE
...You went to the park with us?

MATTHEW
Uh huh. I wasn't actually invited.

JODIE
Oh.

MATTHEW
The first thing you did was take your shoes off.

JODIE
I haven't thought about that for years! I used to walk barefoot at school, too. I was always being written up!

MATTHEW
I had a crush on you from that day on.

JODIE
Did you?

MATTHEW
You were the prettiest girl in the entire neighborhood.

JODIE

Well, thank you.

MATTHEW

(looking in his wallet, pulling out photos and handing them to Jodie)

Dev emailed me this photo of you at the beach. You're barefoot, there, too.

JODIE

He sent you that?

MATTHEW

(pointing to one)

And this. He's pretty solemn here, isn't he?

JODIE

That's at his middle school graduation.

MATTHEW

Is that a cracked tooth in front?

JODIE

He fell at recess. Cost a fortune to fix.

(Matthew looks at the next one.)

MATTHEW

Where's that?

JODIE

At the movies. Mother used to take him on Saturdays. They specialized in blood and gore.

(Matthew looks at another.)

MATTHEW

(laughs)

That fish is bigger than he is.

JODIE

He was only ten. He and Dad used to pile into the truck, drive up to Shasta Lake, and fish.

MATTHEW

He looks very pleased with himself.

JODIE

He was. I used to worry about them because Dad's such a wild driver. That's one of the reasons Dev wanted to go, of course. Dad's his hero.

MATTHEW

(still looking at the photo)

Georgie was my hero.

JODIE

(suddenly cold)

Really.

MATTHEW

(putting the photos away)

I hope we get to know each other better.

JODIE

There's not much to know. About me.

MATTHEW

In six months, I've learned a few things.

JODIE

You've been talking to Devon for six months?

MATTHEW

(nods)

You're always wearing tangerine, you hide the Twinkies, you collect epitaphs, and you can't cook.

JODIE

What else do you talk about?

MATTHEW

The neighbor's dog - he's a yappy Russell Terrier – Foofighters, Damien Rice, my grand plans for the future, difficult relationships, the meaning of life.

JODIE

Devon talks about his relationships?

MATTHEW

Sure. He was going to come up to Bellingham at Spring Break.

JODIE

He was!?

MATTHEW

But I got the offer from Mr. Boylan, so we decided to meet here.

JODIE

Just a minute. You were going to let a seventeen year old boy travel up to Bellingham?

MATTHEW

He said he wanted to come.

JODIE

Alone?

MATTHEW

I guess so.

JODIE

You just let him think he could? You didn't suggest that he ask his Mother, who knew nothing about you?

MATTHEW

I thought you did.

JODIE

You talked about everything under the sun except that he was keeping your conversations a secret from me. How was he going to get there? How long was he going to stay?

MATTHEW

We didn't talk about it.

JODIE

Did you want him to come?

MATTHEW

Yeah.

JODIE

Why?

MATTHEW

To... hang out.

JODIE

That's it?

MATTHEW

What else would it be?

JODIE

You're very interested in him, Matthew.

MATTHEW

Oh, you're not suggesting...

(looks at her face)

I see. I'm a pederast.

JODIE

I didn't say that! I just asked you what you wanted from my son.

MATTHEW

When I saw Dev's message, it felt like a miracle. I had nobody. Mom and Dad died in a car accident and then three years later, my wife, whom I adored, left me. There was a hole in my heart the size of China.

Then, suddenly, I discovered I had a...nephew, a crazy kid who thought that I was pretty terrific, too. Today, I met his mother, this wonderful woman I remembered with such affection and who turned out to be as beautiful as she was seventeen years ago.

(getting up)

All I wanted was to be part of Devon's life. All I hoped was that you would open the door and let me in. That's it.

(Matthew exits.)

JODIE

Matthew?

SCENE FOUR

LIGHTS UP in main area. 10 pm.

AT RISE: The door opens. Jodie creeps in. She's still in her jogging suit, wearing the tangerine scarf. She bumps into the chairs. She turns on the angel lamp, sees them, picks up one and bangs it against the floor.

JODIE

Why, why, why, Mother? You drive me crazy.

(Devon comes in, wearing pajamas bottoms and a T-shirt.)

DEVON

Where have you been?

JODIE

Out. Why are these chairs here?

DEVON

Gram brought them in.

JODIE

And you didn't stop her?

DEVON

If you didn't want them, you should have stayed home. She took the gun back, too.

JODIE

Good. She can shoot someone in her own house.

DEVON

She almost shot Gramps. She's kicked him out. Again.

JODIE

Did you know there's nothing wrong with his leg?

DEVON

Have you been drinking?

JODIE

Two glasses of wine. What's wrong with that?

DEVON

If I got drunk and didn't let anybody know where I was, I'd be in big trouble.

JODIE

Mother said you wouldn't be back until nine.

DEVON

It's after ten! You didn't even call!

JODIE

I did. You weren't at Mother's. You weren't at the hospital. I couldn't find you.

DEVON

You couldn't find me because I'm the only seventeen year old on the entire planet who doesn't have a cellphone.

JODIE

When you have a minimum of four hundred and fifty dollars a year to throw out the window, you can buy yourself one.

DEVON

Where is he? Gramps said he was here.

JODIE

Matthew?

DEVON

Yes, Matthew. My uncle. Don't pretend you don't know.

JODIE

Why didn't you tell me about George?

DEVON

I tried. You don't listen.

JODIE

I can't believe you went online and talked to strangers.

DEVON

I want to know who I am before I die.

JODIE

You could have met a serial killer.

DEVON

What was I supposed to do? I asked you and you said, "He left before you were born. I don't know where he is." Isn't that right? I thought my Dad was a monster and I'd turn out to be a monster, too.

JODIE

I didn't know where your father was.

DEVON

You didn't care. If you'd really looked, I could have seen him. I could have heard his voice. I could have known his family. My family.

(suddenly)

Did you scare Matthew away?

JODIE

No.

DEVON

You scare all the guys away, Jodie.

I did not scare him away. JODIE

Did he talk about me? DEVON

He sure did. He told me a lot of things I didn't know. Your straight A's. JODIE

Where did he go? DEVON

Nowhere. He's parking his car. JODIE

He's coming in? DEVON

Yes. JODIE

When? DEVON

As soon as he parks his car. JODIE

Why didn't you tell me? What is it with you? DEVON

(He exits, slamming the door. There's a knock at the front door.)

Matthew? (calling) JODIE

(offstage, calling) MATTHEW

Yes. (Jodie opens the door. Matthew enters.)

Now I know why your Mother parks on the lawn.

Did you find a spot? JODIE

MATTHEW

Two blocks over. Are you sure about this?

JODIE

Yes. I'm glad you came back.

(calling)

Devon!

MATTHEW

(sees the chairs)

Those are the chairs that were in the truck!

(inspects them)

Chippendale. Late nineteenth Century, I think.

JODIE

Really?

MATTHEW

Look at this crested rail. See how it projects over the rear posts.

(He feels the curve of the arms and the legs, as if he were a lover.)

It has the S-curved legs and the ball and claw feet. Feel them.

JODIE

What kind of wood is it?

MATTHEW

Mahogany. I have to see these in daylight. The fabric is new.

JODIE

Mother had the pillows seat made to match the dining room walls.

(She trails off. Devon has come in and can't speak.)

Devon, this is Matthew Dayton. Matthew, Devon.

(They shake hands.)

MATTHEW AND DEVON

Hi.

MATTHEW

It's good to meet you.

DEVON

C'est un grand plaisir.

MATTHEW

Me, too. We meet at last.

DEVON

Enfin.

(They hug, suddenly, convulsively. Pat each other on the back, ruffle each other's hair.)

MATTHEW

This is good. This is really good.

DEVON

It is. It's good.

MATTHEW

I got in early, so I thought I'd take a chance and come over today. I know I should have called but my cell phone battery was dead and I was on the road and....

DEVON

It's OK, I don't even have a cell phone.

MATTHEW

You look just like him, man.

DEVON

Like George?

MATTHEW

Yeah. You do.

(to Jodie)

Doesn't he look like George?

JODIE

Does he?

MATTHEW

His hair's the same. Look at those ears. Those are the Dayton ears!

DEVON

Fantastique!

MATTHEW

George hated those ears.

JODIE

They look like perfectly ordinary ears to me.

MATTHEW

George was weird about his looks. Don't you remember? He thought his ears were too low and his forehead was too high.

DEVON

She doesn't remember anything.

MATTHEW

He always wore shades and his baseball cap backwards.

JODIE

I remember that.

DEVON

Did you hang out together?

MATTHEW

All the time. He'd try to shake me but sometimes he'd give in and we'd go to Baskin Robbins for doubles.

DEVON

What flavor?

MATTHEW

He was crazy for Pink Bubblegum but he liked Strawberry Cheesecake, too. In a sugar cone. He'd take a lick and say "Delishhhous." We'd fool around in the store, going Delishhhous, delishshous, until we got thrown out.

DEVON

Delishhhous.

MATTHEW

He liked words.

(to Jodie)

Do you remember that?

(Jodie nods.)

When he was a kid, he used to say Y for L and acrimony and cheese for macaroni and cheese so we always asked Mom for a yittle bit of acrimony and cheese. He kept doing it just to make me crack up.

DEVON

What was her name?

Aurelia. MATTHEW

Aurelia and... JODIE

Hank. MATTHEW

That's right. JODIE
(Offstage, the truck pulls up and parks.)
Tell me it isn't.
(She goes to the window.)

It's late. I should be going. MATTHEW

It is. JODIE
(looking out)

We've got some Ho Hos in the kitchen. Can you stay for a Ho Ho? DEVON

How did you find them? JODIE
(amazed)

(Bob enters, still in pajamas.)

Did somebody say, "Ho Hos?" BOB

Oh, no. JODIE

Love you, too, chicken. BOB

(The front door opens and Melina enters, rolling in a suitcase.)

Well, if it isn't Hopalong. MELINA
(to Bob)

(to Jodie)
What's he still doing here?

JODIE
Ask him.

MELINA
We're not staying if he is.

JODIE
Good. You don't have to.

MELINA
You're not leaving that boy alone all weekend. Patti and I are going to take care of him.

BOB
He's not alone. I'm here.

JODIE
No, you're not. You're out of here in the morning.

(Jodie exits.)

BOB
(calling)
I'm your father and the head of this family, dicky bird, and I'll stay as long as I please.
(to Matthew)
And don't think it'll be fun. What was your name again?

MATTHEW
Matthew.

MELINA
(to Devon)
That's the guy who was pawing through my things! What's the matter with you?

(She reaches into her jacket)

BOB
Don't you dare pull out that gun!

MATTHEW
She still has the gun?

BOB
My wife, armed and dangerous.

DEVON

Grams, he's not a thief. He's an antiques dealer.

MATTHEW

You have some beautiful things.

MELINA

Which you were going to waltz away with?

MATTHEW

I wouldn't lie to you. If I'd had a good look at these chairs...

MELINA

What? These?

BOB

Why?

MATTHEW

They're Chippendale, late nineteenth century, I think.

BOB

They're worth something?

MATTHEW

If I'm right.

BOB

How much can you get for them?

MATTHEW

I wouldn't want to say until I can take them into the gallery. Mr. Boylan is the expert.

BOB

You can take them to a gallery?

MATTHEW

If you want me to.

BOB

I'll go with you.

MELINA

You're not going without us. Those chairs are mine.
(to Patti)

We can play bingo next Friday.

BOB

All that stuff was left in the apartment on Woodlawn after Caleb Anders died. Nobody claimed his furniture and I took it for back rent. That makes those chairs mine.

MELINA

You gave them to me.

MATTHEW

It's too bad you don't have the set.

MELINA

I've got six more in storage!

MATTHEW

In good condition?

BOB

(to Matthew)

Depends on how many times they rode around in the back of a pickup truck. Where are you staying?

MATTHEW

At the Best Western on Wilshire.

DEVON

You don't have to stay there.

MATTHEW

What's that?

DEVON

You could stay here.

MATTHEW

You've got a full house.

DEVON

We've got three bedrooms. You could bunk in with Gramps.

BOB

What?!

DEVON

(to Bob)
You've got two beds in there.
(calling)

Jodie!

(She enters, carrying the Ho Hos.)
Matthew's staying with us.

JODIE

He is?

DEVON

It was my idea. He can stay, can't he? He can sleep in Gramps room. If he stays, I won't be alone.

(to Melina)
You and Patti can go to bingo.
(to Jodie)
For the weekend?

JODIE

OK. For the weekend!

DEVON

Merci, Maman. C'est merveilleux.

JODIE

You said the M word.

DEVON

Did not.

(to Matthew)
Do you like soccer?

MATTHEW

George used to play soccer. He was so fast, man. I used to go to all his games.

DEVON

You can come to mine.

MELINA

I thought I was going to the game.

DEVON

You can both come.

MATTHEW

(to Jodie)
Are you sure?

DEVON

Sure, she's sure.

BOB

You're not kicking me out. I'm not leaving those chairs.

MELINA

Well, I'm not leaving my daughter and grandson alone in a house with a stranger.
(to Jodie)
Patti and I'll bunk in with you.

JODIE

Mother!

DEVON

(to Melina)
He's not a stranger. He's part of the family.
(He takes a Ho Ho, to Matthew)
Have one.

MATTHEW

(Matthew takes one, to Jodie)
Thank you.

DEVON

Are your suitcases still in the car?

MATTHEW

Yeah.

JODIE

Suitcases?

DEVON

He can't leave them in the car. Somebody'll steal them.

JODIE

Put some shoes on.

(Devon exits.)

MATTHEW

Listen, Jodie, I don't have to stay here.

JODIE

Well, it's late.

MATTHEW

If I'm a nuisance, you can throw me out.

JODIE

It's a deal.

(Devon enters, wearing a baseball cap backwards and shades. He's put on flipflops.)

DEVON

Ho, ho.

(takes another Ho Ho, bites into it)

Hey. This is delissshous.

MATTHEW

Delissshous!

DEVON AND MATTHEW

Delissshous!

MATTHEW

(his arm around Devon's shoulders)

Look at us. We're the last of the Daytons.

(They crack up and exit.)

MELINA

What are you going to do?

JODIE

Nothing.

MELINA

Just let it happen?

JODIE

We're good at doing nothing, aren't we?

BOB
Speak for yourself.

JODIE
Devon needs this, Dad.

BOB
What does that have to do with anything?

JODIE
Didn't you see how happy he was?

MELINA
You can be happy driving on a wet road with your eyes closed.

BOB
Have you really thought about it?

JODIE
I've been thinking about it all evening. He wanted to wait for Devon, so we went out for a jog and then, we went to Bellini's, that Italian restaurant on Seventh? It has those little white lights in the trees out front? So we had dinner and couple of glasses of white wine and I kept hearing Devon's saying, "He's very important to me."

(smiling)

After dinner, one of the customers sang, "*I'll Be Seeing You.*"

MELINA
You like him.

JODIE
He's a good person.

BOB
You know that?

JODIE
OK. He seems to be. You don't meet many very good persons, do you?

MELINA
She's right. Let him have it.

BOB
My God, woman. What about the truth?

JODIE

Who knows what the truth is, Dad. I don't.

BOB

It's a wicked world, tweetie. I hope you know what you're doing.

(He takes the last Ho Ho.)

MELINA

(to Bob)

Patti gets the bathroom first.

BOB

I'll race her for it.

(They exit. Bob comes back and suddenly kisses Jodie.)

Happy Birthday, sweetheart.

(He exits.)

JODIE

(calling)

I see one AK-47, you're all out of here.

END OF ACT ONE