

## **All Clear**

**By Eugene Stickland**

### CHARACTERS:

DELANEY FORD

MADDIE FORD, his wife

BILLIE FORD, their daughter

BOBBY FORD, her brother, their son

BRAUN, a friend of the family

### SETTING:

The Ford family home.

### TIME:

Near the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*An empty living room. It is dark and rather dingy, suffused with a disquieting orange light emanating from a window that has been covered with heavy plastic sheeting. There are also battery-powered lanterns located throughout the room, so that everything is lit from the side, not from above. Upstage, there is a door, leading outside. The frame has been duct taped along its seams. Somewhere, there is a small desk with an old Remington typewriter on it. Other than this, it is a typical living room in a comfortable home.*

*In the premiere production, we established an “imaginary” window down stage, so that when the actors are looking out the window they are down stage, centre. References to the window in the script are to this window that of course doesn't really exist.*

*DELANEY enters and crosses over to the typewriter. He sits down. He thinks. He stares at the blank page. From somewhere far away, a siren can be heard, faintly. He gets up and goes over to the window and peers out. He leaves. MADDIE enters.*

MADDIE: Hello? Is anyone there? Does anyone hear me? Is anyone listening. . . ?

*DELANEY returns. He is carrying with him a flashlight. He shines it through the window and peers out.*

MADDIE: Do you see anyone?

DELANEY: No . . . .

MADDIE: Do you see anything?

DELANEY: No . . .

MADDIE: It can't be long now. It can't be much longer now. Not if what they told us is true. If what they told us is true, they should be by at any moment. Any moment. Burly men coming up the walk. In their orange uniforms. Giving us the all clear. Any moment. That's what they told us would happen . . .

*Pause. DELANEY looks out, intently.*

MADDIE: Do you hear me?

*No response from DELANEY.*

MADDIE: Do you even hear me, anymore, when I speak? Does anyone hear me?  
Delaney?

DELANEY: What's that?

MADDIE: Never mind. Never mind . . .

*Pause. DELANEY comes back from the window.*

MADDIE: I'm trying to hold on, you know . . .

DELANEY: That's what we're all doing.

MADDIE: I'm trying.

DELANEY: We're all trying.

MADDIE: It's all so miserable. I'm trying to keep my spirits up. I'm trying to stay  
positive, but it's hard . . . . Do you remember what it was, to be happy?  
How it felt?

DELANEY: Not really.

MADDIE: I don't think I've been happy for a very long time. Even before all this  
happened, I can't remember feeling truly happy. I can't remember feeling  
real joy, about my life, about anything . . . .

DELANEY: Well, here's not much I can do to help you right now, Maddie.

MADDIE: I'm barely hanging on . . .

DELANEY: That's too bad.

MADDIE: I don't know even what I'm hanging on to, anymore, exactly . . .

DELANEY: I wouldn't know.

MADDIE: . . . . really, you know . . . . ?

DELANEY: I don't know . . .

MADDIE: And I never knew time could drag on so slowly, so relentlessly, and be so unforgiving . . . . I don't know . . . .

DELANEY: You know, Maddie.

MADDIE: What's that?

DELANEY: They say, getting through something like this, a lot of it has to do with your attitude.

MADDIE: Yeah?

DELANEY: Yeah.

MADDIE: So what are you saying? Are you saying there's something wrong with my attitude?

DELANEY: Yeah. That's what I'm saying, all right.

MADDIE: I can't believe you'd say that.

DELANEY: I think you need to check your attitude. You need to start doing something constructive. Start pulling your weight around here. Do your part. Roll up your sleeves. Pitch in. Help out. Stay busy. Rise above it. That's what I'm doing.

MADDIE: Well, I'm trying. What do you think? Do you think I'm not trying?

DELANEY: Maybe you need to try harder.

MADDIE: I'm trying as hard as I know how.

DELANEY: OK.

MADDIE: I just wish it would end.

DELANEY: We all wish it would end, Maddie. And it will, I guess, eventually. In the meanwhile, I'm going to check for leaks. Maybe you could find something constructive to do with your time . . .

MADDIE: Fine. Go ahead. I'm sure there are leaks all over the place. You better hope you have enough duct tape.

*He leaves.*

Even though I would argue, never mind the leaks, do something about the taps. You want to do your part? You want to pull your weight? Fix the taps so we can have some water. Turn the tap on now, all there is, is orange sludge leaking out. . . .

*BOBBY enters with a bag of Cheetos.*

BOBBY: Orange?

MADDIE: Orange sludge.

BOBBY: Orange?

MADDIE: In the taps.

BOBBY: Orange?

MADDIE: Yes.

BOBBY: Orange alert.

MADDIE: You can say that again.

BOBBY: Orange alert.

MADDIE: Whatever. Well, I'd better go do my part, I guess. I'm going to go roll up my sleeves and start pulling my weight. If anyone wants me, that's what I'll be doing. Pulling my weight . . .

BOBBY: Who would want you?

MADDIE: I don't know . . . the burly men maybe. . . .

BOBBY: Orange alert.

MADDIE: You never know . . .

*She leaves. BOBBY remains on stage, eating Cheetos. He walks over to the window and places his hand against the plastic on the window.*

BOBBY: She thinks casual sex is OK. And not only that, she's 100% single . . . 100 % single . . . . 100 % single . . . and not only that, she's 100% single . . . 100% . . . 100% . . . . .

*DELANEY enters. He is now carrying a roll of duct tape. He stops and watches BOBBY for a moment.*

DELANEY: See anything?

BOBBY: Orange.

DELANEY: No lie.

BOBBY: Orange alert.

DELANEY: Bobby?

BOBBY: Yes?

DELANEY: What are you doing?  
BOBBY: Breathing.  
DELANEY: Don't tamper with the plastic, OK?  
BOBBY: OK.  
DELANEY: We don't want to break the seal.  
BOBBY: OK.  
DELANEY: It's probably all that's keeping us breathing right now.  
BOBBY: OK.  
DELANEY: It's what they said to do.  
BOBBY: OK.  
DELANEY: It seems to be working.  
BOBBY: OK.

*BOBBY turns away and stares out the window again.*

BOBBY: 100%, 100%, 100% . . . .  
DELANEY: I have to go.  
BOBBY: OK.  
DELANEY: I'm checking for leaks.  
BOBBY: OK.  
DELANEY: OK.

*DELANEY leaves. BOBBY remains with his hand on the plastic.  
After a moment BILLIE enters. She is carrying a Discman with the  
battery chamber open.*

BILLIE: Do you see anything?  
BOBBY: Orange . . . .  
BILLIE: Do you have any batteries?  
BOBBY: She's 100% single and if only she were here . . . .  
BILLIE: Who?  
BOBBY: Pretty girl.  
BILLIE: What pretty girl?  
BOBBY: In Maxim.  
BILLIE: Dream on, Bobby.  
BOBBY: So pretty . . .  
BILLIE: Those girls don't really exist. They make them up in a computer. Do you have any batteries?  
BOBBY: She's picture perfect.  
BILLIE: Do you have any batteries or not, Bobby?  
BOBBY: 100 % single.  
BILLIE: Ah, brother. Where's Daddy? He'll have some batteries.  
BOBBY: She doesn't know how hot she is.  
BILLIE: Where is he?  
BOBBY: Who?  
BILLIE: *Daddy.*  
BOBBY: Leaks.  
BILLIE: What?  
BOBBY: She's 100% single.  
BILLIE: Listen pal: do you know where Daddy is or not?  
BOBBY: Leaks.  
BILLIE: I'll find him myself.

BOBBY: 100%.

BILLIE: Thanks for nothing, Bobby.

BOBBY: She has no idea how hot she is.

BILLIE: Christ's sake . . . .

BOBBY: That's what makes her so hot. The fact that she doesn't know how hot she is. The fact that she doesn't know. In fact she'd be much less hot if she knew how hot she is, but the fact that she doesn't know is what makes her so hot.

*BILLIE leaves.*

The fact that she doesn't know. The fact that she's hot. The fact the fact the fact of it. The fact the fact the fact the fact the fact . . . . .

*MADDIE enters.*

MADDIE: In light of recent events, you have to ask yourself, why aren't we smoking?

BOBBY: Breathing . . .

MADDIE: Do you have any smokes?

BOBBY: 7 11.

MADDIE: Yeah.

BOBBY: 7 11.

MADDIE: If only we could get there.

BOBBY: Orange alert.

MADDIE: It may have been looted . . .  
BOBBY: What?  
MADDIE: The 7 11.  
BOBBY: Looted?  
MADDIE: How pathetic would that be?  
BOBBY: What?  
MADDIE: To loot a 7 11?  
BOBBY: I don't know.  
MADDIE: Surely it hasn't come to that.  
BOBBY: Surely.  
MADDIE: Surely we can't have sunk that low.  
BOBBY: Surely.  
MADDIE: Surely we're better than that . . . Impossible to tell in here, what's going on out there. Maybe out there it's all depravity and raw survival of the fittest. How would we know?

*Slight pause. BOBBY eats a Cheeto. She watches him.*

MADDIE: Bobby?  
BOBBY: Yes?  
MADDIE: Where'd you get the Cheetos?  
BOBBY: 7 11.  
MADDIE: Are they still fresh?  
BOBBY: Orange.  
MADDIE: I know. I can see.

BOBBY: Orange . . .

MADDIE: Could I possibly have one? Would you give me a Cheeto, Bobby?  
Please?

*BOBBY gives her the mostly empty bag of Cheetos and leaves.  
She eats them hungrily would.*

MADDIE: I don't care if they're only chemicals. I like 'em . . . .

*BRAUN enters as she's wetting a finger and licking out the crumbs  
from the Cheetos bag.*

BRAUN: Sustenance?

MADDIE: Survival.

BRAUN: We're surviving on crumbs.

MADDIE: Tell me about it . . .

*There is a surging of the light that is coming in through the window.  
This is followed after a few seconds by a muffled and distant  
explosion. They stare out the window for a few moments.*

MADDIE: I don't know if I can take much more of this.

BRAUN: It's hard on the nerves.

MADDIE: That's putting it mildly.

BRAUN: Ja.

MADDIE: Surely, it can't last much longer.

BRAUN: You think not?

MADDIE: We should be getting the "all clear" sometime soon . . .

BRAUN: The what?

MADDIE: The "all clear."

BRAUN: What's that?

MADDIE: Jeez, Braun. Where have you been?

BRAUN: I don't know.

MADDIE: Weren't you watching tv?

BRAUN: I don't have one.

MADDIE: You don't have a tv?

BRAUN: No.

MADDIE: It's pretty simple, Braun. The men in the orange uniforms – or they could be white I guess, it depends what agency they're from – anyway, they'll come to our door, and knock, and give us the "all clear." And then we can go back out and see what's left. That's the plan. That's what they told us to expect on the tv.

BRAUN: You really believe this?

MADDIE: Yes. It's about the only thing keeping me going right now.

BRAUN: When do you think this will happen?

MADDIE: Soon.

BRAUN: Really?

MADDIE: Yes.

BRAUN: Well . . . Far be it from me to prick your shiny balloon.

*Slight pause. BRAUN watches her intently.*

MADDIE: What?  
BRAUN: Seeing you again . . . .  
MADDIE: What about it?  
BRAUN: I know I magically showed up when all the sirens started . . . .  
MADDIE: You said you were in the area . . . .  
BRAUN: As if it were an accident . . . .  
MADDIE: . . . . that's what you said, you were in the area . . . .  
BRAUN: . . . . or a coincidence . . . .  
MADDIE: . . . . and we got you inside and started taping the doors shut . . . .  
BRAUN: . . . . but there are no accidents . . . .  
MADDIE: . . . . sealing us all in here together . . . .  
BRAUN: . . . . for I have been, for a long time now, coming back to you . . . .  
MADDIE: Oh?  
BRAUN: Yes.  
MADDIE: Oh.  
BRAUN: Yes.  
MADDIE: Well, isn't that something . . . . ?

*Slight pause.*

BRAUN: I know it's awkward, but the circumstances at least made it possible.  
MADDIE: I suppose they did.  
MADDIE: Do you know what it is, to yearn for someone, Maddie?

MADDIE: I'm not sure.

BRAUN: To have someone's scent and the sound of their laughter and the texture of their skin knit into your very cells, a molecular identification, vibrating beneath the surface of day to day life, always there, the hope of it forever gnawing away at you?

MADDIE: You still feel all that, Braun?

BRAUN: Well, Maddie, as you know, there is more to it than just that . . .

MADDIE: Yes . . .

BRAUN: So what could I do, but maybe come here one last time . . .

MADDIE: Yes. And so, here we are. Here we all are, sealed in here together.

*MADDIE crosses to the window and picks at the tape. DELANEY enters. BRAUN sees him and leaves.*

They said this is what we should do, and he did it, he's sealed us all in here together. With his duct tape –

DELANEY: What the hell are you doing?

MADDIE: What?

DELANEY: You and Braun.

MADDIE: We were just talking.

DELANEY: Yeah?

MADDIE: Yeah.

DELANEY: Yeah. I hope so.

MADDIE: We were. What do you think?

DELANEY: I can't believe he came back here.

MADDIE: He was in the area when the sirens went off –  
DELANEY: I can't believe we let him in.  
MADDIE: What, did you want to leave him out there, in that?  
DELANEY: It crossed my mind.  
MADDIE: He would have died out there.  
DELANEY: Yeah, I know.  
MADDIE: It was a long time ago, Delaney. Over twenty years. You have nothing to worry about.  
DELANEY: I hope not.  
MADDIE: You don't.  
DELANEY: I hope not . . . .

*Slight pause. She picks at the duct tape on the window.*

DELANEY: Leave that tape alone.  
MADDIE: I was just checking.  
DELANEY: Come away from the window, Maddie. The tape's fine. You're making me nervous.  
MADDIE: OK . . . .  
DELANEY: Thank you . . . .

*Pause. A helicopter flies overhead, loud. It hovers somewhere near the house, its searchlight penetrating the window so the orange light is replaced with a very cold white light. BRAUN, BILLIE and*

*BOBBY enter and stand looking out the window, transfixed. After a few seconds, the helicopter flies off and all is silent. A long, long pause. No one even moving. Finally BILLY and BRAUN leave.*

BOBBY: It comes with the clouds, you see. Do you see it? As I do? As it's always been? And is? And will be? And the colour of it? Since you're asking, the colour is orange . . . .

*BOBBY leaves.*

DELANEY: OK. What the hell is going on with him?

MADDIE: How should I know?

DELANEY: You're his mother.

MADDIE: Well, you're his father.

*Pause. DELANEY sits down at his typewriter and stares at the page. MADDIE begins to speak, more to herself than to DELANEY, although she may wait for him to respond, he doesn't.*

MADDIE: Do you think we'll ever get out of here?

If we do, do you think there'll be anything left that's worthwhile out there?

Anything left, at all?

God . . .

Am I dying?

Am I dead?  
Am I in hell?  
Is that what this is?

That thing . . .  
That activity I was engaged in, that I thought was so important, that I  
thought was so meaningful, that thing I called my life . . .  
Is that over now, I wonder?  
As I knew it, is it now over?

Should we look back on it and say, too bad?  
It was all so fine. We were doing such a good job living.  
Or did we fail at it somehow?  
Everything we had, we took for granted.  
Everything we wanted, we had.  
Everything we thought we needed, we got.  
Yet we never seemed to think we had enough . . . . .  
What do you think?  
Delaney?

DELANEY: Yes?

MADDIE: What do you think?

DELANEY: About what?

MADDIE: Never mind . . . .

*He leaves. She watches him go. Slight pause.*

MADDIE: Ah well. . . . That was then, this is now. And now, no one has a plan. No one has a clue. No one even knows why anymore . . . . .

*BILLIE enters.*

BILLIE: Knows why what?

MADDIE: Why anything.

BILLIE: I don't know. I wouldn't care. I'm thirsty.

MADDIE: There's water in the bath tub.

BILLIE: Like I'm going to drink that water.

MADDIE: It's clean.

BILLIE: Are you drinking it?

MADDIE: No.

BILLIE: Figures.

MADDIE: I can't bring myself to . . .

BILLIE: Why is there no water in the taps?

MADDIE: I don't know.

BILLIE: Where has the water gone?

MADDIE: I don't know.

BILLIE: Why won't my cell phone work?

MADDIE: I don't know.

BILLIE: How am I supposed to call Simon when my cell phone won't work?

MADDIE: I don't know.

BILLIE: How will he know I love him if I can't call him and tell him?

MADDIE: I don't know.

BILLIE: How am I supposed to know what happened to him if I can't call him and find out?

MADDIE: I don't know.

BILLIE: Why doesn't anything work?

MADDIE: I don't know.

BILLIE: Me neither.

MADDIE: I don't know if anyone knows anymore . . .

*Pause.*

BILLIE: Why do things work when they do work? Like, how do they work? I'm so ignorant. I don't know how anything works. I don't know what anything is. Like plastic. What is plastic? Where does plastic come from? How do they make plastic? Who invented plastic? Everything's made out of plastic and I don't even know what it is or how they make it. Why is that? Why don't I know? Why don't I know how anything works? Mom? Do you know?

MADDIE: I don't know anything.

BILLIE: I don't know how anything works. Not even something as basic as plastic.

MADDIE: I don't know anything about anything.

BILLIE: When we can go back outside, what if everything is gone out there? What if everything's been destroyed. Like in that movie. You know? That movie where everything's been destroyed? With what's his name? You know? But what if it's like that? What if we have to start again from scratch? What then?

MADDIE: I don't know.

BILLIE: Is there anything you know how to make?  
MADDIE: Rope.  
BILLIE: Rope?!  
MADDIE: I know how to make rope. They taught us in Guides.  
BILLIE: Great. Well at least we'll have something to hang ourselves with . . . .

*Very faintly, a siren can be heard somewhere in the distance. They stand and listen to it. BOBBY enters.*

BOBBY: Orange alert!  
MADDIE: Shhhh!

*They continue listening. The siren comes slightly closer. BRAUN enters. DELANEY enters carrying a calking gun.*

BOBBY: 7 11 7 11 7 11 7 11.  
MADDIE: Shhhhh!!!!

*They all stand, listening. The siren fades, then there is only silence. DELANEY leaves. MADDIE leaves. BILLIE leaves.*

BOBBY: 7 11 7 11 7 11 7 11.  
BRAUN: What are you saying?  
BOBBY: 7 11.  
BRAUN: Why are you saying it?

BOBBY: I know it. I say it.

BRAUN: You have nothing else in your head but this? 7 11?

BOBBY: Orange.

BRAUN: What do you mean?

BOBBY: Orange.

BRAUN: What are you talking about?

BOBBY: Orange. That's all.

BRAUN: Come here. (*BOBBY comes to him.*) Look at me. (*BOBBY looks at him*)  
Do you know who I am? Don't say "orange!" Do you know who I am?

BOBBY: Braun?

BRAUN: Very good.

BOBBY: Braun.

BRAUN: Yes. You see Bobby, I don't know what this orange business is, but obviously if we put our minds to something and we focus, we can move ahead, ja?

BOBBY: Focus . . .

BRAUN: Ja. Very good. Now. We have some work to do here, Bobby. And I don't know how much time we have.

BOBBY: Time . . .

BRAUN: Ja. Are you with me Bobby?

BOBBY: Orange, Braun, orange.

BRAUN: Ja, never mind that now, Bobby.

BOBBY: Orange!

BRAUN: Stop it!

*BOBBY turns away. Slight pause.*

BRAUN: I'm sorry . . .

BOBBY: I see things in the clouds, Braun. I see shapes emerging from the orange.  
I see what has been and what will be. Drifting in and out. I see it all.

BRAUN: I see . . .

BOBBY: Not only that . . .

BRAUN: Ja?

BOBBY: I can see right inside your skull, Braun.

BRAUN: You can?

BOBBY: Yes.

BRAUN: So how does it look in there?

BOBBY: Dark.

BRAUN: Oh . . .

BOBBY: Very dark.

BRAUN: Yes, I'm sure it is . . .

BOBBY: Dark red so dark it's almost black Braun . . .

BRAUN: And what exactly do you see inside my skull then?

BOBBY: A wire . . .

BRAUN: Ja?

BOBBY: Stretched tight . . .

BRAUN: I see.

BOBBY: And vibrating . . .

Stretched tight and vibrating . . .

BRAUN: I see . . .  
BOBBY: And orange . . .  
BRAUN: Of course . . .

*BOBBY leaves.*

BRAUN: What are you doing here, Braun?

*He crosses to the window, places his hand on the plastic and looks out. DELANEY enters.*

BRAUN: But what was I hoping for . . . ?  
DELANEY: Mind the plastic, Braun.  
BRAUN: Sorry.  
DELANEY: See anything out there? Any activity?  
BRAUN: No.  
DELANEY: I don't know if that's good or bad . . .  
BRAUN: No. Me neither . . .

*Long pause.*

DELANEY: These are extreme times we find ourselves in, Braun.  
BRAUN: Ja . . .  
DELANEY: We don't really know, I guess. Just how bad it is. But looking out that window, looking at the colour of that sky, it seems extreme.

BRAUN: Ja . . .

DELANEY: Under normal circumstances, Braun, I would have to say you would not be welcome here. On one hand, what's done is done, all in the past, water under the bridge, whatever. After all was said and done, I chose to stay with Maddie, for the sake of the kids. But you caused a lot of shit in my life that I could have done without. There was a time, back then, when I thought if I saw you again I would kill you. I dreamed about it. I'd kill you. Slowly. And then piss on you. Bury you in concrete in an off ramp somewhere . . . no one would ever have missed you. People driving over your body all day long. I used to dream about that.

*Slight pause. DELANEY picks up a bottle of Scotch.*

DELANEY: Scotch?

BRAUN: I'm fine.

DELANEY: Sure?

BRAUN: Thank you.

*DELANEY pours himself a Scotch. He drinks. Long pause.*

DELANEY: The thing that really pisses me off?

BRAUN: What?

DELANEY: How well everything's worked out for you . . . that really pisses me off. It doesn't seem fair.

BRAUN: You think everything's worked out for me?

DELANEY: I see your flashy buildings around town. You must be OK at the bank. I'd say things worked out.

BRAUN: You don't know.

DELANEY: What don't I know?

BRAUN: How it is for me. I am alone here. Utterly alone. My own family back home, I don't know if they're alive or dead. I don't know how you define success, Delaney. I don't think things have worked out well, at all.

DELANEY: I thought you were happy. And it pissed me off.

BRAUN: Well, I'm not. I hate it here. I detest the entire continent. But what does it matter? What would you care anyway? On any account, happiness is not a right . . . it's a privilege. And it's overrated . . . .

*BRAUN leaves.*

DELANEY: Cry me a river . . .

*DELANEY sits at the typewriter, staring at the blank page. MADDIE enters. She goes to the window and looks out.*

DELANEY: See anything?

MADDIE: Just what there is to see . . . . nothing . . .

*Slight pause.*

DELANEY: I was just talking with our little house guest.

MADDIE: Oh . . .

DELANEY: Nice having Braun back in our lives again, isn't it?

MADDIE: Stop it.

DELANEY: A dream come true.

MADDIE: I mean it.

DELANEY: What?

MADDIE: Stop what you're doing.

DELANEY: What am I doing?

MADDIE: You know damn well what you're doing.

DELANEY: I didn't realize I was doing anything.

MADDIE: This is the problem right here, Delaney.

DELANEY: What problem?

MADDIE: Right here. Right where we are right now, this is our problem.

DELANEY: We have a problem, do we?

MADDIE: Something that happened so many years ago, which I know was wrong, OK? But it never dies. I know I messed up, I know I did, we've been over this again and again. You asked me to stay. You said stay, we'll work on it, we'll move on, and so I stayed, and I worked on it, and I moved on, but the trouble is, you never did.

DELANEY: I worked on it.

MADDIE: No you didn't.

DELANEY: Yes I did.

MADDIE: No you didn't. You never have. You never will.

DELANEY: Bullshit.

MADDIE: You prefer to linger back there like some kind of martyr or something, and you make me pay for it.

DELANEY: Oh Jesus . . .

MADDIE: You make me pay for it every day.

DELANEY: As if.

MADDIE: I'm tired of it. Sick and tired of it. I've I had any guts at all I'd leave. I'd just walk out that door.

DELANEY: Yeah, right.

MADDIE: Maybe that's what I should do.

DELANEY: Dream on.

MADDIE: Maybe that's exactly what I should do. Just walk on out that door.

DELANEY: You're not going anywhere, Maddie. Don't kid yourself. No one's going anywhere, anyway.

MADDIE: For now, maybe. For now.

DELANEY: As if you'd leave.

MADDIE: Maybe I'll surprise you for once.

DELANEY: Well, if you think you're up to it . . .

MADDIE: Maybe as soon as we get the all clear and it's ok to leave, I'm clear on outta here.

DELANEY: There's the door.

MADDIE: You don't think I would?

DELANEY: I don't think you have the guts.

MADDIE: Yeah, well you watch me. You just watch me.

*She leaves.*

DELANEY: Christ's sake . . . What next?

*DELANEY pours a Scotch and sits at the typewriter, and stares at the empty page. A long pause. At length, BILLIE enters.*

BILLIE: I go to my old room. I lie on my old bed. I stare at the ceiling. I look into the orange shadows. I try and stay put. I try to lie still. I try to pass the time. But I can't. I feel like I'm going to explode if I lie there any longer. So I get up.

*BRAUN enters and says nothing. BOBBY enters at the same time, from the other side of the stage.*

BILLIE: I walk down to the kitchen. I go to the fridge. I open the door. It's all dark and quiet and empty. I go down to the family room. I hit the power button on the remote. Nothing happens. I pick up the phone. There's no dial tone. I enter Simon's number on my cell phone. I hit send. Nothing happens. I go back to my room. I want to check my emails so I try to turn on the computer. Nothing. So I lie on my bed again and stare at the shadows. I think about Simon. I love him so much it makes me cry. I wonder if he's thinking about me. The way I'm thinking about him. At that very moment. How would I know? I don't know. All I know is that this is no way to live . . .

BRAUN: Why don't you try reading a book?  
BILLIE: A book?  
BRAUN: Yes.  
BILLIE: Why?  
BRAUN: For diversion. To take your mind off of things. Maybe learn something.  
BILLIE: I don't want to read a book.  
BRAUN: Why not?  
BILLIE: This is no time to be reading, Braun.  
BRAUN: Why not?  
BILLIE: Because it isn't, that's why. I'm not prepared to commit that amount of mental energy to anything right now. Anyway, who reads anymore?  
BRAUN: OK . . .  
BILLIE: I mean, really.  
BRAUN: Ah well. It's a sad thing. No one reads anymore. No one looks beneath the surface of things. So we believe only what we see on the tv . . .  
BILLIE: I'd kill to watch CNN right now.  
BRAUN: Sad.  
BILLIE: Whatever, Braun . . .

*Long pause. MADDIE enters.*

MADDIE: I'm leaving . . .

*No response from anyone. More pause.*

Does no one hear me . . . ? Does no one listen anymore . . . ? Do I only imagine I'm speaking . . . ? Or does no one care . . . ?

DELANEY: Maddie . . . .

MADDIE: What?

DELANEY: Get off it, will you?

MADDIE: No, I won't get off it.

BILLIE: What are you talking about?

MADDIE: Ahh. Someone hears me. It's a miracle.

BILLIE: I was thinking of the tv. I didn't hear what you were saying. What were you saying?

MADDIE: I'm leaving.

BILLIE: Leaving?

MADDIE: Yes.

BILLIE: You can't leave.

MADDIE: Yes I can

BILLIE: None of us can leave. Right, Daddy?

DELANEY: Well, no. Technically. We can't.

BILLIE: You see? You can't leave. None of us can leave.

MADDIE: I mean, I'm leaving in the larger sense.

BILLIE: What's that supposed to mean?

MADDIE: I'm leaving your father.

BILLIE: You're what?!

MADDIE: I've had enough. I want out. So I'll be leaving. As soon as we get the all clear. As soon as I can actually physically leave the house, I'll be on my way.

*Slight pause.*

BILLIE: Daddy?

DELANEY: She's feeling a little tense, sweetheart. We're all feeling a little tense. A little restless. We'll work this out.

MADDIE: You should get on with your life, Delaney. All of you should. Because I plan on getting on with mine.

BILLIE: I don't see how that's going to be possible.

MADDIE: Why not?

BILLIE: You're parents.

MADDIE: Yes?

BILLIE: *My* parents.

MADDIE: Yes?

BILLIE: I don't see my parents splitting up. Call me old-fashioned. It bothers me.

MADDIE: You'll adjust . . . .

BILLIE: Daddy?

DELANEY: Like I say, sweetie. We'll work it out.

*Slight pause.*

BILLIE: Bobby?

BOBBY: Yes?  
BILLIE: Do you have anything to say?  
BOBBY: Orange . . .  
BILLIE: Thanks for sharing. Braun?  
BRAUN: Ja?  
BILLIE: What do you think about this?  
BRAUN: I don't know.  
BILLIE: No thoughts, no feelings?  
BRAUN: No.

*Braun leaves. Slight pause.*

BILLIE: Oh well . . . If no one else cares, why should I? Why bother? It's all so stupid, anyway. Like, you spend all those years together, when you could have left any time you wanted to, and now that you can't leave, now that you can't even leave the house, *now* you decide it would be a good idea to leave? How screwed up is that?  
MADDIE: So my timing sucks. So shoot me . . .

*BILLIE ignores her. MADDIE leaves. Slight pause.*

DELANEY: Well, someone's got to do something around here. I'm going to look for leaks . . . It's just a bit of snappage, Billie. She'll come 'round . . .

*DELANEY leaves.*

BILLIE: Jeez . . . What next . . . .

BOBBY: Yeah . . .

BILLIE: You know?

BOBBY: Yeah . . .

BILLIE: What next?

*Slight pause.*

BOBBY: Feel bad for Braun.

BILLIE: Excuse me?

BOBBY: Feel bad for Braun.

BILLIE: Bad for Braun?

BOBBY: Yeah.

BILLIE: What does Braun have to do with anything?

BOBBY: Feel bad for Braun.

BILLIE: Why would you feel bad for Braun?

BOBBY: Stuck.

BILLIE: We're all stuck.

BOBBY: Braun's more stuck.

BILLIE: No more than the rest of us. I'm stuck without Simon. I'm stuck with my family. Want to talk about stuck, you should feel bad for me . . .

BOBBY: There's no planes.

BILLIE: So?

BOBBY: They stopped flying. So he's stuck.

BILLIE: No more than the rest of us.

BOBBY: Yes he is.

BILLIE: No he's not.  
BOBBY: Yes he is.  
BILLIE: No he's not. So get off Braun, will you?  
BOBBY: Feel bad for Braun . . .

*Slight pause.*

BILLIE: Do you have a smoke?  
BOBBY: 7 11.  
BILLIE: That doesn't do me much good.  
BOBBY: 7 11.  
BILLIE: If we could only get there.  
BOBBY: Where?  
BILLIE: 7 11.  
BOBBY: Maxim.  
BILLIE: If we could only get there, what would you have?  
BOBBY: Maxim.  
BILLIE: I'd have the nachos.  
BOBBY: She's picture perfect.  
BILLIE: And a smoke.  
BOBBY: The clouds of fire . . .  
BILLIE: I'd buy all the smokes . . .  
BOBBY: . . . as it is now . . . .  
BILLIE: . . . I'd take out my life's savings . . .  
BOBBY: . . . as it was . . .

BILLIE: . . . and buy all the smokes . . .

BOBBY: . . . as it will be . . .

BILLIE: . . . and I'd kill myself smoking them and I'd die happy. If all we have to breathe is this shitty orange air, why not smoke our faces off . . . ?

*Slight pause.*

BOBBY: Feel bad for Braun.

BILLIE: Oh, just shoot me!

BOBBY: Alone.

BILLIE: I don't care.

BOBBY: No family.

BILLIE: Jesus, Bobby. Do you listen?

BOBBY: Yeah.

BILLIE: You know what's going on here?

BOBBY: Orange?

BILLIE: No. Forget orange. I'm talking about Mom and Daddy?

BOBBY: Who?

BILLIE: MOM AND DADDY!

BOBBY: Yes?

BILLIE: Mom leaving?

BOBBY: Yes?

BILLIE: You didn't forget that, did you?

BOBBY: Splitting up?

BILLIE: Yes.

BOBBY: Splitting up. It's splitting up.

BILLIE: What's wrong with you?

BOBBY: No love in this house.

BILLIE: What?

BOBBY: Orange.

BILLIE: What are you talking about, no love in this house?

BOBBY: Orange.

BILLIE: Is that what you're saying, that there's no love in this house?

BOBBY: Big Gulp.

BILLIE: Are you messing with my brain, Bobby?

BOBBY: Maxim.

BILLIE: If you're messing with my brain, Bobby, I'll kill you, I swear to God, I'll kill you. This is no time to be playing games.

BOBBY: Not playing.

BILLIE: Then what the hell's going on with you?

BOBBY: I I I I I. O Jesus.

BILLIE: You what?

BOBBY: Fuck!

BILLIE: You're scaring me, Bobby.

BOBBY: I didn't have it in my immediate access. Oh. Did I just say that?

BILLIE: Yes.

BOBBY: It came out of my mouth?

BILLIE: Yes.

BOBBY: Cool.

BILLIE: Didn't have what?

BOBBY: The thing we were talking about.  
BILLIE: Mom and Daddy?  
BOBBY: Yes.  
BILLIE: I don't know what's going on with your brain Bobby but I don't like it –  
BOBBY: Splitting up.  
BILLIE: Yes.  
BOBBY: It had left my brain. Temporarily. OK?  
BILLIE: OK.  
BOBBY: Obscured by orange. Orange. The colour, the thing. It is in my brain. Yet I'm afraid I don't know my brain. I'm trying to think of my brain as something other than the thing that I'm using to try to think of the thing that it is. The thing that it is. How can the brain think itself? How can it?

*BILLIE leaves.*

I don't know my brain anymore. I think I think there is a right and a left. A brain beside the brain and yet a brain within the brain. The idea of the brain held within the physical the thing of the brain itself. As it was. As it is.

*DELANEY enters.*

BOBBY: The thing of the brain. The thing of the brain. The thing of the brain. The thing that it is. The brain. The brain. What is it? The brain?  
DELANEY: What?  
BOBBY: The brain. What is it?

DELANEY: An organ?

BOBBY: Is it?

DELANEY: I think so.

BOBBY: It can't be an organ, can it?

DELANEY: I think it is.

BOBBY: Nahhhh. It can't possibly be an organ, can it? Don't organs move? Don't they squish around? Don't they squish things around? Fluids? Don't they squish fluids though themselves? Don't they pulsate? Sure they do. Of course they do. So how then can the brain be an organ in the truest sense? Unless what it squishes through itself are memories, and thoughts, and ideas, and beliefs, and feelings, and emotions, and desires, and sensations, of touch, of sound, of sight, of colour, of the colour of the thing, the thing that it is, the colour orange, of course . . . Orange. Orange. Orange. Orange. Or - ange . . . . .

*BOBBY gives up. Slight pause. DELANEY tries to talk to him.*

*BOBBY doesn't respond but DELANEY charges on through.*

DELANEY: So . . . how you doing there, kiddo?

Eh?

How you doing?

Doing good?

Hanging in there?

Sure you are. Sure you are . . . .

Christ. What a time it is, what a time . . . .

But hang in there kiddo. It's going to be OK.

Going to be OK . . .

*Slight pause. DELANEY pours a hit of Scotch. BOBBY goes to the window and looks out.*

DELANEY: There was a time when you were young, and your mother and I would walk into a room – at the day car, a birthday party, a day at grandpa's, whatever – and you'd see us, but you'd focus only on me, like she wasn't even there, and you'd come running for me, like you hadn't seen me for a thousand years, and you'd run into my arms, and I'd pick you up, and I'd hold your body against mine, me in a suit and your hands all smeared with jello or chocolate but I didn't care, it just felt so good. And when I was holding you like that, I'd look over your shoulder at her and she'd be standing there all alone, not knowing what to do with her hands, because it was so obvious you loved me more than her . . . like she barely even registered . . . Man . . . I loved those moments, holding you like that, knowing she was alone and dying . . . beautiful, son . . . I don't know if I've ever thanked you . . . but thank you . . . .

*Pause. BOBBY remains at the window, his hand on the plastic.  
DELANEY goes to pour himself a glass of Scotch.*

DELANEY: Hit a Scotch, son?

BOBBY: Big Gulp.

DELANEY: Don't have one of those. But I have Scotch. Good Scotch. Been saving it for a rainy day. Want a hit?

BOBBY: No.

DELANEY: Sure?

BOBBY: No.

DELANEY: Suit yourself.

BOBBY: No.

DELANEY: *(Discovering there's no more Scotch)* Oh.

BOBBY: Orange.

DELANEY: Oh. Well. This *is* getting serious. That's the end of the Scotch. Jeez. One calamity after another . . . . .

BOBBY: 7 11.

DELANEY: What, for Scotch? Are you kidding me? They have Scotch at the 7 11 now? What next . . .

*Pause. BOBBY wanders over and examines the typewriter. He picks up DELANEY'S thin manuscript from the table.*

BOBBY: What's this?

DELANEY: *(Taking it from him)* Oh. Right. Well, this is, this is like my book.

BOBBY: Maxim?

DELANEY: "A Study in Concrete."

BOBBY: Pretty girls?

DELANEY: No. It's a book of poetry I'm writing.

BOBBY: Poetry?

DELANEY: I'm trying to write . . .

BOBBY: Poetry?!

DELANEY: Yeah.

BOBBY: You?!

DELANEY: Yeah

BOBBY: You?!

DELANEY: Yeah.

BOBBY: What is it?

DELANEY: It's a record of the madness.

BOBBY: Orange.

DELANEY: Whatever. Maybe it's orange. I don't know. I'm trying to write about the madness of the world. You know?

BOBBY: Madness . . .

DELANEY: Yeah, and now, I suppose, if that weren't enough, what's going on out there, now I have the madness of your mother to deal with.

BOBBY: She's 100% single . . . .

DELANEY: Whatever . . .

*Slight pause.*

DELANEY: You know where I think we were? I think we were in the Age of Certainty. That's what I'd call it. That's what others have called it. The Age of Certainty.

BOBBY: Orange . . .

DELANEY: For the longest time, that's where we were.

BOBBY: Orange . . .

DELANEY: But now, it seems, we're moving away from Certainty. From anything being Certain anymore. And you know where I think we're heading?

BOBBY: Seattle?

DELANEY: No, Bobby. We're heading into the Age of Courage.

BOBBY: Orange.

DELANEY: No. Courage.

BOBBY: Courage . . .

DELANEY: That's it, kiddo.

BOBBY: Courage . . .

DELANEY: It's scary as hell. It's frightening, the whole concept of it: courage. I'll tell you something, son. The one thing I've learned? The one thing I know for sure? It takes courage to be a poet. It takes guts. You have no idea.

*BOBBY wanders off.*

I mean, living in general takes a certain amount of courage these days, no matter what you do.

*DELANEY sits down at the typewriter and stares at the blank page.*

But writing poetry is especially courageous . . . or foolhardy . . . .

*MADDIE enters.*

Man, sometimes you just want to conjure it up but it doesn't always work that way . . .

*He looks up at MADDIE. They look at each other a moment.*

MADDIE: Sweetie . . . .

DELANEY: Don't talk to me.

MADDIE: I'm sorry.

DELANEY: I'm trying to work . . .

*Slight pause. There is an explosion that can be heard, that faintly lights up the room for a second.*

DELANEY: Whatever that was . . . .

MADDIE: I don't even know what it looks like out there anymore . . . .

DELANEY: I know . . .

MADDIE: And it smells, you know . . . it smells like death . . . if that's what death smells like . . .

DELANEY: I know . . . .

*Slight pause.*

MADDIE: I'm sorry . . . . .

DELANEY: I'm sure you are . . .

MADDIE: Yes . . . . sorry . . . . .

*Pause.*

DELANEY: Honey, I . . . . I don't . . . I don't want . . . . I just . . . . Look. I don't want you to leave. Once we get out of this, I can try to be more attentive to you. If that's what you think you need. Maybe you're right, maybe I need to let go of some stuff, maybe I can learn to do that. For the sake of our relationship. Our family. I'd be willing to try. If that would help . . . .

MADDIE: I want to go west . . .

DELANEY: Well, then, good. We'll go west.

MADDIE: Alone.

DELANEY: Oh. OK. Well, then. Maybe go out west, you know, when you can, when you're able. Take a little trip. Collect your thoughts. Whatever you need to do.

MADDIE: That's what I plan on doing, Delaney.

DELANEY: Well, I think that's probably a good idea.

MADDIE: What I don't plan on, is coming back. To you.

DELANEY: Oh.

MADDIE: I'm sorry.

DELANEY: Well . . .

MADDIE: This has been building up for a long time . . . .

DELANEY: Yeah, well, things build up, I guess. That's normal. They do for me too, you know. But I don't give into it. I feel the responsibility and obligation of my role around here, so I don't give into it. That's how I live my life. That's what drives me. And I thought we were on the same page about that. I don't understand what's changed with you all the sudden. Unless it has something to do with old numb nuts being back here -

MADDIE: It has nothing to do with Braun.

DELANEY: Then what? I don't understand.

MADDIE: I just . . . I just want to be alone . . . I just do . . . .

DELANEY: I thought I knew you . . . I thought that much at least was certain . . .

*DELANEY leaves.*

MADDIE: I want to rediscover some sense of what I was meant to be. Not in a relationship. Not in relationship to anyone. Not as a mother. Not as a wife. Just me . . .

*BOBBY enters.*

BOBBY: And red steam rose from the fields . . .

MADDIE: Yes?

BOBBY: And the sky was orange . . .

MADDIE: Yes?

BOBBY: And the clouds were ripped and green . . .

MADDIE: Yes?

BOBBY: As it was. As it is now. As it will be. That's all . . . .

MADDIE: OK.

*Slight pause. BOBBY starts to leave.*

MADDIE: Wait! Bobby? Come back a minute.

*He comes back and crosses to the window and looks out.*

MADDIE: Stay with me a minute.

I don't know what to do with you, until we can go outside, again.

Until they open the hospitals again.

I've never known quite what to do but take your temperature, give you an Aspirin.

After I'd made sure you weren't faking it for a bit of attention.

But this has gone beyond that, for sure . . .

Are you OK, Bobby?

Can you tell me what's wrong?

BOBBY: Big Gulp.

MADDIE: Without saying Big Gulp, can you tell me what's wrong?

BOBBY: No . . .

*Slight pause.*

MADDIE: I'm going away . . . When I can go. Out to the coast. See what it's like there, on the coast, with that great big ocean there to wash everything away, and the wind coming off the ocean . . . so clean . . . .

BOBBY: And dad?

MADDIE: No . . .

BOBBY: And Braun?  
MADDIE: No . . .  
BOBBY: And the girl?  
MADDIE: No . . .  
BOBBY: And the little boy?  
MADDIE: No . . . just me . . .

*Slight pause.*

BOBBY: Rains.  
MADDIE: I know. It rains . . .  
BOBBY: Rains and rains . . . .  
MADDIE: It's where I want to be.

*Long pause.*

BOBBY: I drift in and out . . . in and out . . . in and out . . .  
MADDIE: Yes.  
BOBBY: Why, do I?  
MADDIE: I don't know . . .  
BOBBY: There's something orange drifting away from me and swirling around me like sand. Like orange sand in a desert . . . . .  
MADDIE: Maybe the fact that you can tell me about this is a good sign.  
BOBBY: 7 11.  
MADDIE: Maybe the tide is turning.

BOBBY: The Tide.

MADDIE: Maybe it's turning.

BOBBY: The Tide.

MADDIE: Yes . . .

BOBBY: I see the Tide.

MADDIE: You do?

BOBBY: Yes, I do.

MADDIE: Isn't it beautiful?

BOBBY: Yes it is.

MADDIE: Crashing against the rocks!

BOBBY: In the bright orange box!

MADDIE: Oh . . .

BOBBY: Boxes and boxes square on the shelf.

MADDIE: Different Tide . . . .

BOBBY: 7 11.

MADDIE: God!

BOBBY: On the shelf. Coming out of the orange desert. Yes. That would be a thing. That would be a good thing. That would be a good thing. The Tide. The Tide.

MADDIE: Yes, well, I don't know.

BOBBY: The Tide, the Tide, the Tide, the Tide waiting silent patient on the shelves.

MADDIE: I don't know anymore . . .

BOBBY: Orange boxes. Orange Alert. Big Gulp. Orange. Orange sun. You know. The sun. You know. The sun. You know. What am I trying to say? Exactly? Orange. The Tide . . . The Tide . . . .

*MADDIE leaves.*

Orange orange orange orange orange orange red.

Orange orange orange orange orange orange red.

*BRAUN enters.*

Orange orange orange orange orange orange . . . green.

Orange orange orange orange orange orange –

*He notices BRAUN.*

Sorry. Sorry Braun.

BRAUN: Still on the orange?

BOBBY: Sorry . . . .

BRAUN: Don't be sorry, Bobby.

BOBBY: Sorry . . .

BRAUN: That's the last thing you need to feel. In fact, I feel sorry for you, if this is all you know how to say anymore.

BOBBY: Sorry . . .

BRAUN: Very sorry . . .

*Slight pause.*

BOBBY: Feel bad for you, Braun.

BRAUN: Why?

BOBBY: Far from home.  
BRAUN: Don't feel bad for me.  
BOBBY: Stuck far from home.  
BRAUN: I'll be OK.  
BOBBY: Stuck . . .  
BRAUN: I'll be OK . . .

*Pause. Pyrotechnics through the window. The sound of distant explosions. As they look out, BRAUN comforts BOBBY.*

BOBBY: Why is it, Braun? The way it is?  
BRAUN: Ignorance.  
BOBBY: Yes?  
BRAUN: Intolerance.  
BOBBY: Yes?  
BRAUN: Arrogance.  
BOBBY: I see it, Braun.  
BRAUN: Ja?  
BOBBY: When you say it, I see it. All of it.  
BRAUN: You see all of what?  
BOBBY: All of everything. Splitting up. Time. Colour. The colour orange. And time. Splitting up. I see it, as it was. As it will be. I don't know. I don't know. But I do. Everything split from itself. I see your father, Braun.  
BRAUN: My father?  
BOBBY: I see him.

BRAUN: I don't know –

BOBBY: Standing in the ashes of a burned out city . . .

BRAUN: You see this?

BOBBY: Holding in his hands the plans to rebuild it.

BRAUN: Ja, this is what he did after the war.

BOBBY: What was he?

BRAUN: An architect.

BOBBY: Like you, Braun . . .

BRAUN: Ja, I guess . . .

BOBBY: Did he have faith, Braun? In the future?

BRAUN: I guess he must have, because he had a plan.

BOBBY: Beautiful, Braun.

BRAUN: Ja . . .

BOBBY: To have faith, to have a plan.

BRAUN: Ja . . .

BOBBY: To have faith.

BRAUN: Ja . . .

BOBBY: Do you remember him, Braun?

BRAUN: Some. Some of him.

BOBBY: Tell me.

BRAUN: Well, I don't know . . . Funny. I'd forgotten that he managed to find the faith to rebuild his city, and his country, from the ashes and the ruins. For some reason, he never lost hope . . .

BOBBY: I see us in the ashes and the muck, Braun . . .

BRAUN: Ja?

BOBBY: Rebuilding what's left.

BRAUN: You see this?

BOBBY: Yes, and guess what, Braun?

BRAUN: What?

BOBBY: It's orange, Braun. It's orange.

BRAUN: More orange . . .

BOBBY: It's what I see, Braun. Sometimes it's all I see.

BRAUN: I see . . .

BOBBY: The clouds of orange, swirling.

BRAUN: You know something Bobby . . . I might know something about those orange clouds myself . . .

BOBBY: Oh?

BRAUN: Ja.

BOBBY: Oh?

BRAUN: I came here through them, you know, a long time ago . . .

BOBBY: Orange . . .

BRAUN: Yes. I flew here, through the clouds . . . And I believe they were swirling on the day I landed . . . yes . . . I believe they were . . . orange, tinted with red . . .

BOBBY: . . . wow . . .

BRAUN: Ja. But that was just a beginning. Not long after I came here through those clouds, I fell in love with a young woman. Madeline was her name.

BOBBY: I see you . . .

BRAUN: The trouble was, she was married and had a child of her own, a beautiful little girl . . . She talked of leaving her husband, but she never did. She lacked the courage to do it, I guess . . . she never explained and I never understood . . . .

BOBBY: Orange alert, Braun . . .

BRAUN: Ja . . .

BOBBY: Orange alert . . .

BRAUN: Ja . . . after the affair, I saw her around town from time to time, and I couldn't fail to notice she was expecting a child. It didn't take a genius to speculate on the date of the child's conception. I was sure that I was the father of the boy. I am sure, to this day. Do you see?

BOBBY: The little boy . . .

BRAUN: You.

BOBBY: The little boy . . .

BRAUN: Ja.

BOBBY: The little boy . . .

BRAUN: Ja . . . . Bobby, looking out there now, I don't know if we have any kind of future together. But in the event it is safe to go out there again, maybe we could see what we could do together. Maybe together, we could rebuild something, like my father did . . .

BOBBY: Oh-range . . .

*BOBBY wanders off.*

BRAUN: Or maybe I'm too late . . . What the hell was I doing all those years . . . .

*DELANEY enters.*

DELANEY: Talking to yourself, Braun?

BRAUN: Ja, probably . . .

DELANEY: That's a bad sign . . .

BRAUN: If nothing else, I'm able to have an intelligent conversation . . .

DELANEY: Sorry if we're dragging you down . . .

BRAUN: I'll get by.

DELANEY: That's nice . . .

*Pause.*

BRAUN: Don't you ever look at him, and wonder?

DELANEY: No.

BRAUN: Really?

DELANEY: No. But I suppose you do.

BRAUN: Yes.

DELANEY: Figures.

BRAUN: I feel the connection. I always have. You know that. And you can't argue the timing of it. Or the possibility of it.

DELANEY: Yeah, well whatever you might feel, Braun, being a father is about duty. Not biology.

BRAUN: That's only a part of it.

DELANEY: That's all that matters. Duty. Changing the diapers. Writing the cheques.

BRAUN: Even so. You do not own him. I too can love him. I can do that too, if I like, and you can't stop me. And as for duty, what the hell have you let happen to him?

DELANEY: I haven't let anything happen to him.

BRAUN: Well look at him.

DELANEY: It's not my fault.

BRAUN: How long has he been like this?

DELANEY: A few days, I guess -

BRAUN: And you've done nothing for him? Nothing at all?

DELANEY: What do you want me to do? They closed the hospital for Christ's sake, even if I could go out, there's nowhere to take him anyway -

BRAUN: You haven't done your duty.

DELANEY: Back off Braun.

BRAUN: You've failed.

DELANEY: I mean it.

BRAUN: You know what you are?

DELANEY: I don't care what you think I am -

BRAUN: You're a shirker.

DELANEY: A what?!

BRAUN: A shirker.

DELANEY: Oh jeez . . .

BRAUN: You shirk your duty. To Bobby and to everyone else.

DELANEY: I don't have to sit here and listen to this crap. I'm going to go take a little spin through the laundry room and see how my tape is holding up. When I

come back, don't be here. Go hide somewhere. Don't be sitting here. I have some work I have to do. I need some solitude. *Shirker* . . . Fuck, what next . . . ?

*DELANEY leaves. BRAUN picks up the manuscript and starts leafing through the pages. He is discovering the pages are empty. DELANEY enters.*

And another thing – What are you doing with that?

BRAUN: I was reading.

DELANEY: (*Crossing to him and grabbing it away from him*) Give me that.

BRAUN: Didn't take long.

DELANEY: I don't need your bullshit right now Braun.

BRAUN: How is it possible to toil away for so long and come up with not single word?

DELANEY: Get out of here.

BRAUN: The great poet silenced.

DELANEY: I'm warning you!

BRAUN: You're nothing but an imposter.

DELANEY: You little prick –

*BRAUN leaves.*

You think it's so easy? I don't even know if there are any words left to describe it.

*He leaves the typewriter and cross to the window, puts his hand gently against the plastic and looks out.*

I don't even know what I'm trying to describe anymore . . . .

*BILLIE enters.*

BILLIE: Hi daddy.

DELANEY: Hi.

BILLIE: Can you see anything?

DELANEY: Some shadows . . .

BILLIE: That's it?

DELANEY: Yeah . . .

*Slight pause.*

BILLIE: I miss the television.

DELANEY: Do you?

BILLIE: Remember that tv show we used to watch? You know the one, whatever it was called.

DELANEY: I'm not sure.

BILLIE: The one with the family. Do you remember?

DELANEY: No.

BILLIE: Sure you do.

DELANEY: I don't.

BILLIE: You used to watch it. In your chair. We all watched it. Together. While we ate. I wish I could remember what it was called. Because it's what made us who we are. I'm like the pretty one. Who never knew where she stood. And you're the Daddy. And there were the others and the dog and all that. At least I think there was a dog. I wish it was really like that. I don't know if it ever was, but I wish it was now. I wish we could be like that family on the tv . . .

*Slight pause. DELANEY looks out the window. BILLIE speaks to him but he doesn't engage.*

BILLIE: You and mom can't get divorced, daddy.  
I know it seems to be coming from her, but you could be doing more than you are to keep things together.  
That is, assuming you still love her . . .  
You do love her, don't you daddy?  
And if you do love her, don't you think you have an obligation to hold things together here?  
For Bobby's sake . . .  
For my sake . . .  
Daddy . . . ?

*Slight pause. He turns away from the window.*

DELANEY: You don't know what it's like, not to be loved. You have no idea. You've only ever known love, only ever been loved, unconditionally, as if the world owed it to you, but you don't know how it feels to look into the eyes of someone you thought you knew, who you thought loved you, and see nothing in there. No warmth, no light, no vibration. I realize now, that for quite some time, when I've looked into her eyes, it's as dead in there as it is outside. I can't change any of it. There is nothing I can do about it, whether I wanted to or not . . .

*Slight pause.*

BILLIE: I'm scared, daddy.

DELANEY: Yeah. Me too.

BILLIE: Really?

DELANEY: Yeah.

BILLIE: You're my daddy. You're not supposed to be scared.

DELANEY: Well I am.

BILLIE: Me too.

DELANEY: I'm summoning my courage. But I'm scared. I'm alone . . . and scared . . .

.

BILLIE: Me too.

*Slight pause.*

BILLIE: Wanna hear something funny?

DELANEY: Yes . . .

BILLIE: I'm supposed to be tying the knot.

DELANEY: You are?

BILLIE: I said I would.

DELANEY: To who?

BILLIE: Simon. Who do you think?

DELANEY: Really?

BILLIE: Yeah.

DELANEY: Well, that's a surprise.

BILLIE: Why?

DELANEY: To tell you the truth, I always thought he was gay.

BILLIE: He's not gay.

DELANEY: Are you sure?

BILLIE: He wants to marry me, doesn't he?

DELANEY: Maybe he just doesn't know that he is.

BILLIE: He's not gay.

DELANEY: I thought he was. That's why I wasn't worried about him.

BILLIE: He's not. I know.

DELANEY: OK.

BILLIE: He's gentle.

DELANEY: Whatever.

BILLIE: You're a paving contractor.

DELANEY: Was. Was a paving contractor.

BILLIE: You don't know gentle.

DELANEY: That's what I was. Now I'm a poet. Or trying to be one, at least. I'm learning about gentle.

BILLIE: Whatever.

*Slight pause.*

DELANEY: Is he OK? Simon? Is he going to be OK?

BILLIE: How would I know?

DELANEY: Was he inside?

BILLIE: I have no idea.

DELANEY: You haven't heard from him.

BILLIE: Yeah, right. I just pick up the phone and call him every ten minutes.

DELANEY: Right. Sorry . . .

BILLIE: What if he got stuck outside somewhere?

DELANEY: I don't know.

BILLIE: What if he was taking a walk in the park or something like that?

DELANEY: There was *some* warning. The sirens . . .

BILLIE: What if he didn't hear them?

DELANEY: I'm sure he got himself inside.

BILLIE: Do you think so?

DELANEY: I'm sure he did.

BILLIE: Do you think he's OK now?

DELANEY: I'm sure he is.

BILLIE: Inside his apartment?

DELANEY: Sure.

BILLIE: Taping his windows?

DELANEY: Yeah.

BILLIE: Yeah. He would have stayed inside. He's very careful about such things. He would have heard the radio. Simon always listens to the radio. I'm sure he would have stayed inside. And taped up all his windows. And soaked some towels and laid them at the base of his front door. I'm sure he would have . . . .

I miss him. I don't know what to do with myself without him. I just lie on my bed and search for the ceiling in the shadows. When I was young, do you remember, you put little flourescent stars on my ceiling, stars and planets, faintly glowing green in the darkness when the lights went out. A little galaxy in my room for me to dream of as I fell asleep.

*DELANEY leaves.*

Now I can almost believe the roof of our house has been blown off and I'm searching for the stars through the orange air and the green clouds. I wonder, who can see the stars tonight? Is there a place left on earth where you can sit out in your back yard and stare up at the stars? I wonder if Simon can see the stars where he is tonight, or is it like this everywhere else?

*MADDIE enters.*

BILLIE: Is the whole world like this now? Is this what the world's become? And if it's not all like this, if this is only happening to us, I wonder why? What did we ever do to deserve this? What did I ever do to anyone in my whole entire life to deserve this . . . . ?

MADDIE: I'm tired.

BILLIE: Me too.

MADDIE: I can't stand living like this.

BILLIE: Me neither.

MADDIE: It was bad enough before, but now it's just unbearable.

BILLIE: I know.

MADDIE: I'm so tired . . .

BILLIE: Me too . . .

*Slight pause.*

BILLIE: It's not fair.

MADDIE: No it isn't. It's madness.

BILLIE: I mean, you and daddy.

MADDIE: Fair?

BILLIE: Yeah. To me.

MADDIE: It's not really about you, Billie.

BILLIE: Sure it is. Of course it is . . .

MADDIE: It's certainly not mean to be about *you*.

BILLIE: I don't understand why you're doing what you're doing . . . . .

MADDIE: No, I don't suppose you do.

BILLIE: Why are you doing what you're doing?

MADDIE: It's an old thing between us. We tried. Lord knows, we tried. It probably should have ended after you were born, but we tried to do the right thing, we tried to keep it together. But really, Billie, you're grown up now, both of you are, you don't even live at home any more. You need to let it go.

BILLIE: Is there someone else or something?

MADDIE: No. Nothing like that.

BILLIE: I don't get it.

MADDIE: There's nothing there, Billie. I don't know how else to say it . . .

BILLIE: You must have been in love at one time. When you were young and starting out?

MADDIE: I can't remember that. I can't remember the person I was, when I was young and starting out. I mean, look at me now . . .

BILLIE: What?

MADDIE: I'm not young any more . . . .

*Slight pause.*

BILLIE: I love Simon. I think I do. I think I must. No. I do. I do love Simon.

MADDIE: Yes?

BILLIE: Even if I don't even know whether he's alive or not.

MADDIE: OK . . .

BILLIE: And I'll always be faithful to Simon.

MADDIE: You think so?

BILLIE: Yes, I do. I do. I do.

MADDIE: Well, I wish you luck. I really do.

BILLIE: And I'll always love him.

MADDIE: I'm sure you will, sweetheart. I'm sure you will. I wish you all the happiness in the world. But for me right now, I feel that I have to be alone for a while.

BILLIE: I don't want to be alone. I want to be with Simon.

MADDIE: No. You're too young to want to be alone.

BILLIE: It's not fair that I'm all alone and apart from Simon.

MADDIE: Nothing's fair anymore.

BILLIE: Why doesn't anything ever work out?

MADDIE: It'll work out, sweetie . . . Any moment, any hour, tomorrow morning maybe, we'll get the all clear. And then we can carry on. And you can go find Simon.

*BILLIE leaves.*

And the rest of us can stop hearing about him for five minutes . . . . And I'll carry on, and "Daddy" will carry on. And we'll get Bobby fixed. And we'll move ahead, we'll all move ahead . . . .

*BRAUN enters.*

We'll all move on to something better for ourselves and maybe we'll all come together again someday and maybe it will all be so beautiful, not like this . . . . .

BRAUN: So . . .  
MADDIE: Hi, Braun.  
BRAUN: You look beautiful in orange.  
MADDIE: Good thing.  
BRAUN: Ja.

*Slight pause.*

BRAUN: And now you'll be single again, is that it?  
MADDIE: I guess.  
BRAUN: You'll be out there again.  
MADDIE: Hardly.  
BRAUN: Where will you go?  
MADDIE: West.  
BRAUN: Ahhh.  
MADDIE: The coast.  
BRAUN: I see . . . I see . . .  
MADDIE: I hope you won't be disappointed, Braun . . .  
BRAUN: In what way?  
MADDIE: I'm not doing what I'm doing to be with anyone else.  
BRAUN: I didn't think so.  
MADDIE: Well, what you said earlier about yearning for someone . . .  
BRAUN: Yes?  
MADDIE: Well . . . ?

BRAUN: Oh. Yes, I see. Right. I'm sorry, Maddie. I wasn't clear, I guess. I wasn't talking about you. I don't yearn for you, not at all. I was thinking of Bobby .

. . .

MADDIE: I see . . .

*Slight pause. MADDIE goes to the window and looks out. BRAUN speaks to her but she doesn't engage.*

BRAUN: There's still the matter of Bobby.  
I was thinking I could help him.  
I think it's time I started helping him, maybe with his rehabilitation,  
whatever I could do . . .  
Whatever I could do, I would do . . .

MADDIE: Don't muddy the waters here, Braun.

BRAUN: I don't believe that's what I'm doing . . .

MADDIE: Get on with your own life.

BRAUN: That's what I'm doing, my own life, with Bobby in it.

MADDIE: There's nothing here for you anymore. Get on with your own life.

BRAUN: I want to help.

MADDIE: We don't need your help, Braun. You want to help Bobby, leave him alone. He's confused enough as it is. He doesn't need you.

BRAUN: You don't know that -

MADDIE: No one needs you, Braun. I'm surprised you haven't figured that out by now.

*She leaves. BRAUN goes to the window and looks out.*

BRAUN: I want to go home. I don't know what it's like out there anymore, but I want to go home. And see what remains. See what's left of my father's world. Those buildings, that he built from the ashes and the ruins are so pretty, at night when they're all lit up, and in the morning when the sun glints off of them . . . they make good targets. I'm sure they're only smoking rubble now. Reduced again to ashes and ruins . . . .

*BOBBY enters.*

I wonder if I have the strength that my father had, to rebuild it yet again, one more time. I wonder if there will be anything left for me to rebuild, as my father did. As we've always done. Like father, like son. I wonder, what of my father. If he is alive. I wonder about my son, if he even knows who I am. I wish I could see inside his skull, and see what's going on in there . .

*Slight pause.*

BOBBY: I see it, Braun. When you say it.

BRAUN: What's that?

BOBBY: I see it all.

BRAUN: See what, Bobby?

BOBBY: I see it as it was. As it will be. As it is.

BRAUN: I don't understand you.

BOBBY: I know who you are, Braun.

BRAUN: Ja?

BOBBY: I know who you were, and who you will be. I can tell you, Braun. I can say it to you. That there was an awesome explosion, Braun. Right above my head. And screaming, as there always has been, and always will be. And there were sirens, and the sound of someone crying. As it's always been, Braun. The destruction that we have lived through and will live through again. When we will drag each other through the empty fields past our ancestors, over the bloody soil, through the orange mist and the clouds above ripped and green and the air sick and dying. I have seen it all, Braun, in the 7 11. It was the thing that would be destroyed. As it always has been, this is one more time, this thing that it is, this thing in the 7 11. I was reading Maxim, how pretty she is and 100% single so beautiful I was dreaming of our life together, a life of casual sex because she thinks casual sex is OK and she doesn't know how hot she is. And the next thing as there always has been there was an explosion and the roof flew into the sky and there was screaming and the sound of things being ripped apart and then the sound of someone dying. It was orange, Braun. It was orange.

*DELANEY, MADDIE and BILLIE enter from different places. As before, the sound of a siren can be heard in the distance, very far away. They all listen, then the sound fades.*

It was loud and something was scraping across the sky and the sky was ripped and ragged, something loud and ripping the sky as it always has

done and will always do and the sky was falling orange everywhere through the green clouds and as we've always done, Braun, I ran, I ran here, trying not to breath but we've always breathed Braun, we've always had to breath and I gasped and I breathed and I gulped the orange air, gulped it and gulped it until there was no orange air anywhere that I wasn't gulping into my lungs and I can't stop breathing I don't know, it's the thing that it is, the air and the fear and the anger and hatred in the air that we all have to breathe, you and I, together, breathing the same air, father and son, as we have always done, breathing the air, the air, the air, the thing that it is, the thing that it, thing that, the air, the air, orange, orange, orange . . . . .

*Pause. MADDIE goes to comfort BOBBY, but he pushes her away. BRAUN looks at them a moment, moves towards BOBBY but Delaney blocks his way.*

DELANEY: Leave him alone.

BRAUN: But he knows who I am now. Tell them Bobby. Tell them, that we have great things to do together . . .

MADDIE: Spare me.

DELANEY: Much as my instinct tells me we shouldn't be opening that door, I think your time with us has come to an end, Braun.

BRAUN: What?

DELANEY: It's time for you to leave.

BILLIE: But we can't open the door, daddy.

DELANEY: Yes we can, sweetheart. To let Braun out, we can. *(To Braun)* Time to hit the road, pal.

BRAUN: You're sending me out there? Alone?

DELANEY: We don't need you here putting your wild notions into Bobby's head.

BRAUN: It's the truth and you know it.

DELANEY: There's the door, Braun. Make sure you shut it on your way out.

BRAUN: Maddie?

*She turns her back on him.*

Well then . . . If that's how it's going to be . . .

*He goes to BOBBY and kneels by him.*

Bobby, I have to go. Do you hear me? I'm going. I'm leaving here. I'll go see what's left of my father's world. Maybe some day we will find each other again. I'll pray for that day. In the meanwhile, don't lose faith. Good bye, son . . . I love you . . . *(He goes to the door and tears off the duct tape.)* Auf wiedersehen . . .

*BRAUN opens the door. A dull orange light shines into the room, and a small amount of orange fog creeps in. BRAUN leaves, leaving the door open behind him. DELANEY slams the door shut. BOBBY gets up.*

DELANEY: Good riddance . . .

BOBBY: It is my father's world.

DELANEY: Don't waste your breath, son.

BOBBY: Not in here. Out there. From the muck and the ashes, together, we will rebuild it.

*BOBBY follows BRAUN outside. DELANEY goes to the door and closes it and starts to tapes the seam in the doorframe.*

MADDIE: Bobby!

DELANEY: Too late. They're gone. Fuck. After all these years he's still fucking up my life, that bastard.

MADDIE: I didn't ask for this, I didn't, I never asked him back here, I never did, I wish I'd never met him, I wish I never had, I wish I never –

DELANEY: Don't talk anymore, Maddie.

MADDIE: But it's true I wish I'd never met him and that I'd never had him –

DELANEY: That's enough. Don't say anymore. Don't speak. Try not to breathe this shit. Help me tape the door. It's all we can do.

MADDIE: Don't want to.

DELANEY: Help me!

*Slight pause. MADDIE crosses over to join him at the door. BILLIE watches them in disgust.*

BILLIE: I want to know what love is.

DELANEY: Don't breath.

MADDIE: Don't speak.

BILLIE: I'm serious.

MADDIE: Shhh!

BILLIE: I'm not shushing. I'm breathing this orange shit, and I don't know what's going to happen to me, or any of us, so it's a question I'd like to have answered, specifically by the two of you: I want to know what love is.

DELANEY: It would take too much air to try to answer . . . .

MADDIE: Don't speak.

DELANEY: Don't breathe.

BILLIE: You see, I don't know, I just don't, I just – I don't know. I don't know what love is. I still believe it's worth caring about. And asking about. I don't know what love is. Or what marriage is. Or fidelity. Or trust. Or monogamy. Or loyalty. Or friendship. Or desire. Or need. Or brotherly love. Or love between nations or religions or neighbours or anything. Or anything that matters anymore. Or anything that doesn't matter anymore. Or anything. Or anything. Or anything . . . .

MADDIE: There, there baby . . . shush now . . . .

BILLIE: I don't know I don't know I don't know . . . I want to know what love is.

DELANEY: Don't breathe . . . .

MADDIE: Don't speak . . . .

BILLIE: I want to know.

MADDIE: The men will be here soon. The burly men with the all clear. And then we'll speak . . .

DELANEY: And then we'll breathe . . . .

BILLIE: Do you think that you can't love one other single human being in a sacred meaningful and lasting relationship? Is that what you think? Is that what you want me to believe? Is that all you have taught me?

*Lights begin to fade.*

MADDIE: We tried . . .

DELANEY: It didn't work.

MADDIE: Love is gone . . .

DELANEY: Gone . . .

MADDIE: Dead and gone . . .

DELANEY: Dead and gone . . .

*Slight pause. Lights fade to a blood red, so the characters can scarcely be perceived.*

BILLIE: So love is dead . . . and gone . . . leaving only . . . . what . . . in its place?

MADDIE: Nothing . . .

DELANEY: Nothing . . .

BILLIE: *(Trying the word out, as if for the first time)* Nothing . . . .

MADDIE: Nothing . . .

DELANEY: Nothing . . . .

MADDIE: Nothing . . . . .

DELANEY: Nothing . . . . .

BILLIE: To hell with you. To hell with both of you. I won't believe in nothing. I'm going to find out for myself. I'm going to find Simon.

*She leaves, slamming the door behind her. DELANEY and MADDIE watch her, but don't move. The fog continues to creep in.*

DELANEY: Help me with the tape.

MADDIE: But what if they – ?

DELANEY: They won't.

MADDIE: I can't stand this.

DELANEY: If you want to leave, leave now. If you want to stay, then stay.

MADDIE: I can't leave.

DELANEY: Good girl.

MADDIE: I'll stay. But I'm not staying.

DELANEY: Courage is what's wanted now, Maddie.

MADDIE: Courage?

DELANEY: Yes.

MADDIE: Courage. As if. Courage. As if. Courage. If only. I have none. No courage of my convictions. No courage of my actions. I have none of it of any of it, of courage, and so I remain. Because I have none. And so I remain. Because I have none.

DELANEY: Shhhh . . . . . Don't breath . . .

MADDIE: I am trying, not to breath . . .

DELANEY: Don't speak, anymore . . .

MADDIE: OK. I'm done speaking . . . I have nothing more to say . . .

*Final tableau, DELANEY and MADDIE alone together inside their house as the orange fog rolls in on them and the final weak light turns to blood red and fades.*

End of Play

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