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## Of Theatre: Its Production and Reception

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## Of Theatre: Its Production and Reception

### Disciplines

Anthropology

# **Of Theatre:**

## **Its Production and Reception**

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Senior Thesis  
May 2007

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper documents the artistic construction and spectatorial reception of a student production of Paul Zindel's *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* at the University of Pennsylvania. The performance, which allowed audience members to make suggestions that could subtly or radically alter the trajectory of the play at any point during the performance, provides empirical data concerning the actor-audience co-production of theatrical meaning. The paper focuses on three aspects of this theatrical dialogue: the behavior of the student audience at the performance, the audience's "spectatorial literacy" and the concomitant disparity between intended and actual meaning, and the actors' ability to stay in character under audience-modifiable action. Finally, an analysis of the actor-audience interactions leads the author to propose a new ideational framework for the study of theatre, its nature and role in society.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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In order for me to be a, to be a true human being, / ...I  
can't forever dwell in the idea, / of just identifying with  
people like me and understanding me and mine.

Anna Deavere Smith  
*Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*<sup>1</sup>

The matter of reception is, at best, extremely complex; at  
worst, it is deadly.

Susan Bennett  
*Theatre Audiences*<sup>2</sup>

In the fall of 2006 at the University of Pennsylvania, I directed a student production of Paul Zindel's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* for iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company. At this performance of strict America realism, the mostly-student audience was encouraged to proffer suggestions which could subtly or radically alter the trajectory of the play. Additionally, they could make these suggestions at any point during the play's performance.

Similar experiments, of course, have been done, but in contradistinction to the work of someone like Augusto Boal, the actors were not required to enact a spectator's suggestion if they did not wish to. Instead, the actors were given the condition to accept only suggestions they found "aesthetically competent." This power, to either accept or reject the audience's suggestions, produced a uniquely multifarious dynamic between the actor and audience in the co-production of theatrical meaning.

Objective study of theatre is a Herculean task to begin with. Barthes nicely illustrates the art's inherent complexity when he writes, "At every point in a performance

you are receiving (*at the same second*) six or seven items of information (from the scenery, the costuming, the lighting, the position of the actors, their gestures, their mode of playing, their language), but some of these items *remain fixed* (this is true of the scenery) while others *change* (speech, gestures).<sup>3</sup>

But this quote captures only part of theatre's complexity. As theatre practitioners are eager to point it, it is the art's *liveness* which makes it truly unique as a story-telling craft. As Richard Schechner puts it, “[T]he uniqueness of an event is not in its materiality but in its interactivity.”<sup>4</sup> What makes theatre fascinating as an art is the specific interaction that occurs between actors and audience, the communicative circuit which is initiated and results in the co-production of meaning. In other words, what makes theatre both fascinating and problematic is the audience.

Unfortunately, very little is known about the audience. As de Marinis remarks, “What the spectator *actually* does while attending a performance and what action, or kind of action, the performance *really* carries out on the theatergoer are issues that have been neglected and continue to be neglected. We know almost nothing about all of this, except on an intuitive, prescientific basis.”<sup>5</sup> The emergence of performance theory in the past few decades has greatly increased our understanding of theatre, but the audience has been sorely neglected, not for lack of trying, but because of the extreme difficulty of monitoring or analyzing the spectatorial process.

At present, studies of the audience, when they do accomplish something scientifically, focus on individual subjectivities. Almost nothing is known of how an audience reads a performance as a group. Theorists have, of course, speculated. And their speculations make sense on an intuitive level but lack the tenacity and rigor of true

empirical research. This experiment was my attempt to broach the “problem of the audience.”

Yet the question immediately arises, is the *Gamma Rays* audience still an “audience” given the experiment’s structure? Truthfully, the answer is no. But then, a study of “The Audience” is impossible because of the unique dynamic of each performance of each play. In other words, at this point in performance theory’s research, one can only discuss theatre “audiences” or “a” theatre audience. One cannot discuss “the” theatre audience.<sup>6</sup> Obviously, as the structure of the experiment itself automatically rendered the *Gamma Rays* audience an unorthodox audience, one can only speak of the observations of *this* audience. In this manner, one can arrive at empirical data which can be analyzed and criticized, and from there, one can cautiously extrapolate to the theoretical level of “the” audience. I will discuss my assumptions about the experiment and how they colored the formation of its structure below, but first, I must iterate the experiment’s respective goals.

There were three goals to this experiment: 1) To make manifest, through relatively unstructured participation, an audience’s *actual* behavior during a performance in order that it might be documented and analyzed, 2) To measure an audience’s “spectatorial literacy” (its ability to read and evaluate a performance according to two criteria, “readerly competence” and “aesthetic competence”) in a spatially and temporally-bound performance, as well as the ever-present gap between the semiotic “model” and “actual” readers,<sup>7</sup> and 3) To test the actors’ ability to maintain a consistent action-being dynamic (i.e. character) under the duress of audience-modifiable action.

Furthermore, I wanted, with this experiment, to provide performance theory not just with new ideas about the audience, but with performance *data*. As a result, and because of the inherent complexity of such an academic venture, rigorous records were maintained and ample data collected. The following is a list of various materials and data from the experiment:

- Actors' journals, kept throughout the rehearsal process, documenting their experiences and respective orientations to their characters (Appendix E)
- Rehearsal reports detailing each day's activities (Appendix C)
- One fully transcribed rehearsal (Appendix D)
- Video footage of the first, improvised run-through of the play by the actors, displaying their understanding of the dramatic work two-weeks into the rehearsal process
- Video footage of the last dress rehearsal (the "baseline") documenting the show "as rehearsed"
- Video footage of all four performances of the play
- Video footage of the audience at all four performances as captured by two hidden cameras in night-vision (stage left and stage right, respectively)
- Paper transcripts of each performance's audience suggestions (Appendix G)
- Surveys completed by willing spectators after each performance (Appendix H)
- Video footage of two sets of individual interviews and two groups interviews with the cast of *Gamma Rays*, all conducted post-performance or later
- Copies of all advertisements, documents, and other materials pertaining to the iNtuitons production (Appendix J)

As I mentioned briefly at the beginning of this essay, *Gamma Rays* is an American realism play. Discussion of the reason for the play's selection will come later, but my reason in selecting the genre is worth addressing now: the style of realistic theatre excludes audience intervention.<sup>8</sup> A wide selection of plays are available for production which actively involve the audience, from experimental and environmental works from the 1960's to dinner theatre murder mystery plays. Yet these plays are structured around audience participation. For example, typically with an experimental play, only portions of the dramatic text are written down, with the rest improvised by the actors. Murder mystery plays, too, provide "open sections" for audience inclusion. In both these cases, the text allows for audience participation, and then continues with scripted dialogue. While research has been conducted using such plays, the structure of these dramatical works does not permit one to ask the questions which I sought to address. To put it succinctly, we know what an audience does when called upon to participate in plays *written* to include audience participation, but we do not know anything about the perceptual operations taking place in realistic theatre. *Gamma Rays* attempted, then, to conflate these models, to ask an audience to participate in an "un-participatory" drama, in the hope of learning something about the audience's perceptions of both genres.

The question then becomes how to coerce an audience to betray their respective observations about a performance without making them aware that they are doing just that, which would compromise the data. In the end, a loose structure revolving around a false premise seemed the best answer. The audience was encouraged, again, to make suggestions to the actors which could alter the play and its performance. Though far from ideal, this structure would inversely inform the researcher of perceptual operations as

they occurred. To use a simple example, if a spectator made a suggestion addressing the actor by name, rather than by the character's name, one could deduce that the spectator was not "willingly suspending disbelief"; she was aware of the fictional artifice and remained outside of it.

Yet this structure would also invariably make the actors the audience's "puppets," which was ethically questionable. After further consideration, the choice was made to allow the actors to selectively enact the audience's suggestions. This seemed a perfect opportunity to engage the actors and audience in a unique theatrical dialogue regarding the production of meaning. They would literally be constructing the play's meaning *audibly*. Then it would simply be a matter of somehow recording the data and watching what happened. The results were simultaneously fascinating and perfectly obvious.

In the end, each performance (there were four, all documented) possessed a singular character. Yet, interestingly, in every case the audience ultimately rejected the experiment and the performance. On the other side of the fourth wall, the actors rebelled against the audience. In subsequent interviews, they described the experience as a "war," that they were fighting, a battle to "win over" the unruly student-audience. Part of the conflict originated in the theatrical style itself: steeped in the American tradition of Method acting, the actors sought to create "identifiable" characters, a goal which carried with it a specific relationship to the audience. When this relationship presented problems to the actors, as a result of the experiment's structure itself, but more importantly the conduct of the audience, the actors became frustrated and artistically rebelled against the

audience. This generated an intensely insular sense of “communitas” between the actors, and directly influenced their respective processes of acting.<sup>9</sup>

In a way, the choice of the dramatic text and the nature of the experiment opposed one another. Yet this is also what made the experiment so exciting. Again, realism, as a genre, demands silence from an audience. It attempts to erect an enveloping artifice, a flawless illusion that overtakes the audience to the point where they feel exactly what the characters feel. In order for this to be accomplished, the audience must forget itself, must neglect its social actuality, in order that each individual spectator may personally engage with the characters. Surprisingly, though, this aesthetic tradition differentiates the West from other theatrical traditions. As Richard Schechner points out, “Our culture is almost alone in demanding uniform behavior from audiences while clearly segregating audience from performers...”<sup>10</sup>

Of course, all of this is mere convention. Only certain behaviors are reprimanded in realistic theatre. For instance, one may cough, sneeze, or the like, without provoking too much disruption. One practice, above all, testifies to the conventionality of realistic theatre and the circumstances under which it, as a genre, is consistently violated: “When a group of live actors delivers a fast-paced comic dialog to a receptive audience, we expect them to wait until the laughter has died down before beginning the next round of verbal one-upmanship.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, realistic theatre strives to eradicate audience self-awareness, but this is impossible. Instead, Western-realism audiences have learned to ignore certain actions which disrupt the “silent” aesthetic. As Keir Elam points out, these interruptions are cognized, but they are relegated to an alternate level of action.<sup>12</sup>

The *Gamma Rays* experiment sought to test the boundaries of realistic convention. The experiment would invariably disrupt the aesthetic of realism. Consequently, would the audience successfully adopt new aesthetic “codes” in the construction of meaning? Or would they cling to realistic convention and reject the experiment’s disintegration of the aesthetic? How long could the experiment and the realistic aesthetic both operate on the performance? What type of performance would such a union produce? Finally, what type of audience would such a union produce?

Before progressing, it is worth calling attention to two facets of the experiment and its analysis. First, the experiment, again, was conducted at the University of Pennsylvania. Thus, the vast majority of the audience was comprised of *students*. This study specifically examines the behavior of *student* spectators at a *student* performance. As the study shows, the results of the experiment can only be understood within this framework. For instance, because of the self-supporting nature of student theatre at Penn, many of the spectators were socially acquainted with the performers and technicians. As one would expect, this social composition of the audience, and the concomitant actor-audience dynamic, greatly influenced the results of the experiment. Thus, a thorough ethnographic analysis is vital in correctly interpreting the experiment’s data.

The second facet of the experiment which deserves remark regards my position in the construction and analysis of the experiment. This position could most adequately be defined as that of participant ethnographer: I directed the play, and I interpreted the findings. Accordingly, a certain degree of reflexivity is not only essential to the presentation of my data, but ethical as well.

The manifest complexity of this project dictates a thorough explanation of the experiment's goals and methodology. A chronological structure, it seems to me, is most suitable to engage with the data as the experiment itself began humbly enough, but gradually grew to incorporate more and more questions and ideas. Thus, I will begin with a discussion of the experiment itself. Next, I will review the context of the performance, describing the University of Pennsylvania's artistic culture and the theatre "community" in particular. Then, I will present the project's data concerning the audience. Subsequently, I will analyze the actor's experiences in order to draw conclusions about acting itself. Finally, discussion of acting will naturally lead to my final argument concerning the nature of the theatrical art and its role in society.

## **THE EXPERIMENT and THE PLAY**

The experiment's origins lie in questions concerning the audience's "spectatorial literacy," the ability to "read" a performance and effectively distinguish content from form. Spectatorial literacy is a general term, itself comprised of two categories, "readerly competence" and "aesthetic competence." "Readerly competence" refers to a spectator's ability to understand and correctly interpret action – in other words, to follow a story and apprehend its events. This addresses content. "Aesthetic competence" refers to a spectator's ability to understand and evaluate aesthetic convention – in other words, to separate the means of representation from what is being represented. This addresses form. With the term "aesthetic competence," I do not mean to propagate a doctrine of absolute or objective aesthetic. Rather, I refer to an individual's ability to apprehend her own culturally-defined aesthetic, its tropes and conventions. This is a capacity which everyone possesses, though in different measure. It encompasses not only the ability to distinguish

a good play from a bad play, but the ability to explain *why* one was good and the other bad.

One of the primary differences between theatre and other rituals, such as sports, is the disparity in spectatorial literacy. Any theatre historian can demonstrate that the role and significance of the audience has changed over the centuries.<sup>13</sup> Specifically, though, I was curious how a *vocal* audience, similar to that at a sporting event, might influence a theatrical performance. Would vocal support or criticism better or detract from the drama?

Of course, it soon became apparent that such an experiment might also shed light on another question: that of the disjuncture between the “model” and “actual” readers in semiotics.<sup>14</sup> Yet to request an audience to explain their perceptions and experiences as they perceived and experienced them would invariably compromise the results. Whether a play could even progress under such conditions is also doubtable! In order to accomplish this, the audience would need to be given a “false premise,” something which would require their vocal support and covertly reveal their theatrical observations.

Gradually, it became apparent that the two questions might be addressed with a single experiment: permit an audience to suggest alterations to a work. This would inversely inform an analyst of the perceptions operating across the spectatorial group, and it would moreover provide recordable evidence of the disparity between intended and actual meaning. Finally, it would simultaneously betray the audience’s spectatorial literacy.

Obviously, the question of an audience’s spectatorial literacy is a complicated one. For instance, first readings are different from second readings. For a time, I

considered having the audience see the play twice: the first time they would simply watch the performance, and the second time they would be allowed to make suggestions. This idea, however, was rejected for two reasons. First, students would never watch the same show twice. As detailed in the ethnographic analysis, Penn theatre groups survive through mutual self-sponsorship: each group attends the other groups' performances. As such, spectators at a Penn theatre performance attend more out of social obligation than artistic interest. It was therefore unreasonable to expect the students to agree to see the show twice – a four-hour versus a two-hour social obligation.

Second, such an experiment would inform the analyst of the processes of “re-reading,” but not *initial* reading. Invariably, a spectator who has seen a show before, or who is acquainted with it in some other manner, possesses a higher spectatorial literacy than one who has not. What subsequent viewings accomplish, in essence, is a reduction in the complexity of the cultural object. Each time a spectator attends a performance, she becomes more adept at navigating the web of theatrical signs assaulting her senses. Certain aspects of the performance can be “tuned out” in a way. While this subject certainly deserves anthropological scrutiny, I was interested in initial reading operations, when the object’s cultural complexity is most cumbersome. Specifically, I wanted to understand how a spectator initially navigates theatre’s intrinsic semiotic density.

Such an analysis dictates an appreciation of the gap between intended and actual meaning. Initial reading, as a subject, naturally orientates itself to a discussion of these different meanings. In order for an analyst to be certain of the intended meaning, he would need to serve as the author of that meaning himself. So, I chose to direct a play and conduct just such an experiment. I proposed *Gamma Rays*, and the experiment, to the

only experimental theatre company on Penn's campus, iNtuitons. They enthusiastically accepted the project, and soon we were holding auditions for the roles.

Below is the plot summary of *Gamma Rays* as it was presented to the actors at auditions. A copy of the character descriptions provided at auditions can also be found in Appendix B.

Winner of the 1971 Pulitzer Prize, the Obie Award, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award as Best American Play of the season, this powerful and moving study follows an embittered, vindictive widow and her two young daughters as they seek to free themselves from their troubled past and start a new life. Ridiculed by "normal" society, Beatrice, Tillie, and Ruth retreat into their home, full of fear and mistrust – the world is a dangerous place, and it has no place for them. Until, that is, Tillie discovers the magic of science, and the world is revealed to her in all its splendor. But her choice to enter the school science fair threatens to demolish the walls Beatrice has so carefully constructed around the family and subject them to further torment. Hailed as one of the most significant and affecting plays of our time, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* explores the haunting and formidable question, "What makes each person important?"

"Let's start with a single, simple word. Power...I don't know  
of a better (play) of its genre since THE GLASS  
MENAGERIE..." ~ NY Post

Cast in the role of Beatrice was Annie Winter, a sophomore without any theatre experience; as Ruth, Carly Daucher, an actress in high school who had only performed once previously on Penn's campus, as a member of the chorus in *Cabaret*; as Tillie, freshman Ilana Millner, who had acted in high school, primarily in musicals; as Nanny, freshman Sydney Blum, a veteran actress with an extensive and impressive resume; and as Janice, freshman Paula Aranda, who had acted in plays at her high school in her hometown of Madrid, Spain. The actors were selected on the basis of their performance of the role and, in addition, their success at several improvisational games. Because the project involved essentially "throwing the actors to the lions," it was imperative that the actors be gifted improvisers.

The six-week rehearsal period (with a final, seventh week devoted to technical rehearsals) began on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006, with the performances slated for November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006. This rehearsal period was divided into a two-week "workshop" and a four-week "standard" rehearsal period (blocking, refinement, etc.). The purpose of the workshop was to engender cast solidarity and prepare the actors for the audience participation. In order for the actors to be able to evaluate and respond to the audience's suggestions, the actors would need to have a strong *communitas* (for lack of a better word). I requested that all the actors participate in the workshop, but Paula declined, due to outside commitments.

Before progressing, I would like to briefly comment on the actor's communitas. There were positive and negative aspects to the generation of such solidarity. Obviously, the generation of group mentality among the actors ran contrary to the goals of the experiment. It essentially assembled the actors as a group working "against" the audience as group. Still, while such a dynamic was undesirable, I felt it was necessary to the execution of the performance. In anticipating the audience's suggestions, I knew that certain suggestions, though directed at a singular performer, would unavoidably affect other performers as well. In order for these suggestions to be enacted, to be feasible, the actors would need to be able to judge one another's comfort with each suggestion. For example, if a spectator told Beatrice to slap Ruth across the face, Annie would need to know if Carly would be comfortable enacting such a suggestion.

Consequently, I felt that assembling the actors *only* as individuals would be unethical. Annie, as an actor, did not have the right to slap Carly. If such a suggestion were proffered, both actors would need to agree to it. This required a degree of collective familiarity, and it was the purpose of the workshop to generate just such unity. In other words, for practical and ethical reasons, I, as a director and researcher, chose to foster group mentality among the actors, though such a decision ran contrary to the experiment's structure.

My hope in this matter, however, was that this would produce a collaborative, rather than antagonistic, atmosphere. I hoped that group mentality would allow for the enactment of a wider range of suggestions. The positives seemed to outweigh the negatives. At that point in my thinking, I also believed that the experiment would fracture the audience, rendering group mentality impossible for them. I speculated that the

performance would engender a diversity of readings, and disagreements among spectators would prevent the formation of a consensus. To some extent, this was true. What I did not anticipate, however, was that the actors' performance technique would destabilize this dynamic.

Though I address this subject in more detail later in the paper, the actors each performed under the Method acting rubric. The quintessential acting technique for realistic theatre, Method acting seeks to absorb the audience in the illusion and make each spectator identify with one or more characters. Method actors want the spectators to feel what they are feeling. This proved to be the unanticipated *x* variable in the experiment.

At the onset of each performance, the audience did not function as a group. They were still attempting to grasp their role in the experiment. Surprisingly, the actors generated the audience's group mentality. As this paper documents, many of the audience's suggestions were ridiculous – the students cared more about impressing their peers and confirming their social presence than affecting the play itself. This upset the actors' intention of “drawing in” the audience: they felt like they were failing to capture the audience. Furthermore, the actors refused suggestions which they felt were “superficial” or “stupid,” per a direction I gave them, which will be discussed below. The actors, however, took this direction further than intended after engaging with the live audience, which they felt was “unappreciative” of their artistic efforts. In other words, they felt the audience was disrespecting them as artists.

Consequently, the actors refused to accept many of the audience's suggestions. This, of course, angered the audience. They felt that the actors were cheating them, that

their aesthetic contributions were being neglected. Never mind the inane quality of the suggestions, the audience grew increasingly frustrated with the actors for not enacting their suggestions. This, in turn, produced a strong group mentality in the audience. In viewing the tapes, one can mark this progression in each performance. The audience begins as a collective of individuals, but gradually coalesces into a judgmental, singular entity. Of course, each audience contained a significant number of "dissenters," spectators who disagreed with the increasingly-collective interpretation of the play, but, to my surprise, they remained silent. I had anticipated some degree of intra-audience address and even dispute. But direct address was rare, and the audience remained divided in most performances. There were those who agreed with the group-consensus and supported one another vocally, and those who disagreed but remained silent, and who subsequently expressed their discontent in the audience surveys.

All of this will be addressed in great detail later in the essay. For now, I merely wished to enumerate my reasons for nurturing a group mentality among the actors, and briefly purvey the consequences of this decision. With this in mind, I return to my discussion of the rehearsal process, in which I elucidate the construction of this mentality and our unique preparation for the performances.

Besides the actors, the rehearsals, both workshop and standard, were always attended by Laird Edge, the stage manager, Jenny Birnkrant, the assistant director, and myself. Again, the primary purpose of the workshop was to generate actor *communitas*. This was achieved through a series of games and exercises which taught the actors how to rely on one another, both personally and artistically, and furthermore introduced them to increasingly complex forms of representation. These were the three goals of the

workshop: to foster communitas, to augment the actors' aesthetic competence, and to initiate them into complex improvisation. Though a full transcript of the exercises utilized in workshop can be found in Appendix C, a brief description of several of the exercises will suffice to illustrate the character of the workshop: Staring Game – actors stare at one another to create understanding and trust; Object Game – actors must use objects in novel ways, exploring the full dynamic range of the object; Freeze – actors improvise without structure; Stream of Consciousness – as the name indicates, actors reveal their thoughts to one another; Face Painting – actors paint one another's faces in an exploration of art and symbolism. Many of the workshop games were derived from the work and research of Richard Schechner and Augusto Boal. In accordance with the second purpose, the workshop also served to introduce the actors to a variety of performance styles and techniques, from discussion of Kathakali Theatre to experiments with Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*.

Improvisation was incorporated into most rehearsals during the workshop. At times, the actors were given free-range with their choices; at other times, I would give them a character, a scenario, or both. Each improvisation was discussed and evaluated in terms of its artistic quality. As a result of this, Laird, Jenny, and I noted considerable improvement in the quality of the improvisations. The actors quickly learned to work together and depend on one another, producing a cohesiveness that I have never seen in any other production. Moreover, the actors performed some of the best improvisations I have ever witnessed, professionally or non-professionally. Evaluated in these terms, the workshop was a resounding success. The actors gained a remarkable degree of aesthetic competence and refined their talents at individual and group improvisation.

Next, we set about rehearsing the play itself. This portion of the process was “standard” in many regards; it involved the creation of blocking, discussion of character and character-relations, etc. While I am admittedly glossing over an intricately complex process which has not yet received proper scientific investigation, it was never my intention to conduct a process or rehearsal-experiment. It is my hope that, in time, someone else might utilize this project’s data for just such a purpose.

Nevertheless, several aspects of the standard process deserve scrupulous attention. Roughly speaking, the first two weeks (of the three-week standard rehearsal) were similar to any other typical American-realism rehearsal. We discussed the dramatic text, explored interpretations of the material, blocked the show, defined character, fine-tuned performances, developed character relationships, and honed our artistic decisions. The last week, however, was devoted to a synthesis of the workshop and the standard rehearsals; it centered on the actors’ improvisations *off of the play*. Specifically, it was this last week which most rigorously prepared the actors for the experiment.

By that time, the actors were confident enough in their characters to improvise and investigate new artistic avenues. The first improvisations revolved around the simple movement of a set piece or the introduction of an outside character (one not present in the scene as written). In these early alterations, we (meaning Laird, Jenny, and myself) seldom gave the actors any guidelines. For instance, we would tell Ruth to enter a scene without telling her why she was entering.

After each improvisation, we would evaluate the actors’ work according to two criteria: 1) its plausibility within the play as written and our dramatic interpretation of it,

and 2) its aesthetic value “proper.” By this latter phrase I simply mean, was it good or bad theatre?

It was during these discussions that we first explored the limits of the experiment. For instance, because of the integrality of tech in the production, the tech board operators would obviously need to know when a scene had ended. So, we stipulated that an improvisation could, in theory, continue for any length of time (though fifteen minutes seemed a reasonable, “extreme” limit), but that the actors had to return to the written dramatic text at some point, whether to the original point of departure or elsewhere in the script.

Also for this reason, improvisations which so altered the play as to eradicate its storyline could not be accepted, though the audience could still suggest such an alteration. To provide a rather cruel example, the suggestion that Tillie die could not be accepted; Nanny, on the other hand, *could* die because the story could continue without her presence. We also realized the extreme importance of regulating the temporality of suggestions: if the play could move backward in time, it might never end.

These first experiments led to the construction of audience guidelines which were printed on an insert in the program, as well as read aloud to the audience by myself prior to each performance. Rules were pivotal to the successful implementation of the experiment. Art is, of course, a very subjective, personal thing; there is significant room for disagreement. Because the experiment made opinions which were usually internal external, it could easily produce a contentious and aggressive atmosphere between the actors and spectators, and among the spectators themselves. Both the iNtuitons board and I feared that the experiment might even lead to a brawl. Offense was unavoidable – all of

the actors knew going into the performances that they would be offended. Violence, on the other hand, was avoidable. Consequently, rules were crucial to the experiment.

Below, I have reprinted my speech to the audience before each performance because a continued anecdotal account of the rules' generation would require unnecessary space, as well as because it was within this framework which we continued to rehearse all improvisations that final week.

Good evening, everyone. I'd like to draw your attention to the pink insert in your program; there you will find the rules governing our experiment. According to these rules, you, the audience will be encouraged to do certain things but will also be prevented from doing others. The first and most important thing for you to understand is that the actors and technicians will choose whether or not to enact your suggestions. Second, the actors will not halt the performance to listen to your suggestions. It is pivotal that you speak loudly and clearly so as to be heard. Now onto the specific rules. Please follow along as I review them one by one.

- 1) You cannot prevent the performers from performing.
- 2) You cannot stop the play from moving forward (i.e. cannot ask/tell the actors to repeat a section).

- 3) You may make as many *different* suggestions as you would like. However, you may only make the *same* suggestion (whether enacted or not) a maximum of three times.
- 4) You may suggest changing plot, character, acting, blocking, or direction.
- 5) You may suggest changing technical aspects (sound, lights, set, costumes, props).
- 6) You must designate to whom the suggestion is directed (if everyone onstage, then “Everyone”). Tech, on the other hand, does not need to be designated; simply shout out the suggestion.
- 7) Your suggestions may be constructive or deconstructive in nature, but must pertain to the artistic performance.
- 8) Have fun! It’s always better to suggest something. The actors and technicians may or may not choose to enact your idea, but there’s nothing to lose in suggesting it.

Again, this experiment will make for an exciting evening of theatre, hopefully unlike anything you’ve experienced before! I would like to point out that you yourselves are now participants in this production. Consequently, your behavior should reflect this position. Your suggestions do not have to be positive or constructive — they can be deconstructive or critical, but they should always pertain to

the *performance* of the play. Excessively adverse or aggressive behavior will result in your ejection from the theatre. This is a serious experiment – we ask for your respect and cooperation. You may test the actors' boundaries, but do not taunt them or simply try to mess them up.

I will be seated at the back of the theatre with a microphone in hand. If necessary, I might intervene and mediate as director. The performance should be an exciting and unusual dialogue between all of us.

Thank you again for coming. Enjoy the show.

Added to these were several practical guidelines stipulated by myself or adopted by the actors themselves. To begin with, I recommended that the actors only accept suggestions which would better the drama. My reasons for this were twofold: 1) we wanted to put on a good play, and 2) I feared that the adoption of “bad” or ridiculous suggestions would lead to disruptive behavior, sending the performance into a downward spiral. In addition to this, the actors decided to reject suggestions which applied to more than one actor unless they could either covertly agree to enact it (by a look or a gesture) or take it on “good faith” that the other actor would be comfortable with the alteration.

Though I did not know it at the time, the actors also adopted several “unsanctioned” conditions, which I discovered in the interviews. These will be discussed later in the essay. For now, I merely wish to emphasize that they were absent from the rehearsal process.

At one time, I intended to include the technical crew as members of the “audience.” It was my original hope that they, because of their familiarity with the play, could provide data about “educated” readings. In this way, I could simultaneously collect empirical data on initial readings and subsequent, informed readings, doubling the experiment’s reach. This idea was dropped, however, for two reasons. First, I worried that this additional role would distract the technical crew from their more important duties. Second, the technical crew would only further eradicate the “normal” audience composition. A tech crew, by definition, cannot constitute a typical audience. Their inclusion in the audience group, I felt, would so complicate the experiment (and confuse the “guest” spectators) that it rendered any benefits unequal to the aggravation implicit in such a provision.

Through our experimentation, we also stumbled upon several technical limitations. For example, while the suggestion for Beatrice to crush Tillie’s marigolds at the end of act one could be enacted, and the marigolds replaced at the beginning of act two ending the deviation, we could not practically replace the flowers during intermission, rendering the suggestion unfeasible in the realistic genre, within which we were attempting to operate. While other such technical limitations were present, they were few in number. The more proper technical decisions (lighting, sound, etc.) fell under the jurisdiction of Laird, the stage manager, who “called” the show. My deposition from the performance was crucial in the ethical conduction of the experiment. Thus, Laird, with his intricate knowledge of the play and of the improvisational limitations, supervised all technical suggestions. As evidenced in the video footage, he was far more

eager to accept suggestions than the actors, a personal disposition which would have a great effect upon the performances.

With these guidelines in place, we continued our rehearsal improvisations. Surprisingly (or rather, not so surprisingly), during the performances, the actors on occasion reverted back to improvisations created in rehearsal. This was particularly interesting because certain suggestions gave the actors the choice to erect a new dramatic text or repeat an old one, that of a previously “rehearsed” improvisation. They frequently chose the latter.

Accordingly, in order to arrive at a sound understanding of the improvisational extent of the performances, it is necessary to lightly sketch several of the more significant improvisations we explored in rehearsal. They are presented in no particular order: Beatrice crushes Tillie’s marigolds in I.vii. Ruth enters with the news that Chris Burns kissed her in I.iii. Nanny dies in I.vii. Nanny dies in II.v., preventing Ruth’s seizure. Nanny dies in II.v. right after Ruth’s seizure. Beatrice flirts with Mr. Goodman in I.i. and I.v. Photographers arrive to take Tillie’s picture at the end of I.vii. Tillie joins Ruth and Beatrice in the living room because Ruth wet the bed in I.vi. Ruth has a seizure in I.vi., ending the scene. Ruth has a seizure in I.vi., and Beatrice relates her nightmare to Tillie. Tillie successfully calls the doctor in II.v. Beatrice must go to greater lengths to prevent Tillie from calling the doctor in II.v. End of act one, keep going. Nanny is brought to the house by “Miss Career Woman of the Year,” outside of the play. Tillie at school, outside the play. Beatrice at the science fair, outside the play.

After exploring these scenarios, we ran the show without interruption, without constructed scenarios, concentrating instead on generating the atmosphere of a real

performance, with Laird, Jenny, and I shouting suggestions at the actors. We did this several times. The first time, we forced the actors to enact every suggestion we made, regardless of its validity or coherence. In later runs, we simulated the true format of the experiment and granted the actors the agency to accept or reject suggestions. As with all improvisations, we evaluated each new scenario in terms of its artistic value. Finally, the rehearsal process came to an end, and we entered “tech week.”

Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday of that week were devoted to set construction and technical operations, though we were granted three much-desired run-throughs in the performance space, one on Tuesday evening, and two on Wednesday evening. These were incredibly important to us because the actors needed to adjust to the space and the extremely cluttered set, and because it was our first chance to engage with “unaffiliated” spectators, namely the tech crew, some of whom had seen the show and some of whom had not.

Penn theatre companies typically designate one rehearsal as a “designer’s run,” held sometime after the completion of blocking. The purpose of this rehearsal is to provide the technical designers with a preview of the show. Consequently, several members of the tech crew had seen the show before tech week, though many had not. Of course, all of them had read and were familiar with the play. They would be our first audience.

Tuesday’s run and Wednesday’s first run were “improvised,” but the second Wednesday run was “straight,” in order that we might videotape the play “as rehearsed.” This run would serve as the scientific “baseline” against which all other performances would be measured.

During the first improvised run, the tech crew shouted out whatever came to their minds, regardless of its coherence. One person in particular shouted out as many inane suggestions as she could muster. Because this individual was strongly disliked by the cast due to several personal conflicts, her comments especially disturbed them. For the most part, the crew's suggestions were fairly superficial, none of them as difficult or intricate as those offered in rehearsal (by three highly-competent spectators). The actors felt the tech crew's suggestions "disrespectful," and reported to me that they had been "thrown off" by the crew's comments. Several of them were crying after the run, and all of them were fuming.

Returning on Wednesday with renewed purpose and determination, the actors performed to a surprisingly reticent tech crew. When asked why they were so quiet, they simply responded, "We ran out of ideas." With only minimal audience participation, the actors were able to recover their confidence, which was especially important as we headed into the performances.

In neither run did the actors accept any large risks, though admittedly few were proffered by the crew-audience. As we would come to discover with the actual performances, "deep" suggestions were few and far between. Most of the audience's suggestions were regarded by the actors as "superficial" and unworthy of enactment, resulting in fairly "by-the-book" performances. Finally, while the improvised runs gave the actors a taste of acting under an "intrusive" audience, it did not prepare them for the antagonistic character of the real audience's suggestions. Thankfully, a gradual increase in the size of each performance's audience allowed the actors to adjust to the complications of a "real" audience.

## THE CONTEXT

The University of Pennsylvania boasts a large and diverse artistic culture. With more than forty student-groups organized under the Performing Arts Council, students can become involved in groups ranging from stand-up comedy to African dance to Hindu a capella to Jewish theatre. Within this broad framework, the theatre arts community<sup>i</sup> stands alone.

While other performance groups such as dance, music, and a capella receive wide support from the student body, the theatre arts community is largely self-supporting. Theatrical performances rarely garner the numbers of other group performances. A typical audience at a given play will be comprised of 75% theatre members, with the remaining 25% being friends or family of the cast and crew. At Penn, it is exceptionally rare for a student to attend a play simply out of interest. There are three reasons for this phenomenon. First, Penn students are frankly relatively uninterested in theatre. Despite theatre's tradition as a "high art," students at Penn express almost no interest in drama. To what degree this situation stems from the plight of theatre in general in the United States, I cannot say.

Second, theatre does not hold a high artistic reputation at Penn. By this I mean to say that most theatre at Penn is, quite honestly, bad. It is not necessarily worse than at other universities, but for whatever reason students perceive it as being so.

Third, the theatre community is socially insular (thus, its denotation as a "community"). Theatre members spend the majority of their time with other members,

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<sup>i</sup> I use the word "community" because it represents how the group members view their organization. It is utilized with the full connotation of the German *Gemeinschaft*.

attending “exclusive” parties and such. Theatre members also have fewer non-theatre friends than members of other artistic collectives. Thus, their “social reach” does not extend as far into the general student body.

I offer these observations as a member of the “community” for four years. While I believe my analysis is correct and fair, it is not founded on any systematic observation or quantifiable analysis proper.

Theatre members, despite the expenditure of considerable energy in feigning egalitarianism, are nonetheless organized hierarchically. Still, because of its insularity, everyone knows everyone within the community, at least within reason. This in itself produces a hierarchy as each member wields an artistic and social status, the former based in previous performance/contribution and the latter in social exploits (attendance at parties, etc.).

As a result, theatre members attend plays with a highly-informed “horizon of expectations,” quite distinct from the rest of the “lay” community.<sup>15</sup> Theatre members have a high spectatorial literacy (at least, in theory) because they know “what to expect” from a given production. Accordingly, it is imperative to discuss the artistic “track records” of the company and individuals which produced *Gamma Rays*.

To begin with, iNtuitons is widely regarded as one of the worst theatre groups at Penn. The group’s constituency has been declining over the past four-year period of my academic career largely because of popular dislike of the group’s leadership. At Penn, each student group must have a specific, singular purpose; furthermore, each group must be headed by a student board. Thus, there is the experimental theatre company, the

Jewish theatre company, the socially-relevant theatre company, etc., all governed by student boards.

Because of a more general decline in the group's reputation prior to my arrival at Penn, iNtuitons has for the past four years only managed to attract members of the community unable to attain a board position with any other group. This quickly set iNtuitons on a downward spiral. To further complicate matters, iNtuitons was monopolized for several years by a producer-director couple. The plays produced during their hegemony were stylistically very limited.

Each semester, student directors must write a Direction Proposal to a group's board of governors. A director (and the show she hopes to direct) are elected on the basis of this written proposal and a subsequent interview. Occasionally, a group may accept a director but request that she direct a different play for practical purposes, but this is rare. iNtuitons, as the experimental company, assigns as its charter the production of avant-garde theatre. Unfortunately, their productions rarely warrant this designation.

While not the case with every group's board members, the iNtuitons board members, because of their low standing in the community, frequently lack any formal theatrical training. Thus, their productions take the shape, not of the avant-garde, but of uninformed students trying "to do something weird," as one of them openly related to me. Regrettably, their ignorance makes them gullible, a fact which the producer-director team managed to exploit over the course of several seasons to the further detriment of the group's reputation.

During this period, iNtuitons plays served as a forum for the director's narcissism. Even when other directors succeeded in interrupting the couple's

domination, their plays conformed to the hedonistic air. They assumed that that was what one did with iNtuitons. To illustrate, a typical iNtuitons production would be one wherein a student director proposed to direct a modern classic (say, Miller or Albee), and then rewrote it herself. Another popular iNtuitons experiment was to combine two tangentially related plays and present them in a non-conducive space. Because of these poor experiments, and poor productions, the group experienced a decline in the number of proposals it received.

At the time of *Gamma Rays'* production, the iNtuitons board was composed primarily of new students (freshman and “first-timers”) with little social or artistic clout.

<sup>ii</sup> The sole exception was the board chair, a highly capable young woman strongly disliked by the theatre community and widely regarded as a “totalitarian dictator.” When notified of my intent to propose to direct with iNtuitons, many theatre members responded with, “Are you serious?” Another common reaction was, “You’re not going to do something stupid, are you?”

Of the cast and rehearsal staff, only Laird and I had reputations in the community. Again, Annie had never acted before; Ilana, Sydney, and Paula were freshmen; and while Carly had acted in *Cabaret*, many people did not know her (her social involvement with the theatre community was scant, though it has since increased). Laird was well-liked and highly esteemed as a stage manager. An energetic, responsible individual, he was regarded by all as a central member of the theatre community. Artistically, his reputation had suffered after he directed a dismal production of *The Food Chain* the previous fall. Overall, though, Laird’s involvement with the project lent it credence.

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<sup>ii</sup> By “social clout,” I mean the individual’s perceived standing in the theatre “community.” Essentially, it refers to the student’s public esteem and/or popularity.

While some may question the objectivity of the next section, in which I discuss my own reputation as a theatre member, I avow that the following characterization is based not on my own self-perceptions, but on the testimony of other theatre members as relayed to me in personal discussion throughout my career at Penn. As such, unfortunately, I cannot provide documentation of these opinions.

At the time of *Gamma Rays'* production, I was regarded as one of the leading actors and directors at Penn. Socially, however, I was not so well-known. Because of an admittedly old-fashioned and business-like demeanor, I was perceived as a talented actor-director but “distant” social member. This does not mean I was disliked, but rather that I was viewed as self-sufficient and intensely serious. Prior to *Gamma Rays*, I had acted in numerous productions, for the most part playing the lead. Then, in the fall of 2005, I directed a production of Peter Shaffer’s *Equus*. At the time, it was lauded as the best play at Penn in recent memory. After *Equus*, I returned to acting for a semester. The next fall, just before *Gamma Rays*, I directed and acted in a production of Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story*. It, too, was declared as the best play produced at Penn.

Stylistically, my acting and directing were described by the community as “dark” and “intense.” Consequently, my choice to direct *Gamma Rays*, similar to my decision to work with iNtuitons, came as a surprise to many. Still, the community anticipated the play’s rendition, under my direction, would be intense, focused, and dark. Several “outside” references to me and my past productions were made by the audience during the Friday 10 pm and Saturday 8 pm performances which reflect this interpretation of my work. In the end, however, many theatre members credited *Gamma Rays* as my one great failure.

While this project was never intended as a formal study of the audience's horizon of expectations, one focusing on the audience's pre-show perceptions of the play and how they determined the audience's character and guided their construction of meaning, a review of the documents and materials associated with *Gamma Rays*, which a spectator might have encountered, is necessary to an understanding of the performance atmosphere. Because of theatre's insularity, advertising has little effect upon the majority of a play's audience. Theatre groups employ the same local businesses in the manufacture of posters, programs, and tickets. Consequently, production materials across the groups look remarkably similar. For this reason, theatre groups invest little energy in the creative production of these materials. Advertisements serve more as a reminder of social obligation within the community than as a true advertisement.

Theatre advertising takes three distinct forms: 1) a banner on Locust Walk (the central student walkway) 2) "flyering" (the handing out of approximately 4"x4" flyers on Locust Walk), and 3) posters erected all over campus. The banner rarely boasts more than a colorful rendition of the title and accompanying information: location, time, and ticket prices. Some groups have created a group symbol which they inscribe on banners and posters, but iNtuitons has no such symbol. Theatre flyers are always roughly the same size and, in contradistinction to other performing arts groups, are printed on brightly colored paper as opposed to gloss paper. Flyers contain the title and necessary information though a tag-line might also be included. A flyer can be found in Appendix J.

Posters vary the most across artistic groups. Visually, the posters adhere to certain campus fads, but within this imposed range, differ greatly. To clarify, posters almost never contain photographs of the production or its cast. Generally, they consist of a solid

background with colorful illustrations in the foreground. Within this format, the groups express their creativity and work to epitomize the tone of the play. The concept for many posters is derived from a frustratingly literal interpretation of the play's title; *Gamma Rays*' poster is a case in point. Students typically create their posters using Adobe Illustrator, and then send them to a printer for finalization. The *Gamma Rays* poster is included in Appendix J.

A fourth but sporadically exploited advertising tactic is the "production t-shirt." T-shirts are typically solid colored and may or may not contain an illustration on the front, though they always contain the title and necessary information on the back. Like posters, t-shirt designs are derived from literal interpretations of the title. Yet again, the *Gamma Rays* shirt embodies this artistic frivolity; a photograph of the t-shirt can be found in Appendix J.

Finally, advertisements exert even less influence on non-theatre members. This is not so much the fault of the theatre groups as it is the result of the sheer number of performance groups which advertise on campus. Kiosks and bulletins are always covered with dozens of advertisements and performance notices. The fact of the matter is that, at Penn, unless a performance group has a strong reputation in the student body, people will not likely hear of a performance unless someone they know is involved. This, again, results in audiences comprised almost entirely of theatre members and friends of individuals associated with the production.

## THE AUDIENCE

One of the reasons for performance theory's trepidation regarding actor-audience interactions is that the exchange is exceedingly difficult to capture, much less render into

a form of printable data.<sup>16</sup> I do not here wish to engage in a theoretical argument about the validity or objectivity of video capture and ethnography. A number of excellent books and articles have been written on the subject, and I encourage the reader to begin study there. Instead, I would like to point out the more important fact that it is far better to investigate this phenomenon using limited resources than leave our understanding of it impotent. What is advantageous about video footage, imperfect though it may be, is that it is reviewable, and, thus, subject to scientific scrutiny. In this sense, the data is verifiable. And as performance theory currently lacks performance data, I readily submit the video footage of *Gamma Rays* to academic criticism and, hopefully, further empirical study.

In order to investigate a phenomenon as intricately complex as the actor-audience dynamic, one must enlist the powers of disparate media. To reiterate, I used one camera to capture the performance and two hidden cameras on the stage to film the audience (stage left and stage right, respectively). The video footage is extremely valuable, but it must be considered in light of this paper and all other documents. Similarly, a sound understanding of this paper and its conclusions is impossible without rigorous review of the video footage. Thankfully, the valuable information only available on video diminishes the need for tedious and redundant summary here. Thus, I will only briefly touch on specific performances before continuing to my analysis of the experiment as a whole.

Before progressing, however, I must address a methodological question: should the audience be regarded as a social or performative entity? In other words, can one speak of the audience's actions as a "performance?" While many performance theorists would

argue the latter, I have chosen to study the audience as the former, a social entity. A third position could very well state that the audience is both. Nevertheless, I am hesitant to speak of the audience as “a performance” for a number of reasons.

First, I believe that the performance rubric has reached a point where it fails to enhance our understanding of many artistic traditions and social behaviors. The problem is that one can adopt a stance from which almost everything qualifies as performance, so that nothing is. Performance is an admittedly complex phenomenon. I myself am unsure of its definition, despite extensive reading on the subject. In fact, this is one of the problems with the performance metaphor: it is, in essence, a “just-so story.” In other words, it is simpler to evaluate the project acknowledging that while one could argue endlessly over whether or not the audience was “performing,” few scholars would dispute the fact that the *actors were performing*.

On the other hand, one could argue that because the audience, through its vocality, invaded the performance, it must also be viewed as a performance. Yet, while I agree that a few isolated comments-behaviors could be dubbed “performative” (as my analysis will show) I do not believe that the audience’s role was *wholly* performative in nature. This leads me to my second reason.

*The purpose of this study is not to investigate performance, but acting and theatre.* Thus, according to theatrical definitions of performance, the audience simply cannot be regarded as “performers”: they are not acting. Again, one could argue that they are “performing,” but this paper addresses *acting*, not performance, which is a much wider category.

Finally, I believe that the performance metaphor neglects crucial data in the study of the production of meaning. As I argue in my conclusion, social (*Gesellschaft*) attributes of the audience play a pivotal role in the spectator's interpretation of a drama. Qualities such as class, wealth, race, gender, nationality, etc., influence all perceptual processes. One cannot study theatrical reception without studying the sociality (the social behavior and position) of the spectators. Too often the performance metaphor neglects these factors, instead operating within a community framework (*Gemeinschaft*). While I do not directly speak of the audience as a social entity prior to my final argument, all of my analyses of the audience and its behaviors function within this social framework. Again, a few instances of "reverse performance" do exist. But for the most part, the audience's behavior is better explained as a struggle to apprehend their social and aesthetic role in the performance. With this in mind, we can begin an individual analysis of the performances.

The Thursday 8 pm audience was the smallest, an estimated thirty people. If one listens carefully to the tapes, a handful of recurring voices can easily be discerned. While this was the case with all the performances (certain individuals spoke out again and again), it was most pronounced on Thursday. One of the most vocal members of the audience was actually an iNtuitons board member. A disrespectful, rebellious young man, he disregarded the stricture that production members were prohibited from making suggestions. During intermission, I requested that he cease commenting, and he cooperated. With his absence, there was a marked decrease in the number of suggestions offered in the second act. Still, what was most interesting was that he frequently made suggestions which correctly anticipated future events (he was, of course, familiar with the

play). This curious practice will prove pertinent in the final analysis. Overall, the Thursday audience, perhaps because of its size, was mostly reticent. They seemed particularly unsure of what to do, how to behave.

In terms of the performance itself, it was quite similar to the baseline dress rehearsal. Save for a few minor deviations, the actors performed just as we rehearsed it. By this I do not mean that they followed the blocking, etc., which was obviously always the case. Rather, I mean that the performance displayed the intended character and tone. Yet it was also disappointingly lifeless, lacking energy and commitment. This was most likely due to some hesitation on the part of the actors, who were attempting to “get a feel” for what to expect from the audience. In post-show interviews, the actors characterized the Thursday performances as a “safe start” to the experiment.

The Friday 7:30 pm performance proved the most harrowing for the actors. They were nothing short of “disturbed” by the audience. In interviews, both Annie and Sydney in particular spoke of the audience’s hostility, the result of the audience’s frustration with the actors’ selectiveness regarding comments. It was with the 7:30 performance that the actors first began to utilize the “war” metaphor, which would come to serve as their primary characterization of the experience. Annie and Sydney also stated that the 7:30 audience “pulled them out.” After a certain point in the performance, they both said that they effectively “shut down” and refused to honor the communicative circuit with the audience.

Both during the live performance and in reviewing the tapes afterward, I disagreed with the actors that the 7:30 audience was more antagonistic than others. In my opinion, the source of the actors’ frustration is attributable to the specific intersection of

personal dispositions and isolated comments. For instance, Annie was deeply upset by one female's suggestion: "Show us your boobs." Though this was only one of host of inappropriate, disparaging comments, it greatly disturbed Annie because she is to this day an ardent feminist. While it is impossible to discuss the audience's suggestions without taking into account the respective personalities of the actors, this example demonstrates the highly subjective nature of the actor-audience dynamic. In such a case, the singular knowledge of a participant ethnographer is essential to the decoding of noteworthy interactions. However, the details of such an analysis quickly become unwieldy. This example also illustrates the depth and complexity of the *Gamma Rays* project, or of any project scrutinizing actor-audience interactions for that matter. It represents another level of analysis, one so intricate and labyrinthine that it could easily fill a 1000-page tome. Personally, I feel such an analysis is crucial to an empirical understanding of theatre, but how to go about accomplishing it, I do not know.

For reasons that will be explored later, the 7:30 performance was one of the two best performances, in close competition with the Saturday 8 pm performance. Affronted though they were, the actors gave convicted performances. Finally, while the Thursday audience was a fair mixture of theatre members, friends, and family, the Friday audience was almost solely comprised of friends of the cast and crew. It was perhaps two-thirds larger than the Thursday audience, at an estimated fifty spectators.

Of specific interest, the Friday 7:30 performance was the first time the actors accepted a spectator's suggestion by referring back to a "rehearsed" improvisation. In the "nightmare scene" (I.vi.), Tillie repeated the scenario that Ruth had "peed in the bed." Also, the 7:30 audience was the first to address the experiment directly, though both

subsequent audiences would do this. At one point, a young woman said, “You’re not taking any of our suggestions,” which elicited an “Ooh...” from the rest of the audience. Her hushed tone betrayed a certain degree of hesitation, but her statement was incredibly important in that it encapsulated the audience’s frustration with the experiment’s “false premise.” Another fascinating occurrence took place in II.i. A young woman, attempting, like many others, to convince Beatrice to go to the science fair, did not address Beatrice herself, but “outside” phenomena. To clarify, instead of shouting “Beatrice, go!” as other spectators did, she suggested to the tech, “Blow the horn again.” While, in reading this, one might contest that the spectator merely wanted to hear the horn honk again, her tone of voice sounds an urgent plea, as if she hoped that Beatrice would respond to *interior stimuli* having ignored external stimuli (the audience).

The Friday 10 pm performance could best be described as “ridiculous.” In Penn theatre, it is an unspoken tradition for a company to perform the “late show” as a joke. Typically, the cast and crew infuse these late performances with intra-theatre jokes and puns. Of course, this produces an inordinately vocal audience, even in performances which do not incorporate audience participation. Though we made no such indication publicly or privately that our late performance would adhere to this tradition, theatre members assumed as much. They came in droves. Aside from theatre members, who constituted an estimated 80% of the audience, some parents were in attendance, and a reasonable number of friends. Audience “clumps,” most of them theatre sub-communities, are clearly visible in the video footage.

The homogeneity of the audience, and its assumption about the perpetration of this tradition, engendered a unique performance. As the audience discovered that the

experiment was not a joke (i.e. was not *funny*), they attempted to remedy the situation by making intra-theatre references and jokes themselves. Simultaneously, however, the theatre members' high spectatorial literacy resulted in more aesthetic suggestions than any other performance. Because of their familiarity with the art and comfort within the social group, the theatre members were *exceptionally* vocal.

Of interest in the 10 pm performance were suggestions pertaining to representation itself. One young man suggested that the actors (Annie and Carly at the time) "Switch roles." Other individuals used their suggestions to bolster their position within the community and express their opinions about that community. For example, "techies" in the audience persistently yelled for the lights to be turned on during scene changes because the stage hands "are people, too, you know." As one would expect, these sorts of comments begat a convivial atmosphere.

Also of note, the actors once again enacted a suggestion by referring back to a "rehearsed" improvisation, this time at the play's conclusion. When Ilana took up the suggestion to call the doctor in spite of Beatrice's order not to, Annie solved the problem by ripping out the phone cord, just as she had done in rehearsal.

The actors, performing just after the stressful 7:30 performance, did not invest themselves as fully. While the actors never enacted suggestions with which they were uncomfortable, this was especially true at the 10 pm performance. Again, one of the criteria for the actors concerned the artistic value of a suggestion. While the comments of the highly "theatrical" audience were undoubtedly *well-informed*, the actors did not consider them any more *aesthetically* viable. Honestly, I would concur with their ruling.

While we had almost reached capacity with the Friday 10 pm performance (an estimated 100 patrons), we actually over-sold the Saturday 8 pm show. Consequently, we had to move in extra chairs to accommodate everyone, an estimated 130 people. This audience was heavily comprised of theatre members, though because of its sheer size, it also had a significant number of friends and family. Estimating, again, theatre members constituted some 60% of the audience. Despite the homogeneity of the 10 pm performance, the Saturday audience was the most cohesive. This was certainly due to its size, but it is also my suspicion that word had spread about the show, so that by Saturday, the audience knew more about what to expect. Interestingly, however, by the second act, this cohesiveness had begun to fracture, and several theatre members began to dominate the suggestions. Throughout, the audience was highly reactive to itself, a trait similar to the 10 pm audience, though this was more surprising with such a heterogenous group.

For the most part, the audience's suggestions conformed to the tropes of the previous shows. Of note in this performance, however, was the audience's curious anxiety about a wardrobe mishap. That night, Carly-Ruth's seizure left her shirt abnormally high, exposing her black bra; this bra had actually been visible throughout the second act due to the transparency of the short sweater she wore over it. Thus, it was both surprising and endearing that the audience made a considerable fuss for someone to "put [a] blanket over Ruth." In my opinion, the nature of their concern was rooted in the fictional situation which had produced the exposure, namely, Ruth's seizure. In other words, the fictional situation created a "real" concern for the actor, not the character, which the audience sought rectified. In the world of the play, the exposure of Ruth's bra would not have elicited a reaction, and neither Tillie nor Beatrice would have covered

Ruth – they're family. The audience was anxious for *Carly*, their sympathy aggrandized by the fictional seizure.

The Saturday performance also contained the most debatable and thought-provoking comment of the *Gamma Rays* run. In II.i, Ruth tells Beatrice that everyone at the science fair is waiting to laugh at her. At that time, one young man suggested, "Ruth, come stand in the aisle and do this scene." Now, this comment can be read in two different ways. The first reading is that the spectator simply wanted Ruth to break the fourth wall, for fun. The second interpretation is far more complicated. The young man offered his suggestion after many other spectators had already shouted, "Don't tell her." The timing of this is important. In all of the performances, Beatrice was a constant source of ridicule for the audience. Comments relating to Beatrice were fewer than those relating to Nanny, but comments directed at Beatrice were filled with a tangible animosity. It is my opinion, then, that this young man did a profound thing: he (incorrectly) linked the audience's ridicule of Beatrice with the mockery of the school officials, following an understanding that it was my directorial intention to draw a social parallel. In other words, he combined three "realities" (the illusion of the play, the reality of the actors, and the reality of the audience) and conflated them into one grand statement about social behavior. By asking Ruth to come stand in the aisle, he was attempting to make this "intention" visible – Ruth stands among Beatrice's enemies (the audience) and informs her that "they're all waiting."

As previously mentioned, the actors gave a fine performance on Saturday. The audience's responsiveness undoubtedly contributed to the quality and energy of the first act. But by the "nightmare" scene, things had begun to wane. In this scene, the audience

became almost oppressively vocal. The actors were frustrated, but redoubled their efforts in the second act, to limited success.

In the end, the success of the experiment depends on the questions one asks, the critical position one adopts. For the most part, the audience judged the play-experiment a failure, claiming that the actors “didn’t take enough suggestions.” Others encouraged, “Be more experimental.” Specifically, the audience was frustrated by the combined factors of the experiment’s false premise and the actors’ rejection of their suggestions. Because the audience believed that the goal of the experiment was to change the play, they could not understand why more suggestions were not enacted. This, again, was partially the result of my directive to the actors to accept only aesthetically viable suggestions, but more so the result of the actors’ irritation with the audience’s unwillingness to become “absorbed,” according to realistic acting. Surprisingly, as a review of the audience surveys clearly indicates, while the audience frequently rejected the experiment, and sometimes the performance too, they always *separated* the two. One could speak of the experiment, and one could speak of the performance. The two did not go hand in hand. For instance, numerous spectators wrote that it was a wonderful performance but a bad experiment.

This point is intriguing, and reveals much about the audience’s perception of the *Gamma Rays* production. Contrary to the audience, I am not prepared to distinguish the performance from the experiment; they are, in my opinion, symbiotic. Every audience influences a performance, and each audience must be analyzed in its respective communicative circuit. What is most important at this juncture is that the *Gamma Rays*

audience was not typical. The audience was not asked to remain silent, to lose themselves to the drama. Pitting the experiment against realistic theatrical convention, the experiment's structure deconstructed the "typical" audience role, but, in doing so, it made the audience documentable. As such, two conclusions are discernable among the data. The first of these pertains to the behavior of the audience, and the second to the audience's spectatorial literacy. While each may be (and is) considered independently, the two are blatantly interrelated.

To reiterate my definitions, spectatorial literacy is a general term, itself comprised of two categories, readerly competence and aesthetic competence. To reiterate, "readerly competence" refers to a spectator's ability to understand and correctly interpret action – in other words, to follow a story and apprehend its events. This addresses content. "Aesthetic competence" refers to a spectator's ability to understand and evaluate aesthetic convention – in other words, to separate the means of representation from what is being represented. This addresses form. Another way to conceptualize the distinction, though the comparison is less apt, is to consider aesthetic competence as the sign and readerly competence as the referent. With the term "aesthetic competence," I do not mean to propagate a doctrine of absolute or objective aesthetic. Rather, I refer to an individual's ability to apprehend her own culturally-defined aesthetic, its tropes and conventions. This is a capacity which everyone possesses, though in different measure. It encompasses not only the ability to distinguish a good play from a bad play, but the ability to explain *why* one was good and the other bad.

To begin with, the audience, for the most part, kept the fictional realm of the play separate from the real experience of "being in the audience." Furthermore, the audience,

whether hetero- or homogenous in nature, expended more energy in affecting the audience than affecting the play.

The suggestions made by the audience operated in a particular semiotic model. One must consider them not only as addressed to the actors but to the also-listening audience. In this model, the actor is the Addressee, and a fellow spectator is a Hearer.<sup>17</sup> One can think of this exchange in terms of the phrase, “I dare you,” the weight of which stems from its utterance in the presence of additional Hearers.<sup>18</sup>

In every performance, the majority of the audience’s comments were formally directed to the actors, but were informally directed to the Hearers. I have provided a Suggestion Taxonomy in Appendix I, in which I have categorized the audience’s suggestions in an effort to delineate the social interactions taking place in the experiment. These categories are not rigid and separate but overlap. A given suggestion could satisfy multiple criteria; in fact, most suggestions do. All suggestions cite the performance from which they were taken, but they must be read in context for full appreciation.

Overall, suggestions ranged from the simple, “Turn the lights on,” to the highly complex, “Spotlight on the cage.” Yet each one must be analyzed within the Addressee-Hearer semiotic framework. Some suggestions were intended *only* for the audience. These could take the form of direct address to the audience as a collective, “Applause,” or direct address to individual spectators, “Sheira, suggest something.” Other suggestions were addressed to the experimenters (i.e. the cast, the crew, and myself), “You’re not taking any of our suggestions,” or to specific individuals involved in the production, “Laird, call the show in Spanish.” Ultimately, all these suggestions attest to the audience’s constant self-awareness.

This self-awareness was undoubtedly imposed by the experiment itself. Realism strives to obliterate consciousness of representation and artifice; the experiment exploded this possibility. In asking the audience to comment on the artistic performance, we were effectively preventing them from becoming “totally” absorbed (i.e. to the point of complete suspension of disbelief), though absorption and identification did occur.

In surveys, spectators declared that they felt uncomfortable making suggestions in more “serious” scenes. In many ways, the audience had a particularly difficult time ridding themselves of American theatrical convention. In this sense, the experiment could not successfully unravel the audience’s ties to the realistic genre. As Marvin Carlson has pointed out, audiences are more comfortable with plays they can experience in generally predictable ways.<sup>19</sup>

In line with the project’s experiment-realism opposition, many aspects of the performance intentionally adhered to realistic convention. There was a foyer outside of the rehearsal space where the audience gathered before and after the performance and during intermission; tickets were sold in this foyer, though some students had purchased tickets on Locust Walk earlier in the week; the doors which separated the foyer from the performance space were opened approximately fifteen minutes prior to show time (the opening of the “house”); ushers tore the spectators’ tickets and handed them the *Gamma Rays* program; the stage was a proscenium stage, demarcating the performance space from the audience space; audience seating was divided into two sections with a row down the center; spectators were allowed to sit where they wanted; all stage hands and crew were invisible during this period; “house music” was played until the start of the show; a (student) MC made announcements prior to the show (specifically, it was the show’s

producer, Michael Sloan Warren); and the lights were dimmed, signaling to the audience the beginning of the performance. Only two aspects of the otherwise naturalistic performance were changed: I spoke with the audience prior to each performance, dictating the rules of the experiment, and, most importantly, the audience was allowed to speak during the performance. All of these are, of course, practical conventions, rituals pertaining to the demarcation of time and space designated for performance. Other, subtler conventions pertaining to American realism were at work.

The most significant of these was the audience's preoccupation with notions of "appropriateness." Certain scenes, and certain moments within scenes, were judged as appropriate or inappropriate for comment. For example, in "serious" scenes, comical suggestions were reviled. One could feel a tension in the audience during such situations, though this sort of data cannot be captured on videotape. The best evidence for this phenomenon can be found in the audience surveys (Appendix H), where numerous audience members discussed their feelings of "appropriateness."

Apparently, what happened was that the audience successfully maintained the experiment's requested-critical distance in comedic scenes, but, in more dramatic scenes, many spectators became absorbed in the drama out of concern for the characters, in accordance with realism. Because a portion of the audience was "enveloped" in the fictional world, any suggestion that "pulled them out," particularly an inane suggestion, was met with sharp, unspoken criticism. This, of course, did not prevent certain students from making "inappropriate" comments at "inappropriate" times. But for the most part, the audience remained silent in times of increased dramatic tension.

“Pulled out” is exactly the phrase spectators employed in describing the experience, the same phrase the actors used in referencing times when the audience disrupted their connection to their character. Spectators used this phrase in speaking with me and with the actors. As a result, the knowledge that the audience could be “pulled out” too, led the actors to contend that the audience was “performing” just as much as they were. When I inquired as to what the actors meant by “performing,” the actors explained that they believed the onstage world was more “real” than the audience, following a definition of performance as “semblance.”

Another reason the actors chose to speak of the audience in terms of “performance” was because several of the actors were asked by their friends after the show, “Did you hear me? I made a suggestion. Could you tell it was me?” The actors thus concluded that the experiment had produced two simultaneous performances. I, on the other hand, refer to such instances as “reverse performances,” which do lend credence to the argument that the audience was performing, though I have already expressed my opinions on this matter.

What does seem true overall is that the spectators were consistently aware of their position as “speakers.” One spectator told me, in personal discussion, that the experience made him feel both atomized and part of a great collective. When his opinion or suggestions differed from his fellow spectators, or he considered a scene more or less appropriate for response, he felt particularly atomized. Yet when he felt others’ suggestions were made appropriately, were funny, or were in agreement with his opinions about the performance, he described a feeling of “unity.”

It is surprising, in hearing such testimonies, that the spectators did not talk to one another more often. There were several occasions in which one spectator addressed another, but on the whole these were rare. Spectators said afterward that they would have liked to address one another but did not think it permissible under the rules. For the most part, the audience did abide by the rules of the experiment. As would be expected, some students occasionally broke the rules, and I was forced to publicly remind them of the experiment's restrictions. Once I had made this announcement, however, intra-audience disapproval prevented the incident from recurring.

Overall, these intra-audience "undercurrents" proved the most fascinating. That the audience silently judged scenes "appropriate" or "inappropriate" is most intriguing, as is the fact that their judgment of a scene's "appropriateness" rarely coincided with the importance of the content or the intensity of the representation. What I mean by this is that the audience did not always judge a scene's import "correctly." For example, the "nightmare" scene (I.vi.) was virtually inaudible in every performance. The audience deemed it suitable for intervention; yet it is one of the most important scenes in the play. While the play's climax lies in I.vii. with Tillie's entry into the science fair, the nightmare scene is the climax for Beatrice's character arc. In this scene, she reaches rock-bottom and decides to change her life. It is because she is in this state that she reacts so violently to Tillie's entry in the science fair; her realization in I.vi. lights the fuse that will explode in II.i. The audience, however, never listened to, and therefore never understood, this scene. One spectator wrote on the survey that the scene was poorly written and should have been excised from the script/performance.

The audience was always curiously silent at the beginning of act two. Several things contributed to this. First, the scene followed intermission, which forced the audience to reorient itself. Second, Tillie and Ruth began the scene. Beatrice and Nanny were the focus of the majority of suggestions, and with those two characters gone, the audience seemed more willing to watch the play. Third, there is the possibility that the audience felt the need to “be respectful” for Tillie. Ilana looks particularly youthful, and as she had never performed at Penn before, many spectators believed she was an eleven-year-old girl we had enlisted from the West Philadelphia neighborhood.

Part of the audience’s vocality had to do with what they “had to work with.” One of the categories in the suggestion taxonomy is “Intertextual.” Broadly speaking, all of the audience’s suggestions were based on some sort of association, and most focused on content. Truly aesthetic suggestions (i.e. suggestions directed specifically to the actors with little or no regard for the other Hearers) were infrequent. Scenes that have a wider intertextual framework received more comments. For instance, scenes containing smoking or drinking received the most comments because the student-audience could link it with personal experiences. Overall, the audience offered an extremely limited set of comments. The actors described the audience’s suggestions as “superficial,” and in terms of diversity and aesthetic or creative weight, they were.

As Bennett states, theatre is a dual experience: you pay to see the show, and you pay to have the experience of being in a theatre.<sup>20</sup> In the case of *Gamma Rays*, the social aspect eclipsed the artistic experience. Spectators devoted the majority of their energies to influencing their fellow Hearers. The spectators used the vocal opportunity, not to

change the play, but to confirm their place in a community, to make themselves *present*.

Inside jokes, outside references, and ridiculous suggestions all served this aim.

Another tactic the spectators' employed centered on making a suggestion they knew was coming. A handful of spectators actually attended the performance twice, and, interestingly, in their second attendance, made suggestions moments before they were scheduled to be enacted according to the script. This example, above all, testifies to the audience's preoccupation with affirming its social collectivity. Thus, *Gamma Rays* was first and foremost a social experience, and only secondarily an aesthetic one.

The experiment's second focus regarding the audience centers on their spectatorial literacy, their ability to read the performance, both content and form. As previously mentioned, comments were first directed to the other Hearers, and only secondarily to the Addressees. Thus, one must parse suggestions in order to reduce them to their aesthetic content. Furthermore, one must *always* consider an audience's competence in relation to the culture in which the performance takes place. By their very attendance at the performance, the audience subliminally accepts a particular aesthetic framework. Any play that is produced has already undergone social appropriation. As Naumann states, "[T]hey have been selected for reception through social institutions, made available by the latter, and in most cases also have already been evaluated thereby."<sup>21</sup>

In other words, *Gamma Rays* was produced at Penn because it adhered to a specific cultural aesthetic – broadly speaking, American realism, but narrowly speaking, the Penn artistic culture. As previously discussed, while the majority of spectators attend a play out of social obligation, their election to actually attend the play reveals certain

factors about them. To approach the topic at its simplest level, the fact that all of the students attend Penn, an Ivy League university, means that they in some way subscribe to the artistic culture and ideologies of the institution. Thus, the audience must be analyzed according to its subscription to these cultural and aesthetic ideologies. A spectator's attendance exteriorizes a particular social relationship to art, determined "by his [sic] membership in a class, stratum, or group, by his material situation (income, leisure, living and working conditions, and general way of life); by his education, knowledge, and level of culture, his aesthetic needs; by his age, and even by his sex, and not least by his attitude to the other arts, and especially to the very literature that he has already given a reception to."<sup>22</sup>

Finally, this aesthetic framework, which the spectator supports through patronage, informs her of the type of reading she must do. Cultural norms discourage a free play of attention across an admittedly broad perceptual field.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the spectator's social position and subscription to cultural ideologies determine what she pays attention to in a play. *This is her spectatorial literacy.* How well does she read the content of the drama? More importantly, how aware is she of the aesthetic framework itself? Realism works to conceal this framework, while Brechtian epic theatre emphasizes it. Specifically, I sought to measure the audience's ability to read American realism, both its content and form. This topic invariably concerns my position as director.

The purpose of the director in American theatre is to guide the audience's interpretation of a work. Sometimes, the goal is to reduce the disparity between intended meaning and perceived meaning; other times, the goal is to create a variety of readings.

The latter objective is more common in avant-garde theatre. American realism strives for the former ambition, to reduce disparity between intended and actual meaning.

Because realism seeks to “draw in” the spectator, it works to eradicate artifice and anything else that might distance the spectator. This does not mean that realism discourages multiple interpretations; it simply means that the genre seeks to produce as few different interpretations as possible. For realism, a different interpretation is viable so long as it still involves the spectator’s absorption in the drama.

Dozens of directing books, and many more college courses, enumerate “directing guidelines” to accomplish this very task. For example, in general, spectators pay more attention to a character who is speaking than a character who is not speaking. Thus, in measuring the audience’s spectatorial literacy, one inexorably measures the gap between the intended meaning as constructed by the actors and director and the actual meaning of the audience. Thus, when I refer to the audience’s spectatorial literacy, both readerly (content) and aesthetic (form), I cite their ability to correctly interpret what we represented.

The purpose of this research is not to generate a polemic against the audience, citing their “frustrating inability” to read “brilliant direction,” or anything such as that. Rather, the experiment’s purpose is to expose the very processes of perception engaged in watching a theatrical play. Thus, my subject has less to do with an audience’s correct or incorrect interpretation of the work, and significantly more to do with why such interpretations are so.

Susan Bennett, in her work *Theatre Audiences*, has posed that

The audience is likely at the outset of a performance to read the stage as macrocosm. All elements may be taken as of more or less equal importance in establishing a hypothesis of the nature of the on-stage world. As the performance continues, elements such as set tend to be assumed by the audience unless they are in some way drawn back into the spectator's focus (as in the case of a set change). As the world, and the characters within that world, become known, the audience's concentration tends to move to the smaller details (facial expressions, gesture, costume changes, and so on).<sup>24</sup>

On an intuitive level, this idea makes complete sense. The data, unfortunately, did not reveal the operations of any such process. This does not disprove Bennett's theory; it simply does not support it. While the audience's comments unquestionably revealed a perceived hierarchy of information (over the course of the entire play), they did not provide evidence for such a "hierarchical descent." The audience focused on two things in particular: 1) the actors, and 2) the tech. With the tech, the audience only concentrated on it when it was altered, which conforms to Bennett's theory. With the actors, however, the audience did not adhere to any such schemata. By that I mean that they did not supremely focus on the character speaking. Rather, their focus centered on characters which could most readily aid in their primary goal of *influencing the Hearers*. For instance, Nanny was extremely popular among the students because she was the easiest to make fun of.

The experiment, and the audience's awareness of itself, caused the fracture of the audience rather than its unification. This is what made the Saturday audience so unique. Size, of course, contributed most to this unity. Similarly, the theatre members' comfort with the social composition of the audience led them to increased vocality. But it did not result in a homogeneity of response. Overall, in fact, the audience's vocality determined a *heterogeneity* of response, which contradicts Keir Elam's semiotic analysis.<sup>25</sup>

Ellis has proposed that audiences will relate to films (in this case, plays) as individuals when the play is intelligible to the consensus. When the play is unintelligible, the individual will relate to her group through joint mockery or criticism.<sup>26</sup> *Gamma Rays* supports this idea, but in a different way. Because, in the end, the audience rejected the experiment and only then the performance, their rejection must be interpreted as a reaction not to the intelligibility of the content, but to their confusion about the experiment itself. Suggestions became increasingly comic as the audience became more frustrated. This, in turn, influenced the audience's ability to relate to the characters and the fiction in general.<sup>27</sup> In this manner, the audience's awareness of the experiment and itself effectively distanced them from the content. One might assume that from this position, they would become more aware of the artifice and the means of representation, but this was not the case. Even though the audience's self-consciousness informed their *relation* to content, it did not affect their ability to *read* content, save for direct address to the structure of the experiment itself, which I exclude because of its blatant obviousness.

To put it simply, the audience's self-awareness distanced them from the fiction, but did not produce a critical reading of the means of representation. The audience's

comments continued to focus on content, leading to the conclusion that the audience exhibited high readerly competence, but low aesthetic competence.

The audience clearly understood content. Their suggestions functioned both within the framework of the fiction and without it. It depended on the comment's directionality to the Hearers. For example, as the Suggestion Taxonomy indicates, the audience made suggestions which conformed to a character's previous behavior and suggestions which completely ignored previous behavior. The former were genuinely directed to the actors and were serious in tone. The latter, however, were usually comical and/or ridiculous in nature, and were obviously directed more to the Hearers than the Addressees.

Interestingly, the audience was constantly aware of the actors *as college students*. Save for Ilana, about whom there was much confusion, their knowledge of the actors as college students was evinced in the numerous beer jokes the audience proffered. Giving beer to Nanny is funny because she is both a college student and an old woman. This leads one to conclude that the audience held a dual consciousness in their minds – that of the actor and the character. In this sense, the play failed in its realistic ambitions because of the experiment itself (which oddly produced a vaguely Brechtian effect). Despite the fact that all other aspects of realistic theatre were maintained (proscenium stage, blackouts, etc.), the experiment effectively demolished the play's "absorptive" powers.

This directly contributed to the spectators' frequent claim that they did not identify with the characters. If they did, it was with Tillie, which, at an Ivy League school, is not surprising. In watching the tapes, then, one cannot assume that silence reflects absorption. Many spectators disclosed a deep emotional reaction to the drama but

not absorption or identification. In other words, they were deeply impacted by the performance (its content and execution), but not to the point of envelopment which realism aspires to.

The greatest evidence for the absorption of some members could not, unfortunately, be adequately captured on videotape. Instead, I direct the reader to the audience surveys in Appendix H, wherein numerous spectators expressed their frustration in being “pulled out.” During the live performance, particularly in scenes of considerable dramatic intensity, one could sense a palpable tension in the audience. Occasionally, a student would make yet another inane suggestion, but this time, her suggestion would be met with silent disdain. Comments made during intense moments (such as the end of the play) were always met with such silent disapproval. Whether this was because of the emotionality of the content, the absorption of some of the spectators, or simply out of respect for the actors, it is impossible to tell. But the fact remains that, again, the audience considered certain moments “appropriate” for comment and other moments “inappropriate,” as expressed on numerous audience surveys.

A handful of suggestions do, in fact, testify to the audience’s absorption in the drama, at least for a period of time. In particular, Beatrice’s decision to murder the pet rabbit Peter met with open condemnation. The fact that Peter was a stuffed animal, and that the audience knew this, renders their attempts to stop Beatrice as “genuine.” In the real world of the play’s performance, there is no reason to prevent Annie from murdering a stuffed animal. The audience’s protests only make sense within the confines of the fictional reality. Moreover, the tone and urgency of many of these suggestions further confirm the audience’s commitment to the suspension of disbelief.

Still, while the audience may have weaved in and out of absorption and, to a lesser degree, identification, and while they seemed to have held a dual consciousness in their minds during the performance, they still exhibited a surprisingly poor aesthetic competence. As discussed previously, all suggestions must be evaluated within the Addressee-Hearer model and in light of the specific cultural aesthetic of the performance. Overall, aesthetic suggestions tended toward very simple alterations, such as “Bring the rain back,” or “Try projecting,” both of which confirm an awareness of representation, but a simplistic understanding of it.

Some comments mimicked the structure of improvisational exercise. Suggestions like, “Can everyone speak in a Russian accent?” are nonsensical, but they are common in theatre improv games. Still other suggestions were based in cultural-aesthetic tropes, but broke the aesthetic as constructed by the actors and tech crew. For example, the recurrent suggestion to put a “Spotlight” on a character is based in theatrical aesthetic, but not realism. Accordingly, this suggestion can be interpreted in two ways; first, the spectator wished to alter the performance with a common theatrical device, regardless of its aesthetic effect, or second, the spectator wished to alter the performance and break the current aesthetic, reflecting a knowledge of representation and simple theatrical convention. In other words, both break the realistic aesthetic, but one is accidental and the other intended. Of course, intentionality is impossible to penetrate. So the question then becomes whether or not the audience could read the disruption of the aesthetic. The laughter surrounding the use of the spotlight would argue that they could. However, this would seem to indicate that the spotlight might merely have been employed in order to affect the Hearers yet again. Either way, though intention remains obscure (aesthetic or

social?), the use of a spotlight remains a simplistic representational alteration and does not support a high aesthetic competence.

There were, spread among the four performances but concentrated in the Friday 10 pm performance (that most attended by the theatre community), a handful of suggestions which directly addressed the means of representation. One young man suggested that the actors, "Switch roles." The actors, however, chose not to enact this suggestion because of its difficulty. Another intriguing suggestion came on Saturday night at the end of II.iii. After Peter's "murder," one young man shouted out, "Spotlight on the cage." Though intended as a joke, this suggestion ironically played off of the spotlight-convention utilized by others. It most certainly testifies to a keen aesthetic sense. Finally, the aforementioned suggestion, "Ruth, come stand in the aisle and do this scene," would seem to indicate a high aesthetic competence. Yet these suggestions were isolated comments, and they were far from the norm.

In summary, the audience followed plot well. While they occasionally disregarded "logical" behavior in making suggestions to the actors, one can conclude that they understood the characters, and felt reactions to them. People, for instance, were disgusted by Beatrice, as elucidated in the surveys, and in suggestions like, "Beatrice, shut up." For most of the show, the majority of spectators sustained a dual consciousness. Some, however, were absorbed by the production, and a few identified with the characters (mostly Tillie). The effect of the absorption upon these spectators was sufficient to engender a "respectful" atmosphere at times.

The experiment contributed to the audience's awareness of representation but did not engender a critical reading of it. It was awareness in the most limited sense. On the

few occasions when spectators did alter the representation, they did so in a manner that either knowingly or unknowingly disregarded the realistic aesthetic of the play. Whether they did not know how to operate within this aesthetic or simply chose not to, the spectators always suggested representational alterations that conformed to simplistic American-theatrical conventions. Thus, in the end, the audience exhibited a high readerly competence, successfully perceiving the play's events and characters, but a low aesthetic competence despite the self-consciousness produced by the experiment itself.

Finally, one must always keep in mind that this was a student performance with a student audience. All the results of the experiment derive from this fact. The spectators' knowledge of the actors and crew affected their interpretation of the play. Student traditions and conventions at Penn dictated the audience's conduct and reception. The self-supporting nature of Penn theatre was responsible for audience size and composition. The extreme familiarity and comfort of theatre members led to the performance's convivial atmosphere and the experiment's superficial rendering (matters certainly would have been different in a professional performance, with a more heterogeneous audience). Overall, *Gamma Rays*, as a student production, served as a forum for the confirmation and display of social identity among the students. This actuality forged the general character and directionality of the suggestions. Finally, the fact that both the performers and spectators were students led to the generation of a unique actor-audience dynamic, one that was brazen, contentious, and, ultimately, counter-productive.

## THE ACTORS

On one level, acting is a fairly simple concept: to act as another, be it human or non-human. But on a deeper level, our understanding of it has not increased over the past

two millennia. How does one “act?” How is an individual able to effectively “replace” her own psyche, whether for two hours or two years? Where does “actor” end and “character” begin?

Much of the confusion surrounding acting is the result of a poor definition of being – hardly a matter that can be discussed in five minutes. What is the relationship of acting to being? How does one explain the relationship of actor to character without an understanding of being? Is a true understanding of the relationship impossible?

*Gamma Rays* provides a unique window into this relationship. At this point, it would be fruitless to discuss acting proper, which will be addressed later in the essay. Instead, this section will summarize the actor’s perspectives on and experiences within the experiment. All of them operated within the tradition of American realistic (or Method) acting. Thus, their end-goal was to “be” the character. In interviews, one actor valorized this goal saying that it was an amazing feat if “you could make someone who knows you think you’re someone else.”

One of the problems with acting is that it demands an uncanny awareness of self, even an impossible awareness of self. Mark Fortier sums up the problem when he writes, “Because the unconscious is hidden from us, we are not who we are aware of being.”<sup>28</sup> Various acting styles require more or less awareness and control of the self. Realistic acting, with its conviction to erase all artifice, demands the collapse of the signifier and signified – the actor *becomes* the character. It is the claim of realism that, once this is accomplished, the door to identification will be opened. Identification is the ultimate goal because it constitutes the highest form of art: the translation of art into the self.

Obviously, this is a relationship fraught with danger. Postmodernism has spent a great deal of time investigating the ethics and polities of identity and relationships. Elin Diamond, in her article “The Violence of ‘We’: Politicizing Identification,” scrutinizes the ethics of realistic theatre. I quote it here at length:

Plato would understand the definition of *identification* offered by J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* because it confirms his worst fears: ‘The psychological process whereby a subject assimilates an aspect, property, or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified’ [J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 205]. Identification, then, is psychological, that is, partially unconscious and not immediately accessible to rational scrutiny; this alone makes it something to be feared. More troubling, the subject takes on, takes *in*, features of the other and is ‘transformed,’ wholly or partially, in conformity to that model. This implies that the subject has no prior identity; rather, identity is formed in the crucible of identifications; the subject is ‘specified,’ distinguished from all other subjects not by his immortal soul but by his

identifications, and these identifications stem not from disciplined reason but from desire, what Plato calls a ‘weakness in our nature’ or a ‘trick of illusion’...Dramatic realism produces precisely those conditions that allow for the creation of a smugly self-identifying spectator/critic and the creation in the late nineteenth century of an aggressively bourgeois we...The lifelike stage sign reinforces the epistemology of an objective world, for the referent is not simply implied; it is reaffirmed in the activity of reception. Which is to say, realism is more than an interpretation of reality passing as reality; it produces ‘reality’ by positioning its spectators to recognize and verify its truths. Naturalizing the relation between character and actor, setting and world, realism’s project is always ideological, drawing spectators into identifications with its coherent fictions. It is through such identifications that realism surreptitiously reinforces (even if it argues with) the social arrangements of the society it claims to mirror.<sup>29</sup>

Her argument is especially relevant to the *Gamma Rays* experiment because the actors performed under the rubric of realism. Their goal, again, was to produce identification. They wanted the audience to feel what they were feeling. Moreover, this task dictates a specific relationship to character which must be appreciated in order to understand the reason the performances transpired as they did.

The actors viewed their characters, from the beginning, as *real people*. They had lives of their own – dreams, hopes, fears, desires. As real people, they deserved all the rights and privileges of any human being. For this reason, the actors came to see themselves as “defenders” of the characters. All of the actors claimed to love their characters. For some, like Ilana, this was because she saw herself in Tillie. For Sydney, who did not identify with Nanny in any way, it was because she believed Nanny’s life was worth telling. Their deep affinity for the characters led to much of the conflict between the actors and audience.

The actors worked diligently to stay “in character” because to be “pulled out” meant failure. In their minds, it also meant that the audience could not identify with them, could not share their (the actor’s and the character’s) pain. In one interview, Annie spoke of the presentation of her *own* pain. She stated that she used outside, personal conflicts to enrich her character with the hope that it would increase the presence of the character, drawing the audience in until they identified with her.

The actors also explained that they used the audience’s vocality to gauge their relative success in this matter. If the audience, for example, made ridiculous suggestions, the actors concluded that they did not “have them.” This explains their frustration and dissatisfaction with the “nightmare” scene – the audience always talked through it, e.g. Annie and Carly were not doing a good job acting. The actors frequently used “war” imagery in describing their relationship to the audience.

Again, one of our guidelines of the performance was that the actors should only enact suggestions they felt aesthetically viable. The actors, however, felt that the majority of the audience’s comments were ridiculous and superficial. To them, this was incredibly

insulting and frustrating. For one thing, it obstructed them in their goal of “bringing the characters to life.” Moreover, the actors felt that their rehearsal process had been particularly rigorous (it was). As such, they interpreted the audience’s inane suggestions as nothing short of utter disrespect for them as artists. At one point, the actors referred to the play as their “baby.” The maternal analogy testifies to the ferocity of their conviction.

After the performances, the actors described the experience as being “pricked by pins.” The continual onslaught of audience suggestions seemed to them malicious in intent. Sydney said in her interview, “Why would they want to fuck us up?” Ilana felt that the audience became so antagonistic at points that she was obligated to “throw the audience a bone.” While all the actors expressed at one time or another feeling pressured by the audience, the others did not share this sentiment. Overall, the ordeal was so stressful for the actors that I most intermissions and post-show meetings consoling the actors, many of whom were crying.

In the end, however, the actors confidently believed that the audience could not “win” against them. Despite the audience’s effrontery, the actors held firm in their conviction that, ultimately, the play’s emotional intensity would quell the audience. Annie spoke directly of this in her interview, stating that, in the final scene, they (the actors) have won. She asserted that, at that point, the drama was so intense, so powerful that no matter what absurd comments the audience might make, they could not faze the actors. Interestingly, this statement betrays a disarticulation of goals. According to this, their ultimate goal their own absorption in the fiction and, only secondarily, the audience’s. Still, because the actors viewed the first as the means to the second, this ultimately accords with their performative intentions.

Other aspects of the experiment were abandoned by the actors. This was one of the most insightful contributions of the data. The actors required a *stable* character to act. This is of paramount importance. One of the questions of the experiment dealt with whether or not the actors could stay “in character” if the audience could modify their behavior. The answer is, no.

The actors confided in interviews that while they wanted to remain open to character suggestions, it simply was not possible. Somewhere along the way, they said, the possibility of changing the character was abandoned as it would “violate the integrity of the play.” The actors were willing to explore plot and other “external” suggestions (as they characterized it), but they refused to alter their characters. This is partly based in their “love” for the characters and their perceived goals in performing, but it has more to do with the extreme difficulty of portraying a character that continually changes. Each change in action necessitates a change in being. Thus, in order to maintain the actor-character boundary (even if this meant complete replacement), the actors needed to operate on a stable character base.

This character base became so strong that the actors believed they could deviate from it without severing it. For example, Ilana cited a situation in which she rendered a line poorly. Yet she maintained that she “still felt like her [Tillie], but didn’t do what she would have done.” In group interviews, the actors, as a group, espoused this belief, saying that “if you mess up a line, that’s okay. You’re not messing up the character.” But, as any semiotician would point out, the character *is* the lines. At some point, then, the actors’ belief in the characters’ reality successfully eclipsed the text itself.

Paula encapsulated this point when she explained that her primary challenge was to fight the audience's conceptions of her character based *on the text*. In the dramatic text, Janice serves as Tillie's school-antagonist. The audience clearly read this because, at certain performances, when the lights came up on Paula-Janice, the audience boo-ed her. One young woman even exclaimed, "Oh, Jesus." Paula said she felt it was her duty *to her character* to change their minds about Janice. This goal was originally derived out of the Stanislavskian system of objective-acting: Janice wants to win the science fair. Accordingly, Paula has to convince the (real) audience that her project is the best. But in describing the experience, Paula said that she felt she had to "fight" the audience's textual conceptions of Janice. For Paula, Janice existed beyond the text. She wanted the audience to believe as she believed.

Despite their commitment to the characters as real people, the actors still acknowledged a boundary between themselves and the characters. While their ultimate goal was to abolish this distinction, they realized that their relationship waxed and waned. They seemed to apprehend it almost as a percentage: "more me, but still her." This would seem to indicate that the boundary was fluid, but, in discussing the efforts of the audience to "mess them up" (as they characterized it), they said that some comments were directed to the character and some to the actor. Paula stated that she felt the audience directed suggestions to Janice to mess Paula up.

This actually increased solidarity among the actors. Because they were all negotiating the boundary between the self and the "real" character, the actors forged a striking camaraderie. Both Sydney and Ilana said, in personal conversation, that they would become angry when a spectator's suggestion ridiculed another actor. One

particularly callous spectator suggested to Annie during the “nightmare” scene, “Try projecting.” Sydney later informed me that she had wanted to run out and punch the spectator. “Disrespectful” suggestions only increased the actors’ unity and furthered them in their purpose to “win over” the unruly audience, according to their “realistic agenda.”

In the end, the actors said that a large measure of their devotion came from the fact that it was *their* life onstage. Throughout each performance, even when the actors successfully “became” the characters, according to their own definitions, they were always aware of their own selves. Annie, Ilana, Sydney, Carly, and Paula were all onstage, too. The audience was not just engaging with a fiction, but with a reality as well. The actors’ uncanny devotion to their characters, even to a point beyond the text, was *always rooted in their own selves*.

Thus, Annie infused Beatrice with aspects of herself, just as she took on aspects of Beatrice to play her. The relationship was a two-way street. Carly remarked in interviews that she caught herself talking like Ruth in the real world. Ruth had become such a part of who she was that the theatrical frame could no longer contain her. Yet simultaneously, Annie explained that, even when she was *unsuccessful* in channeling Beatrice, the audience still saw Beatrice. She speculated that it was because the audience was still reading *her*, which was effectively half of Beatrice.

This raises an interesting contradiction. In Annie’s case, the frame itself generated the character, but in Carly’s case, just the opposite occurred – the frame could not contain the character. Where, then, is character located? Does it belong solely to the actor? Neither Annie nor Carly could limit her character. For Annie, character was assumed

when it should not have been (she wasn't *acting* like Beatrice). For Carly, it invaded her real life, and she found herself acting like Ruth even when she did not mean to.

Where does the actor end and the character begin?

## AN IDEA

Theatre is the art of acting like another. This other can be sentient or inanimate, but it is different from the self. Acting, of course, involves action. Otherwise, the person is not *acting*. She may be performing (a wider category), but she is not acting. Defined in this way, character is the action another executes. In practical terms, it is the lines and actions of a play, which, together with other lines, actions, and "events," constitute a story.

What is commonly assumed with acting, however, is a relation to being. Many theorists have defined acting as *being* another. It is not. It is merely *acting* as another. Theatre then, redefined, is *the art of acting-being*. It is the forum for the evaluation of the relationship between acting and being. According to this definition, theatre requires a spectator, but acting does not.

The beginning of acting is alteration of action or behavior. Anyone can do this; think of describing someone's behavior as "out of character." We do this because we, as humans, always assume a relationship between action and being. There are beings which act and beings which do not act. Flowers do not "act." They grow and develop, but they do not *behave*. Other beings, however, can and do act. These are fauna, and what is unique about fauna is that we humans assume a relationship between the fauna's action and being. Whether or not this is scientifically or philosophically true is irrelevant. What matters is that we believe it to be so.

As humans, we designate a certain level of action-complexity as “consciousness.” Certain beings have it, others do not. So, to use a few examples, we might say that an amoeba behaves like an amoeba. Its action extends from its being. On the other hand, to see a cow neighing like a horse would be strange indeed. A horse acts like a horse, and a cow acts like a cow. Even small children can elicit the distinction. But the crux of the matter is that we, rightly or wrongly, assume some sort of *intrinsic* relationship between being and action. And consciousness refers to a certain level of complexity in this dynamic – conscious beings are relatively “harder to predict.”

We perform the same operation with our fellow human beings. When consciousness comes into play, however, there is an increased assumption of action-being relation. Each human being is born capable of a diverse range of actions and behaviors. Gradually, these behaviors are narrowed by culture. Children learn to act a certain way in a given situation. One can envision this process as a funnel – the older we get, the fewer actions we employ. Culture is the primary determinant of “ranges of action.” Other determinants are ethnicity, class, nationality, race, gender, religious orientation, age, etc.

Accordingly, these action-being associations carry a heavy ethical weight. People are judged by their behavior, and assumptions are then made about their character, their being. These assumptions can be valid or invalid, but either way, they are dangerous. Assumptions concerning the relation of action to being led to the development of racist ideologies, for instance. People assumed (and still do, regrettably) that one can tell certain things about an individual based on the color of her skin. While the operation is one essential to our survival (the ability to recognize an active being is paramount to staying alive), the conclusions we draw are our own responsibility.

Within this framework, theatre functions as a site for the exploration and iteration of the action-being dynamic. Theatre, as the art of acting and/or being like another, challenges our assumptions about the intrinsicness of the relationship. Theatre as such is an ideological institution. As a forum for the investigation and study of action-being relations, it invariably produces ideologies about those relations. These ideologies can be either approved or disapproved by culture, society, governments or political organs and the like, but, in this sense, theatre is *inherently* political.

To clarify, humans assume a link between the action of a sentient being and the being of that being. Consequently, humans form conclusions about certain action-being relationships. A good way to think of this is in terms of stereotypes or social roles. For example, certain behaviors are characterized as “motherly.” Other behaviors are defined in terms of gender: masculine or feminine. These action-being relationships structure ideologies that permeate society. There are many sites which produce such ideologies: the home, the school, the workplace, etc. Yet theater functions as a unique site of production in that it is the one place where the action-being dynamic is *systematically investigated*. This is theatre’s primary, but not only, societal function.

For example, theatre is an economic entity and a source of pleasure. But theatre’s primary purpose in society is to explore the action-being dynamic. It accomplishes this through framing. Imagine a child’s first introduction to the theater. The child sees people acting onstage, performing and behaving in certain ways. But the child does not yet know that the person onstage might be *lying*. We learn, within our respective cultures, that certain spaces, certain frames, can distort the acting-being dynamic. In such a frame, a young man may act like an old man, or a virgin may act like a mother.

This is the source of theatre's representative power. Yet, contrary to the arguments of many theorists, theatre does not always signify.<sup>30</sup> Signification is not inherent to theatre. It is inherent to the theatrical frame (wherever that might be: a stage, a professional theatre, a high school auditorium, around a campfire), but it is not inherent to acting. We in the West have a tendency to over-signify theatre. To use Peirce's famous example of the drunkard and the Salvation Army, the drunkard cannot be said to signify anything *innately*. His signification is imposed. Because he does not attempt to act, he cannot be said to signify (though acting is not always signification). In other words, neither he, nor perhaps some members of the audience, believe he is creating a "fiction." Yet in another sense, he cannot help but signify by standing onstage; within the theatrical frame. Thus, the only reason the drunkard signifies is because of the frame, which is culturally inscribed.<sup>31</sup>

This tendency to over-signify riddles performance theory. Theorists such as Patrice Pavis have pondered over the signification of a chair onstage.<sup>32</sup> "How does the chair signify?" they ask. They assume that the chair is simultaneously its real self and another chair. It refers to another chair, somewhere, some-when else; or perhaps it refers to *all* chairs. But neither is the case. Ultimately, the chair *does not signify*. Signification is forced upon it by the spectator, by the semiotician. The aforementioned child does not read it as a different chair. Rather, it is taught that it should consider it as such. It achieves this signification through belief in disbelief. We learn that we should not "trust" a chair onstage.

Because *human beings* are able to dissemble onstage, we assume that objects can accomplish this feat as well. But this is not the case. Human beings signify through their

action. An actor onstage acts as someone else. Yet once a space is associated with this activity on a regular basis, it becomes a *site* of semblance. Onstage, Bill does not act like himself; he acts like an eighty-year-old man. Consequently, we designate the space as the source of the signification, and not the human actor. Because the actor has “feigned” in that space, the space becomes endowed with certain properties. Thus, a chair is “more than a singular chair” onstage. But this is ridiculous. It is a blatant misunderstanding of the nature of theatre.

Again, theatre is the art of acting-being alteration. Up to this point, we have only considered the alteration of action. But all action is linked to being in our minds. This association generates character in its typical understanding. This is also the source of theatre’s phenomenological rotundity.<sup>33</sup> Because a character “acts” (through lines and actions contained in the written dramatic text), we subconsciously grant it a being. Thus, we talk of Hamlet as a being. Hamlet *is* different from Othello. How? Because he *does* things that Othello would not do.

Yet to speak of Hamlet as an “is,” as a being, is incorrect. He does not exist, he only acts. The same is true of Othello. He is only a set of recorded actions. Yet we grant him a being because we, as humans, cannot comfortably disassociate acting from being. This is, in effect, how history “comes alive.” It is also how Olivier’s Hamlet *is* different from Gielgud’s Hamlet. The actor becomes the manifestation of the character’s *perceived being*.<sup>34</sup>

Because the character does not truly exist, it requires a human form to become ontologically present. The human actor stands in for the character’s being. Once this yoke

is taken up, however, things become much more complicated. The specific relation of action to being, beyond the assumption of a relation, varies according to acting tradition.

For instance, Method acting strives toward a collapse of the signifier and referent. Stanislavsky wanted to confound the actor's being with the character's being. The result would be that the audience would see, and *only* see, the character. The actor functioned solely as a medium. To accomplish this, Stanislavsky developed an elaborate training system. The actor begins her training by learning/acquiring the character's action (her lines and actions in the script). Then, through a complicated series of exercises, the actor works to effectively erase her own being and replace it with the character's. This is why "thinking like the character" is the end-goal in realistic acting. It dissolves the signifier and referent, effectively re-uniting disassociated action and being (the character is, in a way, lacking its being). What I mean by this is that a young man should work so hard to portray an old man that the actions which he is performing onstage (those of an old man) ultimately *fit with the being*. This is why celebrity poses such a problem to realistic acting.<sup>35</sup> The audience's "heavy" awareness of the actor's being obscures the action-being union, making its achievement extremely difficult. This, too, illustrates that realistic acting is the tradition of the reconciliation of action and being.

Brechtian acting strives for just the opposite. The goal of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* is to force the spectator to hold a dual consciousness in her mind: she should see both the character and the actor. The actor executes the actions of the character, but does not *become* the character. At all times, the actor should retain her individual identity. The audience should be cognizant that the actions belong to another, truly fictional being (the character), but that they are being manifested by a separate, real

being (the actor). In this way, Method acting and Brechtian epic theatre stand at opposite poles of the acting-being dynamic. The former seeks the collapse of the signifier-referent and the reunification of action and being (one cannot discern that it is a real actor executing the actions of a fictional being), while the latter seeks to maintain the boundary between action and being with the result that the spectator is aware of two beings and one set of actions.

Furthermore, the action-being dynamic is the means by which a spectator recognizes “bad acting.” Actors onstage *always* perform the actions of the character in scripted American theatre. Not to perform the actions of a play is not to perform the play. Being, on the other hand, is “optional.”

Needless to say, our incessant need to categorize action in terms of being has made us rather adept at it. Thus, when someone is performing an action that does not coincide with our notion of their being, we suspect dissemblance. The actor is dubbed a “bad actor” because the alien actions are clearly apparent. In realistic acting, an actor is considered successful if she can convince us that no disparity exists between the action and the being.

One must be aware, however, that this feat is accomplished through several means – alteration of action, the use of make-up, the presence of a frame, etc. Depending on the complexity of the action-being relationship, an actor might use any number of these means. For example, if I am relating a story to a friend and want to imitate another friend’s reaction within that story, I merely have to alter my behavior to effect this imitation. I behave as my friend did. It is not necessary for me to alter my being because the frame of the story does not demand it; the friend I am speaking to should not forget

that I am me and instead believe that I am my friend. If, however, I *do* wish to convince her that I am actually our mutual friend, I must go to greater lengths to reconcile the action-being disparity. I still act like him, mimicking his voice and movement, but, in order to accomplish this greater feat, I must also change my appearance: I must dress like him, perhaps dye my hair. Thus, the exact nature of the action-being dynamic depends on the frame and the intentions of the actor (or the aesthetic tradition to which she subscribes).

This, then, is how Annie can be perceived as Beatrice when she is not acting like Beatrice. The audience was over-signifying her. They were aware of the theatrical frame, set up by the purchasing of tickets, the distribution of programs, etc. Because of the frame, they assumed that Annie was *at all times* attempting to portray Beatrice. Thus, when Annie did not act like Beatrice, but acted like herself, they read it as her acting like Beatrice. They might have thought in this instance that she was a bad actor, that she was acting “poorly,” but they still read her actions as a signification because of the frame.

This also explains why Carly found herself acting like Ruth in everyday life. She had effectively spent the last six weeks working to reduce the distance between Ruth’s actions and her (Carly’s) being, so that, according to Method acting and the standards of American realism, she would be esteemed a “good” actor. Gradually, the character’s actions began to intrude into her own actions. Carly never confessed believing that she was Ruth or thought like Ruth outside of the play. This would have been especially extreme. Nevertheless, she became so comfortable with Ruth’s actions that she began to confuse Ruth’s actions with her own: she would talk like Ruth, walk like Ruth; etc. In

this case, the frame played no role, and Carly's experience exemplifies the limits of frame analysis.

However, it must be understood that not all occurrences onstage are read by the audience as pertaining to the realm of the fiction. Thus, as Bert States points out, certain beings (whether active or not) inherently resist signification. Dogs bark, babies cry, and props break.<sup>36</sup> Keir Elam nicely summarizes this point when he writes,

During the performance, not only may various kinds of extratextual "noise" arise, having to be ignored or tolerated (late arrivals, malfunctioning of equipment and, within limits, the forgetting of lines by actors), but certain licensed activities not contributory to the representation proper may take place on stage and will be duly discounted by the spectator (the entry and exit of stagehands, for example, in set changes). It is not that the excluded events – such as audience activity – have no semiotic value (it *does* make a difference if one is allowed to see the stage hands or if the entire audience is noisily eating popcorn), but that they are understood as belonging on a different level of action.<sup>37</sup>

To provide yet another illustration, if I am walking outside, and a man beside me starts to convulse, if he is a good enough actor, I cannot tell if he is acting or truly convulsing. If a disparity is easily recognizable in the action-being relationship, then I know he is acting. But if he is "really" convulsing, or successfully feigning convulsing by uniting action and being, I have no way of distinguishing between the two.<sup>38</sup> A frame has

no bearing on theatre or acting *proper*. It merely serves to inform us that in a certain space, the action-being dynamic may be called into question. There are even theatrical performers and performances which do not alter the action-being dynamic, but which feign alteration.

Consider the case of Spalding Gray.<sup>39</sup> Gray, who wrote and performed his own plays, is frequently utilized in postmodern discussions of theatre. “Who is Spalding Gray?” postmodernists ask. How can Spalding Gray act himself? Is he the author, the character, the actor? The truth of the matter is that Spalding Gray never acted in his monologues. It is yet another case of a frame’s over-signification, a fact which Spalding Gray exploited to aesthetic effect. Spalding Gray did not act in the true sense of the theatrical definition. Even though his behavior was altered by *performing*, it was still behavior that could logically be linked to his being. Spectators never assumed that Gray was playing Hamlet. He was playing himself. And in this way, he was not acting at all. He wrote a play, and read it onstage. The art of the performance lay in the audience’s readiness to over-signify the experience.

This last example finally leads us back to theatre’s function in society as a site for the production of ideology. In her article, “Presenting and Re-Presenting the Self: From Not-Acting to Acting in African Performance,” Frances Harding discusses the actor-audience relationship in certain parts of Africa. Her reading of the African performances paints a picture of an acting framework somewhat similar to the one I am here proposing, though her appeal to theatre’s importance is somewhat misguided.<sup>40</sup> What is paramount is that each acting style, each theatre, must be understood within its own culture. It must be appreciated as an isolated ideological institution, yet one which exerts considerable

influence on the society. Theatre confirms or rejects stereotypes. Theatre convinces us that certain action-being relations are correct or incorrect. Theatre influences our understanding of representation at its very core.

This, in my opinion, is why the *Gamma Rays* audiences rejected the experiment. The structure of the experiment so complicated the action-being dynamic that, ultimately, the audience could not navigate the boundary. At times, they were “pulled into” the play, while at others they maintained a critical distance and saw the actors *only* as actors. Because, in essence, the experiment asked the audience to play with the action-being relationship, it resulted in a complete abandonment of the experiment. While all performances began with the audience seeking to affect the actors and/or the aesthetic, the audience quickly turned to more social concerns. I believe their focus on the social experience was the result of an inability to reconcile the action-being relationship, to stay “involved” in the action-being negotiation. If they could change the play, how could they read it? The audience could not read and write the performance simultaneously. The task was too difficult, and they averted their attention to the social aspect of the performance.

The actors, in turn, rejected the audience because of the audience’s rejection of the experiment-performance. To be sure, the actors contributed to the disruption of the communicative circuit by refusing to enact suggestions which altered their respective characters. They denied the audience the ability to change the core of theatrical art. Yet, who can blame them? It proved too difficult for them to signify a being that was constantly being re-defined in its action.

Thus, the experiment was a failure. The actors and audience could not engage in a positive dialogue and together rewrite the performance text. Instead, the performance, as

one spectator described it, “made a good play with great actors into an average one with people shouting.” Nevertheless, the experiment has contributed to our understanding of theatre and its function in society. In this regard, and this regard only, it was successful.

In conclusion, this definition of theatre and acting is relative. I apply it only to theatre in America. Culturally, performance and theatre vary to such a degree that I, unlike many theorists, hesitate to pose a “theory” which explains everything. As such, each performance must be analyzed within its own cultural and aesthetic context. As the producers and interpreters of meaning operate within a culture-specific ideological framework, one must, in theatre anthropology, study all aspects of the performance.

Up to the present, performance theorists have studied theatre’s relationship to society without clearly defining society. Obviously, this is an enormous problem. Because many performance theorists are anthropologists, they assume a community model (*Gemeinschaft*), an assumption that colors all of their interpretations about theatre and performance. Performance is discussed in terms of the Self/Other dialectic, of “more real” and “less real,” and of its similarity to ritual, to name a few. Frankly, I do not believe that theatre is similar to ritual. One can draw parallels if one so wishes, but ritual and theatre serve wholly distinct functions in society.

It is this word, *society*, which I think has not received enough attention in performance anthropology. The truth of the matter is that the performance metaphor and its close association to *gemeinschaft* thinking effectively ignore the majority of theatrical events. For most people in most countries of the world, theatre occurs in society. It is linked (for better or worse) with status, economics, class, ethnicity, religion, gender,

nationality, and taste, to cite only a handful of discriminatory categories. As Janet Wolff writes,

[T]he nature of the audience is determined, amongst other things, by the nature and practice of culture in general in that society...by the general ideology of that society and of its subdivisions, and by the general mode of production and relations of production of that society. In other words, the possibility for the reception of radical or negative culture is itself determined by the economic base, and by the extent and type of autonomy accorded to general and aesthetic ideology by the stage of development of that society.<sup>41</sup>

At the beginning of this essay, I wrote of the importance of context in analysis. In any study of the production and interpretation of meaning, one must account for the context in which the exchange occurs. I offer this final analysis of the *Gamma Rays* experiment as proof of the importance of the *Gesellschaft* model.

*Gamma Rays* depicts a family of low-economic status facing numerous social challenges. Several of them also struggle with mental conditions and disabilities. To reiterate, this play was presented to students at an Ivy League university where the majority of are wealthy, well-educated, and hail from suburbs or rich neighborhoods. I contend that these differences directly contributed to the audience's difficulty in navigating the action-being relationship.

In effect, the play produced an ideology about the action-being dynamic which the Ivy League students rejected. They wrote that they had difficulty believing the

characters because they had never encountered such people before in real life. When asked whether or not they identified with any of the characters, spectators responded, “No – too dysfunctional.” “No. I’m not particularly sure. I’ve never been close to anyone in such a situation.” “No – they were all too crazy.” “No, they seemed like caricatures more than real people.” “Mostly with Matilda, but this play is pretty far removed from my actual life experiences.” “Sort of... but I think that the circumstances in the play were more exaggerated than those in my life.” “No – this family was very dysfunctional.” and “No, hopefully not.” In realistic theatre, how does one comprehend the action-being relationship of a human character if the spectator does not believe that such a character-being exists?

To summarize: for the most part, the audience felt the play was well-acted. They were greatly frustrated by the actors’ unwillingness to take up more of their suggestions, yet their suggestions were directed more to the audience than to the play. The audience’s simplistic understanding of content and poor understanding of form resulted in superficial suggestions that did not alter the play in any dramatic way. Consequently, the actors rejected the audience’s suggestions. While a few aesthetically-complex suggestions were offered, the actors refused to enact them because they would performatively disrupt the action-being dynamic.

Ultimately, the audience accepted the performance (the play), but rejected the experiment. They could not successfully read and write the play at the same time. Furthermore, they struggled to navigate the action-being dynamic in light of the experiment and sociological differences.

The audience was never sure what to change about the production. It was easier for them to either sit and watch the play or make jokes about it and use the opportunity to reinforce social relations. In other words, the experiment and performance produced an ideology which contradicted the student audience's understanding of action-being relationships. In this light, the audience's superficial suggestions can be interpreted as attempts to "rectify" or even "disrupt" the characters' strange actions. When the audience could not bring the alien characters under their control, they rejected the experiment. To them, it had produced a "false" ideology.

### A FINAL REMARK

At the beginning of this essay I announced that one of my goals with this project was to provide performance theory with performance data. Needless to say, not all of the facets of the *Gamma Rays* performances could be investigated in this paper. Theatre is simply too complex; there are too many questions.

Yet in acknowledgement of this, I have attempted with this project to provide data which might be utilized in future research. Literally hundreds of questions remain unanswered about theatre, and about this experiment in general. To list but a handful: What is the effect of space on the production of meaning? How does an audience's horizon of expectations affect a performance? How does gender influence the perceptual process? and How does an actor psychologically manipulate her own psyche and identity?

Moreover, theatre's complexity dictates a need for research across performances and across cultures. I have attempted to devise a method for the capture of performance data which would allow for the review and re-evaluation of the material by other social

scientists. The problem which today plagues performance theory is that the discipline lacks concrete, verifiable data.

Thus, I humbly submit this project, its data and materials, to the scientific community at large for further investigation, scrutiny, theorizing, and criticism. The data should be made available to all interested parties on the condition that all materials are safely returned and stored by the University of Pennsylvania Department of Anthropology, and that all references are ethically cited. This is my formal statement that my thesis and its data should be made available as a resource to future anthropological research.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS**

**By Paul Zindel**

*(The lights go down slowly as music creeps in – a theme for lost children, the near misbegotten. From the blackness TILLIE'S VOICE speaks against the music.)*

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** He told me to look at my hand, for a part of it came from a star that exploded too long ago to imagine. This part of me was formed from a tongue of fire that screamed through the heavens until there was our sun. And this part of me – this tiny part of me – was on the sun when it itself exploded and whirled in a great storm until the planets came to be. (*Lights start in.*) And this small part of me was then a whisper of the earth. When there was life, perhaps this part of me got lost in a fern that was crushed and covered until it was coal. And then it was a diamond millions of years later – it must have been a diamond as beautiful as the star from which it had first come.

**TILLIE:** (*Taking over from recorded voice.*) Or perhaps this part of me became lost in a terrible beast, or became part of a huge bird that flew above the primeval swamps. And he said this thing was so small – this part of me was so small it couldn't be seen – but it was there from the beginning of the world. And he called this bit of me an atom. And when he wrote the word, I fell in love with it. Atom. *Atom.* What a beautiful word.

*(The phone rings.)*

**BEATRICE:** (*Off stage.*) Will you get that please? (*The phone rings again before BEATRICE appears in her bathrobe from the kitchen.*) No help! Never any help! (*She answers the phone.*) Hello? Yes it is. Who is this?...I hope there hasn't been any trouble at school...Oh, she's always been like that. She hardly says a word around here, either. I always say some people were born to speak and others born to listen...You know I've been meaning to call you to thank you for that lovely rabbit you gave Matilda. She and I just adore it and it's gotten so big...Well, it certainly was thoughtful. Mr. Goodman, I don't mean to change the subject but aren't you that delightful young man Tillie said hello to a couple of months back at the A & P? You were by the lobster tank and I was near the frozen foods? That delightful and handsome young man?...Why, I would very much indeed use the expression *handsome*. Yes, and...Well, I encourage her at every opportunity at home. Did she say I didn't? Both my daughters have their own desks and I put 75-watt bulbs right near them...Yes...Yes...I think those tests are very much overrated, anyway, Mr. Goodman...Well, believe me she's nothing like that around this house...Now I don't want you to think I don't appreciate what you're trying to do, Mr. Goodman, but I'm afraid it's simply useless. I've tried just everything, but she isn't a pretty girl – I mean, let's be frank about it – she's going to have her problems. Are you married, Mr. Goodman? Oh, that's too bad. I don't know what's the matter with women today

letting a handsome young man like you get away...Well, some days she just doesn't feel like going to school. You just said how bright she is, and I'm really afraid to put too much of a strain on her after what happened to her sister. You know, too much strain is the worst thing in this modern world, Mr. Goodman, and I can't afford to have another convulsive on my hands, now can I? But don't you worry about Matilda. There will be some place for her in this world. And, like I said, some were born to speak and others just to listen...and do call again, Mr. Goodman. It's been a true pleasure speaking with you. Goodbye.

(BEATRICE hangs up the phone and advances into the main room. The lights come up.)

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, that wasn't very nice of you to tell them I was forcibly detaining you from school. Why, the way that Mr. Goodman spoke, he must think I'm running a concentration camp. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is to be accused of running a concentration camp for your own children? Well, it isn't embarrassing at all. That school of yours is forty years behind the times anyway, and believe me you learn more around here than that ugly Mr. Goodman can teach you! You know, I really feel sorry for him. I never saw a man with a more effeminate face in my life. When I saw you talking to him by the lobster tank I said to myself, "Good Lord, for a science teacher my poor girl has got herself a Hebrew hermaphrodite." Of course, he's not as bad as Miss Hanley. The idea of letting her teach girl's gym is staggering. And you have to place me in the embarrassing position of giving them a reason to call me at eight-thirty in the morning, no less.

**TILLIE:** I didn't say anything.

**BEATRICE:** What do you tell them when they want to know why you stay home once in a while?

**TILLIE:** I tell them I'm sick.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, you're sick all right, the exact nature of the illness not fully realized, but you're sick all right. Any daughter that would turn her mother in as administrator of a concentration camp has got be suffering from something very peculiar.

**TILLIE:** Can I go in today, Mother?

**BEATRICE:** You'll go in, all right.

**TILLIE:** Mr. Goodman said he was going to do an experiment –

**BEATRICE:** Why, he looks like the kind that would do his experimenting after sundown.

**TILLIE:** On radioactivity –

**BEATRICE:** On radioactivity? That's all that high school needs!

**TILLIE:** He's going to bring in the cloud chamber –

**BEATRICE:** Why, what an outstanding event. If you had warned me yesterday I would've gotten all dressed to kill and gone with you today. I love seeing cloud chambers being brought in.

**TILLIE:** You can actually see –

**BEATRICE:** You're giving me a headache.

**TILLIE:** Please?

**BEATRICE:** No, my dear, the fortress of knowledge is not going to be blessed with your presence today. I have a good number of exciting duties for you to take care of, not the least of which is rabbit droppings.

**TILLIE:** Oh, Mother, please...I'll do it after school.

**BEATRICE:** If we wait a minute longer this house is going to ferment. I found rabbit droppings in my bedroom even.

**TILLIE:** I could do it after Mr. Goodman's class. I'll say I'm ill and ask for a sick pass.

**BEATRICE:** Do you want me to chloroform that thing right this minute?

**TILLIE:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Then shut up.

(RUTH comes to the top of the stairs. She is dressed for school, and though her clothes are simple she gives the impression of being slightly strange. Her hair isn't quite combed, her sweater doesn't quite fit, etc.)

**RUTH:** Do you have Devil's Kiss down there?

**BEATRICE:** It's in the bathroom cabinet.

(RUTH comes downstairs and goes to the bathroom door, located under the stairs. She flings it open and rummages in the cabinet.)

**RUTH:** There's so much junk in here it's driving me crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Maybe it's in my purse...If you don't hurry up you'll be late for school.

**RUTH:** Well, I couldn't very well go in without Devil's Kiss, now could I?

**BEATRICE:** Doesn't anyone go to school these days without that all over their lips?

**RUTH:** (Finding the lipstick.) Nobody I know, except Tillie, that is. And if she had a little lipstick on I'll bet they wouldn't have laughed at her so much yesterday.

**BEATRICE:** Why were they laughing?

**RUTH:** The assembly. Didn't she tell you about the assembly?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, you didn't tell me she was in an assembly.

**RUTH:** Well, I just thought of it right now. How could I tell you anything until I think of it – did you ever stop to consider that? Some crummy science assembly.

**BEATRICE:** (To TILLIE) What is she talking about?

**RUTH:** I thought she'd tell the whole world. Imagine, right in front of the assembly, with everybody laughing at her.

**BEATRICE:** Will you be quiet, Ruth? *Why were they laughing at you?*

**TILLIE:** I don't know.

**RUTH:** You don't know? My heavens, she was a sight. She had that old jumper on – the faded one with that low collar – and a raggy slip that showed all over and her hair looked like she was struck by lightning.

**BEATRICE:** You're exaggerating...

**RUTH:** She was cranking this model of something –

**TILLIE:** The atom.

**RUTH:** This model of the atom...you know, it had this crank and a long tower so that when you turned it, these little colored balls went spinning around like crazy. And there was Tillie, cranking away, looking weird as a coot...that old jumper with the raggy slip and the lightning hair...cranking away while some boy with glasses was reading this stupid speech...and everybody burst into laughter until the teachers yelled at them. And all day long, the kids kept coming up to me saying, "Is that really your sister? How can you bear it?" And you know, Chris Burns says to me – "She looks like the one that went to the looney doctors." I could have kissed him there and then.

**BEATRICE:** (Taking a backscratcher.) Matilda, if you can't get yourself dressed properly before going to school, you're never going to go again. I don't like the idea

of everybody laughing at you, because when they laugh at you they're laughing at me. And I don't want you cranking any more...atoms.

**RUTH:** (*Putting the lipstick back in BEATRICE's bag.*) You're almost out of Devil's Kiss.

**BEATRICE:** If you didn't put so much on it would last longer.

**RUTH:** Who was that calling?

**BEATRICE:** Matilda turned me in to the Gestapo.

**RUTH:** Can I earn a cigarette this morning?

**BEATRICE:** Why not? (*BEATRICE offers her the backscratcher along with a cigarette.*)

**RUTH:** Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**RUTH:** (*Lighting the cigarette.*) The call this morning. Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Yes.

**RUTH:** (*Using the backscratcher on BEATRICE, who squirms with ecstasy.*) I figured it would be.

**BEATRICE:** A little higher, please.

**RUTH:** There?

**BEATRICE:** Yes, *there*...Why did you figure it would be Mr. Goodman?

**RUTH:** Well, he called me out of sewing class yesterday – I remember because my blouse wasn't all buttoned – and he wanted to know why Tillie's out of school so much.

**BEATRICE:** Lower. A little lower...And what did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I wish you'd go back to Kools. I liked Kools better.

**TILLIE:** (*Gravely concerned.*) What did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I told him you were ill, and he wanted to know what kind, so I told him you had leprosy.

**TILLIE:** You didn't!

**RUTH:** You should have seen his face. He was so cute. And I told him you had ringworm and gangrene.

**BEATRICE:** What did he say?

**RUTH:** And I told him you had what Mother's last patient had...whatchamacallit?

**BEATRICE:** Psoriasis?

**RUTH:** Yeah. Something like that.

**TILLIE:** Tell me you didn't, Ruth!

**RUTH:** OK. I didn't...But I really did.

**BEATRICE:** He knew you were joking.

**RUTH:** And then I told him to go look up the *history* and then he'd find out. Whenever they go look up the history then they don't bother me anymore 'cause they think I'm crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Ruth –

**RUTH:** And I told him the disease you had was fatal and that there wasn't much hope for you.

**BEATRICE:** What kind of *history* is it?

**RUTH:** Just a little folder with the story of our lives in it, that's all.

**BEATRICE:** How did you ever see it?

**RUTH:** I read the whole thing last term when Miss Hanley dragged me into the record room because I didn't want to climb the ropes in gym and I told her my skull was growing.

**BEATRICE:** A little *lower*, please.

**RUTH:** Lower! Higher! I wish you'd make up your mind. If you'd switch back to Kools it might be worth it, but ugh! these are awful. You know, I really did think my skull was growing. Either that or a tumor. So she dragged me out of gym class, and she thought I couldn't read upside down while she was sitting opposite me with the history. But I could.

**BEATRICE:** What does it say?

**RUTH:** Oh, it says you're divorced and that I went crazy...and my father took a heart attack at Star Lake...and now you're a widow —

**BEATRICE:** (*Referring to the backscratching.*) That's it! Hold it right there! Aaah!

**RUTH:** And it says that I exaggerate and tell stories and that I'm afraid of death and have nightmares...and all that stuff.

**BEATRICE:** And what else does it say?

**RUTH:** I can't remember everything you know. Remember this, remember that... remember this, that...

(*Go to dark. Music in.*)

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** Today I saw it. Behind the glass a white cloud began to form. He placed a small piece of metal in the center of the chamber and we waited until I saw the first one — a trace of smoke that came from nowhere and then disappeared. And then another...and another, until I knew it was coming from the metal. They looked like water-sprays from a park fountain, and they went on and on for as long as I watched. And he told me the fountain of smoke would come forth for a long time, and if I had wanted to, I could have stayed there all my life and it would never have ended — that fountain, so close I could have touched it. In front of my eyes, one part of the world was becoming another. Atoms exploding, flinging off tiny bullets that caused the fountain, atom after atom breaking down into something new. And no one could stop the fountain. It would go on for millions of years — on and on, this fountain from eternity.

(*By the end of this speech, the lights are in to show TILLIE preparing boxes of dirt in which to plant seeds. The rabbit is in the cage near her, and BEATRICE is reading a newspaper on the other side of the room. She is sipping coffee from a huge coffee cup.*)

**BEATRICE:** I thought we had everything, but leave it to you to think of the one thing we're missing... (*She reads from the newspaper.*) Twenty-two acres in Prince's Bay. Small pond. \$6,000...That's cheap. I'd take a look at it if I had any money...What kind of seeds are they?

**TILLIE:** Marigolds. *They've been exposed to cobalt-60.*

**BEATRICE:** If there's one thing I've always wanted, it's been a living room planted with marigolds that have been exposed to cobalt-60. While you're at it, why don't you throw in a tomato patch in the bathroom?

**TILLIE:** Just let me keep them here for a week or so until they get started and then I'll transplant them to the backyard.

**BEATRICE:** (*Reading again.*) Four-family house. Six and a half and six and a half over five and five. Eight garages. I could really do something with that. A nursing home... Don't think I'm not kicking myself that I didn't finish that real estate course. I should have finished beauty school, too...God, what I could do with eight garages... (*There is a sound from beyond the curtained doorway. BEATRICE gestures in that direction.*) You know, I'm thinking of getting rid of *that* and making this place into something.

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** I've been thinking about a tea shop. Have you noticed there aren't many of them around anymore?

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** And this is just the type of neighborhood where a good tea shop could make a go of it. We'd have a good cheesecake. You've got to have a good cheesecake... (*She calculates.*) Eight times ten – well, eight times eight, if they're falling down – that's sixty-four dollars a month from the garages alone...I swear money makes money.

(*There is a rustling at the curtains. Two thin and wrinkled hands push the curtains apart slowly and then the ancient face of NANNY appears. She negotiates her way through the curtains. She is utterly wrinkled and dried, perhaps a century old. Time has left her with a whisper of a smile – a smile from a soul half-departed. If one looked closely, great cataracts could be seen on each eye, and it is certain that all that can pierce her soundless prison are mere shadows from the outside world. She pervades the room with age. NANNY supports herself by a four-legged tubular frame which she pushes along in front of her with a shuffling motion that reminds one of a ticking clock. Inch by inch she advances into the room. TILLIE and BEATRICE continue speaking, knowing that it will be minutes before she is close enough to know they are there.*)

**BEATRICE:** What is cobalt-60?

**TILLIE:** It's something that causes...changes in seeds. Oh, Mother – he set the cloud chamber up just for me and he told me about radioactivity and half-life and he got the seeds for me.

**BEATRICE:** (*Her attention still on the newspaper.*) What does half-life mean? (NANNY is well into the room as TILLIE replies.)

**TILLIE:** (*Reciting from memory.*) The half-life of Polonium-210 is one hundred and forty days. The half-life of Radium-226 is one thousand five hundred and ninety years. The half-life of Uranium-238 is four and one-half billion years.

**BEATRICE:** (*Putting away her newspaper.*) Do you know you're giving me a headache? (*Then, in a loud, horribly saccharine voice, she speaks to NANNY as if she were addressing a deaf year-old child.*) LOOK WHO'S THERE! IT'S NANNY! NANNY CAME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE BY HERSELF! I'm going to need a cigarette for this. NANNY! YOU COME SIT DOWN AND WE'LL BE RIGHT WITH HER! You know, sometimes I've got to laugh. I've got *this* on my hands and all you're worried about is planting marigolds. I'VE GOT HOTSY WATER FOR YOU, NANNY. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME HOTSY WATER AND HONEY? (NANNY has seated herself at a table, smiling but oblivious to her environment.) I've never seen it to fail. Every time I decide to have a cup of coffee I see that face at the curtains. I wonder what she'd do... (*She holds the pot of boiling water.*) ...if I just

poured this right over her head. I'll be she wouldn't even notice it. NANNY'S GOING TO GET JUST WHAT SHE NEEDS! (*She fills a cup for her and places a honey jar near her.*) You know if someone told me when I was young that I'd end up feeding honey to a zombie, I'd tell them they were crazy. SOMETHING WRONG, NANNY? OH, DID I FORGET NANNY'S SPOON? MERCY! MERCY! I FORGOT NANNY'S SPOON! (*She gets a spoon and stands behind NANNY.*) I'll give you a spoon, Nanny, I'll give you a spoon. (*She makes a motion behind NANNY's back as if she's going to smack her head with the spoon.*) Matilda! Watch me give Nanny her spoon. A SPOON FOR NANNY! (*It manages to be slightly funny and TILLIE yields a laugh, along with her mother.*) Fifty dollars a week. Fifty dollars. I look at you, Nanny, and I wonder if it's worth it. I think I'd be better off driving a cab. TAKE HONEY, NANNY. HONEY WITH HOTSY WATER! You should have seen her daughter bring her here last week...I could have used you that day...She came in pretending she was Miss Career Woman of the Year. She said she was in real estate and *such a busy little woman*, such a busy little woman – she just couldn't give all the love and care and affection her little momsy needed anymore... (*Then, with a great smile, she speaks right into NANNY's uncomprehending face.*) Nanny's quite a little cross to bear, now aren't you, Nanny dear? But you're a little better than Mr. Mayo was – with the tumor on his brain – or Miss Marion Minto with her cancer, or Mr. Brougham...what was his first name?

**TILLIE:** Alexander.

**BEATRICE:** Mr. Alexander Brougham with the worms in his legs. WHY, NANNY'S QUITE SOME LITTLE GIRL, AREN'T YOU, NANNY? A GIRL DRINKING HER HOTSY AND HONEY!...Cobalt-60. Ha! You take me for a fool, don't you?

**TILLIE:** No, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** Science, science, science! Don't they teach our misfits anything anymore? Anything decent and meaningful and sensitive? Do you know what I'd be now if it wasn't for this mud pool I got sucked into? I'd probably be a dancer. Miss Betty Frank, The Best Dancer of the Class of 19...something. One minute I'm the best dancer in school – smart as a whip – the head of the whole crowd! And the next minute...One mistake. That's how it starts. Marry the wrong man and before you know it he's got you tied down with two stones around your neck for the rest of your life. When I was in that lousy high school I was one of the most respected kids you ever saw. I used to wonder why people always said, "Why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday..." Before I knew what happened I lost my dancing legs and got varicose legs. Beautiful varicose legs. Do you know, everything I ever thought I'd be has exploded! NANNY, YOU HURRY UP WITH THAT HONEY! Exploded! You know, I almost forgot about everything I was supposed to be...NANNY'S ALMOST FINISHED. ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL? She's almost finished, all right. NANNY'S DAUGHTER IS COMING TO SEE YOU SOON. WILL THAT MAKE NANNY HAPPY? The day Miss Career Woman of the Year comes to visit again I think I'll drop dead. Nobody's too busy for anything they want to do, don't you tell me. What kind of idiot do people take me for? NANNY, YOU'RE SPILLING YOUR HOTSY! JESUS CHRIST! You know, I ought to kick you right out and open that tea shop tomorrow. Oh, it's coming. I can feel it. And the first thing I'll do is get rid of that rabbit.

**TILLIE:** (*Hardly listening.*) Yes, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** You think I'm kidding?

**TILLIE:** No, I don't.

**BEATRICE:** You bet I'm not! (*She rummages through some drawers in a chest.*) I was going to do this a month ago. (*She holds up a small bottle.*) Here it is. Here's a new word for you. (*She reads.*) Trichloro...methane. Do you know what that is, Matilda? Well, it's chloroform! (*She puts the bottle away.*) I'm saving it for that Angora manure machine of yours. Speaking of manure machines, IS NANNY READY TO GO MAKE DUTY? (*She starts helping NANNY out of the chair and props her up with the tubular frame.*) NANNY IS ALWAYS READY FOR DUTY, AREN'T YOU NANNY? BECAUSE NANNY'S A GOODY-GOODY GIRL AND GOODY-GOODY GIRLS ALWAYS GET GOODY-GOODY THINGS. GOD LOOKS OUT FOR GOODY-GOODY GIRLS AND GIVES THEM HOTSY AND HONEY – RIGHT, NANNY?

(*BEATRICE sits down in the hall and watches NANNY make her way toward the bathroom. There is a pause as the woman's shuffling continues. The lights go low on TILLIE, NANNY becomes a silhouette, and the light remains on BEATRICE. She starts to read the paper again, but the shuffling gets on her nerves and she flings the paper down.*)

**BEATRICE:** Half-life! If you want to know what a half-life is, just ask me. You're looking at the original half-life! I got stuck with one daughter with half a mind; another one who's half a test tube; half a husband – a house half full of rabbit crap – and half a corpse! That's what I call a half-life, Matilda! Me and cobalt-60! Two of the biggest half-lives you ever saw!

(*The set goes dark. After a few seconds, the sound of someone dialing a phone can be heard. As the spot comes up on her, we see BEATRICE holding the phone and struggling to get a cigarette.*)

**BEATRICE:** (*On the phone.*) Hello – Mr. Goodman, please... How would I know if he's got a class?...Hello, Mr. Goodman? Are you Mr. Goodman?...Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Torgersen...Yes, I'll wait... (*She lights her cigarette.*) Couldn't you find him, Miss Torgersen?...Oh! Excuse me, Mr. Goodman. How are you?...I'll bet you'll never guess who this is – it's Mrs. Hunsdorfer – remember the frozen foods? (*She laughs.*) You know, Ruth told me she's your new secretary and I certainly think that's a delight. You were paying so much attention to Matilda that I'll bet Ruth just got jealous. She does things like that, you know. I hope she works hard for you, although I can't imagine what kind of work Ruth could be doing in that great big science office. She's a terrible snoop... (*She takes a puff.*) Your attendance? Isn't that charming. And the cut cards! Imagine. You trust her with...why, I didn't know she could type at all...imagine. Well...I'll...Of course, too much work isn't good for anyone, either. No wonder she's failing everything. I mean, I never knew a girl who failed everything regardless of what they were suffering from...I suppose I should say recovering from...Well, it's about the seeds you gave Matilda...Well, she's had them in the house for a week now and they're starting to grow. Now, she told me they had been subjected to radioactivity, and I hear such terrible things about radioactivity that I automatically associate radioactivity with sterility, and it positively horrifies me to have those seeds right here in my living room. Couldn't she just grow plain marigolds like everyone else? (*She takes a puff.*) Oh... (*Another big puff, forming a mushroom*

*cloud.) It does sound like an interesting project, but... (The biggest puff yet.) No, I must admit that at this very moment I don't know what a mutation is... (She laughs uncomfortably.) Mr. Goodman... Mr. Goodman! I don't want you to think I'm not interested, but please spare me definitions over the phone. I'll go to the library next week and pick me out some little book on science and then I'll know all about mutations... No, you didn't insult me, but I just want you to know that I'm not stupid... I just thought prevention was better than a tragedy, Mr. Goodman. I mean, Matilda has enough problems to worry about without sterility... Well, I was just concerned, but you've put my poor mother's heart at ease. You know, really, our schools need more exciting young men like you, I really mean that. Really. Oh, I do. Goodbye, Mr. Goodman.*

*(By the end of her talk, on the phone, her face is left in a spotlight, and then the stage goes black. The music theme comes in, in a minor key, softly at first, but accentuated by increasingly loud pulses which transmute into thunder crashes. There is a scream heard from upstairs and we see the set in night shadows. TILLIE tears open her bedroom door and rushes into BEATRICE's room. RUTH screams again.)*

**TILLIE:** Mother! She's going to have one!

*(RUTH appears on the landing and releases another scream which breaks off into gasps. She starts down the stairs and stops halfway to scream again. There is another tremendous thunder crash as BEATRICE comes out of her room, puts on the hall light, and catches the hysterical girl on the stairs.)*

**BEATRICE:** (Shouting.) Stop it! Stop it, Ruth!

**TILLIE:** (At the top of the stairs.) She's going!

**BEATRICE:** Ruth! Stop it!

**TILLIE:** She's going to go!

**BEATRICE:** (Yelling at TILLIE.) Shut up and get back in your room! (RUTH screams.) You're not going to let yourself go, do you hear me, Ruth? You're not going to go!

**RUTH:** He's after me! (She screams, lightning and thunder crash follow.)

**BEATRICE:** You were dreaming, do you hear me? Nobody's after you! Nobody!

**TILLIE:** I saw her eyes start to go back –

**BEATRICE:** (To TILLIE.) Get back in your room! (She helps RUTH down the rest of the stairs.) There, now, nobody's after you. Nice and easy. Breathe deeply... Did the big bad man come after my little girl? (She sits RUTH down and then puts both hands up to her own face and pulls her features into a comic mask. RUTH begins to laugh at her.) That big bad bogey man? (They both laugh heartily.) Now that wasn't so bad, was it?

**RUTH:** It was the dream, with Mr. Mayo again.

**BEATRICE:** Oh. Well, we'll just get you a little hot milk and – (A tremendous thunder crash throws the set into shadows.) Why, the electricity's gone off. Do you remember what happened to those candles?

**RUTH:** What candles?

**BEATRICE:** The little white ones from my birthday cake last year.

**RUTH:** Tillie melted them down for school a long time ago.

**BEATRICE:** (Searching through drawers.) She had no right to do that.

**RUTH:** She asked you. She used them to attach a paper straw to a milk bottle with a balloon over it, and it was supposed to tell if it was going to rain.

**BEATRICE:** (*Finding a flashlight.*) There! It works. I don't want her wasting anything of mine unless she's positive I won't need it. You always need candles. (*She steers RUTH toward the couch as lightning flashes.*) Why, Ruth – your skin just turned ice cold! (*She rummages through one of the boxes and grabs a blanket.*) This will warm you up... What's the matter?

**RUTH:** The flashlight –

**BEATRICE:** What's wrong with it?

**RUTH:** It's the same one I used to check on Mr. Mayo with.

**BEATRICE:** So it is. We don't need it.

**RUTH:** No, let me keep it. (*Starting to laugh.*) Do you want to know how they have it in the history?

**BEATRICE:** No, I don't.

**RUTH:** Well, they say I came out of my room... (*She flashes the light on her room.*) ...And I started down the stairs, step by step...and I heard the choking and banging on the bed, and...

**BEATRICE:** I'm going back to bed.

**RUTH:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Well, talk about something nice, then.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, tell me about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** You change so fast I can't keep up with you.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...* the story about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** I don't know anything about telling stories. Get those great big smart teachers of yours to do that sort of stuff.

**RUTH:** Tell me about the horses again, and how you stole the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** Don't get me started on that.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...*

**BEATRICE:** (*Taking out a pack of cigarettes.*) Do you want a cigarette?

**RUTH:** (*Taking one.*) Leave out the part where they shoot the horses, though. (*They both light up.*)

**BEATRICE:** Honey, you know the whole story –

**RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! Cu...cumbers!"

**BEATRICE:** No. It's "Apples! Pears! Cucum...bers!"

(*They say it together.*)

**BEATRICE AND RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! Cucum...bers!" (*And they laugh.*)

**RUTH:** How did you get the wagon out without him seeing you?

**BEATRICE:** That was easy. Every time he got home for the day he'd make us both some sandwiches – my mama had been dead for years – and he'd take a nap on the old sofa that used to be...there! (*She points to a corner of the room.*) And while he was sleeping I got the horses hitched up and went riding around the block waving to everyone.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, you didn't!

**BEATRICE:** Of course I did. I had more nerve than a bear when I was a kid. Let me tell you it takes nerve to sit up on that wagon every day yelling "Apples!... (*Both together*) Pears! Cucum...bers!" (*They laugh again.*)

**RUTH:** Did he find out you took the wagon?

**BEATRICE:** Did he find out? He came running down the street after me and started spanking me right on top of the wagon – not hard – but it was so embarrassing – and I had one of those penny marshmallow ships in the back pocket of my overalls, and it got all squished. And you better believe I never did it again... You would have loved him, Ruth, and gone out with him on the wagon... all over Stapleton yelling as loud as you wanted.

**RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! Cu...cumbers!"

**BEATRICE:** No!

**RUTH:** "Cucum...bers!"

**BEATRICE:** My father made up for all the other men in this whole world, Ruth. If only you two could have met. He'd only be about seventy now, do you realize that? And I'll bet he'd still be selling vegetables around town. All that fun – and then I don't think I ever knew what really hit me.

**RUTH:** Don't tell about –

**BEATRICE:** Don't worry about the horses.

**RUTH:** What hit you?

**BEATRICE:** Well it was just me and Papa... and your father hanging around. And then Papa got sick... and I drove with him up to the sanatorium. And then I came home and there were the horses –

**RUTH:** Mother!

**BEATRICE:** And I had the horses... taken care of. And then Papa got terribly sick and he begged me to marry so that he'd be sure I'd be taken care of. (*She laughs.*) If he knew how I was taken care of he'd turn over in his grave. And *nightmares!* Do you want to know the nightmare I used to have? I never had nightmares over the fights with your father, or the divorce, or this thrombosis – he deserved it – I never had nightmares over any of that. Let me tell you about my nightmare that used to come back and back: *Well,* I'm on Papa's wagon, but it's newer and shinier, and it's being pulled by beautiful white horses, not dirty workhorses – these are like circus horses with long manes and tinsel – and the wagon is blue, shiny blue. And it's full – filled with yellow apples and grapes and green squash. You're going to laugh when you hear this. I'm wearing a lovely gown with jewels all over it, and my hair is piled up on top of my head with a long feather in it, and the bells are ringing. Huge bells swinging on a gold braid strung across the back of the wagon, and they're going DONG, DONG... DONG, DONG. And I'm yelling "APPLES! PEARS! CUCUM...BERS!"

**RUTH:** That doesn't sound like a nightmare to me.

**BEATRICE:** And then I turn down our street and all the noise stops. This long street, with all the doors of the houses shut and everything crowded next to each other, and there's not a soul around. And then I start getting afraid that the vegetables are going to spoil... and that nobody's going to buy anything, and I feel as though I shouldn't be on the wagon, and I keep trying to call out. But there isn't a sound. Not a single sound. Then I turn my head and look at the house across the street. I see an upstairs window, and a pair of hands pull the curtains slowly apart. I see the face of my father and my heart stands still... Ruth... take the light out of my eyes. (*A long pause.*)

**RUTH:** Is Nanny going to die here?

**BEATRICE:** No.

Robert Caleb Green

## Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**RUTH:** How can you be sure?

**BEATRICE:** I can tell.

**RUTH:** Are you crying?

**BEATRICE:** What's left for me, Ruth?

**RUTH:** What, Mama?

**BEATRICE:** What's left for me?

*(The stage goes slowly dark as the drizzling rain becomes louder and then disappears.)*

When the lights come up again NANNY is seated at the kitchen table with a bottle of beer and a glass in front of her. TILLIE comes in the front door with a box of large marigold plants and sets them down where they'll be inconspicuous. She gets the rabbit out of its cage, sits down near NANNY and gives her a little wave. BEATRICE suddenly appears at the top of the stairs and drops a stack of newspapers with a loud thud. She goes back into her room and lets fly another armful of junk.)

**TILLIE:** What are you doing?

**BEATRICE:** A little housecleaning, and you're going to help. You can start by getting rid of that rabbit or I'll suffocate the bastard. (*She takes a drink from a glass of whiskey.*) You don't think I will, do you? You wait and see. Where's Ruth? She's probably running around the schoolyard in her brassiere. (*She comes downstairs.*)

**TILLIE:** Mother, they want me to do something at school.

(RUTH enters at a gallop, throwing her books down and babbling a mile a minute.)

**RUTH:** (*Enthusiastically.*) Can you believe it? I didn't, until Chris Burns came up and told me about it in Geography, and then Mr. Goodman told me himself during the eighth period in the office when I was eavesdropping. Aren't you so happy you could bust? Tillie? I'm so proud I can't believe it, Mama. Everybody was talking about it and nobody...well, it was the first time they all came up screaming about her and I said, "Yes, she's my sister!" I said it, "She's my sister! My sister! My *sister!*" Give me a cigarette.

**BEATRICE:** Get your hands off my personal property.

**RUTH:** I'll scratch your back later.

**BEATRICE:** I don't want you to touch me!

**RUTH:** Did he call yet? My God, I can't believe it, I just can't!

**BEATRICE:** Did who call yet?

**RUTH:** I'm not supposed to tell you, as Mr. Goodman's private secretary, but you're going to get a call from school.

**BEATRICE:** (*To TILLIE.*) What is she talking about?

**TILLIE:** I was in the Science Fair at school.

**RUTH:** Didn't she tell you yet? Oh, Tillie, how could you? She's fantastic, Mama! She's a finalist in the Science Fair. There were only five of them out of hundreds and hundreds. She won with all those plants over there. They're freaks! Isn't that a scream? Dr. Berg picked her himself. The principal! And I heard Mr. Goodman say she was going to be another Madam Pasteur and he never saw a girl do anything like that before and...so I told everybody, "Yes, she's my sister!" Tillie, "You're my sister!" I said. And Mr. Goodman called the Advance and they're coming to take your picture. Oh, Mama, isn't it crazy? And nobody laughed at her, Mama. She beat out practically everybody and nobody laughed at her. "She's my sister," I said. "She's my sister!" (*The telephone rings.*) That must be him! Mama, answer it – I'm afraid. (*Ring.*) Answer it before he hangs up! (*Ring.*) Mama! He's gonna hang up! (**RUTH** grabs the phone.) Hello?...Yes... (*Aside to BEATRICE.*) It's him!...Just a minute, please... (*Covering the mouthpiece.*) He wants to talk to you.

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**RUTH:** The *principal*!

**BEATRICE:** Hang up.

**RUTH:** I told him you were here! Mama! (*BEATRICE gets up and shuffles slowly to the phone.*)

**BEATRICE:** (*Finally, into the phone.*) Yes?...I know who you are, Dr. Berg...I see...Couldn't you get someone else? There's an awful lot of work that has to be done around here, because she's not as careful with her home duties as she is with man-in-the-moon marigolds...Me? What would you want with me up on the stage?...The other mothers can do as they please...I would have thought you had enough in your *history* without...I'll think about it...Goodbye, Dr. Berg... (*Pause, then screaming.*) I SAID I'D THINK ABOUT IT! (*She hangs up the phone, turns her face slowly to RUTH, then to TILLIE, who has her face hidden in the rabbit's fur.*)

**RUTH:** What did he say?

**BEATRICE:** (*Flinging her glass on the floor.*) How could you do this to me? HOW COULD YOU LET THAT MAN CALL OUR HOME! I have no clothes, do you hear me? I'd look just like you up on the stage, ugly little you! DO YOU WANT THEM TO LAUGH AT US? LAUGH AT THE TWO OF US?

**RUTH:** (*Disbelievingly.*) Mother...aren't you proud of her? Mother...it's an honor.

(*TILLIE breaks into tears and moves away from BEATRICE. It seems as though she is crushed, but then she halts and turns to face her mother.*)

**TILLIE:** (*Through tears.*) But...nobody laughed at me. (*BEATRICE's face begins to soften as she glimpses what she's done to TILLIE.*)

**BEATRICE:** Oh, my God...

(*TILLIE starts toward her. BEATRICE opens her arms to receive her as music starts in and lights face. A chord of finality punctuates the end of Act I.*)

(About two weeks later. The room looks somewhat cheery and there is excitement in the air. It is early evening and preparations are being made for TILLIE to take her project to the final judging of the Science Fair. TILLIE has been dressed by her mother in clothes which are clean but too girlish for her awkwardness. Her hair has been curled, she sports a large bow, and her dress is a starched flair. RUTH has dressed herself up as well. She has put on too much makeup, and her lipstick has been extended beyond the natural line of her lips. She almost appears to be sinister. A large three-panel screen stands on one of the tables. THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS is printed in large letters running across the top of the three panels. Below this one each panel there is a subtopic: THE PAST; THE PRESENT; THE FUTURE. Additional charts and data appear below the titles.)

**RUTH:** The only competition you have to worry about is Janice Vickery. They say she caught it near Princess Bay Boulevard and it was still alive when she took the skin off it.

**TILLIE:** (Taking some plants from Ruth.) Let me do that please, Ruth.

**RUTH:** I'm sorry I touched them, really.

**TILLIE:** Why don't you feed Peter?

**RUTH:** Because I don't feel like feeding him...Now I feel like feeding him. (*She gets some lettuce from a bag.*) I heard that it screamed for three minutes after she put it in because the water wasn't boiling yet. How much talent does it take to boil the skin off a cat and then stick the bones together again? That's what I want to know. Ugh. I had a dream about that, too. I figure she did it in less than a day and she ends up as one of the top five winners...and you spend months growing atomic flowers.

**TILLIE:** Don't you think you should finish getting ready?

**RUTH:** Finish? This is it!

**TILLIE:** Are you going to wear that sweater?

**RUTH:** Look, don't worry about me. I'm not getting up on any stage, and if I did I wouldn't be caught dead with a horrible bow like that.

**TILLIE:** Mother put it—

**RUTH:** They're going to laugh you off the stage again like when you cranked that atom in assembly...I didn't mean that...The one they're going to laugh at is Mama.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** I said the one they're going to laugh at is Mama...Oh, let me take that bow off.

**TILLIE:** It's all right.

**RUTH:** Look, just sit still. I don't want everybody making fun of you.

**TILLIE:** What made you say that about Mama?

**RUTH:** Oh, I heard them talking in the Science Office yesterday. Mr. Goodman and Miss Hanley. She's getting \$12.63 to chaperon the thing tonight.

**TILLIE:** What were they saying?

**RUTH:** Miss Hanley was telling Mr. Goodman about Mama...when she found out you were one of the five winners. And he wanted to know if there was something wrong with Mama because she sounded crazy over the phone. And Miss Hanley said she

*was* crazy and she always has been crazy and she can't wait to see what she looks like after all these years. Miss Hanley said her nickname used to be *Betty the Loon*.

**TILLIE:** (*As RUTH combs her hair.*) Ruth, you're hurting me.

**RUTH:** She was just like you and everybody thought she was a big weirdo. There! You look much better! (*She goes back to the rabbit.*) Peter, if anybody stuck you in a pot of boiling water I'd kill them, do you know that?... (*Then to TILLIE.*) What do they call boiling the skin off a cat? I call it murder, that's what I call it. They say it was hit by a car and Janice just scooped it up and before you could say *bingo* it was screaming in a pot of boiling water...Do you know what they're all waiting to see? Mama's feathers! That's what Miss Hanley said. She said Mama blabs as though she was the Queen of England and just as proper as can be, and that her idea of getting dressed up is to put on all the feathers in the world and go as a bird. Always trying to get somewhere, like a great big bird.

**TILLIE:** Don't tell Mama, please. It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** I was up there watching her getting dressed and sure enough, she's got the feathers out.

**TILLIE:** You didn't tell her what Miss Hanley said?

**RUTH:** Are you kidding? I just told her I didn't like the feathers and I didn't think she should wear any. But I'll bet she doesn't listen to me.

**TILLIE:** It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** It doesn't matter? Do you think I want to be laughed right out of the school tonight, with Chris Burns there, and all? Laughed right out of the school, with your electric hair and her feathers on that stage, and Miss Hanley splitting her sides?

**TILLIE:** Promise me you won't say anything.

**RUTH:** On one condition.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** (*Ignoring her.*) The taxi will be here any minute and I won't have all this stuff ready. Did you see my speech?

**RUTH:** I mean it. Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** He belongs to all of us.

**RUTH:** For me. All for me. What do you care? He doesn't mean anything to you anymore, now that you've got all those crazy plants.

**TILLIE:** Will you stop?

**RUTH:** If you don't give him to me I'm going to tell Mama that everybody's waiting to laugh at her.

**TILLIE:** Where are those typewritten cards?

**RUTH:** I MEAN IT! Give him to me!

**TILLIE:** Does he mean that much to you?

**RUTH:** Yes!

**TILLIE:** All right.

**RUTH:** (*After a burst of private laughter.*) Betty the Loon... (*She laughs again.*) That's what they used to call her, you know. Betty the Loon!

**TILLIE:** I don't think that's very nice.

**RUTH:** First they had Betty the Loon, and now they've got Tillie the Loon... (*To rabbit.*) You don't have to worry about me turning you in for any old plants...How much does a taxi cost from here to the school?

**TILLIE:** Not much.

**RUTH:** I wish she'd give me the money it costs for a taxi – and for all that cardboard and paint and flowerpots and stuff. The only time she ever made a fuss over me was when she drove me nuts.

**TILLIE:** Tell her to hurry, please.

**RUTH:** By the way, I went over to see Janice Vickery's pot, that she did you know what in, and I started telling her and her mother about the worms in Mr. Alexander Brougham's legs, and I got thrown out because it was too near dinner time. That Mrs. Vickery kills me. She can't stand worms in somebody else's legs but she lets her daughter cook a cat.

**TILLIE:** (*Calling upstairs.*) Mother! The taxi will be here any minute.

(BEATRICE comes to the top of the stairs. Her costume is strange, but not that strange, by any means. She is even a little attractive tonight, and though her words say she is greatly annoyed with having to attend the night's function, her tone and direction show she is very, very proud.)

**BEATRICE:** You're lucky I'm coming, without all this rushing me.

**TILLIE:** Mama, you look beautiful.

**BEATRICE:** Don't put it on too thick. I said I'd go and I guess there's no way to get out of it. Do you mind telling me how I'm supposed to get up on the stage? Do they call my name or what? And where are you going to be? If you ask me, they should've sent all the parents a mimeographed sheet of instructions. If this is supposed to be such a great event, why don't they do it right?

**TILLIE:** You just sit on the stage with the other parents before it begins.

**BEATRICE:** How long is this going to last? And remember, I don't care even if you do win the whole damn thing, I'm not making any speech. I can hold my own anywhere, but I hated that school when I went there and I hate it now...and the only thing I'd have to say is, what a pack of stupid teachers and vicious children they have. Imagine someone tearing the skin off a cat.

**RUTH:** She didn't tear it. She boiled it off.

**BEATRICE:** You just told me upstairs that girl tore the skin off with an orange knife and...do you know, sometimes you exasperate me? (*To TILLIE.*) If you've got all the plants in this box, I can manage the folding thing. Do you know I've got a headache from doing those titles? And you probably don't even like them.

**TILLIE:** I like them very much.

**BEATRICE:** Look, if you don't want me to go tonight, I don't have to. You're about as enthusiastic as a dummy about this whole thing.

**TILLIE:** I'm sorry.

**BEATRICE:** And I refuse to let you get nervous. Put that bow back in your hair.

**RUTH:** I took it out.

**BEATRICE:** What did you do that for?

**RUTH:** (*Taking the rabbit in her arms.*) Because it made her look crazy.

**BEATRICE:** How would you know what's crazy or not? If that sweater of yours was any tighter it'd cut off the circulation in your chest. (*Fussing over TILLIE.*) The bow

looks very nice in your hair. There's nothing wrong with looking proper, Matilda, and if you don't have enough money to look expensive and perfect, people like you for trying to look nice. You know, one day maybe you will be pretty. You'll have some nice features, when that hair revives and you do some tricks with makeup. I hope you didn't crowd the plants too close together. Did you find your speech?

**TILLIE:** Yes, mother.

**BEATRICE:** You know, Matilda, I was wondering about something. Do you think you're really going to win? I mean, not that you won't be the best, but there's so much politics in school. Don't laugh, but if there's anyone who's an expert on that, it's me, and someday I'm going to write a book and blast that school to pieces. If you're just a little bit different in this world, they try to kill you off.

**RUTH:** (*Putting on her coat.*) Tillie gave Peter to me.

**BEATRICE:** Oh? Then you inherited the rabbit droppings I found upstairs. What are you doing with your coat on?

**RUTH:** I'm going out to wait for the taxi.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not. You start right in on the rabbit droppings. Or you won't get another cigarette even if you scratch my back with an orange knife.

**RUTH:** I'm going down to the school with you.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not! You're going to keep company with that corpse in there. If she wakes up and starts gagging just slip her a shot of whiskey. (*The taxi horn blows outside.*) Quick! Grab the plants, Matilda – I'll get the big thing.

**RUTH:** I want to go! I promised Chris Burns I'd meet him.

**BEATRICE:** Can't you understand English?

**RUTH:** I've got to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up!

**RUTH:** (*Almost berserk.*) I don't care! I'M GOING ANYWAY!

**BEATRICE:** (*Shoving RUTH hard.*) WHAT DID YOU SAY?

**TILLIE:** Mother!

(*After a pause, the horn blows again.*)

**BEATRICE:** Hurry up with that box, Matilda, and tell him to stop blowing the horn. HURRY UP! (*TILLIE reluctantly exits with the box of plants.*) I don't know where you ever got the idea you were going tonight. Did you think nobody was going to hold down the fort?...Now you know how I felt all those years you and everybody else was running out whenever they felt like it – because there was always me to watch over the fifty-dollar-a-week corpse. If there's one thing I demand it's respect. I don't ask for anything from you but respect.

**RUTH:** (*Pathetically.*) Why are you ashamed of me?

**BEATRICE:** I've been seen with a lot worse than you. I don't even know why I'm going tonight, do you know that? Do you think I give one goddamn about the whole thing?... (*She starts to fold the large three-panel screen with the titles THE PAST, THE PRESENT, and THE FUTURE.*) Do you want to know why I'm going? Do you really want to know why this once somebody else has to stick with that dried prune for a few minutes? Because this is the first time in my life I've ever felt just a little bit proud over something. Isn't that silly? Somewhere in the back of this turtle-sized brain of mine I feel just a little *proud!* Jesus Christ! And you begrudge me even that, you little bastard.

(*The taxi horn blows impatiently.*)

**RUTH:** (In a hard voice.) Hurry up. They're waiting for you...They're *all* waiting for you.

**BEATRICE:** (Carrying the folded screen so that THE PAST is face out in bold black letters.) I hope the paint is dry...Who's waiting for me?

**RUTH:** Everybody...including Miss Hanley. She's been telling all the teachers...about you...and they're all waiting.

**BEATRICE:** You're such a little liar, Ruth, do you know that? When you can't have what you want, you try to ruin it for everybody else. (*She starts to the door.*)

**RUTH:** Goodnight, *Betty the Loon.*

(*BEATRICE stops as if she's been stabbed. The taxi horn blows several times as BEATRICE puts down the folding screen.*)

**BEATRICE:** (Helplessly.) Take this thing.

**RUTH:** What for?

**BEATRICE:** Go with Matilda.

**RUTH:** I don't want to go now.

**BEATRICE:** (Blasting.) GET OUT OF HERE!

**RUTH:** (After a long pause.) Now Tillie's going to blame it on me that you're not going – and take the rabbit back. (*The taxi beeps again, as RUTH puts her coat on.*) I can't help it what people call you. (*She picks up the screen.*) I'll tell Tillie you'll be down later, all right?... (*BEATRICE does not respond.*) Don't answer me. What do I care!

(*RUTH exits. BEATRICE breaks into tears that shudder her body, and the lights go down slowly on her pathetic form. Music in. Suddenly, a bolt of light strikes an area in the right stage – JANICE VICKERY is standing in the spotlight holding the skeleton of a cat mounted on a small platform. Her face and voice are smug.*)

**JANICE:** *The Past:* I got the cat from the A.S.P.C.A. immediately after it had been killed by a high-altitude pressure system. That explains why some of the rib bones are missing, because that method sucks the air out of the animal's lungs and ruptures all cavities. They say it prevents cruelty to animals but I think it's horrible. (*She laughs.*) Then I boiled the cat in a sodium hydroxide solution until most of the skin pulled right off, but I had to scrape some of the grizzle off the joints with a knife. You have no idea how difficult it is to get right down to the bones. (*A little gong sounds.*) I have to go on to *The Present*, now – but I did want to tell you how long it took me to put the thing together. I mean, as it is now, it's extremely useful for students of anatomy, even with the missing rib bones, and it can be used to show basic anatomical aspects of many, many animals that are in the same family as felines. I suppose that's about the only present uses I can think for it, but it is nice to remember as an accomplishment, and it looks good on college applications to show you did something else in school besides dating. (*She laughs, and a second gong sounds.*) *The Future:* The only future plans I have for Tabby – my little brother asked the A.S.P.C.A. what its name was when he went to pick it up and they said it was called Tabby, but I think they were kidding him – (*She laughs again.*) I mean as far as future plans, I'm going to donate it to the science department, of course, and next year, if there's another Science Fair perhaps I'll do the same thing with a dog. (*A third gong sounds.*) Thank you very much for your attention, and I hope I win!

(JANICE and her spotlight disappear as suddenly as they had arrived, and music returns as the lights come up slowly on BEATRICE. She has obviously been drinking and is going through a phone book. Finding her number, she goes to the phone and dials.)

**BEATRICE:** I want to talk to the principal, please...Well, you'll have to get him down off the stage...It's none of your goddamn business who I am!...Oh, I see...Yes. I have a message for him and Mr. Goodman, and you, too...And this is for Miss Hanley, too...Tell them Mrs. Hunsdorfer called to thank them for making her wish she was dead...Would you give them that message, please?...Thank you very much.

(She hangs up the phone, pauses, then surveys the room. Her attention fixes on the store window covered with newspapers. The phone rings several times but she ignores it. She goes to the window and proceeds to rip the paper from it. That finished, she turns and surveys the room again. She goes to the kitchen table and rearranges its position. She spies a card table with school supplies and hurls them on the floor. Next, she goes to a bureau and rummages through drawers, finding tablecloths and napkins. She throws cloths on two or three tables and is heading toward the kitchen when the phone rings again. The ringing triggers off something else she wants to do. She empties a cup filled with scraps of paper and finds a telephone number. She lifts the receiver off the ringing phone and hangs up immediately. She lifts the receiver again, checks to make sure there's a dial tone, and then dials the number on the scrap of paper.)

**BEATRICE:** (Into the phone.) Hello. This is Mrs. Hunsdorfer...I'm sorry if I frightened you, I wouldn't want you to think Nanny had deceased or anything like that – I can imagine how terrible you'd feel if anything like that ever happened...Terrible tragedy that would be, Miss Career Woman of the Year... Yes, I'll tell you why I'm calling. I want her out of here by tomorrow. I told you when you rolled her in here I was going to try her out for a while and if I didn't like her she was to get the hell out. Well I don't like her, so get her the hell out... It's like this. I don't like the way she cheats at solitaire. Is that a good enough reason?...Fine. And if she's not out of here by noon I'll send her collect in an ambulance, you son of a bitch!

(She slams down the phone and bursts into laughter. The laughter subsides somewhat as she pours herself another drink. She takes the drink to a chair and as she sits down her foot accidentally hits the rabbit cage. She gives the cage a little kick and then an idea strikes. She gets up and finds a large blue towel which she flings over her shoulder. She gets the bottle of chloroform and approaches the cage. Having reached a decision she picks up the cage and takes it upstairs. Music in and lights fade. From the darkness a beam of light falls on TILLIE in the same way JANICE VICKERY had been presented.)

**TILLIE:** (Deathly afraid, and referring to her cards.) *The Past:* The seeds were exposed to various degrees...of gamma rays from radiation sources in Oak Ridge...Mr. Goodman helped me pay for the seeds...Their growth was plotted against...time. (She loses her voice for a moment and then the first gong sounds.) *The Present:* The seeds which received little radiation have grown to plants which are normal in appearance. The seeds which received moderate radiation gave rise to mutations such as double blooms, giant stems, and variegated leaves. The seeds closest to the gamma source were killed or yielded dwarf plants. (The second gong rings.) *The Future:* After radiation is better understood, a day will come when the power of exploding

atoms will change the whole world we know. (*With inspiration.*) Some of the mutations will be good ones – wonderful things beyond our dreams – and I believe, I believe this with all my heart, THE DAY WILL COME WHEN MANKIND WILL THANK GOD FOR THE STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL ENERGY FROM THE ATOM.

(*Part of her last speech is reverberated electronically. Deep pulses of music are added as the light focuses on TILLIE's face. Suddenly, there is silence, except for RUTH picking up TILLIE's last words. The lights come up on the main set, and the room is empty. RUTH bursts in the front door. She is carrying the three-panel card and a shopping bag of plants, both of which she drops on the floor.*)

**RUTH:** MAMA! MAMA! She won! Mama! Where are you? She won! (*She runs back to the front door and yells to TILLIE.*) Hurry up! Hurry! Oh, my God, I can't believe it! (*Then yelling upstairs.*) Mama! Come on down! Hurry! (*TILLIE comes in the front door, carrying the rest of her plants, and the large trophy. RUTH takes the trophy.*) Give me that! (*She starts upstairs.*) Mama! Wait till you see this! (*BEATRICE appears at the top of the stairs. She has been drinking a great deal, and clings fast to a bunch of old cheap curtains and other material.*) Mama! She won... (*BEATRICE continues mechanically on down the stairs.*) Didn't you hear me? Tillie won the whole thing!...Mama?...What's the matter with you? What did you rip the paper off the windows for?

(*BEATRICE commences taking up one of the curtains.*)

**TILLIE:** Mama? Are you going to open a...shop?

**RUTH:** What's the matter? Can't you even answer?

**BEATRICE:** (*To TILLIE.*) Hand me some of those tacks.

**RUTH:** (*Screaming.*) I SAID SHE WON! ARE YOU DEAF?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, if you don't shut up I'm going to have you put away.

**RUTH:** They ought to put you away, BETTY THE LOON!

(*There is a long pause.*)

**BEATRICE:** The rabbit is in your room. I want you to bury it in the morning.

**RUTH:** If you did anything...I'LL KILL YOU! (*She runs upstairs.*)

**TILLIE:** Mother, you didn't kill it, did you?

**BEATRICE:** Nanny goes tomorrow. First thing tomorrow.

(*There is a cry from upstairs.*)

**TILLIE:** Ruth? Are you all right?

**BEATRICE:** I don't know what it's going to be. Maybe a tea shop. Maybe not. (*RUTH appears in the doorway of her room. She is holding the dead rabbit on the blue towel. As she reaches the top of the stairs, she begins to moan deeply.*) After school you're going to have regular hours. You'll work in the kitchen, you'll learn how to cook, and you're going to earn your keep, just like in any other business.

(*TILLIE starts slowly up the stairs toward RUTH.*)

**TILLIE:** (*With great fear.*) Mama...I think she's going to go. (*RUTH commences to tremble. TILLIE speaks softly to her.*) Don't go...don't go... (*RUTH's eyes roll in her head, and the trembling of her body becomes pronounced throbbing. She drops the rabbit with the towel covering it.*) Help me! Mama! Help me!

**BEATRICE:** Snap out of it, do you hear me? RUTH, DON'T LET YOURSELF GO! (*To TILLIE.*) Help me get her downstairs!

(By the time the trio reaches the bottom of the stairs, RUTH is consumed by a violent convulsion. BEATRICE holds her down and pushes TILLIE out of the way.)

**BEATRICE:** (Screaming.) Get the wooden spoon!

(TILLIE responds as BEATRICE gets RUTH onto a sofa. The convulsion runs its course of a full minute, then finally subsides. TILLIE gets a blanket and covers RUTH.)

**TILLIE:** Shall I call the doctor? (There is a long pause.) Shall I call the doctor?

**BEATRICE:** No. She'll be all right.

**TILLIE:** I think we should call him.

**BEATRICE:** I DIDN'T ASK YOU WHAT YOU THOUGHT!...We're going to need every penny to get this place open.

(BEATRICE spreads a tablecloth on one of the tables and places a pile of old cloth napkins on it. She sits down and lights a cigarette.)

**TILLIE:** (Picking up the rabbit on the stairs.) I'd better bury him in the backyard. (She starts out.)

**BEATRICE:** Don't bury the towel.

(TILLIE stops, sobs audibly, then gets control.)

**TILLIE:** I'll do it in the morning.

(She gently lays the rabbit near the door. She tucks RUTH in on the couch and sits a few minutes by her sleeping sister. Music starts in softly as BEATRICE continues folding napkins with her back to the others. There is the sound of someone at the curtained doorway, and NANNY commences negotiating herself into the room. Slowly she advances with the tubular frame – unaware, desiccated, in some other land.)

**BEATRICE:** (Weakly.) Matilda?

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mama?

**BEATRICE:** I hate the world. Do you know that, Matilda?

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mama.

**BEATRICE:** I hate the world.

(The lights have started down, the music makes its presence known, and a spot clings to TILLIE. She moves to the staircase and the rest of the set goes to black during the following speech. As she starts up the stairs her recorded voice takes over as in the opening of the play.)

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** *The Conclusion:* My experiment has shown some of the strange effects radiation can produce...and how dangerous it can be if not handled correctly. Mr. Goodman said I should tell in this conclusion what my future plans are and how this experiment has helped me make them. For one thing, the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds has made me curious about the sun and the stars, for the universe itself must be like a world of great atoms – and I want to know more about it. But most important, I suppose, my experiment has made me feel important – every atom in me, in everybody, has come from the sun – from places beyond our dreams. The atoms of our hands, the atoms of our hearts... (All sound out. TILLIE speaks the rest live – hopeful, glowing.) Atom. Atom. What a beautiful word.

**THE END**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS**

**By  
Paul Zindel**

#### **Plot Synopsis**

Winner of the 1971 Pulitzer Prize, the Obie Award, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award as Best American Play of the season, this powerful and moving study follows an embittered, vindictive widow and her two young daughters as they seek to free themselves from their troubled past and start a new life. Ridiculed by "normal" society, Beatrice, Tillie, and Ruth retreat into their home, full of fear and mistrust – the world is a dangerous place, and it has no place for them. Until, that is, Tillie discovers the magic of science, and the world is revealed to her in all its splendor. But her choice to enter the school science fair threatens to demolish the walls Beatrice has so carefully constructed around the family and subject them to further torment. Hailed as one of the most significant and affecting plays of our time, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* explores the haunting and formidable question, "What makes each person important?"

"Let's start with a single, simple word. Power...I don't know of a better (play) of its genre since THE GLASS MENAGERIE..." ~ NY Post

## **APPENDIX B**

### **THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS**

By  
**Paul Zindel**

#### **Character Descriptions**

BEATRICE – a middle-aged mother; unintelligent but inventive, funny, controlling, insecure; has been beaten down by the world and is doing everything in her power to hide her scars from her children; hides her frailty behind her strength; takes out her anger on her kids, but can be caring when they need her; concocts extravagant money-making schemes, none of which ever sees completion; she has to be a woman, but inside she's just a girl

*[strive for Beatrice's complexity and volatility; do not neglect her sarcastic sense of humor]*

RUTH – the eldest daughter (13); unintelligent, conniving, sensitive, energetic; a bit of a floozy, very much wants people to like her; loves her family very much, but can't seem to get her mother to love her back; survives by sucking up to her mother; still, she's abused, and takes out her abuse on Tillie; was committed to a mental institution; suffers from intense seizures

*[Ruth wants to be want her mother wants her to be; do not play her as crazy]*

TILLIE – the youngest daughter (10); brilliant, calm, respectful, loving; is nothing short of a scientific genius; knows that the best way to deal with her mother is by not putting up a fight; wise beyond her years, really the only adult in the family; finds wonder and beauty in everything; is an "old soul"; loves school

*[go for Tillie's inner depth – despite her quiet demeanor, an entire world exists inside her; do not play her as a little girl]*

NANNY – an "ancient" woman (98); is a tenant in the home (Beatrice opens a room for nursing care); neglected by her family; practically blind and deaf, though her outward demeanor is pleasant (she's always smiling)

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

JANICE – Tillie’s classmate, and her primary competition for the science fair;  
a Valley girl/guy, but not stereotypical or cartoonish – the real thing  
[*do play her/him as a child; do not play her/him as if it's Clueless*]

## **APPENDIX B**

### ***AUDITION PIECES***

#### **TILLIE**

*[This is Tillie's opening monologue. It begins the show.]*

He told me to look at my hand, for a part of it came from a star that exploded too long ago to imagine. This part of me was formed from a tongue of fire that screamed through the heavens until there was our sun. And this part of me – this tiny part of me – was on the sun when it itself exploded and whirled in a great storm until the planets came to be. And this small part of me was then a whisper of the earth. When there was life, perhaps this part of me got lost in a fern that was crushed and covered until it was coal. And then it was a diamond millions of years later – it must have been a diamond as beautiful as the star from which it had first come.

Or perhaps this part of me became lost in a terrible beast, or became part of a huge bird that flew above the primeval swamps. And he said this thing was so small – this part of me was so small it couldn't be seen – but it was there from the beginning of the world. And he called this bit of me an atom. And when he wrote the word, I fell in love with it. Atom. *Atom*. What a beautiful word.

## BEATRICE

[*The capital letters are Beatrice speaking to Nanny, who is hard of hearing. When she speaks to Nanny, her voice is saccharine sweet. Nanny cannot hear the other dialogue.*]

Fifty dollars a week. Fifty dollars. I look at you, Nanny, and I wonder if it's worth it. I think I'd be better off driving a cab. TAKE HONEY, NANNY. HONEY WITH HOTSY WATER! You should have seen her daughter bring her here last week...I could have used you that day...She came in pretending she was Miss Career Woman of the Year. She said she was in real estate and *such a busy little woman*, such a busy little woman – she just couldn't give all the love and care and affection her little momsy needed anymore... Nanny's quite a little cross to bear, now aren't you, Nanny dear?

Do you know what I'd be now if it wasn't for this mud pool I got sucked into? I'd probably be a dancer. Miss Betty Frank, The Best Dancer of the Class of 19...something. One minute I'm the best dancer in school – smart as a whip – the head of the whole crowd! And the next minute...One mistake. That's how it starts. I used to wonder why people always said, "Why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday..." Before I knew what happened I lost my dancing legs and got varicose legs. Beautiful varicose legs. Do you know, everything I ever thought I'd be has exploded! NANNY, YOU HURRY UP WITH THAT HONEY! Exploded! You know, I almost forgot about everything I was supposed to be...NANNY'S DAUGHTER IS COMING TO SEE YOU SOON. WILL THAT MAKE NANNY HAPPY? The day Miss Career Woman of the Year comes to visit again I think I'll drop dead. Nobody's too busy for anything they want to do, don't you tell me. What kind of idiot do people take me for? NANNY, YOU'RE SPILLING YOUR HOTSY! JESUS CHRIST! You know, I ought to kick you right out and open that tea shop tomorrow. Oh, it's coming. I can feel it.

## JANICE

*[Jordan's presentation at the science fair.]*

*The Past:* I got the cat from the A.S.P.C.A. immediately after it had been killed by a high-altitude pressure system. That explains why some of the rib bones are missing, because that method sucks the air out of the animal's lungs and ruptures all cavities. They say it prevents cruelty to animals but I think it's horrible. (*Laughs.*) Then I boiled the cat in a sodium hydroxide solution until most of the skin pulled right off, but I had to scrape some of the grizzle off the joints with a knife. You have no idea how difficult it is to get right down to the bones. (*A little gong sounds.*) I have to go on to *The Present*, now – but I did want to tell you how long it took me to put the thing together. I mean, as it is now, it's extremely useful for students of anatomy, even with the missing rib bones, and it can be used to show basic anatomical aspects of many, many animals that are in the same family as felines. I suppose that's about the only present uses I can think for it, but it is nice to remember as an accomplishment, and it looks good on college applications to show you did something else in school besides dating. (*Laughs, and a second gong sounds.*) *The Future:* The only future plans I have for Tabby – my little brother asked the A.S.P.C.A. what its name was when he went to pick it up and they said it was called Tabby, but I think they were kidding him – (*Laughs again.*) I mean as far as future plans, I'm going to donate it to the science department, of course, and next year, if there's another Science Fair perhaps I'll do the same thing with a dog. (*A third gong sounds.*) Thank you very much for your attention, and I hope I win!

## 1

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, that wasn't very nice of you to tell them I was forcibly detaining you from school. Why, the way that Mr. Goodman spoke, he must think I'm running a concentration camp. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is to be accused of running a concentration camp for your own children? Well, it isn't embarrassing at all. That school of yours is forty years behind the times anyway, and believe me you learn more around here than that ugly Mr. Goodman can teach you! You know, I really feel sorry for him. I never saw a man with a more effeminate face in my life. When I saw you talking to him by the lobster tank I said to myself, "Good Lord, for a science teacher my poor girl has got herself a Hebrew hermaphrodite." Of course, he's not as bad as Miss Hanley. The idea of letting her teach girl's gym is staggering. And you have to place me in the embarrassing position of giving them a reason to call me at eight-thirty in the morning, no less.

**TILLIE:** I didn't say anything.

**BEATRICE:** What do you tell them when they want to know why you stay home once in a while?

**TILLIE:** I tell them I'm sick.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, you're sick all right, the exact nature of the illness not fully realized, but you're sick all right. Any daughter that would turn her mother in as administrator of a concentration camp has got be suffering from something very peculiar.

**TILLIE:** Can I go in today, Mother?

**BEATRICE:** You'll go in, all right.

**TILLIE:** Mr. Goodman said he was going to do an experiment –

**BEATRICE:** Why, he looks like the kind that would do his experimenting after sundown.

**TILLIE:** On radioactivity –

**BEATRICE:** On radioactivity? That's all that high school needs!

**TILLIE:** He's going to bring in the cloud chamber –

**BEATRICE:** Why, what an outstanding event. If you had warned me yesterday I would've gotten all dressed to kill and gone with you today. I love seeing cloud chambers being brought in.

**TILLIE:** You can actually see –

**BEATRICE:** You're giving me a headache.

**RUTH:** The only competition you have to worry about is Janice Vickery. They say she caught it near Princess Bay Boulevard and it was still alive when she took the skin off it.

**TILLIE:** Why don't you feed Peter?

**RUTH:** Because I don't feel like feeding him...Now I feel like feeding him. I heard that it screamed for three minutes after she put it in because the water wasn't boiling yet. How much talent does it take to boil the skin off a cat and then stick the bones together again? That's what I want to know. Ugh. I had a dream about that, too. I figure she did it in less than a day and she ends up as one of the top five winners...and you spend months growing atomic flowers.

**TILLIE:** Don't you think you should finish getting ready?

**RUTH:** Finish? This is it!

**TILLIE:** Are you going to wear that sweater?

**RUTH:** Look, don't worry about me. I'm not getting up on any stage, and if I did I wouldn't be caught dead with a horrible bow like that.

**TILLIE:** Mother put it –

**RUTH:** They're going to laugh you off the stage again like when you cranked that atom in assembly...I didn't mean that...The one they're going to laugh at is Mama.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** I said the one they're going to laugh at is Mama...Oh, let me take that bow off.

**TILLIE:** It's all right.

**RUTH:** Look, just sit still. I don't want everybody making fun of you.

**TILLIE:** What made you say that about Mama?

**RUTH:** Oh, I heard them talking in the Science Office yesterday. Mr. Goodman and Miss Hanley. She's getting \$12.63 to chaperon the thing tonight.

**TILLIE:** What were they saying?

**RUTH:** Miss Hanley was telling Mr. Goodman about Mama –

**TILLIE:** Ruth, you're hurting me.

**RUTH:** She was just like you and everybody thought she was a big weirdo. There! You look much better!

**TILLIE:** Don't tell Mama, please. It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** What do they call boiling the skin off a cat? I call it murder, that's what I call it. They say it was hit by a car and Janice just scooped it up and before you could say *bingo* it was screaming in a pot of boiling water.

3

**RUTH:** I'm going out to wait for the taxi.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not! You're going to keep company with that corpse in there. If she wakes up and starts gagging just slip her a shot of whiskey. (*The taxi horn blows outside.*) Quick! Grab the plants, Matilda – I'll get the big thing.

**RUTH:** I want to go! I promised Chris Burns I'd meet him.

**BEATRICE:** Can't you understand English?

**RUTH:** I've got to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up!

**RUTH:** I don't care! I'M GOING ANYWAY!

**BEATRICE:** WHAT DID YOU SAY?

(*After a pause, the horn blows again.*)

**BEATRICE:** I don't know where you ever got the idea you were going tonight. Did you think nobody was going to hold down the fort?...Now you know how I felt all those years you and everybody else was running out whenever they felt like it – because there was always me to watch over the fifty-dollar-a-week corpse. If there's one thing I demand it's respect. I don't ask for anything from you but respect.

**RUTH:** Why are you ashamed of me?

**BEATRICE:** I've been seen with a lot worse than you...I don't even know why I'm going tonight, do you know that? Do you think I give one goddamn about the whole thing?...Do you want to know why I'm going? Because this is the first time in my life I've ever felt just a little bit proud over something. Isn't that silly? Somewhere in the back of this turtle-sized brain of mine I feel just a little *proud!* Jesus Christ! And you begrudge me even that, you little bastard.

4

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, tell me about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** Don't get me started on that.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...*

**BEATRICE:** Honey, you know the whole story —

**RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! *Cu...cumbers!*"

**BEATRICE:** No. It's "Apples! Pears! *Cucum...bers!*"

(*They say it together.*)

**BEATRICE AND RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! *Cucum...bers!*" (*And they laugh.*)

**RUTH:** How did you get the wagon out without him seeing you?

**BEATRICE:** That was easy. Every time he got home for the day he'd make us both some sandwiches — my mama had been dead for years — and he'd take a nap on the old sofa that used to be...there! And while he was sleeping I got the horses hitched up and went riding around the block waving to everyone.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, you didn't!

**BEATRICE:** Of course I did. I had more nerve than a bear when I was a kid. Let me tell you it takes nerve to sit up on that wagon every day yelling "Apples!... (*Both together*) Pears! *Cucum...bers!*" (*They laugh again.*)

**RUTH:** Did he find out you took the wagon?

**BEATRICE:** Did he find out? He came running down the street after me and started spanking me right on top of the wagon — not hard — but it was so embarrassing — and I had one of those penny marshmallow ships in the back pocket of my overalls, and it got all squished. And you better believe I never did it again... You would have loved him, Ruth, and gone out with him on the wagon...all over Stapleton yelling as loud as you wanted.

**RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! *Cu...cumbers!*"

**BEATRICE:** No!

**RUTH:** "*Cucum...bers!*"

**BEATRICE:** My father made up for all the other men in this whole world, Ruth. If only you two could have met. He'd only be about seventy now, do you realize that? And I'll bet he'd still be selling vegetables around town.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **WORKSHOP REHEARSAL REPORTS**

[NOTE: *At the time of the workshop, the iNtuitons board had not yet provided us with rehearsal report forms. Consequently, we wrote down our activities in a notebook.*]

#### **September 19, 2006 - Tuesday**

7:00-9:00 – First read-through and discussion

#### **September 20, 2006 - Wednesday**

7-9:05 – Film  
9:20-9:30 – Sweeping Exercise  
9:30-9:50 – Floor Relaxation Exercise  
9:50-10:00 – Stare Down  
10:00-10:15 – Chair Lifting  
10:15-10:30 – Chopstick Balancing  
10:30-10:50 – Minimal Contact

#### **September 21, 2006 - Thursday**

7-7:40 – Relaxation Exercises  
7:40-7:45 – Staring Exercises  
7:45-8:25 – Intro to Global Performance  
8:25-8:50 – Art of Art's Sake Discussion  
8:50-9:00 – Break  
9:00-9:05 – Balinese Dance Tutorial  
9:05-9:10 – Noh Theatre Tutorial  
9:10-9:15 – Facial Expression Exercise  
9:15-9:35 – Kathakali Dance tutorial  
9:35-10:00 – Walking Exercise  
10:00-10:20 – Mirror Game  
10:20-10:30 – Point of Focus  
10:30-10:40 – Music Visualization  
10:40-10:45 – Silent Dance off  
10:45-11:00 – Journal Writing

#### **September 24, 2006 - Sunday**

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

7:50-8:35 – Identity Discussion and Exercise  
8:35-8:45 – Break  
8:45-8:50 – Object Game  
8:50-9:20 – Fabric Game  
9:20-9:35 – Party Exercise  
9:35-10:15 – Freeze  
10:15-10:45 – Memory and Emotion Exercise  
10:45-11:00 – Journal Writing

### **September 25, 2006 - Monday**

Guest: Nancy Kantra from Philadanco

7:00-7:30 – History of Dance Discussion (guest)  
7:31-7:55 – Ballet Tutorial (guest)  
7:55-8:15 – Movement as a Medium of Expression Discussion  
8:15-8:25 – Break  
8:25-8:55 – Relaxation Exercises  
8:55-9:20 – Simulation Discussion  
9:20-10:05 – Alienation Effect Exercises  
10:05-10:30 – Clothes Game  
10:30-10:45 – Journal Writing

### **September 26, 2006 - Tuesday**

7:10-7:25 – Relaxation Exercises  
7:25-8:25 – “Marat/Sade” Viewing and Discussion  
8:25-8:35 – Break  
8:35-8:55 – Relaxation Exercises  
8:55-9:25 – Face Painting  
9:25-9:50 – Sin Exercise  
9:50-10:20 – Journal Writing

[NOTE: *Unfortunately, the rehearsal report for September 27, 2006 – Wednesday was lost. Neither Laird, the stage manager, nor I could locate it.*]

### **September 28, 2006 - Thursday**

7:00-7:20 – Annie Workshop  
7:20-7:55 – Relaxation Exercises  
7:55-8:10 – Staring Exercises  
8:10-8:45 – Park Bench Improv  
8:45-9:05 – Cops and Robbers

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9:05-9:15 – Break

9:15-9:50 – Freeze

9:50-10:55 – Improv Entire Play

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## APPENDIX C

### *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

Intuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/01    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:00-7:20 – p. 9-12 Tabling
<b>Rehearsed:</b> pg. 9-12 (Tabling and Trash Can Exercise)	7:20 – 9:00 - Trash Can Exercise
Pg. 2-5 (Tabled and Blocked)	9:00 – 9:15 - Break
	9:15-10:35 – pg. 2-5 (Tabled and Blocked)
	10:35-11:00 – Journal Writing
<b>Absent:</b> Sydney Blum, Ilana Millner (7-9)	

#### **Cast**

#### **Set**

Move Armchair to SL side of couch

#### **Lighting**

#### **Sound**

#### **Props**

Wet clothes in dryer (p.2)  
Newspaper (off SL) p. 2  
Cigarettes on Kitchen Table  
Lipstick in Beatrice's Purse (SR Drawer)  
Backscratcher on Kitchen Table

#### **Costumes**

Please Email the Actors for their sizes.

#### **Everyone!**

If your script does not have page numbers, please number it.

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/-2- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

## *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*

## **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

Intuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/02   **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:00-7:30 – Seizure Work
<b>Rehearsed:</b> pg. 9-12 (Blocked) Pg. 14-18 (Tabled and Blocked)	7:30-7:35 – Break (for Carly) 7:35-9:20 – Storm Scene (pg. 9-12) 9:20-9:30 – Break
<b>Absent:</b> Sydney Blum,	9:30-10:45 – Act 2 (pg. 14-18) 10:45-11:00 – Journal Writing

## Cast Setting

<b>Lighting</b>	<b>Sound</b>
	Meeting with Caleb 10/03 at 4:45 in the HRS Upper Lobby

<b>Props</b>	<b>Costumes</b> Please schedule a time to come into rehearsal on Thursday.
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**Everyone!**

If your script does not have page numbers, please number it.

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/03- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

## *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*

## **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

Intuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/03    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:00-7:50 – Beatrice Character Work
<b>Rehearsed:</b> Beatrice and Tilly's Monologues Pg. 5-8 Blocked	7:50-9:00 – Beatrice's Monologues 9:00-9:10 – Break
<b>Absent:</b>	9:10-10:00 – pg. 5-8 Blocked 10:00-10:45 – Tilly's Monologues 10:40-11:00 – Journal Writing

## Cast

## Set

## Lighting

## Sound

Added five Gong sounds (pg. 18-19)

## Props

## Changed Honey Jar to Honey Packets

## Costumes

Please schedule a time to come into rehearsal on Thursday.

Everyone!

If your script does not have page numbers, please number it.

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/04- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

### ***The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds***

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel  
Directed by Caleb Green



**Date:** 10/04   **Location:** Arch, Room 313

**Call Time:** 7:00 PM

**Time**

7:00-7:45 – Scene 1 Work -  
Beatrice  
7:45-8:30 – Phone Work -  
Beatrice  
8:30-8:45 – Break  
8:45-9:45 – Blocked last scene  
Act 1  
9:25-10:10 – Beatrice Work  
10:10-10:35 - Janice/Jordan Work

**Absent:**

**Cast**

Remember to bring in costume items  
tomorrow

**Set**

We need a small table for the Science Fair  
presentations.

**Lighting**

**Sound**

**Props**

**Costumes**

Coming to rehearsal tomorrow at 9PM.

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Everyone!**

If your script does not have page numbers, please number it.

**Next Rehearsal**

10/05- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

### ***The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds***

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/05    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

**Call Time:** 7:00 PM

Time

7:00-9:00 – Beatrice Work

9:00-9:30 – Costume Meeting

**Rehearsed:** Beatrice's phone work (p. 18,19-)

9:30-9:40 – Break

9:40-10:45 -

**Absent:**

#### **Cast**

Off-Book by Wednesday Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Set**

Kitchen Table will work fine for the  
Science Fair

#### **Lighting**

#### **Sound**

#### **Props**

Add Tacks to Prop List (pg. 20)  
I need a copy of the Props List Before  
Sunday's rehearsal.

#### **Costumes**

Came to rehearsal, looked at some items,  
good times.

#### **Everyone!**

If your script does not have page numbers, please number it.

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/08- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

### ***The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds***

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/08    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:00-8:20 – pg. 14-16

**Rehearsed:** worked through pg. 14-16

**Absent:**

<b>Cast</b>	<b>Set</b>
Off-Book by Wednesday Oct. 11 <sup>th</sup> .	

<b>Lighting</b>	<b>Sound</b>

<b>Props</b>	<b>Costumes</b>
Add Tacks to Prop List (pg. 20)	

I need a copy of the Props List ASAP.  
Emer or Maggie please email it to me  
tonight.

**Everyone!**  
We lost the ultimate Frisbee match 13-4.

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/09- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

## *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*

## Rehearsal Report

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/09 **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:00-8:55 - Beatrice's Phone Calls
<b>Rehearsed:</b> pg. 1, 9; 5-7	8:55-9:05 – Break 9:05-10:25 - pg. 5-7
<b>Absent:</b>	10:25-10:40 – pg. 10-12 10:40-11:00 – Beatrice Character Work

**Cast** Set  
Off-Book by Wednesday Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **Lighting**      **Sound**

## **Everyone!**

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/10- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

### ***The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds***

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/10    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:15-8:25 – First Run Through
<b>Rehearsed:</b> Full Run	8:25-8:35 – Break
	8:35-8:50 - 1 <sup>st</sup> Run Through
<b>Absent:</b>	Notes
	8:50-10:40 – Individual Work
	10:40-11:00 - End of Act 1(p. 12-13)

<b>Cast</b>	<b>Set</b>
Off-Book by tomorrow, Wednesday Oct. 11 <sup>th</sup> .	

<b>Lighting</b>	<b>Sound</b>
Shults will be coming to rehearsal tomorrow. Woohoo.	

<b>Props</b>	<b>Costumes</b>
Can we Annie break a glass on pg. 13?	

**Everyone!**

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/11 - 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

## *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*

## **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/15    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:00-8:45 – Line Throughs
<b>Rehearsed:</b> Full Run (Off Book)	8:45-9:30 – Freeze 9:30-9:40 – Break
<b>Absent:</b> Sydney Blum (excused)	9:40-11:00 – Improvisation within the play

## Cast Set

**Everyone!**

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/16- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

### ***The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds***

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/16   **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:30-7:55 – Freeze
<b>Rehearsed:</b> Full Run (Off Book)	7:55-8:50 - Outside Scenarios
<b>Absent:</b>	8:50-9:00 - Break 9:00-10:50 - First Scene Touch-ups

<b>Cast</b>	<b>Set</b>
Thursday (11/19) is the last day to call "line." Come back from break completely off book.	

<b>Lighting</b>	<b>Sound</b>
	Schedule Monologue Recording Session for Thursday (10/19) after 4PM.

<b>Props</b>	<b>Costumes</b>

**Everyone!**  
9:36

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/16- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

### ***The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds***

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/17    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:15-7:35: Bottle Game
<b>Rehearsed:</b> Full Run (Off Book)	7:35-7:55: Bonding Exercise
<b>Absent:</b>	7:55-9:05 : Full Run
	9:05-9:20: Break
	9:20-10:30: Notes
	10:30-10:45: Last Scene
	10:45-11:00: Beginning of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Act

<b>Cast</b>	<b>Set</b>
Thursday (11/19) is the last day to call “line.” Come back from break completely off book.	
<b>Lighting</b>	<b>Sound</b> Schedule Monologue Recording Session for Thursday (10/19) after 4PM.

<b>Props</b>	<b>Costumes</b>

**Everyone!**

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/16- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

### ***The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds***

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/18    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

**Call Time:** 7:00 PM

	Time
7:00-8:30 – PAC Shop Costuming	
8:30-9:40 – Full Run	
9:40-9:50 – Break	
9:50-10:30 – Notes	
10:30-11:00 – 1 <sup>st</sup> Act with Suggestions	

**Rehearsed:** Full Run (Off Book)

**Absent:**

#### **Set**

Can we go to the shop next week to look at the staircase? (concern about seizure on them)

#### **Cast**

Thursday (11/19) is the last day to call “line.” Come back from break completely off book.

#### **Sound**

Re-Schedule Monologue Recording Session for next Thursday (10/26) after 4PM.

#### **Lighting**

#### **Costumes**

Glass of Water during Opening Scene

#### **Everyone!**

Designer's Run! Tomorrow, 9:30 in ARCH 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/16- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## **APPENDIX C**

### ***The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds***

#### **Rehearsal Report**

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNtuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/24    **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:00-7:40 – Italian Run
<b>Rehearsed:</b> Full Run (Off Book)	7:40-9:15 – Hot Seating
	9:15-9:25 – Break
	9:25-10:45 – Full Run

**Absent:**

Cast	Set
------	-----

#### **Lighting**

When writing cues in your script for Paper Tech please number the cues (odd numbers only) i.e. Cue 1, Cue 3

#### **Sound**

When writing cues in your script for Paper Tech please letter the cues i.e. Cue A, Cue B...

Oh! And can you skip Q if necessary...cue Q isn't cool

**Props**

**Costumes**

#### **Everyone!**

Paper Tech Saturday 10/28 at 11 AM.

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

10/25- 7PM – 11PM; Arch, Room 313

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

## APPENDIX C

## *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*

## Rehearsal Report

Written by Paul Zindel

Directed by Caleb Green

iNTuitons Experimental Theatre Company Fall 2006

**Date:** 10/26   **Location:** Arch, Room 313

	Time
<b>Call Time:</b> 7:00 PM	7:00-7:30- End of Act 1 Touch up
<b>Rehearsed:</b> Full Run (Off Book)	7:30-8:15 – Freeze 8:15-9:20 – Improv First Act 9:20-9:30 – Break
<b>Absent:</b>	9:30-10:20 – Improv Second Act

## Cast Set

## Lighting

When writing cues in your script for Paper Tech please number the cues (odd numbers only) i.e. Cue 1, Cue 3

## Sound

When writing cues in your script for Paper Tech please letter the cues i.e. Cue A, Cue B...

## Props

## Costumes

## Everyone!

Paper Tech Saturday 10/28 at 11 AM. Only Designers, Sloan, and Caleb (if he wants to attend)

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

**Next Rehearsal**

NEVER! LOAD-IN ON SUNDAY!

## **APPENDIX D**

### **REHEARSAL TRANSCRIPT**

**Oct. 10, 2006 7-11 pm**  
**(Transcribed by Jenny Birnkrant)**

Caleb: Annie, we're going to work on monologue to get emotional range and phone conversations on point. We'll take the first phone conversation and use whatever mood you're in as a starting point. Just go this first time without interruption. Remember the work that we did last time and the emotional and expressive range that Beatrice is starting to achieve. This is real, commit to it.

[I.i. : phone conversation]

C: How did you feel?

A: It started to feel more comfortable, but there needs to be more extreme reaction.

C: Yeah that's the problem right now. You're starting off each night at a higher point, but some of the pauses felt like you were trying to be on the phone. Sometimes it sounded like you were really talking to someone, but sometimes it didn't. Your focus and energy...we can tell when it goes off.

A: It's hard when you get off of it.

C: That's why actors are terrified of forgetting their lines onstage because you need to know that your concentration isn't going to be uselessly broken.. But that's what's going to happen with the audience...you have to maintain that focus. How did the starting point influence everything you did?

A: It influenced up to a point, but I feel like she's being woken up and she's not in a good mood, so I can't imagine having her be in a good mood. The only thing it did influence was when you did the rings, I really answered the phone.

C: I want to put in some blocking, then go through it once, and have all your conversation focus on what you're saying.

C: I want the cord to be tangled. Answer the phone, untangle the cord. I want you to grab your pack of cigarettes off the kitchen table. It emphasizes the fact that you're messing with him as you're smoking your cigarettes. "Lobster tank..." do something in the kitchen, like get a glass of water. Sit down in the armchair and smoke: "Well I encourage her..." and play with the lighter so we can see you're not really attentive. Switch ears: "I don't want you to think I don't appreciate..." You're looking at Tillie when you're saying she's not pretty. Fiddle with the chair, get up on "There'll be some place for her..."

A: Can we go through it once?

[Go through blocking again]

C: Go ahead and be really cheery until you get cut off by him. A shift at, "Well some days...." At some point you can get up anywhere here.

A: Yeah, I think it's probably best at "But don't you worry about Matilda..."

C: So let's just say the lines and remember the blocking...don't worry about the acting"

[Run phone conversation again, with blocking]

C: Do you think you can remember it?

A: Yeah, sure.

C: Do you want to go through the blocking one more time?

A: Yeah, let's do it one more time.

[Phone conversation again, to run through blocking]

C: Let's give it a real go. Explore the dynamic range; she's faking it, she's effective, she overreacts. Sustain the focus...if you break it, don't wallow just get back on. You do that by focusing on the objective.

[Start scene again with the blocking incorporated]

C: Okay stop...very nice and natural. We want it to be fake...remember how she interacts with Nanny? You've never been aware of your social ineptitude. Try harder to impress him, but also be thinking you're better than him. So let's try it again...

[Scene, take 2!]

[stop] C: Okay, to give you an example...what I'm having a problem with is I think your vocal inflections are limiting the range of the character. Your vocal range when you're acting is smaller than your normal vocal range. While it's very believable, we want a theatrical quality to Beatrice. It's hard to play someone who's real but who's being theatrical without you coming off as theatrical, which is difficult. Let me try to show you your vocal inflections. It's kind of in the same range and we have the same movement. A possible interpretation could be... [reading] See how we went wider?? This run I want you to just kind of explore. Don't worry about believability, just go for any impulse that strikes you. Take everything up a notch. Explore the vocal and emotional range...I want you to reach the top and reach the bottom...as big as you can make everything.

[Scene, take 3!]

[stop] C: Okay, you're doing well, but bigger! That was good, though.

[Scene, take 4!]

[stop] C: Okay, let's just work on varying that one line. "Mr. Goodman, I don't mean to change the subject..."

Good, let's do another one: "Believe, me, she's nothing like that...."

"I don't know what's the matter with women these..."

You can do more with it, try it again.

[Running line again]

Okay we're still kind of following the same structure...try something else. Try emphasizing something else. It's like a rollercoaster.

You're separating it in the middle so it sounds like a poem. Don't pause

A: Oh yeah it rhymes!

A: [line]

A: Oh man that's worse it sounds like Dr. Seuss!

C: Stay away from the rhymes!

A: Ahhh I can't it's like poking me in the eye!

C: Okay let's do "Too much strain..."

A: [line]

C: Okay good, take it more places. One thing you're not doing is varying the pace...you're changing the tone but you're not slowing down and speeding back up quite as much. You can mumble or enunciate or mispronounce something. Are you supporting, are you constricting or full? She's going to do different things. Your voice changes depending on who you're talking to...you're almost limitless with your possibilities.

A: [running line]

C: Bigger bigger bigger!

A: [running line]

C: Good! Did you see how many ways there are to say it? Do you remember auditions when we asked you to say the phrase "This evening" in as many ways as you could?

A: Yeah I think I said it about 5 times

C: I got that idea from Stanislavsky's modern art theatre. If you were considered for auditioning for it, you had to say that phrase at least 40 different ways. We're used to speaking in certain inflections, so even when I'm acting I'm acting in my realm of believable experience. Let's say I'm trying to think of a way to say "This evening." The first thing I'm going to say is not going to be in the context of something I don't know very well. People's ideas are common for a reason, because they're shared experiences for a lot of people. So there are all different ways to approach it, and there are certain ways that are characteristic to Beatrice.

There is a subset that's appropriate for Beatrice, so this is the time to explore the range but make smart artistic choices. She is a mother of two children that she hates saying it to an up-and-coming teacher at their high school so that limits it. You'll be able to feel what kind of makes sense. I want you to think about Beatrice and think about the choices that she makes. We want you and Beatrice to be one...the only way she lives is through you. Now, keep your range wide, explore it. You're going to have to make choices and then we'll tweak them.

[Take 5!]

[stop] C: This isn't the decision run, it should be bigger! Start over.

[Take 6!]

[C: You got so much smaller, stay big!]

C: Believe it or not that wasn't far from how we really want it to be. How did you feel about it?

A: It felt fine, blocking's just still a little confusing. I feel better but I still think there's more I can do to tweak certain sentences.

C: let's do it again and I'll stop and start you this time, If I say "Bigger" just go back to the last sentence you said. The reason we're doing this is so you can investigate the rest of the play on your own. We need to figure out what we want the rest of the play to be like. That's why we're doing this now...I know you can make good choices, but we need to put this in context of the whole play.

[Starting scene]

[stop] C: I want you to really call out, "Never any help" to make them feel bad. Also, wait two more rings before you answer. [starting again]

C: Stop..."I hope there hasn't been any trouble..." It's about more of a question than a statement. Good though, especially with playing at the guilt factor more. Say "Will you get that please" after the 3<sup>rd</sup> ring and come out after the 4<sup>th</sup>. [starting again]

C: Okay, go back to "Hello..." because the way you said "school" was too much.

[starting again]

A: Oh man! I can't do it!

C: Don't go up on the end!

A: Okay! Go down go down... [line] Aahh, okay! [line]

C: You really want to go up on the end! Okay it is a question but don't go up on the end. You're saying, it seems like a statement, but really you're asking the person. It's like please confirm for me that this statement is correct.

A: [line]

C: Yes! That was the best. Start from "Hello"

[staring again]

C: Start again, more charm! "Delightful rabbit..."

[starting again]

C: Bigger! No you're not buttering him up, you're just stating.

C: Okay, we're losing the naturalism

A: I lost my focus on that one.

C: That's okay. We need to give you as many believable possibilities as we can. Beatrice is dynamic, and the audience is going to have kind of free reign with her. Before you were making smart artistic choices. This time, some of them were good and some of them weren't. "Can I?..." was not so good. I think you should go through the lines again and again figuring out what works. Not so much from the perspective of sounding right, but really wondering what Beatrice would say. In phone conversations you need to know what's being said on the other side of the line. When he interrupts you, you know what he's saying. Continue to look at possibilities, and narrow them down using the criteria of what's believable for Beatrice. Think about the circumstances and how she feels. What did she do this morning? You need to know where she's coming from and how she's feeling. For example, "Oh she's always been like that..." You're comfortable with that,

it's a normal conversation. But you come and sit down when he asks you if you encourage her, and when he says how intelligent she is. As you pointed out, some of it is ironic because she's so sweet and the person on the other line would never know she's not paying attention.

Opposition is one of the most difficult and most essential things for an actor to achieve. If you can do it so that at any given point we feel a variety of emotions, that's stupendous acting. Halle Berry is great in one scene in Monster's Ball when she's getting drunk after her son just died. She just starts going nuts and laughing and crying, talking about her son. She complicates it even further because she has such a depth of emotion and so much inner conflict. She feels so many things at once. When you're mad and throwing everything around, it's just as intense. We need to see that you have opposition, and you're conflicted. Beatrice is incredibly volatile...she oscillates regularly. She changes her position in a second to try to have the upper hand over her children. You always commit to whatever Beatrice is going through, but there's always conflict and opposition in a character. When you're tearing down newspaper and putting up curtains, there are so many emotions. You love your kids, you want to hurt your kids. You want Nanny gone, but you feel responsible for her. She wants to tear her home down but she doesn't want to tear it down. There are all of these thoughts going through her head...she's conflicted the entire time.

So I want you to focus on that. We want her to have a full range. We want Beatrice to be extreme, because she has a lot of conflicting emotions that have to fit into a small space. We can't limit her yet. Right now, pull and stretch her. Try different physicalities, try changing your vocal inflections just to get to know her. Think about what she's going through: what's her objective, what are her tactics, what's going through her head? You can't sum up Beatrice in a single sentence, so don't start making too many choices yet...really explore. The moiré oppositional elements you can feel, the better the performance is going to be.

Let's go on to the second phone conversation. I'm not going to give you any instruction.

[Second phone conversation]

C: Okay, that was a little bit lifeless. It started off well, but it became kind of same note. I want to do some textual analysis with you. Let's take it from "It does sound like an interesting project, but..."

Let's look at the lines...you're already very good at it in terms of pulling things out that the playwright is doing, but I'd like to pull out character details, too. We want to know how the person is: what's going on and what choices they're making.

"It does sound..." What can we learn from that?

A: I think she's cutting him off...she doesn't care about the project she just wants to interject.

C: Exactly...she's not trying to be respectful but she's pretending like she is. She is interrupting him, so that give it an urgent quality. It's also going to be louder at the beginning because you're talking over him. You'll want to confirm to him, "does" is really the keyword there. I think he interrupts you again. The relationship is developing: you're getting handles on each other. You're trying to get this out. When you're interrupting someone you start off loud and fast. Maybe he quits around the "ing" of

"interesting" because he doesn't think you appreciate it. How about "At this very moment I don't know..."

A: I think she's resentful, so she's probably irritated

C: yeah she's defensive. What does that tell us about the choices for the line?

A: I think she's stressed.

C: That's one possibility. Why does she say no?

A: He asked her directly. That's not something she can dance around to make herself seem intelligent. She's a bit embarrassed.

C: It's italicized for a reason...she says it with some scorn. Good playwrights help you out with clues. Look at all the alliteration in this. "I must admit at this very moment, I don't know what a mutation is" People when they get mad, they start to pronounce their consonants more. Macbeth's phrases become very consonant when he gets angry...Shakespeare used it. In addition to being defense, she's angry...she's being put on the spot. It's your decision...is that the end and he keeps going, or does he interrupt you and define mutation? I think he interrupts her and starts defining.

A: Think she's like shut up, I don't care.

C: "I don't want you to think..." What can we learn from that? It's offensive.

A: I know she should switch back to sugary sweet, so I think here she's still offended...shes still like, please spare me definitions over the phone, my time is so valuable.

C: Where is the emphasis?

A: Spare me definitions.

C: That's good, try something else...what's another way?

A: [line]

C: What's the best choice with the given clues?

A: [line]

C: Good...I think though, "not interested" should be pulled out. She's trying to be polite...I think when you're trying to emphasize something you slow down. That's kind of what she's doing. She wants to cut off the argument before it even happens. You're making very sure that he knows how you feel.

A: [line]

C: Let's make the pause shorter between "shorter" and "but"

A: [line]

C: Soften the blow with "not interested." Now try to be nice, but you're mad. That was a little too nice. This person has insulted you several times already.

A: [line]

C: Okay, how does the rest of that go? "I'll go to the library..."

A: This is sarcasm.

C: What can we tell?

A: She's saying "some little book" like I'm so stupid I don't understand. She's saying she's promising to do this so that you shut up.

C: It's dripping with sarcasm. But she's comparing herself to a little girl, so she's saying you're making me feel like a child. That's the subtext to it. She's punching these words out. That's kind of the vibe she's giving off. And he becomes apologetic because he's a nice guy. Start with "Mr. Goodman..."

A: [line]

C: Good! Angrier, though, for the whole thing. The pause is still too long.

A: [line]

C: Good! Even bigger and angrier...even more sarcasm.

A: [line]

C: Okay, you're restraining yourself with this line. She's conflicted on this line. She's knows what she should do, she knows what she wants to do.

A: [line]

C: This should all come faster. He's been interrupting you.

A: [line]

C: Interrupt me!

A: [line]

C: Okay, more emphatic on the second portion of that. This is important to her...she doesn't want people to think she's stupid. He should know that she's not.

A: [line]

C: Make me feel bad. I don't feel bad. Interrupt me, get me to stop.

A: [line]

C: That was better! Let's keep going.

A: She's trying to redeem herself by saying, this is my intention.

C: Exactly. What does that remind you of? It sounds like a parent, doesn't it? "Prevention is better than a tragedy" It's like an authority. It's firm but it's not sarcastic or as cruel. Then she's making him feel guilty. "Matilda has enough problems without sterility."

Why's that italicized again?

A: It's like, how bad would you feel if my daughter was sterile?

C: Exactly, make him feel like shit. Sterility...that would be your fault. Then you're just dripping with love and affection: so fake.

So, we're going to go back to, "No it must have been..."

A: [line]

C: The second part has to go to be meaner and more sarcastic. Let's go back to the second part.

A: [line]

C: Too act-y...just try to save face.

A: [line]

C: More defensive. More emphatic...put your foot down.

A: [line]

C: I didn't believe the second sentence, make me feel guilty.

A: [line]

C: Sterility was overemphasized, but better. Do it again.

A: [line]

C: There we go.

A: [line]

C: "Poor mother's heart..." Return to the Nanny-esque speech.

A: [line]

C: Even dippier.

A: [line]

C: So fake...wonderful. Did you see how we looked at the text? You need to do this with your entire script. When Carly says something to you, why do you respond in one way

and not another? What else could I have said and why didn't I say it that way? I'm making word choices that reflect me right now. That's why writers have styles; she has a style. Beatrice has a certain perception of reality, and all that's evident through her choices. It's up to you what those choices are, and to align yourself with those choices. You're making Beatrice's choices to cause Beatrice's desired effects. Small statements are easy to miss...why does someone say "uh"? Even small words like "No" tell us that it's a question. What words are receiving emphasis...can multiple words get emphasis? All of the questions tell us about her and why she's Beatrice, and why she's not someone else. Obviously you need your script to do this, but think about Beatrice. If you're walking somewhere, think about Beatrice... she should be your best friend. Go over the choices and scenarios...create history for her. Who is she, why is she that way? How is that transformed into action?? When you can think about her, think about her. It doesn't need to distract from the other things that you're doing.

[Break]

[Ilana, Sydney, & Annie]

C: We're going to do the first scene with Nanny, Beatrice is looking at the newspaper. What we're going to be doing is getting on point...we're going to go through it once for you to figure out what's going on, but then we're going to stop and start to get it as close to perfect as we can. I'm not going to stop you this time. Commit to it, though. Each time we come back to a scene we're going to lose something...we want to lose as little as possible each time. Take a second to go over it. Commit to everything. Commit to the extremes.

A: Where are we going until?

C: Through your half-life speech.

[“I thought we had everything...” scene, pg. 5: Tillie, Beatrice, Nanny]

C: What did you think about that?

S: For me, I wasn't very into it so when I'm not feeling it I can't expect other people to communicate with me.

A: I got really thrown off a couple times, and I just wasn't into it at all. I realized that they weren't reacting to me and they were just saying things.

C: That's something that happens...if a bug catches, it can spread through the entire cast. That's why everyone needs to be committed to conversation.

C: What happened?

S: We were all in our own world. I wasn't hearing anything, I think I blocked it all out.

C: I have a question...who's tired? Who has a lot of stuff on their plate? Who's excited to come to rehearsal?

A: I am excited, but tonight I can't...it's all coming to a head and I can't just put everything on hold.

C: Because of everything that's going on right now, it's getting harder and harder to concentrate on this show. It becomes like, what are all of the other things I could do with these 4 hours? I think what was wrong was that we weren't excited to do it, and to be

these people. I don't think we were loving the characters. As much work as you have, you get the opportunity to create. You've probably heard people say this before, that art saves. This is still a place where you can come and relax, where you can come and not be yourself for awhile, which don't ever take that for granted. You can come be with friends, where you get to have fun and where you get to work on something you will be very proud of. When you come in, we don't have time to start off with warm-ups. As soon as you walk in the door, there is nothing outside of this room. The scenes will look like this otherwise.

We're all stressed, but there's nothing we can do about it here. Have fun. This should be a joy, and I'm a firm believer that you make of things what you want. If this a burden to you, then that's what it's going to be. If it's an opportunity to save yourself, if it's a place to be safe, then it's very different. You come here to work and to play; be proud leaving this room. Have fun and love your characters. Acting is nothing short of a blessing...you all know that, don't ever forget it.

[Run scene again]

[stop] C: Start over, talk to each other. Give me energy!

[Take 2!]

C: You forgot what we talked about. Annie. You're still looking at the newspaper until you become completely sarcastic at, "While you're at it..."

C: I don't believe you have separate thoughts. Place yourself in the setting...what's going through your head?

[3]

C: Make her feel guilty

[4]

C: Really ask, Tillie. Beatrice, give me energy.

[5]

C: Okay..."It's something that causes..." You realize your mom's not that smart. Then you get so excited, I want you to lose your breath.

[6]

C: Okay, what else is missing?

S: Purpose?

C: No, it's even more surface level.

I: Eye contact?

C: Humor. Where'd the humor go? Have fun with this, let's try it again.

S: Do you want me to look up when she says, "Nanny!" ?

C: No, I don't want you to react at all. This should really be humorous...this is what you do, this is your life. Same thing with the beginning, it starts off funny. You are so sarcastic. Don't forget the humor. Let's start from the beginning again.

[7]

C: Stop! You're in a real living room, think about that. I don't believe that you're sitting and working on plants... I don't believe that you're reading the newspaper. This is a real morning. There should be a quality of silence to this. We're not always talking to our parents when we're around them...you feel the most comfortable with them, you've been

around them your whole life. The quality of silence isn't in this scene yet... you're filling up space. You're kind of making conversation. You stop for awhile...the silence can be half an hour. If you ask something, it's genuine. This is a real morning and a real living room. Start over.

[8]

C: Pretty good. The pauses were a little too long, because we are onstage. We don't want people to think you forgot your lines. But much better.

[9]

C: Okay...does she answer you? Did Annie answer you?

I: She answers me because she's silent

C: Yeah that's in the script...did you feel like you got an answer from her? Her decision to ignore you is still a decision. Do you think she made it or went on to her next line? Place yourself in a given circumstance. This is your science fair project...you're very excited about it.

I: Can I say please on the end so that it's like I'm asking?

C: Yeah, definitely. Annie, a little too deadpan when you're talking about the plants. But you have the right idea. Let's start again.

[10]

C: Not funny, it's got to have more energy, more emphasis.

[11]

C: Annie, were you really thinking about what you could do with 8 garages??

A: No, I wasn't.

C: If you don't see it, we don't believe that you see it. Ilana are you touching plants right now?

I: Yeah. They're kind of waxy.

C: You need to know details about everything you're doing. That's the kind of attention to detail we need. There's so much junk in this room, you have to step over everything. Tillie brought in dirty plants. What a dump.

[12]

C: I do not believe you. Put your scripts away. Let's go back to improv.

[Take 13: Improved: Killing Nanny off]

C: That was the best one! Because you didn't know what was going to happen...you didn't know what was going to come next. Why is the script any different? Because you know what's going to come next? No, you don't. You can't lose that spontaneity. The way that Annie says a line could make you change everything. It's really something that's not unnatural to theatre. It's the same thing as when it's really happen. A lot of theorists think that we come to see theater and film because we don't have to make choices. That's why it's entertainment: you don't have to be involved. It's a position of power to be in the audience, you get to watch. It's escapism, it's not having to make choices. Being up onstage is scary and volatile. We're just amplifying this. We're not starting with new first principles; this is the nature of theater. Yesterday, when Ilana said to Carly "I don't think that's very nice" she said it almost like an authority, because she was in the moment. Carly was making fantastic choices physically in the chair. She's such an excited person she can't sit still. That was a decision she made on her own, and she got frustrated with the chair because the chair couldn't keep up with her. You will never run out of choices or opportunities. Choices, choices, choices, that's what it's

about. That's what made this successful, you were making choices. If you know how you're going to say a line, you're already anticipating.

[14: Improved]

C: Good, get your scripts...do it again.

[15]

[Ruth...entering scene. Chris Burns kissed her → running away]

C: Okay, some bumps but some nice discoveries. Carly, I like that you brought up love. Do you ever tell them you love them and do they ever ask?

We're jumping to the scene with Annie and Carly.

[Start scene: "Get back in your room!..."]

C: How did that feel?

A: It's gotten better.

C: Yeah, this scene went better than the last scene. I want to perfect it a little bit more, but we really need to see it in the context of a full run.

C: Are you upset?

A: Frustrated.

C: Why are you frustrated? What's the hardest thing for you?

A: Becoming this person. The more we keep doing this the more frustrated I become, and I know when I'm not. I don't know how to get there.

C: What's been successful?

A: Sometimes it's easy for me to lose my concentration, and once I do it's really hard to get back into it.

C: What do you mean by keeping the character?

A: I can connect with certain emotions but I'm not connecting with it as three dimensionally as I should. I'm just really frustrated.

C: The main thing is that you can tell you're upset because your energy level is lower and the choices aren't as strong. This is a leap for you...you come from little theater experience to a challenging role. It was a big decision to choose who could be Beatrice. A simple person can't play a complex role. You are passionate, so you can connect with emotional force. You're closer to Beatrice than you think. I think the greatest hindrance to acting is character. We have to be so conscious that we're performing as another human being. I've emphasized the otherness. I want you to think, though, that Beatrice only gets to talk from you; it's just as much self as it is the other.

The self comes to consciousness through acknowledging the other. The self appropriates the other from the moment of recognition. You're viewing Beatrice as a pure other, but she's not: she's channeled through you. Don't make it so hard on yourself. Don't put up so many barriers. We're defining this person...that doesn't mean she's any more difficult to connect with. You're finding out more about her and that can be intimidating, but don't overcomplicate the issue.

If you want to be a great actor, you should relax and just do it. If you need to ask Tillie a question, just ask her. In saying a line and trying to be a character, it's more forced.

People onstage think that they have to do something. We defined performance as exerting more energy, and, in many cases, being viewed. Don't think so much about being viewed. Instead of focusing the energy on being viewed, it's being focused on

performance. You should think about the character, her wants, her impulses, her history, but once you're onstage, you should forget them, in a way. You should act within them, so you don't have to remember them. Just do it.

You're getting so many thoughts in your head that you can't function. Learn enough about Beatrice so that you don't have to think about Beatrice when you're onstage. Why does it need to be so hard? Because you have a script...because you're saying words that aren't your own? I guarantee you've said every word in this play. All language is re-combination. A script shouldn't be this impossible barrier. You need to think about the script and the character offstage. Think about your choices offstage, but when you come on it shouldn't be difficult. You shouldn't have to fight with yourself during the performance.

I see you working very hard and I appreciate your effort, but forget about it. Think about Ilana being your daughter and just ask her. She's a complex enough character that she changes. Beatrice turns on a dime. You need to commit to those forces. All of your efforts should go into asking Tillie a question and then insulting her. So many actors want directors to hold their hands. And so many directors are willing to oblige them. Directors shouldn't hold actors hands or help them piece together a performance. It's about taking inhibitions away so you can be free. It's about coming up here and just doing it...that's how you'll be able to respond to the audience and other people. Onstage, it's Beatrice through you. You should only be concentrating on the moment...don't think about what's going to happen or what has to happen. That's what you're doing in improv. There are all these mental barriers that keep you from being able to just do it. Take them down. Acting is the most difficult thing in the world, because it should be the easiest.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **ACTOR JOURNAL Ilana Millner, "Tillie"**

Thursday September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006

Supposed to write in this last night, I know. But, I was exhausted, and feeling too alive.  
**MATILDA.** What is it with that name? The trunchbull, purple newt's hopping motions. Small raggedy dolls, salad fingers, else's wing, lynette, Pittsburgh, small girl with magical powers. ADA. Ada and her palindromes.

Science is an escape. Science is THE escape.

Ada says, Ada says to me:

"In organic chemistry, invertebrate zoology, and the inspired symmetry of Mendelian genetics, I have found a religion that serves."

pg. 409

SHE SAYS

"Now I understand, God is not just rooting for the dollies. We and our vermin all blossomed together out of the same humid soil in the Great Rift Valley, and so far no one is really winning. Five million years is a long partnership. If you could for a moment rise up out of your own beloved skin and appraise ant, human, and virus as equally resourceful beings, you might admire the accord they have all struck in Africa."

pg. 529

SHE SAYS

Thursday September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006

MOVE. She says MOVE. Up and down and all around. Touch the ground. Make a sound.

There is a little place inside me, a little space inside me, a little face inside me, a different pace inside me. Saul Williams wrote about music changing your heart – literally. Transforming its beat. But WHAT IS MY BEAT? What is HER beat? Do I need to change it at all? Do I even have one.

I thought I would cry. Lying there on the ground, the dust scattered brown ground, the darkness around me and a million bugs crawling through my brain. Cry because I missed myself and suddenly realized there were things I didn't know where missing.

What is Tillie missing? What is she gaining? If she cannot see the back of her skull, can I not either?

What is it to know?

Sometimes I drown. Drown in the laughter, or the pain or the moment. I kind of think it's all the same. And in the end, it's only after that I realize I CAN breathe. That I should. That I want to.

A LITTLE PHOTOGRAPH in my brain:

Green dress with watercolor Paris, button top, sylvan background, tiny feet, clean clean clean.

Dancing. Not to any thing at all. Singing too. Picking up ants, walking, feeling, toes, hands, sun.

But I'm looking at myself. This has me. A memory. But I'm no longer IN it. How can it be mine? What changed?

We have this urge to posess. To posess the moment. What if you can posess nothing but the moment you are in? Who owns your memories? What if you surrender them?

WHAT THEN? Who do you become? What do you become? Do you LOSE or GAIN?

Must you let go to get out? Or should you hold on tighter?

I DON'T KNOW THE BACK OF MY HAND.

but then again, I kind of enjoy the anticipation of meeting it one day – in all its glory.

Sunday September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006

It is rather odd to feel like you are not what you were for a very long time. I've changed and I don't know how it/when it/why it happened.

I want to connect, to let down my guard, to FEEL that bond. I'm still standoffish though. There is something holding me back and I'm going crazy trying to figure it out.

I'm embarrassed by the sister scene. I knew the character too well. It was like the painter friend in Dorian Gray – terrified of displaying his masterpiece portrait because he was so afraid the world would see inside his soul. I really wasn't acting. Or maybe, maybe I'm always acting. Sydney became Stephanie. Maybe it isn't Stephanie. If I can do the same things, say the same things, feel the same things, know the same pain, be consumed by the same bitter hatred – ALL OF IT – all of it without her there. It isn't her then.

It's me.

I'm afraid of playing Tillie. I'm afraid I won't be able to be her. I'll feel like a phony (LOL Holden Caulfield), something won't work. I have lost the Tillie inside me. I was her. Maybe I wasn't. I wanted to be her. Maybe I was.

I am threatened by the goodness of my character. I am threatened by anyone and everyone because I am afraid they will be better at being me then I could ever be. Caleb talked about the EXISTANT and EXISTENCE. Usually I feel like others can exist for me. I don't own it. Similar people frighten me because I'm afraid I won't be good enough to compare – they will be MORE of me than me. What I thought was mine is really theirs.

"Whoops! You've been living a lie. You've been copying."

This gets in the way of connection.

I'd like to talk to Tillie. For once, I'd like to be able to connect, to identify, to share, to rejoice in ourselves and to OWN MY SELF. To know it's mine. To see her, to see me, and to see the difference. To just not think about it. That's kind of always the problem though.

Damn thinking.

STAIRS, STAIRS, STAIRS, STAIRS, STAIRS, STAIRS, STARES

Stairs/stares all around.

Monday September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006

It hurts so much. That feeling that comes. The one you need and miss and want and pray for, and yet never really understand.

How can you want something you cannot imagine? I am afraid of not knowing and never knowing and missing and falling and just not knowing.

Are you dead and I don't know it?

I was.

It hurts.

small chocking pain tightens tightens,  
grips, grasps clutches pulls, strangles, burns  
a million little pieces of pain and worry and  
need and sorrow – all congregate to make as  
one mass – to surge forth from your throat  
like the most violent purge of heart and soul  
in the history of man. in the history of life. in the  
history of mass. in the history of meaning.  
and yet, just before it leaves, it transforms. and I cry  
instead and I love instead and I'm saved instead.  
to the edge and back, to the edge and back, to the edge and back,  
and I love instead.

They love instead. They love me. I love them. We love instead. It is the only thing that can change you.

It is the only thing that can change me.

I never want to lose it. Why don't I work for it? I feel so lucky, so lucky to find these moments. Spectacular beauty and purpose and life.

it hurts, and it is the most beautiful pain in the world.  
a perfect balance  
everything and everything  
completion  
breathe because it was all worth it  
breathe because each day is worth it  
breathe. because life is worth it.

It is worth it.

3 years lost. 3 years to make up for. 3 years of emotion. Can I ever regain it? Maybe this is better. So lucky, it hurts. So blessed, it hurts.

These women amaze me. They are role models like I've never had. I have a hard time understanding how my world moved forward without them, and without this.

How can we grow so much in the space of a moment?  
How can we not?

grey sweatshirt, alex perotti, missed phone calls, crazy beat, Sydney's feet, purple flower, locust walk, posters, red, heart, shirt letters, enveloping t-shirt, annie, kind eyes, pink toes, bald head, intense gaze, fidgeting hands, choking, steaphnie, dirty white socks, peacock, wall, kiley, math, love, circle, women, like, hope, connection, fear, wall, circle, love, home, penn, home, soy crisps, wawa, bum, election note, Hill cafeteria, Dan, fear, hip bones, cat, tongue, blue bed spread.

A CIRCLE. A BOND. A CIRCLE.  
An atom.  
What a beautiful word.

Yes Tillie, I do agree. What beautiful words. What beauty.

Tuesday September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Not really feeling the connection today, worried about the election, about focus, about achievement, about friendship, about family, about selfishness, about falsity, about pain.

Jenny is wonderful. It amazes me every day how genuine and affectionate she is. My immediate reaction is to feel threatened, to feel less, to feel worse, to feel like an imposter: LOOK THERE, she is the REAL thing. YOU, you are but a facsimile, a reflection, an imitation, a confused wannabe.

But I'll fight that. I'm not sure Tillie would feel that way. What innocence, what strength does she have that I have forgotten about?

The best things/ the happiest things/ the most wonderful things terrify me.

It'd be nice, it'd be nice (I keep thinking again and again) to just not worry about that. To see it. To see it and breathe.

Is anything really a compromise of the 'self'? What is the distinction between that and a change?

Face paint. So odd to touch. So foreign. I see faces every day, but never REALLY feel them. I hug, I kiss, I touch, I massage – but the face is off limits.

It's still a struggle – this interaction. It used to be high fives – couldn't even do that. Now it's just a constant battle. DON'T RETREAT. STAY THERE. FORGE AHEAD.

There are some sins I am afraid of – not afraid to do, but afraid to portray. What makes me able to convey envy, but stops me from touching lust? Why is one 'sin' more off limits? I don't believe in sins. I only believe in actions. Sin implies that you've done

something wrong – I just think you've done something that has changed you. Changed changed changed me.

Wednesday September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006

It is hard to under perform, but I know it's good for me. To constantly have to keep proving myself, to keep improving myself. Not in the hateful way, but in the growing way.

It hurt to fuck up. I felt inadequate, especially because I feel so blessed and lucky to be here. And because I really respect these women, and their talent, and their passion, and their love, and their kindness and their generosity. And Caleb's too. Laird still seems removed. I hope he'll change.

Stream of consciousness was more difficult for me than it usually is. It is funny how everything related to that has been harder for me in here. Usually it just comes out. Maybe this is more real than anything else, maybe it's more important.

It is such a risk to share. But more of a risk to hold back. I never regret, but I do worry what others will think of the decisions I'm making. The person I'm becoming changing learning to love.

I worry that people will get sick of me. Kiley. How can I play some roles so well, and fail so miserably at others? 2 nights ago, I WAS the ultimate character, the ultimate me. This morning, I was an awkward approximation. Same person, same bodies, same lifetime, same place. What changes?

It is so hard to hold things together. I'm worried about school. I'm not doing well on tests. Because I'm not studying. I'm talking and laughing and loving and learning, but I AM NOT STUDYING. I am afraid of getting kicked out. I makes me feel stupid. I love education. But somehow, class is not education. I learn every moment of the day except the 2, 3, 4, 5 hours I am in class. It's the people. I want to connect with them all. It's like Tillie, talks about the atom. The atom in everything, in all of us, in me.

What a beautiful word.

What a beautiful life.

What a beautiful process.

What a beautiful opportunity.

ATOM

What a beautiful word.

Sunday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006

Tired, tired, tired, tired.

I really can't get a handle on Tillie. Is she angry? Is she happy? When she's just sitting around at home – is she content?

Is there malice in her voice? What does she think of Beatrice? Does she MANAGE her mother?

Is Tillie a caretaker, or does she just watch? So awkward, so many questions.

I really want to crawl into bed and listen to SAMSON.

cigarettes and autumn air.  
you have a soul, carry a spare  
leave if you forgot your fare  
it's be a fair fair process.

Congregation synagogue, foreign tropes.  
Topography of the vocal range.

God is a character.  
laundry  
weakness  
pitiful  
condescending  
slightly sinister

Monday October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006

Tillie, Tillie, TO TILL. Look up the definition. I have an inkling.

To till, to sow, to reap, to grow.

The plants. Ada.

What is it again? Remember from art class a million years ago: white is the absence of all color? Black is the presence? I think it might be the other way around. FOR TILLIE: monotone/unemotional/constant/calm = the presence of all emotion – everything. The extremes of expression are rigid and one-dimensional. There is everything in every word, in every world, in every particle, in every atom of Tillie.

It is hard to look at Annie as a mother. I disconnect from my mother. I shut down. Hang up the phone, go blank, take the love out of my voice. I can't connect with Annie.

Barrier, blockade, tension.

Easier with Carly. But I'm so used to roles reversed. Maybe I should talk to my sister. Do a little "character study." What an absurd and cruel thought.

CALCULUS. Sushi, bagel, white fish, Christian, Alan, Kate, Kiley, leg, pen, duck, quad, stars.

Tuesday October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006

SUCCESS. I felt Tillie. I don't know where Laird came up with the "Thank you" bit, but it was PERFECT. It was her.

She just kind of jumped out of my throat, didn't even have to force it. The volume helped. I prefer being loud. Loud things excited me – or the very softest ones.

She shocks herself. What have I done to shock myself? SO MANY THINGS. I shock myself every day. Shock shock shock. Electro-shock therapy. Stay awake, keep alive, keep that heart beating. The key is to find new shocks, new sparks, new static electricity.

SHOCKING. Little atoms colliding.

Wednesday October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Stuck. Stuck like a bug on a rug. Poor Tillie. Poor Beatrice, Ruth, Tillie, Nanny. Poor world. I don't really feel part of the family – but maybe that is appropriate, Tillie isn't like them. Tillie isn't like herself. Tillie is the universe.

The universe is Tillie.

THE UNIVERSE.

What is Tillie's song? Everyone has a song. What is Tillie? How does her song change? My song was – my song was – my song was – my song was.

My song changed.

Plants to ants to pants. Rants, chants, cants, slants. Ada's slant. What is Tillie's slant? What does she chant? What CAN'T?

sitting. sipping, crying. dying.

THE END.

Wednesday October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Felt pretty good. Pretty good. "Maybe someday you will be pretty."

How would that feel? Does Tillie even care about that? Do I even care about that? YES. YES. Yes I do.

So tired though. Freeze was uncomfortable. I like how close Paula seems. That is very brave of her.

Interesting phenomenon: I was actually really annoyed with Sydney. A friend, a boyfriend, a someone has died. He committed suicide. Tommy Coletti. She wasn't being real. Maybe she was. I felt defensive. I didn't want to act out the scene. Too close to home. I didn't know how to behave in real life, how was I supposed to know how to behave onstage?

Remember the morning. Graduation. College, happiness, relief. Auditorium seats. Rough red checkered/plaid/familiar. Blue. Not red, blue. Bethany Marvel in front of me. She always had such a tight smile. Crinkly eyes. Gaze that passed slowly like a turtle's head.

I saw her deflate. The robot spokē in her monotone voice. She announced death, welcomed him into our lives. That crinkled, sporty, vibrant, tight, brown, straight, straight buck, athletic gate, tomboy – DEFLATE.

Maybe I should be more cautious in the future. Remember that people actually go through these things, go through life. Go through a suicide.

Tommy Colletti: Remember him.

Thursday October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006

"You are what you love, and not what loves you back" – cause we live in a house of mirrors.

Oh, Jenny Lem's and the Watson Twins.

For some reason this song has been stuck in my head all day. It is good to escape. Fucking midterms. Feeling stupid, embarrassed, apathetic, brush it off – I really don't care. Maybe that is the trouble. I need something I care about. CARE about.

I care about the science fair. It is easy to forget. Tillie/me cares about: Mr. Goodman, atoms, plants, purpose, Ruth, Beatrice, the texture of the rug, germs on her hands, the boy who reads during the atom cranking, Peter, Nanny, her father, the principal, dirt in the backyard, piles, spaces, vast expanse, books, smiles, quiet, laughter, passion, discovery, hope, care, things beyond my reach...the way Peter eats food.

TILLIE HATES: (nothing, but dislikes much)

- loud voices
- darkness (the newspapered window kind)
- wooden spoons
- NO.
- unnatural death

#### WHAT ELSE?

It's like reading the monologue over and over – out come the lines, out come the words, out come the intention, out comes the passion, out comes the noise...BUT WHERE IS TILLIE? When does SHE come out of me? My knowledge of her is frustrating – it is too little. She is like that person you find intriguing, but never get to know. Tillie and I need a date.

Monday October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Tired. Tired tired tired. That surreal world where Alice falls down the rabbit hole. It's like falling down your thoughts. Suddenly, your ideas stretch – like thin gooey strings of cheese – oozing, falling, dripping, sliding and dangling as you too slide along.

That is what the sleep world is like. Tillie, onstage, sitting. Sitting. Sitting. Start to numb out. I know I'm tired, my whole body pulls me towards the floor, my eyelids are in an apocalyptic struggle with gravity, my bones ache and moan and sing low funeral dirges. Hunger rumbles in my stomach, but it feels more like rocks being tumbled in one of those amateur scientist/geologist rock tumbler kits. (Just like the magic school bus one Steph got for her 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, replete with fake rocks covered in fake dirt – all tropical pinks yellows and purples).

You don't need drugs to send you into hallucinations, to pull you away, to trip your mind up, to connect this and that and life and death and conscious and subconscious – all you need is a little bit of time, a stage, a character, an overwhelming tiredness, a need to stay awake, a fear, a cast, a director, a brain, an ass to sit on.

All things fall apart.  
We played hide and seek and I couldn't find Tillie.

Sunday October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Apples and honey. Honey from Wawa, apples from orchards. Sometimes you need a little something. HOTSY WATER. HOTSY TOTSY.

Thursday October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Bad job? I don't really know how to feel about that. I feel kind of angry, kind of defensive. No one said it was bad, but once the idea was thrown out there – the seed planted... BAD.

Fucked up the last line. Fucked it up. So sad. Bad recovery. Tommy said it was scary how comfortable I was in the role. What does that mean? Good or bad?

Things are awkward. It is hard to look out to the “audience.” I really wish I had plants and props – it feels so fake.

OVERALLS/TURTLENECKS.

Tuesday October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006

SAFETY MEETING. Safety.

Do you feel safe at home Tillie?

What is the boundary between me and my character. I didn't feel safe sitting up there. No one can really understand what is outside of themselves. We all want to. We all pretend to, but in the end. we are. just. ourselves. That is all we are left with in the end.

The business of living and maintaining and keeping things straight is almost too consuming.

Energy energy energy.

I really don't want to answer those questions. I don't like answering questions anymore. It feels like I'm whoring my life out. MY LIFE.

MINE.

He's all mine. He belongs to all of us.

Mine mine mine mine

Does he really mean that much to you?

Does life really mean that much to you?

YES.

Wednesday October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006

I like to improve a lot more. Much less stressful.

Joints. Knife. Stress on the joints...

Pottruck – joints and knees and tense leg muscles.

Tense heart muscles. Hands heart legs, brain.

TENSE.

Air sucked out of lungs.

Alone and lonely and plants and eating alone.

Slow it down, speed it up slow it down.

High low high low high low high low.

Odd to be watched. Eyes in the walls.

Eyes like coal.

Full fathom fire

The Poisonwood Bible

Ada

Funny how it all comes around again.

Beginning to end.

Ashes to ashes.

He took the ruins of Babylon – the dust of Babylon, and put it all into the [illegible].

Take my life, bundle it up. Put it in a box. Put it in a dorm, put it in a quad. Put it in a school.

PUT IT IN A SCRIPT.

Funny grilled cheese sandwich t-shirt.

Saw it at a feat. Funny funny.

Funny how Tillie has recently made one angry because I have to tend to her instead of Homecoming.

I have ALWAYS, my entire LIFE, wanted to fully enjoy homecoming. I feel like Beatrice with the science fair.

Funny how my decisions have consequences. Tillie would never go to Homecoming.

Thursday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006

TILLIE SAYS:

She's really scattered. Up down up down here there all over the place. I think she understands – she seems to see it. Sitting in Mr. Goodman's class I think she'd feel the spark. But sometimes, she's just gone.

I am a constant. An invariable. A standard. A fixed dot. She is uncharitable, constantly changing, constantly reinventing, constantly falling. I can see the cosmos, she can only glimpse them.

When mama yells at me, I take it. I take it, hold onto it, examine it, touch it, mold it, fold it, set it down, pick it up. Then I tuck it away. I tuck it away and I'm okay. I don't judge, I don't hate, I don't hurt, I don't misinterpret. All I do is look and find what it really is. Ilana feels too much. She sees the big picture and then instantly zooms in. She talks the talk but can only crawl.

She harbors a hatred, a burden, a grudge, a festering wound. No matter how many times she talks a bandaid into existence – no matter how many times she buries the dead thing – she keeps picking off the scab. Digging it up. Picking and digging in her sleep.

And when it starts to bleed – it's always a surprise again.

I'm not really surprised. I know that I can't know. I know that there will always be a mystery beyond me. Ilana can't accept that. She is depressed by it, lessened by it, threatened by it. She loves the mystery but craves a solution. She feels stupid when she doesn't know. I just feel amazed.

She needs to sit a little more. She is so afraid of missing something she can hardly enjoy what she has. A minute with my plants – that is something she has rarely ever

experienced. Full commitment, full meditation, full relaxation, full concentration. She understands it, she understands it all on some level. But she's at all different levels. Old since she was young, too young to be old. Socially retarded. Socially stunted. Missing years. Surplus of tears/fears.

She watches the clock. I am the clock.

If Ilana were my age, we could be friends. She was me. She had more life though. She was a fighter. Now – I don't think she'd see me.

She sees too much.

Sunday October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006

SO FUCKING TIRED.

The days never end. Rather, the DAY never ends. I no longer believe in a difference between night and day, work and play, act and say...ANYTHING.

It is all one, we are all one. The boundaries we put up, like "morning, noon, and night," "friend colleague, classmate, stranger," "minute, second, day, month, year, hour" – they mean nothing outside of the context we give them and the emphasis we place on them. Step outside of it. Hop on out of the box. Laugh until you cry and your abdomen hurts and you roll on the ground.

So silly how we run around like chickens with our heads chopped off.

Tonight – it was all worth it. All of it. I felt like we belonged together, like I belonged – was an integrate part. I have a place. Bubble letters are my favorite (and I feel so proud to do them).

I NEED MORE ART.

I NEED TO CREATE.

I completely understand Tillie. Her voice still doesn't sound right, but I get her.  
"Just let me keep them here for a week or so, until they get started, and then I'll transplant them to the backyard."

FUCK THIS LINE

No time. No time. No time.

So false. So rehearsed. Fuck it.

Aunt Delfene, Mom, Dad, Hannah, Rise, Abby, LA, EVERYONE.

Oh dear.

Oh my goodness.

FUCK.

Monday October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Tick tock tick tock. Houston Hall fireplace. Back rub. A little family. Embittered. Diligent. Art thou speaketh savour words little banner – rap lyrics.

Tripping over the rabbit cage. Rage. Page, Sage. Cage – closed in, cannot access Tillie. Fucking comments.

Rage – Sam. Sam. Grades. Math. Disconnect. Give up to take in to spit out.



Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

Straighten. Enjoy wearing it more. Wear my life. Favorite pair of jeans. So fucking feel good.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **ACTOR JOURNAL Carly Daucher, "Ruth"**

9/20/06

I've started to form this weird attachment to Ruth already. Last night I began to describe a scene from Gamma Rays to my roommate – it was when Ruth sort of exposes her mother to all the ridicule she had been hiding from. Not exactly a shining moment for Ruth. My roommate was appalled, started talking about how interesting it would be for me to play a monster, someone so antithetical to myself.

I immediately began to backpedal. I came running in to Ruth's defense and started listing all the reasons why Ruth deserves to be so very monstrous to others.

Maybe I ought not to defend her so much, because she does do some unspeakable things to others. But I just think if someone stepped in somewhere and loved her, she wouldn't be such a miserable disaster. Staring into Jenny's face today was the best part. How often do we really look that closely at someone else?

Did anyone ever look that way at Ruth? I've been thinking about Jenny's mouth twitching and wondering what kind of tells my face displays, and how many there are on Ruth's.

I wonder if she has any scars from the seizures. I wonder how much she dies inside every time her mom makes taunting reference to her "problem." I wonder if her face falls, or if she just gets a little harder on the inside. Does that happen every week? Every day? (This is silly, but there's a very lighthearted song on right now that reminds me simultaneously of a steel drum band on a beach somewhere and my first boyfriend. I wonder if Ruth even has any memories that are purely happy like that.)

9/21/06

Trading walks today was absolutely bizarre. I have no concept of how I walk, really, because I can't see it, but it was obvious that Annie nailed it because of everybody else's reactions. I like the way I walk, I decided. And I like that I can slip someone else's walk on like new skin. Also about today's rehearsal –

I'm loving the exploration of other cultures and performance styles. The Balinese dance floored me in its intricacy.

But I can't stand Bertolt Brecht and you can't make me. I love realism and Stanislavski and always will because that is the theatre that can make me cry.

I was sitting backstage at Closer listening to a play I had heard and seen multiple times, and during one scene I became wracked with silent sobs at its power.

Realist theatre can crush me like nothing I've ever known.

I want to make Ruth real for people. I want someone to cry over the loss of her potential.

(There are a lot of "I"s on this page. Whoops. Here's a good "we" statement: I think we, the cast, are bonding well. It's not hard to picture Annie and Ilana as my family, although I can't imagine the dysfunctional dynamic quite yet).

A new preoccupation:

Who is Mr. Mayo? The "chocking and banging on the bed?" Was Ruth sexually abused/did she witness something awful?

-Are seizures brought about because of emotional trauma ever?-

I don't know if I'm supposed to be asking these questions yet or just concentrating on the workshop, but I can't wait to dive into the script.

9/25/06

Bummer of an end to a rehearsal.

I don't really get Theatre of Cruelty. At least, I didn't get Marat/Sade. I did find the layering of the acting – playing a psychopath playing an historical figure – interesting and admirable. Their preparation must have been incredibly painstaking. That aside, however, I found the play in general a lot like the electric symphony yesterday – jarring and hard to follow. I should have focused more but nothing about it, for the most part, made me want to focus. I think there must be something low or simple about me that I can't appreciate that art. I found nothing touching about it. Does that matter? It matters to me.

I liked the face-painting as a kind of calming form of expression. Better, though, was the Seven Deadly Sins approach to Theatre of Cruelty. I connected to that. I did envy, though, and no one guessed that so it was probably a poor representation.

I feel like a bad actress today. That's discouraging.

I think maybe I've only ever been a good actress because I'm an empathetic person. With purposely distant forms, all of a sudden I have no ground to stand on.

9/28/06

Amazing night. Little to say because some of it actually took my breath away with excitement.

I forgot how much I love this.

The improve scene with Annie, in the hospital... I felt so real, like I was actually that person and her words could flow from me so freely. Some of it I could fully identify with and some of it was scarily new. But it worked. The other girls seemed to feel it too. Annie gave me all that I needed for that scene.

Improving Gamma Rays from start to finish came surprisingly easy for us. I haven't spent that much time with my lines. We spent so much time on this workshop that it's hard to imagine the other girls did either. But I think tonight proved that at the very least, we have all grasped the heart of the play.

I had trouble being Ruth at the beginning, but by the time I was convulsing I felt completely comfortable.

I wonder if I can live without this feeling.

10/1/06

It was great working with the script for the first time tonight. The workshop process was so full that I barely visited the script at all. I was a little rusty with the words, for sure, but that wasn't a problem for long. Working with Annie without being able to see or touch her in our most dramatic scene helped me really concentrate on the communication. I was listening to her instead of waiting for a cue.

The focus on the flashlight helped tremendously. What does it mean to Ruth? Is she scared by it or just paralyzed?

She is becoming just like her mother. She is a manipulator. But can you blame her for pulling every desperate trick she can muster in exchange for just a little normal maternal attention? What kind of mother leaves her child alone after a seizure?

I liked working the first scene best. It felt very natural and that we were starting to achieve the family dynamic. Ruth is much more hilarious aloud than she is on paper. I feel like I'm getting her from bit to bit, scene to scene, but Ruth is not yet a coherent whole to me.

Is she even a coherent whole to herself, though?

The two scenes today were like night and day for her – and me, too, from everything down to my voice.

I think Annie was doing some really great things with Beatrice tonight. I felt like she was mocking me. Not usually a good thing. ☺ It's helping me out a lot because she'll say something and my – Ruth's – face will fall naturally.

Beatrice deflates, which I think sometimes is just as bad as wounding.

10/2/06

Why are you ashamed of me?

Why are you ashamed of me?

WHY ARE YOU ASHAMED OF ME?

Why are you ashamed of me why are you ashamed of me why are you ashamed of me  
why are you ashamed of me why are you ashamed of me

I think if I get this line I get Ruth. Stripped of her various eccentricities she's just this horribly broken little girl. I connected with that line tonight and I don't know why, because thank god in my life I have never had to feel that feeling from my parents. How can you wound your own child so deeply that she is able to ask that question.

If I asked my mother that question she would cry and pull me into her lap and rock me and cry and cry and ask me how on earth I could feel that she was ashamed of me.

The problem is, Ruth is totally right. Beatrice is ashamed of her to the point that she barely consider her her own child.

10/4/06

Ruth's hyperactivity comes easy to me – I think just because her lines are written so beautifully. When I read them I feel like there's no other choice but the way they come out. She just talks and talks and talks without thinking or taking in her surroundings and I actually find it refreshing. I have no natural capacity to talk that quickly or let my thoughts just come spilling out of me like a freight train. Her concern for her sister is sweet in this scene. She's completely relatable here.

NO DATE

Rehearsal tonight was a little rough, but I'm not sure why. I think Caleb and Jenny's reactions got me down a little. I felt energetic but I was being told we looked tired and lacking in spirit. Maybe Ruth is harder to find when I'm concentrating too much, because she's so reactionary. Without the scripts it'll be a lot better because I can really listen to Ilana more instead of reading.

NO DATE

Short rehearsal... I liked doing the little bit of improve that I was there for. It made me a little less anxious about the improve aspect of the actual performances – at first. But then I was realizing that Caleb knows and loves this play like we do and was throwing out a thoughtful and relevant suggestions because he could.

The audience, for the most part, won't know the story at all. I should say, they don't know our characters or circumstances. It seems to me that what they throw at us has to be either tiny – which seems pointless unless we use it as a springboard for something big – or ridiculous.

10/10/06

I was terrified when Caleb said tonight was not so good. I felt like all my instincts were completely backwards and that I've been overconfident. But I don't usually get overconfident, I get terrified and insecure about my ability to make other people really believe. Ruth has been a pleasant surprise and also kind of a nightmare because this broken, dysfunctional, twisted, reactionary, scary, scared girl has been coming naturally – easily is definitely the wrong word – to me. I was scared that what was feeling natural to me was actually me being a lazy actor or something. One-on-one with Caleb helped because he assured me that mostly, I was doing well. He said the word "vibrant" and I love that word. That may be something in Ruth that I actually envy. People can't help but look at Ruth, and it's not just because she's weird.

I told Caleb I don't really find her weird anymore, and that's true. The reason she doesn't seem strange anymore is that, besides the fact that I've been living in her head as much as I can, I can't blame her for being her. She's a product of her horrendous environment. I think Tillie is more out of the norm because she's just this kid, this little girl of eleven for

god's sake, who manages to save herself from her fate and her family. Ruth is her mother's daughter, and Tillie is something else entirely.

I started thinking on the walk home about what happens to Ruth after the end of the play.  
I think:

-she refuses to go back to school for a week and a half, and when she does, she doesn't talk to Chris Burns anymore

10/12/06

I liked the improv tonight... again. I suppose I should look back in this journal at all the times I've written that sentence and feel better about improv in the performance. I think I trust myself now, and I look forward to improv in rehearsal. So I'm not my own problem anymore, and neither is the idea of improv in general. It is some third variable I don't trust, and I think it might be the audience. I've never feared the audience so much before. Showing so much skin in Cabaret will be nothing compared to this. I feel like I'm painting a bull's eye on my soul and the program is inviting them to take aim.

Half of the tech staff scares the crap out of me. Some of them act like they hate actors. I don't feel safe in their hands. I feel safe with Caleb and Laird, but there's only so much they can do.

I might just be a coward. The other girls don't seem as afraid as I am.

#### NO DATE

What's my "thing?" There's supposed to be one thing I can do to get to Ruth right away... Caleb doesn't think any of us have one yet... I don't.

I've been thinking of what is powerful enough in my life that is also relevant to Ruth that can get me to her, immediately, regardless of the situation.

I've never been as erratic as Ruth. But I think I've been connecting with it. Maybe I'm wrong and I'm not convincing anyone. I think when I've been successful it's because I'm having fun with it... not making fun of Ruth but having fun being Ruth. There are things in her that I sometimes wish I could be. Call her what you will, but she is vivacious and unpredictable and bouncy and unflappably electric.

I've started drawing and writing in the margins the way Ruth would. It's fun being her when it's not so incredibly depressing.

#### NO DATE

I'm going to try not to let my confidence sink when the notes reflect that I was the one to sink a scene. Obviously that's part of what's keeping me down.

10/18/06

GOOD RUN! The presence of a new audience helped a lot with the energy. I think. I felt like Ruth was completely filling the room at some parts. I have never been so excited to do the next scene, and the next. I am revived completely.

Ilana's monologues were beautiful today, completely serene. And Annie was full of life. This is maybe the first time the three of us were fluid (mostly) the whole way through.  
In the storm scene –

Caleb asked me last time what I thought of Tillie's science projects.

I made my decision today – Ruth is confused, dismissive, but above all jealous. She can't do these things and so doesn't get any attention for it.

I'd like to get more physically comfortable in the nightmare scene, but it probably will only really come with the couch, so I'll cut myself some slack. Jumping on the couch scene felt great.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **ACTOR JOURNAL**

#### **Paula Aranda, “Janice”**

[NOTE: *Unfortunately, Paula neglected to mark the dates of her entries. They are presented in the order in which she wrote them, as they appeared in her journal.*] ]

I was really excited about going to my first rehearsal. I got there and read my part, and it was OK. I just can't think of a laugh. But I'll work on it. How hard can it be to come up with a laugh for a geeky character? I guess the whole Caleb doing a laugh and me doing another one gave me some ideas. It's kind of weird because I've always been given examples of what to do, and Caleb makes me find it on my own. I guess that when I feel more like my character it will be better. Stupid laugh.

It was kind of weird at rehearsal today. I'd never done my part in front of the other actors. I feel kind of intimidated because they all seem to be kind of close because they did the workshops, and I didn't get a chance to. I don't feel the connection they all have. But I guess that's OK because I'm not really supposed to feel like part of the family: I'm the enemy.

And I still can't get that stupid laugh. And it didn't help that I was so intimidated, especially by Annie. I really wish I had been able to go the workshops.

I thought that being off-book would help me feel more like Janice, but no. I was too focused on trying to remember the lines to actually act. And on top of that I completely messed them up. I have the fewest amount of lines (not counting Sydney) and I can't even learn them. This is ridiculous.

And on top of that I can't even get that stupid laugh right. I'm really not feeling the laugh. I guess that part of the problem is that I don't even get why I would laugh. It's hard because I don't have a little brother so I don't see why it's funny. I guess I just have to keep trying.

Well Caleb helped me find a laugh that works: my really annoying laugh. Too bad I can't make myself laugh like that while I'm doing my monologue. I can only laugh like that when I really find something absolutely hilarious, and this is just more of ridiculous, nervous laughter.

What really did help was Caleb suggesting starting the laugh earlier so that I'm laughing while I speak. I guess I'm feeling it more that way. This is getting much better I think. I hope it looks that way too.

It sucks because everyone else seems to be doing much better. I think it's harder for me because I only have a one minute scene to develop my character.

But you know, I think I'm doing much better in relating with the other actors. I don't feel intimidated anymore. This should be good.

Working on my monologue with Jenny was very different. Annie was sitting there and I wasn't feeling embarrassed, which is awesome. But Jenny did help, a lot because she realized that I didn't really get why I had to laugh during the part about my brother. But she said it's because I think he is so ridiculous it makes me laugh. I guess that makes more sense and it's kind of starting to work. I just have to find a laugh that will actually fit me. I love how Jenny is so excited about everything. She was making me feel really good about my artistic choices. I don't know, I guess it's getting better.

I know that the improve today was in no way directed to help me, but it really did actually. A typical day at school shows me as a sort of outcast with no real friends. I felt like I was a little geek who is trying really hard to fit in with the cool girls and doesn't want to try to make friends with someone like Tillie because she is obviously teacher's pet. The whole lunch scene where Tillie begins going to the table, I was next and purposely sat at the opposite end so that I won't be seen as being friendly with such a person, but then when everyone else came I kind of wanted to be included in the fun.

The hot seat activity was really good for me. I know I should have, but I've never really thought about my character outside of the experiment. Some of the stuff I said I got from my real life experience, like my mom being a teacher. And then, well I was acting kind of childish and not interested in boys because that's how I used to be. I was a very late bloomer. But that obviously didn't work because I start giggling about dating in school during the science fair. I had thought of it as a nervous laugh, but I think it's better this way.

Oct. 30

The run last night was pretty good. I know that for the other actors it was worse than usual, but for me it was great. For the first time, I was actually feeling like Janice. I think it's kind of because I was in front of an audience with a light on me, which is kind of like it would be in a science fair. I felt like I was actually trying to prove how great my experiment is. Also, I didn't think that I would get any suggestions from the audience, but I did, and they worked. Even the picking my nose was good. I felt like such a geek, it was amazing.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Introductory Speech**

**Sloan:**

Good evening. I'm Sloan, the producer of tonight's performance of *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. This will be an unusual production.

We want to examine how audience participation can alter a performance. I'd like to encourage you all to participate in this production by making suggestions that subtly or radically alter the trajectory of the play. We hope you have a lot of fun with it, though you are equally as entitled to just sit back and enjoy the show as is.

Please take a moment to turn off all cell phones and electronic devices – although we want your suggestions, and because we want them, we can't have extraneous noises.

To ensure that the show runs smoothly, there are some guidelines to structure your participation. Our director, Caleb Green, will explain these rules.

**Caleb:**

Good evening, everyone. I'd like to draw your attention to the pink insert in your program; there you will find the rules governing our experiment. According to these rules, you, the audience will be encouraged to do certain things but will also be prevented from doing others. The first and most important thing for you to understand is that the actors and technicians will choose whether or not to enact your suggestions. Second, the actors will not halt the performance to listen to your suggestions. It is pivotal that you speak loudly and clearly so as to be heard. Now onto the specific rules. Please follow along as I review them one by one.

- 1) You cannot prevent the performers from performing.
- 2) You cannot stop the play from moving forward (i.e. cannot ask/tell the actors to repeat a section).
- 3) You may make as many *different* suggestions as you would like. However, you may only make the *same* suggestion (whether enacted or not) a maximum of three times.
- 4) You may suggest changing plot, character, acting, blocking, or direction.
- 5) You may suggest changing technical aspects (sound, lights, set, costumes, props).
- 6) You must designate to whom the suggestion is directed (if everyone onstage, then "Everyone"). Tech, on the other hand, does not need to be designated; simply shout out the suggestion.
- 7) Your suggestions may be constructive or deconstructive in nature, but must pertain to the artistic performance.
- 8) Have fun! It's always better to suggest something. The actors and technicians may or may not choose to enact your idea, but there's nothing to lose in suggesting it.

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

Again, this experiment will make for an exciting evening of theatre, hopefully unlike anything you've experienced before! I would like to point out that you yourselves are now participants in this production. Consequently, your behavior should reflect this position. Your suggestions do not have to be positive or constructive – they can be deconstructive or critical, but they should always pertain to the *performance* of the play. Excessively adverse or aggressive behavior will result in your ejection from the theatre. This is a serious experiment – we ask for your respect and cooperation. You may test the actors' boundaries, but do not taunt them or simply try to mess them up.

I will be seated at the back of the theatre with a microphone in hand. If necessary, I might intervene and mediate as director. The performance should be an exciting and unusual dialogue between all of us.

Thank you again for coming. Enjoy the show.

## **APPENDIX G**

### **AUDIENCE TRANSCRIPT Nov. 2, 2006 Thursday 8 pm**

#### **KEY:**

**[response]** : spectator's response

**m** : male spectator

**f** : female spectator

**[—]** : no response, or negative response from the audience to the comment

**[+]** : positive response from audience to comment, typically laughter

**\*** : suggestion was taken up by performer or tech

**-** : no reaction, or negative reaction, to the enacted suggestion by the audience

**+** : positive reaction, typically laughter, to the enacted suggestion by the audience

**#** : spectator suggested something moments before it was scheduled to happen

#### **EXAMPLE:**

**[Act. + m]\*-** : A male spectator shouted out, "Act." The audience responded to this suggestion with laughter. Subsequently, an actor accepted the suggestion and enacted it. This time, however, the audience did not react, or reacted negatively, to the actor's enactment.

#### **I.i**

##### **[Turn the lights on. + f]**

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** He told me to look at my hand, for a part of it came from a star that exploded too long ago to imagine. This part of me was formed from a tongue of fire that screamed through the heavens until there was our sun. And this part of me – this tiny part of me – was on the sun when it itself exploded and whirled in a great storm until the planets came to be. And this small part of me was then a whisper of the earth. When there was life, perhaps this part of me got lost in a fern that was crushed and covered until it was coal. And then it was a diamond millions of years later – it must have been a diamond as beautiful as the star from which it had first come. Or perhaps this part of me became lost in a terrible beast, or became part of a huge bird that flew above the primeval swamps. And he said this thing was so small – this part of me was so small it couldn't be seen – but it was there from the beginning of the world. And he called this bit of me an atom. And when he wrote the word, I fell in love with it. Atom. *Atom*. What a beautiful word.

#### **I.ii**

**BEATRICE:** Will you get that please? No help! Never any help! Hello? Yes it is. Who is this?...I hope there hasn't been any trouble at school...Oh, she's always been like that. She hardly says a word around here, either. I always say some people were born to speak and others born to listen...You know I've been meaning to call you to thank

you for that lovely rabbit you gave Matilda. She and I just adore it and it's gotten so big...Well, it certainly was thoughtful. Mr. Goodman, I don't mean to change the subject but aren't you that delightful young man Tillie said hello to a couple of months back at the A & P? You were by the lobster tank and I was near the frozen foods? That delightful and handsome young man?...Why, I would very much indeed use the expression *handsome*. Yes, and...Well, I encourage her at every opportunity at home. Did she say I didn't? Both my daughters have their own desks and I put 75-watt bulbs right near them...Yes...Yes...I think those tests are very much overrated, anyway, Mr. Goodman...Well, believe me she's nothing like that around this house...Now I don't want you to think I don't appreciate what you're trying to do, Mr. Goodman, but I'm afraid it's simply useless. I've tried just everything, but she isn't a pretty girl – I mean, let's be frank about it – she's going to have her problems. Are you married, Mr. Goodman? Oh, that's too bad. I don't know what's the matter with women today letting a handsome young man like you get away...Well, some days she just doesn't feel like going to school. You just said how bright she is, and I'm really afraid to put too much of a strain on her after what happened to her sister. You know, too much strain is the worst thing in this modern world, Mr. Goodman, and I can't afford to have another convulsive on my hands, now can I? [IN – f] But don't you worry about Matilda. There will be some place for her in this world. And, like I said, some were born to speak and others just to listen...and do call again, Mr. Goodman. It's been a true pleasure speaking with you. Goodbye.

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, that wasn't very nice of you to tell them I was forcibly detaining you from school. Why, the way that Mr. Goodman spoke, he must think I'm running a concentration camp. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is to be accused of running a concentration camp for your own children? Well, it isn't embarrassing at all. That school of yours is forty years behind the times anyway, and believe me you learn more around here than that ugly Mr. Goodman can teach you! You know, I really feel sorry for him. I never saw a man with a more effeminate face in my life. When I saw you talking to him by the lobster tank I said to myself, "Good Lord, for a science teacher my poor girl has got herself a Hebrew hermaphrodite." Of course, he's not as bad as Miss Hanley. [Give Tillie the beer. + f] The idea of letting her teach girl's gym is staggering. And you have to place me in the embarrassing position of giving them a reason to call me at eight-thirty in the morning, no less.

**TILLIE:** I didn't say anything.

**BEATRICE:** What do you tell them when they want to know why you stay home once in a while?

**TILLIE:** I tell them I'm sick.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, you're sick all right, the exact nature of the illness not fully realized, but you're sick all right. Any daughter that would turn her mother in as administrator of a concentration camp has got be suffering from something very peculiar.

**TILLIE:** Can I go in today, Mother?

**BEATRICE:** You'll go in, all right.

**TILLIE:** Mr. Goodman said he was going to do an experiment –

**BEATRICE:** Why, he looks like the kind that would do his experimenting after sundown.

**TILLIE:** On radioactivity –

**BEATRICE:** On radioactivity? That's all that high school needs!

**TILLIE:** He's going to bring in the cloud chamber —

**BEATRICE:** Why, what an outstanding event. If you had warned me yesterday I would've gotten all dressed to kill and gone with you today. I love seeing cloud chambers being brought in.

**TILLIE:** You can actually see —

**BEATRICE:** You're giving me a headache.

**TILLIE:** Please?

**BEATRICE:** No, my dear, the fortress of knowledge is not going to be blessed with your presence today. I have a good number of exciting duties for you to take care of, not the least of which is rabbit droppings.

**TILLIE:** Oh, Mother, please...I'll do it after school.

**BEATRICE:** If we wait a minute longer this house is going to ferment. I found rabbit droppings in my bedroom even.

**TILLIE:** I could do it after Mr. Goodman's class. I'll say I'm ill and ask for a sick pass.

**BEATRICE:** Do you want me to chloroform that thing right this minute?

**TILLIE:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Then shut up.

**[IN – f]**

**RUTH:** Do you have Devil's Kiss down there?

**BEATRICE:** It's in the bathroom cabinet.

**RUTH:** There's so much junk in here it's driving me crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Maybe it's in my purse...If you don't hurry up you'll be late for school.

**RUTH:** Well, I couldn't very well go in without Devil's Kiss, now could I?

**BEATRICE:** Doesn't anyone go to school these days without that all over their lips?

**RUTH:** Nobody I know, except Tillie, that is. And if she had a little lipstick on I'll bet they wouldn't have laughed at her so much yesterday.

**BEATRICE:** Why were they laughing?

**RUTH:** The assembly. Didn't she tell you about the assembly?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, you didn't tell me she was in an assembly.

**RUTH:** Well, I just thought of it right now. How could I tell you anything until I think of it — did you ever stop to consider that? Some crummy science assembly.

**BEATRICE:** What is she talking about?

**RUTH:** I thought she'd tell the whole world. Imagine, right in front of the assembly, with everybody laughing at her.

**BEATRICE:** Will you be quiet, Ruth? *Why were they laughing at you?*

**TILLIE:** I don't know.

**RUTH:** You don't know? My heavens, she was a sight. She had that old jumper on — the faded one with that low collar — and a raggy slip that showed all over and her hair looked like she was struck by lightning.

**BEATRICE:** You're exaggerating...

**RUTH:** She was cranking this model of something —

**TILLIE:** The atom.

**RUTH:** This model of the atom...you know, it had this crank and a long tower so that when you turned it, these little colored balls went spinning around like crazy. And there was Tillie, cranking away, looking weird as a coot...that old jumper with the

raggy slip and the lightning hair...cranking away while some boy with glasses was reading this stupid speech...and everybody burst into laughter until the teachers yelled at them. And all day long, the kids kept coming up to me saying, "Is that really your sister? How can you bear it?" And you know, Chris Burns says to me - "She looks like the one that went to the looney doctors." I could have kissed him there and then.

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, if you can't get yourself dressed properly before going to school, you're never going to go again. I don't like the idea of everybody laughing at you, because when they laugh at you they're laughing at me. And I don't want you cranking any more...atoms.

**RUTH:** You're almost out of Devil's Kiss.

**BEATRICE:** If you didn't put so much on it would last longer.

**RUTH:** Who was that calling?

**BEATRICE:** Matilda turned me in to the Gestapo.

**RUTH:** Can I earn a cigarette this morning?

**BEATRICE:** Why not?

**RUTH:** Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**RUTH:** The call this morning. Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Yes.

**RUTH:** I figured it would be.

**BEATRICE:** A little higher, [Wack her with it. – f\*- please.

**RUTH:** There?

**BEATRICE:** Yes, *there*... [Brush her hair with it. – f] Why did you figure it would be Mr. Goodman?

**RUTH:** Well, he called me out of sewing class yesterday – I remember because my blouse wasn't all buttoned – and he wanted to know why Tillie's out of school so much.

**BEATRICE:** Lower. A little lower...And what did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I wish you'd go back to Kools. I liked Kools better.

**TILLIE:** What did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I told him you were ill, and he wanted to know what kind, so I told him you had leprosy.

**TILLIE:** You didn't!

**RUTH:** You should have seen his face. He was so cute. And I told him you had ringworm and gangrene.

**BEATRICE:** What did he say?

**RUTH:** And I told him you had what Mother's last patient had...whatchamacallit?

**BEATRICE:** Psoriasis?

**RUTH:** Yeah. Something like that.

**TILLIE:** Tell me you didn't, Ruth!

**RUTH:** OK. I didn't...But I really did.

**BEATRICE:** He knew you were joking.

**RUTH:** And then I told him to go look up the *history* and then he'd find out. Whenever they go look up the history then they don't bother me anymore 'cause they think I'm crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Ruth –

**RUTH:** And I told him the disease you had was fatal and that there wasn't much hope for you.

**BEATRICE:** What kind of *history* is it?

**RUTH:** Just a little folder with the story of our lives in it, that's all.

**BEATRICE:** How did you ever see it?

**RUTH:** I read the whole thing last term when Miss Hanley dragged me into the record room because I didn't want to climb the ropes in gym and I told her my skull was growing.

**BEATRICE:** A little *lower*, please.

**RUTH:** Lower! Higher! I wish you'd make up your mind. If you'd switch back to Kools it might be worth it, but ugh! these are awful. You know, I really did think my skull was growing. Either that or a tumor. So she dragged me out of gym class, and she thought I couldn't read upside down while she was sitting opposite me with the history. But I could.

**BEATRICE:** What does it say?

**RUTH:** Oh, it says you're divorced and that I went crazy...and my father took a heart attack at Star Lake...and now you're a widow –

**BEATRICE:** That's it! Hold it right there! Aaah!

**RUTH:** And it says that I exaggerate and tell stories and that I'm afraid of death and have nightmares...and all that stuff.

**BEATRICE:** And what else does it say?

**RUTH:** I can't remember everything you know. Remember this, remember that... remember this, that...

### I.iii

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** Today I saw it. Behind the glass a white cloud began to form. He placed a small piece of metal in the center of the chamber and we waited until I saw the first one – a trace of smoke that came from nowhere and then disappeared. And then another...and another, until I knew it was coming from the metal. They looked like water-sprays from a park fountain, and they went on and on for as long as I watched. And he told me the fountain of smoke would come forth for a long time, and if I had wanted to, I could have stayed there all my life and it would never have ended – that fountain, so close I could have touched it. In front of my eyes, one part of the world was becoming another. Atoms exploding, flinging off tiny bullets that caused the fountain, atom after atom breaking down into something new. And no one could stop the fountain. It would go on for millions of years – on and on, this fountain from eternity.

### I.iv

**BEATRICE:** I thought we had everything, but leave it to you to think of the one thing we're missing...Twenty-two acres in Prince's Bay. Small pond. \$6,000...That's cheap. I'd take a look at it if I had any money...What kind of seeds are they?

**TILLIE:** Marigolds. *They've been exposed to cobalt-60.*

**BEATRICE:** If there's one thing I've always wanted, it's been a living room planted with marigolds that have been exposed to cobalt-60. While you're at it, why don't you throw in a tomato patch in the bathroom?

**TILLIE:** Just let me keep them here for a week or so until they get started and then I'll transplant them to the backyard.

**BEATRICE:** Four-family house. Six and a half and six and a half over five and five. Eight garages. I could really do something with that. A nursing home... Don't think I'm not kicking myself that I didn't finish that real estate course. I should have finished beauty school, too...God, what I could do with eight garages... You know, I'm thinking of getting rid of *that* and making this place into something.

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** I've been thinking about a tea shop. Have you noticed there aren't many of them around anymore?

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** And this is just the type of neighborhood where a good tea shop could make a go of it. We'd have a good cheesecake. You've got to have a good cheesecake... Eight times ten – well, eight times eight, if they're falling down – that's sixty-four dollars a month from the garages alone...I swear money makes money.

**BEATRICE:** What is cobalt-60?

**TILLIE:** It's something that causes...changes in seeds. Oh, Mother – he set the cloud chamber up just for me and he told me about radioactivity and half-life and he got the seeds for me.

**BEATRICE:** What does half-life mean?

**TILLIE:** The half-life of Polonium-210 is one hundred and forty days. The half-life of Radium-226 is one thousand five hundred and ninety years. The half-life of Uranium-238 is four and one-half billion years.

**BEATRICE:** Do you know you're giving me a headache? LOOK WHO'S THERE! IT'S NANNY! NANNY CAME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE BY HERSELF! I'm going to need a cigarette for this. NANNY! YOU COME SIT DOWN AND WE'LL BE RIGHT WITH HER! **[Stop smoking. – m]** You know, sometimes I've got to laugh. I've got *this* on my hands and all you're worried about is planting marigolds. I'VE GOT HOTSY WATER FOR YOU, NANNY. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME HOTSY WATER AND HONEY? I've never seen it to fail. Every time I decide to have a cup of coffee I see that face at the curtains. I wonder what she'd do...if I just poured this right over her head. **[Do it. – f]\*+** I'll be she wouldn't even notice it. **[Fall of the chair. – f]** NANNY'S GOING TO GET JUST WHAT SHE NEEDS! **[Spill it. – f]** You know if someone told me when I was young that I'd end up feeding honey to a zombie, I'd tell them they were crazy. SOMETHING WRONG, NANNY? OH, DID I FORGET NANNY'S SPOON? MERCY! MERCY! I FORGOT NANNY'S SPOON! I'll give you a spoon, Nanny, I'll give you a spoon. **[Nanny, knock the table over. – m]** **[Throw the cup at her. – f]** Matilda! Watch me give Nanny her spoon. **[Don't watch. – f]\*+** A SPOON FOR NANNY! Fifty dollars a week. Fifty dollars. I look at you, Nanny, and I wonder if it's worth it. I think I'd be better off driving a cab. TAKE HONEY, NANNY. HONEY WITH HOTSY WATER! You should have seen her daughter bring her here last week...I could have used you that day...She came in pretending she was Miss Career Woman of the Year. She said she was in real estate

and *such a busy little woman*, such a busy little woman – she just couldn't give all the love and care and affection her little momsy needed anymore... Nanny's quite a little cross to bear, now aren't you, Nanny dear? [Help Nanny. – f] But you're a little better than Mr. Mayo was – with the tumor on his brain – or Miss Marion Minto with her cancer, or Mr. Brougham... [Tillie, open that for Nanny. – f] what was his first name?

**TILLIE:** Alexander.

**BEATRICE:** Mr. Alexander Brougham with the worms in his legs. WHY, NANNY'S QUITE SOME LITTLE GIRL, AREN'T YOU, NANNY? A GIRL DRINKING HER HOTSY AND HONEY!...Cobalt-60. Ha! You take me for a fool, don't you?

**TILLIE:** No, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** Science, science, science! Don't they teach our misfits anything anymore? Anything decent and meaningful and sensitive? Do you know what I'd be now if it wasn't for this mud pool I got sucked into? I'd probably be a dancer. [Dance. – m] [Show us your boobs. + f] Miss Betty Frank, The Best Dancer of the Class of 19... [Spotlight. – f]\* [(internal) Yes. – f That's it. – f] something. One minute I'm the best dancer in school [IN – f] – smart as a whip – [Dance for us. + f] the head of the whole crowd! [Background music. + f] And the next minute...One mistake. That's how it starts. Marry the wrong man and before you know it he's got you tied down with two stones around your neck for the rest of your life. When I was in that lousy high school I was one of the most respected kids you ever saw. I used to wonder why people always said, "Why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday..." Before I knew what happened I lost my dancing legs and got varicose legs. Beautiful varicose legs. Do you know, everything I ever thought I'd be has exploded! NANNY, YOU HURRY UP WITH THAT HONEY! [Nanny, spill it. – f] Exploded! You know, I almost forgot about everything I was supposed to be... [Spotlight on Nanny. + m] [Speak, Nanny. – f] NANNY'S ALMOST FINISHED. ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL? She's almost finished, all right. NANNY'S DAUGHTER IS COMING TO SEE YOU SOON. WILL THAT MAKE NANNY HAPPY? [IN – f] The day Miss Career Woman of the Year comes to visit again I think I'll drop dead. [Drop dead. + m] Nobody's too busy for anything they want to do, [Give Nanny the beer. + f] don't you tell me. What kind of idiot do people take me for? NANNY, YOU'RE SPILLING YOUR HOTSY! JESUS CHRIST! [Get the beer. + f] You know, I ought to kick you right out and open that tea shop tomorrow. [Do it. – f] Oh, it's coming. I can feel it. And the first thing I'll do is get rid of that rabbit.

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** You think I'm kidding?

**TILLIE:** No, I don't.

**BEATRICE:** You bet I'm not! I was going to do this a month ago. [Kill the rabbit. – f] [Nanny, drink the beer. + f] Here it is. Here's a new word for you. Trichloro...methane. Do you know what that is, Matilda? Well, it's chloroform! I'm saving it for that Angora manure machine of yours. Speaking of manure machines, IS NANNY READY TO GO MAKE DUTY? NANNY IS ALWAYS READY FOR DUTY, [Fall over. – f] AREN'T YOU NANNY? BECAUSE NANNY'S A GOODY-GOODY GIRL AND GOODY-GOODY GIRLS ALWAYS GET GOODY-

GOODY THINGS. GOD LOOKS OUT FOR GOODY-GOODY GIRLS AND GIVES THEM HOTSY AND HONEY – RIGHT, NANNY?

**BEATRICE:** Half-life! If you want to know what a half-life is, just ask me. You're looking at the original half-life! I got stuck with one daughter with half a mind; another one who's half a test tube; half a husband – a house half full of rabbit crap – and half a corpse! That's what I call a half-life, Matilda! Me and cobalt-60! Two of the biggest half-lifes you ever saw!

#### I.v

**BEATRICE:** Hello – Mr. Goodman, please... How would I know if he's got a class?...Hello, Mr. Goodman? Are you Mr. Goodman?...Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Torgersen...Yes, I'll wait... Couldn't you find him, Miss Torgersen?...Oh! Excuse me, Mr. Goodman. How are you?...I'll bet you'll never guess who this is – it's Mrs. Hunsdorfer – remember the frozen foods? You know, Ruth told me she's your new secretary and I certainly think that's a delight. You were paying so much attention to Matilda that I'll bet Ruth just got jealous. She does things like that, you know. I hope she works hard for you, although I can't imagine what kind of work Ruth could be doing in that great big science office. She's a terrible snoop... Your attendance? Isn't that charming. And the *cut* cards! Imagine. You trust her with...why, I didn't know she could type *at all*...imagine. Well...I'll...Of course, *too* much work isn't good for anyone, either. No wonder she's failing everything. I mean, I never knew a girl who failed everything regardless of what they were suffering from...I suppose I should say recovering from...Well, it's about the seeds you gave Matilda...Well, she's had them in the house for a week now and they're starting to grow. Now, she told me they had been subjected to radioactivity, and I hear such terrible things about radioactivity that I automatically associate radioactivity with sterility, and it positively horrifies me to have those seeds right here in my living room. Couldn't she just grow plain marigolds like everyone else? Oh... It does sound like an interesting project, but... No, I must admit that at this very moment I don't know what a *mutation* is... Mr. Goodman... Mr. Goodman! I don't want you to think I'm not interested, but please spare me definitions over the phone. I'll go the library next week and pick me out some little book on science and then I'll know all about mutations...No, you didn't insult me, but I just want you to know that I'm not *stupid*... I just thought prevention was better than a tragedy, Mr. Goodman. I mean, Matilda has enough problems to worry about without *sterility*... [Ask him on a date. + f]\*+ Well, I was just concerned, but you've put my poor mother's heart at ease. You know, really, our schools need more exciting young men like you, I really mean that. Really. Oh, I do. Goodbye, Mr. Goodman.

#### I.vi

**TILLIE:** Mother! She's going to have one!

**BEATRICE:** Stop it! Stop it, Ruth!

**TILLIE:** She's going!

**BEATRICE:** Ruth! Stop it!

**TILLIE:** She's going to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up and get back in your room! You're not going to let yourself go, do you hear me, Ruth? You're not going to go!

**RUTH:** He's after me!

**BEATRICE:** You were dreaming, do you hear me? Nobody's after you! Nobody!

**TILLIE:** I saw her eyes start to go back –

**BEATRICE:** Get back in your room! There, now, nobody's after you. Nice and easy.

**[Lightning. – m]** Breathe deeply...Did the big bad man come after my little girl?

**[Spotlight and a romantic song. + m]\*-** **[IN – f]** That big bad bogey man? Now that wasn't so bad, was it?

**RUTH:** It was the dream, with Mr. Mayo again.

**BEATRICE:** Oh. Well, we'll just get you a little hot milk and **[Power's out. – f]#** Why, the electricity's gone off. Do you remember what happened to those candles?

**RUTH:** What candles?

**BEATRICE:** The little white ones from my birthday cake last year.

**[(cut herself off) – f]**

**RUTH:** Tillie melted them down for school a long time ago.

**BEATRICE:** She had no right to do that.

**[Tillie's got the flashlight. – f]**

**RUTH:** She asked you. **[Tillie come save them. – f]\*+** She used them to attach a paper straw to a milk bottle with a balloon over it, **[Check the rabbit. – f]** and it was supposed to tell if it was going to rain.

**BEATRICE:** There! It works. I don't want her wasting anything of mine unless she's positive I won't need it. You always need candles. **[Nanny, come on stage. + f]** **[internal discussion and jokes]** **[Tillie, go hug her. – m]** **[Tillie, don't take no for an answer. – f]** **[Tillie, snuggle with your sister. – f]** **[Tillie, go to Nanny. + f]** Why, Ruth – your skin just turned ice cold! This will warm you up... What's the matter?

**RUTH:** The flashlight –

**BEATRICE:** What's wrong with it?

**RUTH:** It's the same one I used to check on Mr. Mayo with.

**BEATRICE:** So it is. We don't need it.

**RUTH:** No, let me keep it. **[Tell us about Mr. Mayo. – f]** Do you want to know how they have it in the history?

**BEATRICE:** No, I don't.

**RUTH:** Well, they say I came out of my room...And I started down the stairs, step by step...and I heard the choking and banging on the bed, and...

**BEATRICE:** I'm going back to bed.

**RUTH:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Well, talk about something nice, then.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, tell me about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** You change so fast I can't keep up with you.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...* the story about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** I don't know anything about telling stories. Get those great big smart teachers of yours to do that sort of stuff.

**RUTH:** Tell me about the horses again, and how you stole the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** Don't get me started on that.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...*

**BEATRICE:** Do you want a cigarette?

**RUTH:** Leave out the part where they shoot the horses, though.

**BEATRICE:** Honey, you know the whole story –

**RUTH:** “Apples! Pears! *Cu...cumbers!*”

**BEATRICE:** No. It’s “Apples! Pears! *Cucum...bers!*”

**BEATRICE AND RUTH:** “Apples! Pears! *Cucum...bers!*”

**RUTH:** How did you get the wagon out without him seeing you?

**BEATRICE:** That was easy. Every time he got home for the day he’d make us both some sandwiches – my mama had been dead for years – and he’d take a nap on the old sofa that used to be...there! And while he was sleeping I got the horses hitched up and went riding around the block waving to everyone.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, you didn’t!

**BEATRICE:** Of course I did. I had more nerve than a bear when I was a kid. Let me tell you it takes nerve to sit up on that wagon every day yelling “Apples!... Pears! *Cucum...bers!*”

**RUTH:** Did he find out you took the wagon?

**BEATRICE:** Did he find out? He came running down the street after me and started spanking me right on top of the wagon – not hard – but it was so embarrassing – and I had one of those penny marshmallow ships in the back pocket of my overalls, [Lights come back on. – f]\*- and it got all squished. And you better believe I never did it again... [Rain stops. – f]\*- You would have loved him, Ruth, and gone out with him on the wagon...all over Stapleton yelling as loud as you wanted.

**RUTH:** “Apples! Pears! *Cu...cumbers!*”

**BEATRICE:** No!

**RUTH:** “*Cucum...bers!*”

**BEATRICE:** My father made up for all the other men in this whole world, Ruth. If only you two could have met. He’d only be about seventy now, do you realize that? And I’ll bet he’d still be selling vegetables around town. All that fun – and then I don’t think I ever knew what really hit me.

**RUTH:** Don’t tell about –

**BEATRICE:** Don’t worry about the horses.

**RUTH:** What hit you?

**BEATRICE:** Well it was just me and Papa... and your father hanging around. And then Papa got sick... and I drove with him up to the sanatorium. And then I came home and there were the horses –

**RUTH:** Mother!

**BEATRICE:** And I had the horses...taken care of. And then Papa got terribly sick and he begged me to marry so that he’d be sure I’d be taken care of. If he knew how I was taken care of he’d turn over in his grave. And *nightmares!* Do you want to know the nightmare I used to have? I never had nightmares over the fights with your father, or the divorce, or this thrombosis – he deserved it – I never had nightmares over any of that. Let me tell you about my nightmare that used to come back and back: *Well, I’m on Papa’s wagon, but it’s newer and shinier, and it’s being pulled by beautiful white horses, not dirty workhorses – these are like circus horses with long manes and tinsel – and the wagon is blue, shiny blue. And it’s full – filled with yellow apples and*

grapes and green squash. You're going to laugh when you hear this. I'm wearing a lovely gown with jewels all over it, and my hair is piled up on top of my head with a long feather in it, and the bells are ringing. Huge bells swinging on a gold braid strung across the back of the wagon, and they're going DONG, DONG...DONG, DONG. And I'm yelling "APPLES! PEARS! CUCUM...BERS!"

**RUTH:** That doesn't sound like a nightmare to me.

**BEATRICE:** And then I turn down our street and all the noise stops. This long street, with all the doors of the houses shut and everything crowded next to each other, and there's not a soul around. And then I start getting afraid that the vegetables are going to spoil...and that nobody's going to buy anything, and I feel as though I shouldn't be on the wagon, and I keep trying to call out. But there isn't a sound. Not a single sound. Then I turn my head and look at the house across the street. I see an upstairs window, and a pair of hands pull the curtains slowly apart. I see the face of my father and my heart stands still... Ruth... take the light out of my eyes.

**[Put the light back in her eyes. + m] [Unfreeze. - f]**

**RUTH:** Is Nanny going to die here?

**BEATRICE:** No.

**RUTH:** How can you be sure?

**BEATRICE:** I can tell.

**RUTH:** Are you crying?

**BEATRICE:** What's left for me, Ruth?

**RUTH:** What, Mama?

**BEATRICE:** What's left for me?

### I.vii

**[Change the music. - f] [No! + m] [Spotlight on Nanny. - f] [Light rock. + f]**

**[Begin scene. + m] [Fast forward. + m] [You're not taking any of our suggestions. - f] [(internal, in response to previous) Ooh... - f] [Take a shot. + f] [The couch is smoking. - f]**

**TILLIE:** What are you doing?

**BEATRICE:** A little housecleaning, and you're going to help. You can start by getting rid of that rabbit or I'll suffocate the bastard. You don't think I will, do you? You wait and see. Where's Ruth? She's probably running around the schoolyard in her brassiere.

**TILLIE:** Mother, they want me to do something at school.

**BEATRICE:** NANNY! DID YOU HEAR THAT? THEY WANT HER TO DO SOMETHING AT SCHOOL! ISN'T THAT MOMENTOUS, NANNY? Well I want you to do something around here. Like get rid of that bunny. I'm being generous! I'll let you give it away. Far away. Give it to Mr. Goodman. I'd chloroform the thing myself, but that crazy sister of yours would throw convulsions for fifty years...and I hate a house that vibrates. And get rid of those sterile marigolds. They stink! HI, NANNY – HOW ARE YOU, HONEY? HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ON A LONG TRIP? You see, everybody, I spent today taking stock of my life and I've come up with zero. I added up all the separate departments and the total reads zero... zero zero zero zero zero **[Stop. + f]** zero ...And do you know how you pronounce that, with all your

**RUTH:** Can you believe it? [IN – f] I didn't, until Chris Burns came up and told me about it in Geography, and then Mr. Goodman told me himself during the eighth period in the office when I was eavesdropping. Aren't you so happy you could bust? Tillie? I'm so proud I can't believe it, Mama. Everybody was talking about it and nobody...well, it was the first time they all came up screaming about her and I said, "Yes, she's my sister!" I said it, "She's my sister! My sister! My *sister!*" Give me a cigarette.

**BEATRICE:** Get your hands off my personal property.

**RUTH:** I'll scratch your back later.

**BEATRICE:** I don't want you to touch me!

**RUTH:** Did he call yet? My God, I can't believe it, I just can't!

**BEATRICE:** Did who call yet?

**RUTH:** I'm not supposed to tell you, as Mr. Goodman's private secretary, but you're going to get a call from school.

**BEATRICE:** What is she talking about?

**TILLIE:** I was in the Science Fair at school.

**RUTH:** Didn't she tell you yet? Oh, Tillie, how could you? She's fantastic, Mama! She's a finalist in the Science Fair. There were only five of them out of hundreds and hundreds. She won with all those plants over there. They're freaks! Isn't that a scream? Dr. Berg picked her himself. The principal! And I heard Mr. Goodman say she was going to be another Madam Pasteur [**Fall. – m**] and he never saw a girl do anything like that before and...so I told everybody, "Yes, she's my sister!" Tillie, "You're my sister!" I said. And Mr. Goodman called the Advance and they're coming to take your picture. Oh, Mama, isn't it crazy? And nobody laughed at her, Mama. She beat out practically everybody and nobody laughed at her. "She's my sister," I said. "She's my sister!" That must be him! Mama, answer it – I'm afraid. [**Wake up, Nanny. – f**] Answer it before he hangs up! [**Have Nanny answer it. + f**] Mama! He's gonna hang up! [**Pick it up. – f**] Hello?...Yes... It's him!...Just a minute, please... He wants to talk to you.

**BEATRICE:** Who?

## RUTH: The *principal!*

**BEATRICE:** Hang up.

**RUTH:** I told him you were here! Mama!

**BEATRICE:** [Be nice on the phone. – f] Yes?...I know who you are, Dr. Berg...I see...Couldn't you get someone else? There's an awful lot of work that has to be done around here, because she's not as careful with her home duties as she is with man-in-the-moon marigolds...Me? What would you want with me up on the stage?...  
[Give Nanny a napkin. + f] The other mothers can do as they please...I would have thought you had enough in your *history* without...I'll think about it...Goodbye, Dr. Berg... I SAID I'D THINK ABOUT IT!

**RUTH:** What did he say?

**BEATRICE:** How could you do this to me? HOW COULD YOU LET THAT MAN CALL OUR HOME! I have no clothes, do you hear me? I'd look just like you up on the stage, ugly little you! DO YOU WANT THEM TO LAUGH AT US? LAUGH AT THE TWO OF US?

**RUTH:** Mother...aren't you proud of her? Mother...it's an *honor*.

**TILLIE:** But...nobody laughed at me.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, my God...

**[Someone help Nanny. + f] [Music. - f]**

## II.i

**[Applause. + m]\***(audience took it up)+ **[End applause. + m]\***(audience took it up)+

**RUTH:** The only competition you have to worry about is Janice Vickery. They say she caught it near Princess Bay Boulevard and it was still alive when she took the skin off it.

**TILLIE:** Let me do that please, Ruth.

**RUTH:** I'm sorry I touched them, really.

**TILLIE:** Why don't you feed Peter?

**RUTH:** Because I don't feel like feeding him...Now I feel like feeding him. I heard that it screamed for three minutes after she put it in because the water wasn't boiling yet. How much talent does it take to boil the skin off a cat and then stick the bones together again? That's what I want to know. Ugh. I had a dream about that, too. I figure she did it in less than a day and she ends up as one of the top five winners...and you spend months growing atomic flowers.

**TILLIE:** Don't you think you should finish getting ready?

**[Take off your shirt. - f]**

**RUTH:** Finish? This is it!

**TILLIE:** Are you going to wear that sweater?

**RUTH:** Look, don't worry about me. I'm not getting up on any stage, and if I did I wouldn't be caught dead with a horrible bow like that.

**TILLIE:** Mother put it —

**RUTH:** They're going to laugh you off the stage again like when you cranked that atom in assembly...I didn't mean that...The one they're going to laugh at is Mama.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** I said the one they're going to laugh at is Mama...Oh, let me take that bow off.

**TILLIE:** It's all right.

**RUTH:** Look, just sit still. I don't want everybody making fun of you.

**TILLIE:** What made you say that about Mama?

**RUTH:** Oh, I heard them talking in the Science Office yesterday. Mr. Goodman and Miss Hanley. She's getting \$12.63 to chaperon the thing tonight.

**TILLIE:** What were they saying?

**RUTH:** Miss Hanley was telling Mr. Goodman about Mama...when she found out you were one of the five winners. And he wanted to know if there was something wrong with Mama because she sounded crazy over the phone. And Miss Hanley said she

*was* crazy and she always has been crazy and she can't wait to see what she looks like after all these years. Miss Hanley said her nickname used to be *Betty the Loon*.

**TILLIE:** Ruth, you're hurting me.

**RUTH:** She was just like you and everybody thought she was a big weirdo. There! You look much better! Peter, if anybody stuck you in a pot of boiling water I'd kill them, do you know that?... What do they call boiling the skin off a cat? I call it murder, that's what I call it. [Put him in the oven. + f] They say it was hit by a car and Janice just scooped it up and before you could say *bingo* it was screaming in a pot of boiling water...Do you know what they're all waiting to see? Mama's feathers! That's what Miss Hanley said. She said Mama blabs as though she was the Queen of England and just as proper as can be, and that her idea of getting dressed up is to put on all the feathers in the world and go as a bird. Always trying to get somewhere, like a great big bird.

**TILLIE:** Don't tell Mama, please. It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** I was up there watching her getting dressed and sure enough, she's got the feathers out.

**TILLIE:** You didn't tell her what Miss Hanley said?

**RUTH:** Are you kidding? I just told her I didn't like the feathers and I didn't think she should wear any. But I'll bet she doesn't listen to me.

**TILLIE:** It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** It doesn't matter? Do you think I want to be laughed right out of the school tonight, with Chris Burns there, and all? Laughed right out of the school, with your electric hair and her feathers on that stage, and Miss Hanley splitting her sides?

**TILLIE:** Promise me you won't say anything.

**RUTH:** On one condition.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** The taxi will be here any minute and I won't have all this stuff ready. Did you see my speech?

**RUTH:** I mean it. Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** He belongs to all of us.

**RUTH:** For me. All for me. What do you care? He doesn't mean anything to you anymore, now that you've got all those crazy plants.

**TILLIE:** Will you stop?

**RUTH:** If you don't give him to me I'm going to tell Mama that everybody's waiting to laugh at her.

**TILLIE:** Where are those typewritten cards?

**RUTH:** I MEAN IT! Give him to me!

**TILLIE:** Does he mean that much to you?

**RUTH:** Yes!

**[Throw him on the floor. - f]**

**TILLIE:** All right.

**RUTH:** Betty the Loon... That's what they used to call her, you know. Betty the Loon!

**TILLIE:** I don't think that's very nice.

**RUTH:** First they had Betty the Loon, and now they've got Tillie the Loon... You don't have to worry about me turning you in for any old plants...How much does a taxi cost from here to the school?

**TILLIE:** Not much.

**RUTH:** I wish she'd give me the money it costs for a taxi – and for all that cardboard and paint and flowerpots and stuff. The only time she ever made a fuss over me was when she drove me nuts.

**TILLIE:** Tell her to hurry, please.

**RUTH:** By the way, I went over to see Janice Vickery's pot, that she did you know what in, and I started telling her and her mother about the worms in Mr. Alexander Brougham's legs, and I got thrown out because it was too near dinner time. That Mrs. Vickery kills me. She can't stand worms in somebody else's legs but she lets her daughter cook a cat.

**TILLIE:** Mother! The taxi will be here any minute.

**BEATRICE:** You're lucky I'm coming, without all this rushing me.

**TILLIE:** Mama, you look beautiful.

**BEATRICE:** Don't put it on too thick. I said I'd go and I guess there's no way to get out of it. Do you mind telling me how I'm supposed to get up on the stage? Do they call my name or what? And where are you going to be? If you ask me, they should've sent all the parents a mimeographed sheet of instructions. If this is supposed to be such a great event, why don't they do it right?

**TILLIE:** You just sit on the stage with the other parents before it begins.

**BEATRICE:** How long is this going to last? And remember, I don't care even if you do win the whole damn thing, I'm not making any speech. I can hold my own anywhere, but I hated that school when I went there and I hate it now...and the only thing I'd have to say is, what a pack of stupid teachers and vicious children they have. Imagine someone tearing the skin off a cat.

**RUTH:** She didn't tear it. She boiled it off.

**BEATRICE:** You just told me upstairs that girl tore the skin off with an orange knife and...do you know, sometimes you exasperate me? If you've got all the plants in this box, I can manage the folding thing. Do you know I've got a headache from doing those titles? And you probably don't even like them.

**TILLIE:** I like them very much.

**BEATRICE:** Look, if you don't want me to go tonight, I don't have to. You're about as enthusiastic as a dummy about this whole thing.

**TILLIE:** I'm sorry.

**BEATRICE:** And I refuse to let you get nervous. Put that bow back in your hair.

**RUTH:** I took it out.

**BEATRICE:** What did you do that for?

**RUTH:** Because it made her look crazy.

**BEATRICE:** How would you know what's crazy or not? If that sweater of yours was any tighter it'd cut off the circulation in your chest. The bow looks very nice in your hair. There's nothing wrong with looking proper, Matilda, and if you don't have enough money to look expensive and perfect, people like you for *trying* to look nice. You know, one day maybe you will be pretty. You'll have some nice features, when

that hair revives and you do some tricks with makeup. I hope you didn't crowd the plants too close together. Did you find your speech?

**TILLIE:** Yes, mother.

**BEATRICE:** You know, Matilda, I was wondering about something. Do you think you're really going to win? I mean, not that you won't be the best, but there's so much politics in school. Don't laugh, but if there's anyone who's an expert on that, it's me, and someday I'm going to write a book and blast that school to pieces. If you're just a little bit different in this world, they try to kill you off.

**RUTH:** Tillie gave Peter to me.

**BEATRICE:** Oh? Then you inherited the rabbit droppings I found upstairs. What are you doing with your coat on?

**RUTH:** I'm going out to wait for the taxi.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not. You start right in on the rabbit droppings. Or you won't get another cigarette even if you scratch my back with an orange knife.

**RUTH:** I'm going down to the school with you.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not! You're going to keep company with that corpse in there. If she wakes up and starts gagging just slip her a shot of whiskey. Quick! Grab the plants, Matilda – I'll get the big thing.

**RUTH:** I want to go! I promised Chris Burns I'd meet him.

**BEATRICE:** Can't you understand English?

**RUTH:** I've got to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up!

**RUTH:** I don't care! [Slap her. – f] I'M GOING ANYWAY!

**BEATRICE:** WHAT DID YOU SAY?

**TILLIE:** Mother!

**BEATRICE:** Hurry up with that box, Matilda, and tell him to stop blowing the horn.

HURRY UP! I don't know where you ever got the idea you were going tonight. Did you think nobody was going to hold down the fort?...Now you know how I felt all those years you and everybody else was running out whenever they felt like it – because there was always me to watch over the fifty-dollar-a-week corpse. If there's one thing I demand it's respect. I don't ask for anything from you but respect.

**RUTH:** Why are you ashamed of me?

**BEATRICE:** I've been seen with a lot worse than you. I don't even know why I'm going tonight, do you know that? Do you think I give one goddamn about the whole thing?... Do you want to know why I'm going? Do you really want to know why this once somebody else has to stick with that dried prune for a few minutes? Because this is the first time in my life I've ever felt just a little bit proud over something. Isn't that silly? Somewhere in the back of this turtle-sized brain of mine I feel just a little *proud!* [IN – f] Jesus Christ! And you begrudge me even that, you little bastard.

**RUTH:** Hurry up. They're waiting for you... [Tell us – (cuts herself off). – f] They're *all* waiting for you.

**BEATRICE:** I hope the paint is dry...Who's waiting for me?

**RUTH:** Everybody...including Miss Hanley. [Don't tell her. – f] [Head out the door. – f] She's been telling all the teachers... [Honk the horn again. – f] about you...and they're all waiting.

[Accept it and leave. – f]

**BEATRICE:** You're such a little liar, Ruth, do you know that? When you can't have what you want, you try to ruin it for everybody else.

**RUTH:** Goodnight, *Betty the Loon*.

**[Accept it and leave. – m] [chorus of “Go.” and “Just go.”]**

**BEATRICE:** Take this thing.

**RUTH:** What for?

**BEATRICE:** Go with Matilda.

**RUTH:** I don't want to go now.

**BEATRICE:** GET OUT OF HERE!

**RUTH:** Now Tillie's going to blame it on me that you're not going – and take the rabbit back. I can't help it what people call you. I'll tell Tillie you'll be down later, all right?... Don't answer me. What do I care!

**[Go back in time and let the mother go. + m] [Throw yourself out the window. + f]**

**[Kill nanny. + m] [Spotlight. – f] [Go anyway. – f] [IN + f] [Lay on the couch. – f] [Let them see how pretty you are. – f] [Cheer up. + f]**

## II.ii

**[Oh Jesus Christ. – f] [Boo! – f]**

**JANICE:** *The Past:* I got the cat from the A.S.P.C.A. immediately after it had been killed by a high-altitude pressure system. **[Forget your speech. – f]** That explains why some of the rib bones **[Stop smiling. – m]** are missing, because that method sucks the air out of the animal's lungs and ruptures all cavities. They say it prevents cruelty to animals but I think it's horrible. Then I boiled the cat in a sodium hydroxide solution until most of the skin pulled right off, but I had to scrape some of the grizzle off the joints with a knife. You have no idea how difficult it is to get right down to the bones. I have to go on to *The Present*, now – but I did want to tell you how long it took me to put the thing together. I mean, as it is now, it's extremely useful for students of anatomy, even with the missing rib bones, and it can be used to show basic anatomical aspects of many, many animals that are in the same family as felines. I suppose that's about the only present uses I can think for it, but it is nice to remember as an accomplishment, and it looks good on college applications to show you did something else in school besides dating. *The Future:* The only future plans I have for Tabby – my little brother asked the A.S.P.C.A. what its name was when he went to pick it up and they said it was called Tabby, but I think they were kidding him – I mean as far as future plans, I'm going to donate it to the science department, of course, and next year, if there's another Science Fair perhaps I'll do the same thing with a dog. Thank you very much for your attention, and I hope I win!

## II.iii

**BEATRICE:** I want to talk to the principal, please... Well, you'll have to get him down off the stage... It's none of your goddamn business who I am!... Oh, I see... Yes. I have a message for him and Mr. Goodman, and you, too... And this is for Miss Hanley, too... **[Curse a lot. – f]** Tell them Mrs. Hunsdorfer called to thank them for making her wish she was dead... Would you give them that message, please?... Thank you very much.

**[Rip it off the wall. – f] [Boil the rabbit. – f] [(to previous comment) Jesus. – f]**

**BEATRICE:** Hello. This is Mrs. Hunsdorfer...I'm sorry if I frightened you, I wouldn't want you to think Nanny had deceased or anything like that – I can imagine how terrible you'd feel if anything like that ever happened... **[Slur your words. – f]** Terrible tragedy that would be, Miss Career Woman of the Year... Yes, I'll tell you why I'm calling. I want her out of here by tomorrow. I told you when you rolled her in here I was going to try her out for a while and if I didn't like her she was to get the hell out. Well I don't like her, so get her the hell out... It's like this. I don't like the way she cheats at solitaire. Is that a good enough reason?...Fine. And if she's not out of here by noon I'll send her collect in an ambulance, you son of a bitch!

**[Woo! – f] [Dance. – m] [Where's Nanny? – f] [chorus of "No." "Don't do it."  
"Don't hurt the bunny."]**

**[New music. – f]**

#### II.iv

**TILLIE:** *The Past:* The seeds were exposed to various degrees...of gamma rays from radiation sources in Oak Ridge...Mr. Goodman helped me pay for the seeds...Their growth was plotted against...time. *The Present:* The seeds which received little radiation have grown to plants which are normal in appearance. The seeds which received moderate radiation gave rise to mutations such as double blooms, giant stems, and variegated leaves. The seeds closest to the gamma source were killed or yielded dwarf plants. *The Future:* After radiation is better understood, a day will come when the power of exploding atoms will change the whole world we know. Some of the mutations will be good ones – wonderful things beyond our dreams – and I believe, I believe this with all my heart, THE DAY WILL COME WHEN MANKIND WILL THANK GOD FOR THE STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL ENERGY FROM THE ATOM.

**[Aw. – f] [Lightning. + f]**

#### II.v

**RUTH:** MAMA! MAMA! She won! Mama! Where are you? She won! Hurry up! Hurry! Oh, my God, I can't believe it! Mama! Come on down! Hurry! Give me that! Mama! Wait till you see this! **[Jump on the couch in excitement. – f]** Mama! She won... Didn't you hear me? Tillie won the whole thing!...Mama?...What's the matter with you? What did you rip the paper off the windows for?

**TILLIE:** Mama? Are you going to open a...shop?

**RUTH:** What's the matter? Can't you even answer?

**BEATRICE:** Hand me some of those tacks.

**RUTH:** I SAID SHE WON! ARE YOU DEAF?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, if you don't shut up I'm going to have you put away.

**RUTH:** They ought to put *you* away, BETTY THE LOON!

**BEATRICE:** The rabbit is in your room. I want you to bury it in the morning.

**RUTH:** If you did anything...I'LL KILL YOU!

**TILLIE:** Mother, you didn't kill it, did you?

**BEATRICE:** Nanny goes tomorrow. First thing tomorrow.

**TILLIE:** Ruth? Are you all right?

**BEATRICE:** I don't know what it's going to be. Maybe a tea shop. Maybe not. After school you're going to have regular hours. You'll work in the kitchen, you'll learn how to cook, and you're going to earn your keep, just like in any other business.

**TILLIE:** Mama...I think she's *going to go*. Don't go...don't go...Help me! Mama! Help me!

**BEATRICE:** Snap out of it, do you hear me? RUTH, DON'T LET YOURSELF GO!  
Help me get her downstairs!

**BEATRICE:** Get the wooden spoon!

**TILLIE:** Shall I call the doctor?...Shall I call the doctor?

**BEATRICE:** No. She'll be all right.

**TILLIE:** I think we should call him.

**BEATRICE:** I DIDN'T ASK YOU WHAT YOU THOUGHT!...We're going to need every penny to get this place open.

**TILLIE:** I'd better bury him in the backyard.

**BEATRICE:** Don't bury the towel.

**TILLIE:** I'll do it in the morning.

**[Ruth, get up and kill your mother. – f] [Runaway, Tillie. – f] [Nanny, come onstage. – m]** (*interestingly, sounds of disapproval after this suggestion*) **[Move in fast motion. – f] [Red lighting. – f]**

**BEATRICE:** Matilda?

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mama?

**BEATRICE:** I hate the world. Do you know that, Matilda?

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mama.

**BEATRICE:** I hate the world.

**TILLIE:** *The Conclusion:* My experiment has shown some of the strange effects radiation can produce...and how dangerous it can be if not handled correctly. Mr. Goodman said I should tell in this conclusion what my future plans are and how this experiment has helped me make them. For one thing, the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds has made me curious about the sun and the stars, for the universe itself must be like a world of great atoms – and I want to know more about it. But most important, I suppose, my experiment has made me feel important – every atom in me, in everybody, has come from the sun – from places beyond our dreams. The atoms of our hands, the atoms of our hearts... Atom. *Atom*. What a beautiful word.

**THE END**

## **APPENDIX G**

### **AUDIENCE TRANSCRIPT Nov. 3, 2006 Friday 7:30 pm**

#### **KEY:**

**[response]** : spectator's response

**m** : male spectator

**f** : female spectator

**[—]** : no response, or negative response from the audience to the comment

**[+]** : positive response from audience to comment, typically laughter

\* : suggestion was taken up by performer or tech

- : no reaction, or negative reaction, to the enacted suggestion by the audience

+ : positive reaction, typically laughter, to the enacted suggestion by the audience

# : spectator suggested something moments before it was scheduled to happen

#### **EXAMPLE:**

**[Act. + m]\*-** : A male spectator shouted out, "Act." The audience responded to this suggestion with laughter. Subsequently, an actor accepted the suggestion and enacted it. This time, however, the audience did not react, or reacted negatively, to the actor's enactment.

#### **I.i**

##### **[Turn the lights up. – m]**

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** He told me to look at my hand, for a part of it came from a star that exploded too long ago to imagine. This part of me was formed from a tongue of fire that screamed through the heavens until there was our sun. And this part of me – this tiny part of me – was on the sun when it itself exploded and whirled in a great storm until the planets came to be. And this small part of me was then a whisper of the earth. When there was life, perhaps this part of me got lost in a fern that was crushed and covered until it was coal. And then it was a diamond millions of years later – it must have been a diamond as beautiful as the star from which it had first come. Or perhaps this part of me became lost in a terrible beast, or became part of a huge bird that flew above the primeval swamps. And he said this thing was so small – this part of me was so small it couldn't be seen – but it was there from the beginning of the world. And he called this bit of me an atom. And when he wrote the word, I fell in love with it. Atom. *Atom*. What a beautiful word.

#### **I.ii**

**BEATRICE: [IN – m]** Will you get that please? No help! Never any help! Hello? Yes it is. Who is this?...I hope there hasn't been any trouble at school...Oh, she's always been like that. She hardly says a word around here, either. I always say some people were born to speak and others born to listen...You know I've been meaning to call

you to thank you for that lovely rabbit you gave Matilda. She and I just adore it and it's gotten so big...Well, it certainly was thoughtful. Mr. Goodman, I don't mean to change the subject but aren't you that delightful young man Tillie said hello to a couple of months back at the A & P? You were by the lobster tank and I was near the frozen foods? That delightful and handsome young man?...Why, I would very much indeed use the expression *handsome*. Yes, and...Well, I encourage her at every opportunity at home. Did she say I didn't? Both my daughters have their own desks and I put 75-watt bulbs right near them...Yes...Yes...I think those tests are very much overrated, anyway, Mr. Goodman...Well, believe me she's nothing like that around this house...Now I don't want you to think I don't appreciate what you're trying to do, Mr. Goodman, but I'm afraid it's simply useless. I've tried just everything, but she isn't a pretty girl – I mean, let's be frank about it – she's going to have her problems. Are you married, Mr. Goodman? Oh, that's too bad. I don't know what's the matter with women today letting a handsome young man like you get away...Well, some days she just doesn't feel like going to school. You just said how bright she is, and I'm really afraid to put too much of a strain on her after what happened to her sister. You know, too much strain is the worst thing in this modern world, Mr. Goodman, and I can't afford to have another convulsive on my hands, now can I? But don't you worry about Matilda. There will be some place for her in this world. And, like I said, some were born to speak and others just to listen...and do call again, Mr. Goodman. It's been a true pleasure speaking with you. Goodbye.

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, that wasn't very nice of you to tell them I was forcibly detaining you from school. Why, the way that Mr. Goodman spoke, he must think I'm running a concentration camp. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is to be accused of running a concentration camp for your own children? Well, it isn't embarrassing at all. That school of yours is forty years behind the times anyway, and believe me you learn more around here than that ugly Mr. Goodman can teach you! You know, I really feel sorry for him. I never saw a man with a more effeminate face in my life. When I saw you talking to him by the lobster tank I said to myself, "Good Lord, for a science teacher my poor girl has got herself a Hebrew hermaphrodite." Of course, he's not as bad as Miss Hanley. The idea of letting her teach girl's gym is staggering. And you have to place me in the embarrassing position of giving them a reason to call me at eight-thirty in the morning, no less.

**TILLIE:** I didn't say anything.

**BEATRICE:** What do you tell them when they want to know why you stay home once in a while?

**TILLIE:** I tell them I'm sick.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, you're sick all right, the exact nature of the illness not fully realized, but you're sick all right. Any daughter that would turn her mother in as administrator of a concentration camp has got to be suffering from something very peculiar.

**[Talk back, Matilda. – m]**

**TILLIE:** Can I go in today, Mother?

**BEATRICE:** You'll go in, all right.

**TILLIE:** Mr. Goodman said he was going to do an experiment –

**BEATRICE:** Why, he looks like the kind that would do his experimenting after sundown.

**TILLIE:** On radioactivity –

**BEATRICE:** On radioactivity? That's all that high school needs!

**TILLIE:** He's going to bring in the cloud chamber –

**BEATRICE:** Why, what an outstanding event. If you had warned me yesterday I would've gotten all dressed to kill and gone with you today. I love seeing cloud chambers being brought in.

**TILLIE:** You can actually see –

**BEATRICE:** You're giving me a headache.

**TILLIE:** Please?

**BEATRICE:** No, my dear, the fortress of knowledge is not going to be blessed with your presence today. I have a good number of exciting duties for you to take care of, not the least of which is rabbit droppings.

**[Chug it. Chug it. – f]**

**TILLIE:** Oh, Mother, please...I'll do it after school.

**BEATRICE:** If we wait a minute longer this house is going to ferment. I found rabbit droppings in my bedroom even.

**TILLIE:** I could do it after Mr. Goodman's class. I'll say I'm ill and ask for a sick pass.

**BEATRICE:** Do you want me to chloroform that thing right this minute?

**TILLIE:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Then shut up.

**RUTH:** Do you have Devil's Kiss down there?

**BEATRICE:** It's in the bathroom cabinet.

**RUTH:** There's so much junk in here it's driving me crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Maybe it's in my purse...If you don't hurry up you'll be late for school.

**RUTH:** Well, I couldn't very well go in without Devil's Kiss, now could I?

**BEATRICE:** Doesn't anyone go to school these days without that all over their lips?

**RUTH:** Nobody I know, except Tillie, that is. And if she had a little lipstick on I'll bet they wouldn't have laughed at her so much yesterday.

**BEATRICE:** Why were they laughing?

**RUTH:** The assembly. Didn't she tell you about the assembly?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, you didn't tell me she was in an assembly.

**RUTH:** Well, I just thought of it right now. How could I tell you anything until I think of it – did you ever stop to consider that? Some crummy science assembly.

**BEATRICE:** What is she talking about?

**RUTH:** I thought she'd tell the whole world. Imagine, right in front of the assembly, with everybody laughing at her.

**BEATRICE:** Will you be quiet, Ruth? *Why were they laughing at you?*

**TILLIE:** I don't know.

**RUTH:** You don't know? My heavens, she was a sight. She had that old jumper on – the faded one with that low collar – and a raggy slip that showed all over and her hair looked like she was struck by lightning.

**BEATRICE:** You're exaggerating...

**RUTH:** She was cranking this model of something –

**TILLIE:** The atom.

**RUTH:** This model of the atom...you know, it had this crank and a long tower so that when you turned it, these little colored balls went spinning around like crazy. And

there was Tillie, cranking away, looking weird as a coot...that old jumper with the raggy slip and the lightning hair...cranking away while some boy with glasses was reading this stupid speech...and everybody burst into laughter until the teachers yelled at them. And all day long, the kids kept coming up to me saying, "Is that really your sister? How can you bear it?" And you know, Chris Burns says to me - "She looks like the one that went to the looney doctors." I could have kissed him there and then.

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, if you can't get yourself dressed properly before going to school, you're never going to go again. I don't like the idea of everybody laughing at you, because when they laugh at you they're laughing at me. And I don't want you cranking any more...atoms.

**RUTH:** You're almost out of Devil's Kiss.

**BEATRICE:** If you didn't put so much on it would last longer.

**RUTH:** Who was that calling?

**BEATRICE:** Matilda turned me in to the Gestapo.

**RUTH:** Can I earn a cigarette this morning?

**BEATRICE:** Why not?

**[Ask for a cigarette, Matilda – m]\*- [Put it out on the couch. – m]**

**RUTH:** Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**RUTH:** The call this morning. Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Yes.

**RUTH:** I figured it would be.

**BEATRICE:** A little higher, please.

**RUTH:** There?

**BEATRICE:** Yes, *there*...Why did you figure it would be Mr. Goodman?

**RUTH:** Well, he called me out of sewing class yesterday – I remember because my blouse wasn't all buttoned – and he wanted to know why Tillie's out of school so much.

**BEATRICE:** Lower. A little lower...And what did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I wish you'd go back to Kools. I liked Kools better.

**TILLIE:** What did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I told him you were ill, and he wanted to know what kind, so I told him you had leprosy.

**TILLIE:** You didn't!

**RUTH:** You should have seen his face. He was so cute. And I told him you had ringworm and gangrene.

**BEATRICE:** What did he say?

**RUTH:** And I told him you had what Mother's last patient had...whatchamacallit?

**BEATRICE:** Psoriasis?

**RUTH:** Yeah. Something like that.

**TILLIE:** Tell me you didn't, Ruth!

**RUTH:** OK. I didn't...**[IN – m]** But I really did.

**BEATRICE:** He knew you were joking.

**RUTH:** And then I told him to go look up the *history* and then he'd find out. Whenever they go look up the history then they don't bother me anymore 'cause they think I'm crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Ruth –

**RUTH:** And I told him the disease you had was fatal and that there wasn't much hope for you.

**BEATRICE:** What kind of *history* is it?

**RUTH:** Just a little folder with the story of our lives in it, that's all.

**BEATRICE:** How did you ever see it?

**RUTH:** I read the whole thing last term when Miss Hanley dragged me into the record room because I didn't want to climb the ropes in gym and I told her my skull was growing.

**BEATRICE:** A little *lower*, please.

**RUTH:** Lower! Higher! I wish you'd make up your mind. If you'd switch back to Kools it might be worth it, but ugh! these are awful. You know, I really did think my skull was growing. Either that or a tumor. So she dragged me out of gym class, and she thought I couldn't read upside down while she was sitting opposite me with the history. But I could.

**BEATRICE:** What does it say?

**RUTH:** Oh, it says you're divorced and that I went crazy...and my father took a heart attack at Star Lake...and now you're a widow –

**BEATRICE:** That's it! Hold it right there! Aaah!

**RUTH:** And it says that I exaggerate and tell stories and that I'm afraid of death and have nightmares...and all that stuff.

**BEATRICE:** And what else does it say?

**RUTH:** I can't remember everything you know. Remember this, remember that... remember this, that...

### I.iii

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** Today I saw it. Behind the glass a white cloud began to form. He placed a small piece of metal in the center of the chamber and we waited until I saw the first one – a trace of smoke that came from nowhere and then disappeared. And then another...and another, until I knew it was coming from the metal. They looked like water-sprays from a park fountain, and they went on and on for as long as I watched. And he told me the fountain of smoke would come forth for a long time, and if I had wanted to, I could have stayed there all my life and it would never have ended – that fountain, so close I could have touched it. In front of my eyes, one part of the world was becoming another. Atoms exploding, flinging off tiny bullets that caused the fountain, atom after atom breaking down into something new. And no one could stop the fountain. It would go on for millions of years – on and on, this fountain from eternity.

### I.iv

**BEATRICE:** I thought we had everything, but leave it to you to think of the one thing we're missing...Twenty-two acres in Prince's Bay. Small pond. \$6,000...That's cheap. I'd take a look at it if I had any money...What kind of seeds are they?

**TILLIE:** Marigolds. *They've been exposed to cobalt-60.*

**BEATRICE:** If there's one thing I've always wanted, it's been a living room planted with marigolds that have been exposed to cobalt-60. While you're at it, why don't you throw in a tomato patch in the bathroom?

**TILLIE:** Just let me keep them here for a week or so until they get started and then I'll transplant them to the backyard.

**BEATRICE:** Four-family house. Six and a half and six and a half over five and five. Eight garages. I could really do something with that. A nursing home... Don't think I'm not kicking myself that I didn't finish that real estate course. I should have finished beauty school, too...God, what I could do with eight garages... You know, I'm thinking of getting rid of *that* and making this place into something.

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** I've been thinking about a tea shop. Have you noticed there aren't many of them around anymore?

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** And this is just the type of neighborhood where a good tea shop could make a go of it. We'd have a good cheesecake. You've got to have a good cheesecake... Eight times ten – well, eight times eight, if they're falling down – that's sixty-four dollars a month from the garages alone...I swear money makes money.

**BEATRICE:** What is cobalt-60?

**TILLIE:** It's something that causes...changes in seeds. Oh, Mother – he set the cloud chamber up just for me and he told me about radioactivity and half-life and he got the seeds for me.

**BEATRICE:** What does half-life mean?

**TILLIE:** The half-life of Polonium-210 is one hundred and forty days. The half-life of Radium-226 is one thousand five hundred and ninety years. The half-life of Uranium-238 is four and one-half billion years.

**BEATRICE:** Do you know you're giving me a headache? LOOK WHO'S THERE! IT'S NANNY! NANNY CAME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE BY HERSELF! I'm going to need a cigarette for this. NANNY! YOU COME SIT DOWN AND WE'LL BE RIGHT WITH HER! **[Old woman, get a cookie. – m]\*+** You know, sometimes I've got to laugh. I've got *this* on my hands and all you're worried about is planting marigolds. I'VE GOT HOTSY WATER FOR YOU, NANNY. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME HOTSY WATER AND HONEY? I've **[Drop the cup. – m]** never seen it to fail. Every time I decide to have a cup of coffee I see that face at the curtains. I wonder what she'd do...if I just poured this right over her head. I'll be she wouldn't even notice it. NANNY'S GOING TO GET JUST WHAT SHE NEEDS! You know if someone told me when I was young that I'd end up feeding honey to a zombie, I'd tell them they were crazy. SOMETHING WRONG, NANNY? OH, DID I FORGET NANNY'S SPOON? MERCY! MERCY! I FORGOT NANNY'S SPOON! I'll give you a spoon, Nanny, I'll give you a spoon. Matilda! Watch me give Nanny her spoon. **[Throw the water in her face. – m]** A SPOON FOR NANNY! Fifty dollars a week. Fifty dollars. I look at you, Nanny, and I wonder if it's worth it. I think I'd be better off driving a cab. TAKE HONEY, NANNY. HONEY WITH HOTSY WATER! **[Take the cup from her. – m]** You should have seen her daughter bring her here last week...I could have used you that day...She came in pretending she was Miss Career

Woman of the Year. She said she was in real estate and *such a busy little woman*, such a busy little woman – she just couldn't give all the love and care and affection her little momsy needed anymore... Nanny's quite a little cross to bear, now aren't you, Nanny dear? [Tillie, help the old woman. – m] But you're a little better than Mr. Mayo was – with the tumor on his brain – or Miss Marion Minto with her cancer, or Mr. Brougham...what was his first name?

[IN – m]

**TILLIE:** Alexander.

**BEATRICE:** Mr. Alexander Brougham with the worms in his legs. WHY, NANNY'S QUITE SOME LITTLE GIRL, AREN'T YOU, NANNY? [IN – m] A GIRL DRINKING HER HOTSY AND HONEY!...Cobalt-60. Ha! You take me for a fool, don't you?

**TILLIE:** No, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** Science, science, science! Don't they teach our misfits anything anymore? Anything decent and meaningful and sensitive? Do you know what I'd be now if it wasn't for this mud pool I got sucked into? I'd probably be a dancer. Miss Betty Frank, The Best Dancer of the Class of 19... [Dance. – m]\*- something. [Throw the towel at the old woman. – m] One minute I'm the best dancer in school – smart as a whip – the head of the whole crowd! And the next minute...One mistake. That's how it starts. Marry the wrong man and before you know it he's got you tied down with two stones around your neck for the rest of your life. When I was in that lousy high school I was one of the most respected kids you ever saw. I used to wonder why people always said, "Why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday..." Before I knew what happened I lost my dancing legs and got varicose legs. Beautiful varicose legs. [Show us more. + m] Do you know, everything I ever thought I'd be has exploded! NANNY, YOU HURRY UP WITH THAT HONEY! Exploded! You know, I almost forgot about everything I was supposed to be...NANNY'S ALMOST FINISHED. ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL? She's almost finished, all right. NANNY'S DAUGHTER IS COMING TO SEE YOU SOON. WILL THAT MAKE NANNY HAPPY? The day Miss Career Woman of the Year comes to visit again I think I'll drop dead. Nobody's too busy for anything they want to do, don't you tell me. What kind of idiot do people take me for? NANNY, YOU'RE SPILLING YOUR HOTSY! JESUS CHRIST! You know, I ought to kick you right out and open that tea shop tomorrow. [Drink the beer, Nanny. + m] Oh, it's coming. I can feel it. And the first thing I'll do is get rid of that rabbit.

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** You think I'm kidding?

[Take the beer, old woman. – m]

**TILLIE:** No, I don't.

**BEATRICE:** You bet I'm not! I was going to do this a month ago. Here it is. Here's a new word for you. Trichloro...methane. Do you know what that is, Matilda? Well, it's chloroform! I'm saving it for that Angora manure machine of yours. Speaking of manure machines, IS NANNY READY TO GO MAKE DUTY? NANNY IS ALWAYS READY FOR DUTY, AREN'T YOU NANNY? BECAUSE NANNY'S A GOODY-GOODY GIRL AND GOODY-GOODY GIRLS ALWAYS GET

GOODY-GOODY THINGS. GOD LOOKS OUT FOR GOODY-GOODY GIRLS  
AND GIVES THEM HOTSY AND HONEY – RIGHT, NANNY?

**BEATRICE:** Half-life! If you want to know what a half-life is, just ask me. You're looking at the original half-life! I got stuck with one daughter with half a mind; another one who's half a test tube; half a husband – a house half full of rabbit crap – and half a corpse! That's what I call a half-life, Matilda! Me and cobalt-60! Two of the biggest half-lives you ever saw!

I.v

**BEATRICE:** Hello – Mr. Goodman, please... How would I know if he's got a class?...Hello, Mr. Goodman? Are you Mr. Goodman?...Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Torgersen...Yes, I'll wait... Couldn't you find him, Miss Torgersen?...Oh! Excuse me, Mr. Goodman. How are you?...I'll bet you'll never guess who this is – it's Mrs. Hunsdorfer – remember the frozen foods? You know, Ruth told me she's your new secretary and I certainly think that's a delight. You were paying so much attention to Matilda that I'll bet Ruth just got jealous. She does things like that, you know. I hope she works hard for you, although I can't imagine what kind of work Ruth could be doing in that great big science office. She's a terrible snoop... Your attendance? Isn't that charming. And the *cut* cards! Imagine. You trust her with...why, I didn't know she could type *at all*...imagine. Well...I'll...Of course, *too* much work isn't good for anyone, either. No wonder she's failing everything. I mean, I never knew a girl who failed everything regardless of what they were suffering from...I suppose I should say recovering from...Well, it's about the seeds you gave Matilda...Well, she's had them in the house for a week now and they're starting to grow. Now, she told me they had been subjected to radioactivity, and I hear such terrible things about radioactivity that I automatically associate radioactivity with sterility, and it positively horrifies me to have those seeds right here in my living room. Couldn't she just grow plain marigolds like everyone else? Oh... It does sound like an interesting project, but... No, I must admit that at this very moment I don't know what a *mutation* is... Mr. Goodman... Mr. Goodman! I don't want you to think I'm not interested, but please spare me definitions over the phone. I'll go the library next week and pick me out some little book on science and then I'll know all about mutations...No, you didn't insult me, but I just want you to know that I'm not *stupid*... I just thought prevention was better than a tragedy, Mr. Goodman. I mean, Matilda has enough problems to worry about without *sterility*... Well, I was just concerned, but you've put my poor mother's heart at ease. You know, really, our schools need more exciting young men like you, I really mean that. Really. Oh, I do. Goodbye, Mr. Goodman.

I.vi

**[Stop the storm. – m]**

**TILLIE:** Mother! She's going to have one!

**BEATRICE:** Stop it! Stop it, Ruth!

**TILLIE:** She's going!

**BEATRICE:** Ruth! Stop it!

**TILLIE:** She's going to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up and get back in your room! You're not going to let yourself go, do you hear me, Ruth? You're not going to go!

**RUTH:** He's after me!

**BEATRICE:** You were dreaming, do you hear me? Nobody's after you! Nobody!

**TILLIE:** I saw her eyes start to go back –

**BEATRICE:** Get back in your room! There, now, nobody's after you. Nice and easy. Breathe deeply...Did the big bad man come after my little girl? **[Make it a blackout. – m]** **[Start convulsing, Ruth. – m]** That big bad bogey man? Now that wasn't so bad, was it?

**RUTH:** It was the dream, with Mr. Mayo again.

**[Ruth, start freaking out. – m]**

**BEATRICE:** Oh. Well, we'll just get you a little hot milk and –Why, the electricity's gone off. Do you remember what happened to those candles?

**RUTH:** What candles?

**BEATRICE:** The little white ones from my birthday cake last year.

**RUTH:** Tillie melted them down for school a long time ago.

**BEATRICE:** She had no right to do that.

**RUTH:** She asked you. She used them to attach a paper straw to a milk bottle with a balloon over it, and it was supposed to tell if it was going to rain.

**[Turn the lights back on. – m]**

**BEATRICE:** There! It works. I don't want her wasting anything of mine unless she's positive I won't need it. You always need candles. Why, Ruth – your skin just turned ice cold! This will warm you up... What's the matter?

**RUTH:** The flashlight –

**BEATRICE:** What's wrong with it?

**RUTH:** It's the same one I used to check on Mr. Mayo with.

**BEATRICE:** So it is. We don't need it.

**RUTH:** No, let me keep it. **[Tell a ghost story. – f]** Do you want to know how they have it in the history?

**BEATRICE:** No, I don't.

**RUTH:** Well, they say I came out of my room...And I started down the stairs, step by step...and I heard the choking and banging on the bed, and...

**BEATRICE:** I'm going back to bed.

**RUTH:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Well, talk about something nice, then.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, tell me about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** You change so fast I can't keep up with you.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...* the story about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** I don't know anything about telling stories. Get those great big smart teachers of yours to do that sort of stuff.

**[Tell the story. – m]**

**RUTH:** Tell me about the horses again, and how you stole the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** Don't get me started on that.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...*

**BEATRICE:** Do you want a cigarette?

**[Nanny, come on stage. + m]** **[No smoking in bed. – m]**

**RUTH:** Leave out the part where they shoot the horses, though.

**BEATRICE:** Honey, you know the whole story –

**RUTH:** “Apples! Pears! Cu...cumbers!”

**BEATRICE:** No. It’s “Apples! Pears! Cucum...bers!”

**BEATRICE AND RUTH:** “Apples! Pears! Cucum...bers!”

**RUTH:** How did you get the wagon out without him seeing you?

**BEATRICE:** That was easy. Every time he got home for the day he’d make us both some sandwiches – my mama had been dead for years – and he’d take a nap on the old sofa that used to be...there! And while he was sleeping I got the horses hitched up and went riding around the block waving to everyone.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, you didn’t!

**BEATRICE:** Of course I did. I had more nerve than a bear when I was a kid. Let me tell you it takes nerve to sit up on that wagon every day yelling “Apples!... Pears! Cucum...bers!”

**RUTH:** Did he find out you took the wagon?

**BEATRICE:** Did he find out? He came running down the street after me and started spanking me right on top of the wagon – not hard – but it was so embarrassing – and I had one of those penny marshmallow ships in the back pocket of my overalls, and it got all squished. And you better believe I never did it again...You would have loved him, Ruth, and gone out with him on the wagon...all over Stapleton yelling as loud as you wanted.

**RUTH:** “Apples! Pears! Cu...cumbers!”

**BEATRICE:** No!

**RUTH:** “Cucum...bers!”

**[Come on stage, nanny. – m] [Ruth, tell her you’re pregnant. + m]**

**BEATRICE:** My father made up for all the other men in this whole world, Ruth. If only you two could have met. He’d only be about seventy now, do you realize that? And I’ll bet he’d still be selling vegetables around town. All that fun – and then I don’t think I ever knew what really hit me.

**RUTH:** Don’t tell about –

**BEATRICE:** Don’t worry about the horses.

**RUTH:** What hit you?

**BEATRICE:** Well it was just me and Papa... and your father hanging around. And then Papa got sick... and I drove with him up to the sanatorium. And then I came home and there were the horses –

**RUTH:** Mother!

**BEATRICE:** And I had the horses...taken care of. **[Play a gunshot. – m]** And then Papa got terribly sick and he begged me to marry so that he’d be sure I’d be taken care of. If he knew how I was taken care of he’d turn over in his grave. And *nightmares!* Do you want to know the nightmare I used to have? **[Play some drive-by music. + m]** I never had nightmares over the fights with your father, or the divorce, or this thrombosis – he deserved it – I never had nightmares over any of that. Let me tell you about my nightmare that used to come back and back: *Well, I’m on Papa’s wagon, but it’s newer and shinier, and it’s being pulled by beautiful white horses, not dirty workhorses – these are like circus horses with long manes and [Play horse sounds. + m]* tinsel – and the wagon is blue, shiny blue. And it’s full – filled with yellow apples

and grapes and green squash. You're going to laugh when you hear this. I'm wearing a lovely gown with jewels all over it, and my hair is piled up on top of my head with a long feather in it, and the bells are ringing. Huge bells swinging on a gold braid strung across the back of the wagon, and they're going DONG, DONG...DONG, DONG. And I'm yelling "APPLES! PEARS! CUCUM...BERS!"

**[Make shadow puppets. – f]**

RUTH: That doesn't sound like a nightmare to me.

**[Tillie, come on stage. – m]**

BEATRICE: And then I turn down our street and all the noise stops. This long street, with all the doors of the houses shut and everything crowded next to each other, and there's not a soul around. **[(cuts himself off) – m]** And then I start getting afraid that the vegetables are going to spoil...and that nobody's going to buy anything, and I feel as though I shouldn't be on the wagon, and I keep trying to call out. But there isn't a sound. Not a single sound. **[Bring the puppet from Saw onstage. – m]** Then I turn my head and look at the house across the street. I see an upstairs window, and a pair of hands pull the curtains slowly apart. I see the face of my father and my heart stands still... Ruth... take the light out of my eyes.

RUTH: Is Nanny going to die here?

BEATRICE: No.

RUTH: How can you be sure?

BEATRICE: I can tell.

**[Turn the lights back on. – m]**

RUTH: Are you crying?

BEATRICE: What's left for me, Ruth?

RUTH: What, Mama?

BEATRICE: What's left for me?

I.vii

**[Take a swig of the bottle. – m]**

TILLIE: What are you doing?

BEATRICE: A little housecleaning, and you're going to help. You can start by getting rid of that rabbit or I'll suffocate the bastard. You don't think I will, do you? You wait and see. Where's Ruth? She's probably running around the schoolyard in her brassiere.

TILLIE: Mother, they want me to do something at school.

BEATRICE: NANNY! DID YOU HEAR THAT? THEY WANT HER TO DO SOMETHING AT SCHOOL! ISN'T THAT MOMENTOUS, NANNY? Well I want you to do something around here. Like get rid of that bunny. I'm being generous! I'll let you give it away. Far away. Give it to Mr. Goodman. I'd chloroform the thing myself, but that crazy sister of yours would throw convulsions for fifty years...and I hate a house that vibrates. And get rid of those sterile marigolds. They stink! HI, NANNY – HOW ARE YOU, HONEY? HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ON A LONG TRIP? You see, everybody, I spent today taking stock of my life and I've come up with zero. I added up all the separate departments and the total reads zero... zero ...And do you know how you pronounce that, with all your grammatical

**RUTH:** Can you believe it? I didn't, until Chris Burns came up and told me about it in Geography, and then Mr. Goodman told me himself during the eighth period in the office when I was eavesdropping. Aren't you so happy you could bust? Tillie? I'm so proud I can't believe it, Mama. Everybody was talking about it and nobody...well, it was the first time they all came up screaming about her and I said, "Yes, she's my sister!" I said it, "She's my sister! My sister! My *sister!*" Give me a cigarette.

**BEATRICE:** Get your hands off my personal property.

**RUTH:** I'll scratch your back later.

**BEATRICE:** I don't want you to touch me!

**RUTH:** Did he call yet? My God, I can't believe it, I just can't!

**BEATRICE:** Did who call yet?

**RUTH:** I'm not supposed to tell you, as Mr. Goodman's private secretary, but you're going to get a call from school.

**BEATRICE:** What is she talking about?

**TILLIE:** I was in the Science Fair at school.

**RUTH:** Didn't she tell you yet? Oh, Tillie, how could you? She's fantastic, Mama! She's a finalist in the Science Fair. There were only five of them out of hundreds and hundreds. She won with all those plants over there. They're freaks! Isn't that a scream? Dr. Berg picked her himself. The principal! And I heard Mr. Goodman say she was going to be another Madam Pasteur and he never saw a girl do anything like that before and...so I told everybody, "Yes, she's my sister!" Tillie, "You're my sister!" I said. And Mr. Goodman called the Advance and they're coming to take your picture. Oh, Mama, isn't it crazy? And nobody laughed at her, Mama. She beat out practically everybody and nobody laughed at her. "She's my sister," I said. "She's my sister!" That must be him! Mama, answer it – I'm afraid. [Nanny, wake up. – f] Answer it before he hangs up! [Answer it, Nanny. + m] Mama! He's gonna hang up! Hello?...Yes... It's him!... [Nanny, have night terrors. + m] [(internal discussion ensues)] Just a minute, please... He wants to talk to you.

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**RUTH:** The *principal!*

**BEATRICE:** Hang up.

**RUTH:** I told him you were here! Mama!

Talk to him. — m    Be excited, Beatrice. — m

**BEATRICE:** Yes?...I know who you are, Dr. Berg...I see...Couldn't you get someone else? There's an awful lot of work that has to be done around here, because she's not as careful with her home duties as she is with man-in-the-moon marigolds...Me? What would you want with me up on the stage?...The other mothers can do as they please...I would have thought you had enough in your *history* without...I'll think about it...Goodbye, Dr. Berg... I SAID I'D THINK ABOUT IT!

**RUTH:** What did he say?

**BEATRICE:** How could you do this to me? HOW COULD YOU LET THAT MAN CALL OUR HOME! I have no clothes, do you hear me? I'd look just like you up on the stage, ugly little you! [**Throw the marigolds. – m**] DO YOU WANT THEM TO LAUGH AT US? LAUGH AT THE TWO OF US?

**RUTH:** Mother...aren't you proud of her? Mother...it's an *honor*.

[**Walk over to her. – f**] [**Tillie, defend yourself. – m**] [**Slap her. + m**]

**TILLIE:** But...nobody laughed at me.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, my God...

[**Join in, Ruth. – m**]

## II.i

**RUTH:** The only competition you have to worry about is Janice Vickery. They say she caught it near Princess Bay Boulevard and it was still alive when she took the skin off it.

**TILLIE:** Let me do that please, Ruth.

**RUTH:** I'm sorry I touched them, really.

**TILLIE:** Why don't you feed Peter?

**RUTH:** Because I don't feel like feeding him...Now I feel like feeding him. I heard that it screamed for three minutes after she put it in because the water wasn't boiling yet. How much talent does it take to boil the skin off a cat and then stick the bones together again? That's what I want to know. Ugh. [**Take the rabbit out of the cage. – f**] I had a dream about that, too. I figure she did it in less than a day and she ends up as one of the top five winners...and you spend months growing atomic flowers.

**TILLIE:** Don't you think you should finish getting ready?

**RUTH:** Finish? This is it!

**TILLIE:** Are you going to wear that sweater?

**RUTH:** Look, don't worry about me. I'm not getting up on any stage, and if I did I wouldn't be caught dead with a horrible bow like that.

**TILLIE:** Mother put it –

**RUTH:** They're going to laugh you off the stage again like when you cranked that atom in assembly...I didn't mean that...The one they're going to laugh at is Mama.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** I said the one they're going to laugh at is Mama...Oh, let me take that bow off.

**TILLIE:** It's all right.

**RUTH:** Look, just sit still. I don't want everybody making fun of you.

**TILLIE:** What made you say that about Mama?

**RUTH:** Oh, I heard them talking in the Science Office yesterday. Mr. Goodman and Miss Hanley. She's getting \$12.63 to chaperon the thing tonight.

**TILLIE:** What were they saying?

**RUTH:** Miss Hanley was telling Mr. Goodman about Mama...when she found out you were one of the five winners. And he wanted to know if there was something wrong with Mama because she sounded crazy over the phone. And Miss Hanley said she *was* crazy and she always has been crazy and she can't wait to see what she looks like after all these years. Miss Hanley said her nickname used to be *Betty the Loon*.

**TILLIE:** Ruth, you're hurting me.

**RUTH:** She was just like you and everybody thought she was a big weirdo. There! You look much better! Peter, if anybody stuck you in a pot of boiling water I'd kill them, do you know that?... What do they call boiling the skin off a cat? I call it murder, that's what I call it. They say it was hit by a car and Janice just scooped it up and before you could say *bingo* it was screaming in a pot of boiling water...Do you know what they're all waiting to see? Mama's feathers! That's what Miss Hanley said. She said Mama blabs as though she was the Queen of England and just as proper as can be, and that her idea of getting dressed up is to put on all the feathers in the world and go as a bird. Always trying to get somewhere, like a great big bird.

**TILLIE:** Don't tell Mama, please. It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** I was up there watching her getting dressed and sure enough, she's got the feathers out.

**TILLIE:** You didn't tell her what Miss Hanley said?

**RUTH:** Are you kidding? I just told her I didn't like the feathers and I didn't think she should wear any. But I'll bet she doesn't listen to me.

**TILLIE:** It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** It doesn't matter? Do you think I want to be laughed right out of the school tonight, with Chris Burns there, and all? Laughed right out of the school, with your electric hair and her feathers on that stage, and Miss Hanley splitting her sides?

**TILLIE:** Promise me you won't say anything.

**RUTH:** On one condition.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** The taxi will be here any minute and I won't have all this stuff ready. Did you see my speech?

**RUTH:** I mean it. Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** He belongs to all of us.

**RUTH:** For me. All for me. What do you care? He doesn't mean anything to you anymore, now that you've got all those crazy plants.

**TILLIE:** Will you stop?

**RUTH:** If you don't give him to me I'm going to tell Mama that everybody's waiting to laugh at her.

**TILLIE:** Where are those typewritten cards?

**RUTH:** I MEAN IT! Give him to me!

**TILLIE:** Does he mean that much to you?

**RUTH:** Yes!

**TILLIE:** All right.

**RUTH:** Betty the Loon... That's what they used to call her, you know. Betty the Loon!

**[Then the bunny bites you. + m]\*+**

**TILLIE:** I don't think that's very nice.

**RUTH:** First they had Betty the Loon, and now they've got Tillie the Loon... You don't have to worry about me turning you in for any old plants...How much does a taxi cost from here to the school?

**TILLIE:** Not much.

**RUTH:** I wish she'd give me the money it costs for a taxi – and for all that cardboard and paint and flowerpots and stuff. The only time she ever made a fuss over me was when she drove me nuts.

**TILLIE:** Tell her to hurry, please.

**RUTH:** By the way, I went over to see Janice Vickery's pot, that she did you know what in, and I started telling her and her mother about the worms in Mr. Alexander Brougham's legs, and I got thrown out because it was too near dinner time. That Mrs. Vickery kills me. She can't stand worms in somebody else's legs but she lets her daughter cook a cat.

**TILLIE:** Mother! The taxi will be here any minute.

**BEATRICE:** You're lucky I'm coming, without all this rushing me.

**TILLIE:** Mama, you look beautiful.

**BEATRICE:** Don't put it on too thick. I said I'd go and I guess there's no way to get out of it. Do you mind telling me how I'm supposed to get up on the stage? Do they call my name or what? And where are you going to be? If you ask me, they should've sent all the parents a mimeographed sheet of instructions. If this is supposed to be such a great event, why don't they do it right?

**TILLIE:** You just sit on the stage with the other parents before it begins.

**BEATRICE:** How long is this going to last? And remember, I don't care even if you do win the whole damn thing, I'm not making any speech. I can hold my own anywhere, but I hated that school when I went there and I hate it now...and the only thing I'd have to say is, what a pack of stupid teachers and vicious children they have. Imagine someone tearing the skin off a cat.

**RUTH:** She didn't tear it. She boiled it off.

**BEATRICE:** You just told me upstairs that girl tore the skin off with an orange knife and...do you know, sometimes you exasperate me? If you've got all the plants in this box, I can manage the folding thing. Do you know I've got a headache from doing those titles? And you probably don't even like them.

**TILLIE:** I like them very much.

**BEATRICE:** Look, if you don't want me to go tonight, I don't have to. You're about as enthusiastic as a dummy about this whole thing.

**TILLIE:** I'm sorry.

**BEATRICE:** And I refuse to let you get nervous. Put that bow back in your hair.

**RUTH:** I took it out.

**BEATRICE:** What did you do that for?

**RUTH:** Because it made her look crazy.

**BEATRICE:** How would you know what's crazy or not? If that sweater of yours was any tighter it'd cut off the circulation in your chest. The bow looks very nice in your hair. There's nothing wrong with looking proper, Matilda, and if you don't have enough money to look expensive and perfect, people like you for *trying* to look nice. You know, one day maybe you will be pretty. You'll have some nice features, when that hair revives and you do some tricks with makeup. I hope you didn't crowd the plants too close together. Did you find your speech?

**TILLIE:** Yes, mother.

**BEATRICE:** You know, Matilda, I was wondering about something. Do you think you're really going to win? I mean, not that you won't be the best, but there's so

much politics in school. Don't laugh, but if there's anyone who's an expert on that, it's me, and someday I'm going to write a book and blast that school to pieces. If you're just a little bit different in this world, they try to kill you off.

**RUTH:** Tillie gave Peter to me.

**BEATRICE:** Oh? Then you inherited the rabbit droppings I found upstairs. What are you doing with your coat on?

**RUTH:** I'm going out to wait for the taxi.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not. You start right in on the rabbit droppings. Or you won't get another cigarette even if you scratch my back with an orange knife.

**RUTH:** I'm going down to the school with you.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not! You're going to keep company with that corpse in there. If she wakes up and starts gagging just slip her a shot of whiskey. Quick! Grab the plants, Matilda – I'll get the big thing.

**RUTH:** I want to go! I promised Chris Burns I'd meet him.

**BEATRICE:** Can't you understand English?

**RUTH:** I've got to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up!

**RUTH:** I don't care! I'M GOING ANYWAY!

**BEATRICE:** WHAT DID YOU SAY?

**TILLIE:** Mother!

**BEATRICE:** Hurry up with that box, Matilda, and tell him to stop blowing the horn. HURRY UP! I don't know where you ever got the idea you were going tonight. Did you think nobody was going to hold down the fort?...Now you know how I felt all those years you and everybody else was running out whenever they felt like it – because there was always me to watch over the fifty-dollar-a-week corpse. If there's one thing I demand it's respect. I don't ask for anything from you but respect.

**RUTH:** Why are you ashamed of me?

**BEATRICE:** I've been seen with a lot worse than you. I don't even know why I'm going tonight, do you know that? Do you think I give one goddamn about the whole thing?... Do you want to know why I'm going? Do you really want to know why this once somebody else has to stick with that dried prune for a few minutes? Because this is the first time in my life I've ever felt just a little bit proud over something. Isn't that silly? Somewhere in the back of this turtle-sized brain of mine I feel just a little *proud!* Jesus Christ! And you begrudge me even that, you little bastard.

**RUTH:** Hurry up. They're waiting for you...They're *all* waiting for you.

**BEATRICE:** I hope the paint is dry...Who's waiting for me?

**RUTH:** Everybody...including Miss Hanley. She's been telling all the teachers...about you...and they're all waiting.

**BEATRICE:** You're such a little liar, Ruth, do you know that? When you can't have what you want, you try to ruin it for everybody else.

**RUTH:** Goodnight, *Betty the Loon.*

**BEATRICE:** Take this thing.

**RUTH:** What for?

**BEATRICE:** Go with Matilda.

**RUTH:** I don't want to go now.

**BEATRICE:** GET OUT OF HERE!

**RUTH:** Now Tillie's going to blame it on me that you're not going – and take the rabbit back. I can't help it what people call you. I'll tell Tillie you'll be down later, all right?... Don't answer me. What do I care!

## II.ii

**JANICE:** *The Past:* I got the cat from the A.S.P.C.A. immediately after it had been killed by a high-altitude pressure system. That explains why some of the rib bones are missing, because that method sucks the air out of the animal's lungs and ruptures all cavities. They say it prevents cruelty to animals but I think it's horrible. Then I boiled the cat in a sodium hydroxide solution until most of the skin pulled right off, but I had to scrape some of the gristle off the joints with a knife. You have no idea how difficult it is to get right down to the bones. I have to go on to *The Present*, now – but I did want to tell you how long it took me to put the thing together. I mean, as it is now, it's extremely useful for students of anatomy, even with the missing rib bones, and it can be used to show basic anatomical aspects of many, many animals that are in the same family as felines. I suppose that's about the only present uses I can think for it, but it is nice to remember as an accomplishment, and it looks good on college applications to show you did something else in school besides dating. *The Future:* The only future plans I have for Tabby – my little brother asked the A.S.P.C.A. what its name was when he went to pick it up and they said it was called Tabby, but I think they were kidding him – I mean as far as future plans, I'm going to donate it to the science department, of course, and next year, if there's another Science Fair perhaps I'll do the same thing with a dog. Thank you very much for your attention, and I hope I win!

## II.iii

**BEATRICE:** I want to talk to the principal, please...Well, you'll have to get him down off the stage...It's none of your goddamn business who I am!...Oh, I see...Yes. I have a message for him and Mr. Goodman, and you, too...And this is for Miss Hanley, too...Tell them Mrs. Hunsdorfer called to thank them for making her wish she was dead...Would you give them that message, please?...Thank you very much.

**BEATRICE:** Hello. This is Mrs. Hunsdorfer...I'm sorry if I frightened you, I wouldn't want you to think Nanny had deceased or anything like that – I can imagine how terrible you'd feel if anything like that ever happened...Terrible tragedy that would be, Miss Career Woman of the Year... Yes, I'll tell you why I'm calling. I want her out of here by tomorrow. I told you when you rolled her in here I was going to try her out for a while and if I didn't like her she was to get the hell out. Well I don't like her, so get her the hell out... It's like this. I don't like the way she cheats at solitaire. Is that a good enough reason?...Fine. And if she's not out of here by noon I'll send her collect in an ambulance, you son of a bitch!

**[No, don't kill the rabbit. – f]**

## II.iv

**TILLIE:** *The Past:* The seeds were exposed to various degrees...of gamma rays from radiation sources in Oak Ridge...Mr. Goodman helped me pay for the seeds...Their growth was plotted against...time. *The Present:* The seeds which received little

radiation have grown to plants which are normal in appearance. The seeds which received moderate radiation gave rise to mutations such as double blooms, giant stems, and variegated leaves. The seeds closest to the gamma source were killed or yielded dwarf plants. *The Future:* After radiation is better understood, a day will come when the power of exploding atoms will change the whole world we know. Some of the mutations will be good ones – wonderful things beyond our dreams – and I believe, I believe this with all my heart, THE DAY WILL COME WHEN MANKIND WILL THANK GOD FOR THE STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL ENERGY FROM THE ATOM.

**RUTH:** MAMA! MAMA! She won! Mama! Where are you? She won! Hurry up! Hurry! Oh, my God, I can't believe it! Mama! Come on down! Hurry! Give me that! Mama! Wait till you see this! Mama! She won... Didn't you hear me? Tillie won the whole thing!...Mama?...What's the matter with you? What did you rip the paper off the windows for?

**TILLIE:** Mama? Are you going to open a...shop?

**RUTH:** What's the matter? Can't you even answer?

**BEATRICE:** Hand me some of those tacks.

**RUTH:** I SAID SHE WON! ARE YOU DEAF?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, if you don't shut up I'm going to have you put away.

**RUTH:** They ought to put *you* away, BETTY THE LOON!

**BEATRICE:** The rabbit is in your room. I want you to bury it in the morning.

**RUTH:** If you did anything...I'LL KILL YOU!

**TILLIE:** Mother, you didn't kill it, did you?

**BEATRICE:** Nanny goes tomorrow. First thing tomorrow.

**TILLIE:** Ruth? Are you all right?

**BEATRICE:** I don't know what it's going to be. Maybe a tea shop. Maybe not. After school you're going to have regular hours. You'll work in the kitchen, you'll learn how to cook, and you're going to earn your keep, just like in any other business.

**TILLIE:** Mama...I think she's *going to go*. Don't go...don't go...Help me! Mama! Help me!

**BEATRICE:** Snap out of it, do you hear me? RUTH, DON'T LET YOURSELF GO! Help me get her downstairs!

**BEATRICE:** Get the wooden spoon!

**TILLIE:** Shall I call the doctor?...Shall I call the doctor?

**BEATRICE:** No. She'll be all right.

**TILLIE:** I think we should call him.

**BEATRICE:** I DIDN'T ASK YOU WHAT YOU THOUGHT!...We're going to need every penny to get this place open.

**TILLIE:** I'd better bury him in the backyard.

**BEATRICE:** Don't bury the towel.

**TILLIE:** I'll do it in the morning.

**BEATRICE:** Matilda?

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mama?

**BEATRICE:** I hate the world. Do you know that, Matilda?

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mama.

**BEATRICE:** I hate the world.

**TILLIE:** *The Conclusion:* My experiment has shown some of the strange effects radiation can produce...and how dangerous it can be if not handled correctly. Mr. Goodman said I should tell in this conclusion what my future plans are and how this experiment has helped me make them. For one thing, the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds has made me curious about the sun and the stars, for the universe itself must be like a world of great atoms – and I want to know more about it. But most important, I suppose, my experiment has made me feel important – every atom in me, in everybody, has come from the sun – from places beyond our dreams. The atoms of our hands, the atoms of our hearts... Atom. *Atom.* What a beautiful word.

**THE END**

## **APPENDIX G**

### **AUDIENCE TRANSCRIPT**

**Nov. 3, 2006 Friday 10 pm**

**KEY:**

- [response]** : spectator's response
- m** : male spectator
- f** : female spectator
- [—]** : no response, or negative response from the audience to the comment
- [+]** : positive response from audience to comment, typically laughter
- \*** : suggestion was taken up by performer or tech
- : no reaction, or negative reaction, to the enacted suggestion by the audience
- +** : positive reaction, typically laughter, to the enacted suggestion by the audience
- #** : spectator suggested something moments before it was scheduled to happen

**EXAMPLE:**

**[Act. + m]\*-** : A male spectator shouted out, "Act." The audience responded to this suggestion with laughter. Subsequently, an actor accepted the suggestion and enacted it. This time, however, the audience did not react, or reacted negatively, to the actor's enactment.

**I.i**

**[Lights up. — f]\*-**

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** He told me to look at my hand, for a part of it came from a star that exploded too long ago to imagine. This part of me was formed from a tongue of fire that screamed through the heavens until there was our sun. And this part of me – this tiny part of me – was on the sun when it itself exploded and whirled in a great storm until the planets came to be. And this small part of me was then a whisper of the earth. When there was life, perhaps this part of me got lost in a fern that was crushed and covered until it was coal. And then it was a diamond millions of years later – it must have been a diamond as beautiful as the star from which it had first come. Or perhaps this part of me became lost in a terrible beast, or became part of a huge bird that flew above the primeval swamps. And he said this thing was so small – this part of me was so small it couldn't be seen – but it was there from the beginning of the world. And he called this bit of me an atom. And when he wrote the word, I fell in love with it. Atom. *Atom*. What a beautiful word.

**I.ii**

**BEATRICE:** Will you get that please? No help! Never any help! Hello? Yes it is. Who is this?...I hope there hasn't been any trouble at school...Oh, she's always been like that. She hardly says a word around here, either. I always say some people were born to speak and others born to listen...You know I've been meaning to call you to thank

you for that lovely rabbit you gave Matilda. She and I just adore it and it's gotten so big...Well, it certainly was thoughtful. Mr. Goodman, I don't mean to change the subject but aren't you that delightful young man Tillie said hello to a couple of months back at the A & P? You were by the lobster tank and I was near the frozen foods? That delightful and handsome young man?...Why, I would very much indeed use the expression *handsome*. Yes, and...Well, I encourage her at every opportunity at home. Did she say I didn't? Both my daughters have their own desks and I put 75-watt bulbs right near them...Yes...Yes...I think those tests are very much overrated, anyway, Mr. Goodman... **[Hang up. — m]** Well, believe me she's nothing like that around this house...Now I don't want you to think I don't appreciate what you're trying to do, Mr. Goodman, **[Stop smoking. — f]** **[It's bad for you. — m]** but I'm afraid it's simply useless. I've tried just everything, but she isn't a pretty girl — I mean, let's be frank about it — she's going to have her problems. Are you married, Mr. Goodman? Oh, that's too bad. I don't know what's the matter with women today letting a handsome young man like you get away...Well, some days she just doesn't feel like going to school. You just said how bright she is, and I'm really afraid to put too much of a strain on her after what happened to her sister. You know, too much strain is the worst thing in this modern world, Mr. Goodman, and I can't afford to have another convulsive on my hands, now can I? But don't you worry about Matilda. There will be some place for her in this world. And, like I said, some were born to speak and others just to listen...and do call again, Mr. Goodman. It's been a true pleasure speaking with you. Goodbye.

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, that wasn't very nice of you to tell them I was forcibly detaining you from school. Why, the way that Mr. Goodman spoke, he must think I'm running a concentration camp. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is to be accused of running a concentration camp for your own children? Well, it isn't embarrassing at all. That school of yours is forty years behind the times anyway, and believe me you learn more around here than that ugly Mr. Goodman can teach you! You know, I really feel sorry for him. I never saw a man with a more effeminate face in my life. When I saw you talking to him by the lobster tank I said to myself, "Good Lord, for a science teacher my poor girl has got herself a Hebrew hermaphrodite." Of course, he's not as bad as Miss Hanley. The idea of letting her teach girl's gym is staggering. And you have to place me in the embarrassing position of giving them a reason to call me at eight-thirty in the morning, no less.

**TILLIE:** I didn't say anything.

**BEATRICE:** What do you tell them when they want to know why you stay home once in a while?

**TILLIE:** I tell them I'm sick.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, you're sick all right, the exact nature of the illness not fully realized, but you're sick all right. Any daughter that would turn her mother in as administrator of a concentration camp has got be suffering from something very peculiar.

**TILLIE:** Can I go in today, Mother?

**BEATRICE:** You'll go in, all right.

**TILLIE:** Mr. Goodman said he was going to do an experiment —

**BEATRICE:** Why, he looks like the kind that would do his experimenting after sundown.

**TILLIE:** On radioactivity –

**BEATRICE:** On radioactivity? That's all that high school needs!

**TILLIE:** He's going to bring in the cloud chamber –

**BEATRICE:** Why, what an outstanding event. If you had warned me yesterday I would've gotten all dressed to kill and gone with you today. I love seeing cloud chambers being brought in.

**TILLIE:** You can actually see –

**BEATRICE:** You're giving me a headache.

**TILLIE:** Please?

**BEATRICE:** No, my dear, the fortress of knowledge is not going to be blessed with your presence today. I have a good number of exciting duties for you to take care of, not the least of which is rabbit droppings.

**TILLIE:** Oh, Mother, please...I'll do it after school.

**BEATRICE:** If we wait a minute longer this house is going to ferment. I found rabbit droppings in my bedroom even.

**TILLIE:** I could do it after Mr. Goodman's class. I'll say I'm ill and ask for a sick pass.

**BEATRICE:** Do you want me to chloroform that thing right this minute?

**[Matilda, be more aggressive about it. – m] [Let her go to school. – m] [She needs an education. + m] [Do it. + m]**

**TILLIE:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Then shut up.

**RUTH:** Do you have Devil's Kiss down there?

**BEATRICE:** It's in the bathroom cabinet.

**RUTH:** There's so much junk in here it's driving me crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Maybe it's in my purse...If you don't hurry up you'll be late for school.

**RUTH:** Well, I couldn't very well go in without Devil's Kiss, now could I?

**BEATRICE:** Doesn't anyone go to school these days without that all over their lips?

**RUTH:** Nobody I know, except Tillie, that is. And if she had a little lipstick on I'll bet they wouldn't have laughed at her so much yesterday.

**BEATRICE:** Why were they laughing?

**RUTH:** The assembly. Didn't she tell you about the assembly?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, you didn't tell me she was in an assembly.

**RUTH:** Well, I just thought of it right now. How could I tell you anything until I think of it – did you ever stop to consider that? Some crummy science assembly.

**BEATRICE:** What is she talking about?

**RUTH:** I thought she'd tell the whole world. Imagine, right in front of the assembly, with everybody laughing at her.

**BEATRICE:** Will you be quiet, Ruth? *Why were they laughing at you?*

**TILLIE:** I don't know.

**RUTH:** You don't know? My heavens, she was a sight. She had that old jumper on – the faded one with that low collar – and a raggy slip that showed all over and her hair looked like she was struck by lightning.

**BEATRICE:** You're exaggerating...

**RUTH:** **[Re-enact the laughter. – m]** She was cranking this model of something –

**TILLIE:** The atom.

**RUTH:** This model of the atom...you know, it had this crank and a long tower so that when you turned it, these little colored balls went spinning around like crazy. And there was Tillie, cranking away, looking weird as a coot...that old jumper with the raggy slip and the lightning hair...cranking away while some boy with glasses was reading this stupid speech...and everybody burst into laughter until the teachers yelled at them. And all day long, the kids kept coming up to me saying, "Is that really your sister? How can you bear it?" And you know, Chris Burns says to me – "She looks like the one that went to the looney doctors." I could have kissed him there and then.

**[IN – f]**

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, if you can't get yourself dressed properly before going to school, you're never going to go again. I don't like the idea of everybody laughing at you, because when they laugh at you they're laughing at me. And I don't want you cranking any more... **[Matilda, laugh at her. – m]** atoms.

**RUTH:** You're almost out of Devil's Kiss.

**BEATRICE:** If you didn't put so much on it would last longer.

**RUTH:** Who was that calling?

**BEATRICE:** Matilda turned me in to the Gestapo.

**[Give Matilda a cigarette. – f]**

**RUTH:** Can I earn a cigarette this morning?

**BEATRICE:** Why not?

**[Have some beer, too. + m]\*+ [Drink it. – f] [Scratch her eyes out. + m]**

**RUTH:** Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**RUTH:** The call this morning. Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Yes.

**RUTH:** I figured it would be.

**BEATRICE:** A little higher, please.

**RUTH:** There?

**BEATRICE:** Yes, *there*...Why did you figure it would be Mr. Goodman?

**RUTH:** Well, he called me out of sewing class yesterday – I remember because my blouse wasn't all buttoned – and he wanted to know why Tillie's out of school so much.

**BEATRICE:** Lower. A little lower...And what did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I wish you'd go back to Kools. I liked Kools better.

**TILLIE:** What did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I told him you were ill, and he wanted to know what kind, so I told him you had leprosy.

**TILLIE:** You didn't!

**RUTH:** You should have seen his face. He was so cute. And I told him you had ringworm and gangrene.

**BEATRICE:** What did he say?

**RUTH:** And I told him you had what Mother's last patient had...whatchamacallit?

**BEATRICE:** Psoriasis?

**RUTH:** Yeah. Something like that.

**TILLIE:** Tell me you didn't, Ruth!

**RUTH:** OK. I didn't...But I really did.

**BEATRICE:** He knew you were joking.

**RUTH:** And then I told him to go look up the *history* and then he'd find out. Whenever they go look up the history then they don't bother me anymore 'cause they think I'm crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Ruth –

**RUTH:** And I told him the disease you had was fatal and that there wasn't much hope for you.

**BEATRICE:** What kind of *history* is it?

**RUTH:** Just a little folder with the story of our lives in it, that's all.

**BEATRICE:** How did you ever see it?

**RUTH:** I read the whole thing last term when Miss Hanley dragged me into the record room because I didn't want to climb the ropes in gym and I told her my skull was growing.

**BEATRICE:** A little *lower*, please.

**RUTH:** Lower! Higher! I wish you'd make up your mind. If you'd switch back to Kools it might be worth it, but ugh! these are awful. [More top-light. – m]\*- You know, I really did think my skull was growing. Either that or a tumor. So she dragged me out of gym class, and she thought I couldn't read upside down while she was sitting opposite me with the history. But I could.

**BEATRICE:** What does it say?

**RUTH:** Oh, it says you're divorced and that I went crazy...and my father took a heart attack at Star Lake...and now you're a widow –

**BEATRICE:** That's it! Hold it right there! Aaah!

**RUTH:** And it says that I exaggerate and tell stories and that I'm afraid of death and have nightmares...and all that stuff.

**BEATRICE:** And what else does it say?

**RUTH:** I can't remember everything you know. Remember this, remember that... remember this, that...

**[Stop scratching. – f]**

### I.iii

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** Today I saw it. Behind the glass a white cloud began to form. He placed a small piece of metal in the center of the chamber and we waited until I saw the first one – a trace of smoke that came from nowhere and then disappeared. And then another...and another, until I knew it was coming from the metal. They looked like water-sprays from a park fountain, and they went on and on for as long as I watched. [Spotlight on the rabbit. – m] And he told me the fountain of smoke would come forth for a long time, and if I had wanted to, I could have stayed there all my life and it would never have ended – that fountain, so close I could have touched it. In front of my eyes, one part of the world was becoming another. Atoms exploding, flinging off tiny bullets that caused the fountain, atom after atom breaking down into something new. And no one could stop the fountain. It would go on for millions of years – on and on, this fountain from eternity.

### I.iv

**BEATRICE:** I thought we had everything, but leave it to you to think of the one thing we're missing... **[Matilda, get a beer. – m]** Twenty-two acres in Prince's Bay. Small pond. \$6,000... That's cheap. I'd take a look at it if I had any money... **[Turn to page three. – m]\*- [Do sudoku. + m]** What kind of seeds are they?

**TILLIE:** Marigolds. *They've been exposed to cobalt-60.*

**BEATRICE:** If there's one thing I've always wanted, it's been a living room planted with marigolds that have been exposed to cobalt-60. While you're at it, why don't you throw in a tomato patch in the bathroom?

**TILLIE:** Just let me keep them here for a week or so until they get started and then I'll transplant them to the backyard.

**BEATRICE:** Four-family house. Six and a half and six and a half over five and five. Eight garages. I could really do something with that. A nursing home... Don't think I'm not kicking myself that I didn't finish that real estate course. I should have finished beauty school, too... God, what I could do with eight garages... You know, I'm thinking of getting rid of *that* and making this place into something.

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** I've been thinking about a tea shop. Have you noticed there aren't many of them around anymore?

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** And this is just the type of neighborhood where a good tea shop could make a go of it. We'd have a good cheesecake. You've got to have a good cheesecake... **[Can everyone talk in a Russian accent. + m]** Eight times ten – well, eight times eight, if they're falling down – that's sixty-four dollars a month from the garages alone... I swear money makes money.

**[Give her entrance music. – m]**

**BEATRICE:** What is cobalt-60?

**TILLIE:** It's something that causes... changes in seeds. Oh, Mother – he set the cloud chamber up just for me and he told me about radioactivity and half-life and he got the seeds for me.

**BEATRICE:** What does half-life mean?

**TILLIE:** The half-life of Polonium-210 is one hundred and forty days. The half-life of Radium-226 is one thousand five hundred and ninety years. The half-life of Uranium-238 is four and one-half billion years.

**BEATRICE:** Do you know you're giving me a headache? **[What about plutonium? + m]** LOOK WHO'S THERE! IT'S NANNY! NANNY CAME **[Fall down. + m]** ALL THE WAY OUT HERE BY HERSELF! I'm going to need a cigarette for this. NANNY! YOU COME SIT DOWN **[Hit her with the walker. + f]** AND WE'LL BE RIGHT WITH HER! You know, sometimes I've got to laugh. I've got *this* on my hands and all you're worried about is planting marigolds. **[Give Nanny a cigarette. + m]** I'VE GOT HOTSY WATER FOR YOU, NANNY. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME HOTSY WATER AND HONEY? I've never seen it to fail. Every time I decide to have a cup of coffee I see that face at the curtains. I wonder what she'd do... **[Nanny, be fifty years younger. – m]** if I just poured this right over her head. **[Do it. – m]\*- I'll be she wouldn't even notice it.** NANNY'S GOING TO GET JUST WHAT SHE NEEDS! **[Spill some tea. – m]** **[Pour the water on her. – f]** You know if someone told me when I was young that I'd end up feeding honey to a zombie, I'd tell them

they were crazy. [**Beatrice, stop smoking.** – m] SOMETHING WRONG, NANNY? OH, DID I FORGET NANNY'S SPOON? MERCY! MERCY! I FORGOT NANNY'S SPOON! I'll give you a spoon, Nanny, I'll give you a spoon. [**Matilda, run away from home.** – m] [**Nanny, throw the water in her face.** – f] Matilda! Watch me give Nanny her spoon. A SPOON FOR NANNY! Fifty dollars a week. Fifty dollars. I look at you, Nanny, and I wonder if it's worth it. [**Matilda, play with your rabbit.** – m]\*- [**Have more respect for old people. Come on.** + m] I think I'd be better off driving a cab. TAKE HONEY, NANNY. HONEY WITH HOTSY WATER! You should have seen her daughter bring her here last week...I could have used you that day...She came in pretending she was Miss Career Woman of the Year. She said she was in real estate and *such a busy little woman*, [**Beatrice, help Nanny with her sugar pack.** – m] such a busy little woman – she just couldn't give all the love and care and affection her little momsy needed anymore... Nanny's quite a little cross to bear, now aren't you, Nanny dear? But you're a little better than Mr. Mayo was – with the tumor on his brain – or Miss Marion Minto with her cancer, or Mr. Brougham...what was his first name?

**TILLIE:** Alexander.

**BEATRICE:** Mr. Alexander Brougham with the worms in his legs. WHY, NANNY'S QUITE SOME LITTLE GIRL, AREN'T YOU, NANNY? A GIRL DRINKING HER HOTSY AND HONEY!... [**She still needs a lemon.** – m] [**Matilda, start cleaning the house.** – f] Cobalt-60. Ha! You take me for a fool, don't you?

**TILLIE:** No, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** Science, science, science! Don't they teach our misfits anything anymore? Anything decent and meaningful and sensitive? [**Spot on Beatrice.** – m]\*+ Do you know what I'd be now if it wasn't for this mud pool I got sucked into? I'd probably be a dancer. [**Tillie, give Nanny a kiss.** – f] Miss Betty Frank, The Best Dancer of the Class of 19... [**Open the iris.** + m] something. [**Dance.** + f]\*+ One minute I'm the best dancer in school – smart as a whip – the head of the whole crowd! [**Modern dance.** – f] And the next minute...One mistake. That's how it starts. [**Slam the door.** – f] Marry the wrong man and before you know it he's got you tied down with two stones around your neck for the rest of your life. [**Matilda, go sit with Nanny.** – f]\*- When I was in that lousy high school I was one of the most respected kids you ever saw. I used to wonder why people always said, "Why, just yesterday... [**(cuts himself off)**] why, just yesterday... [**Beatrice, shut up.** + m] why, just yesterday..." [**Ruth, come on in.** + m] Before I knew what happened I lost my dancing legs and got varicose legs. Beautiful varicose legs. [**Play some dancing music.** – f] Do you know, everything I ever thought I'd be has exploded! NANNY, YOU HURRY UP WITH THAT HONEY! Exploded! [**Beatrice, tear down some newspaper.** – m] You know, I almost forgot about everything I was supposed to be...NANNY'S ALMOST FINISHED. ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL? She's almost finished, all right. NANNY'S DAUGHTER IS COMING TO SEE YOU SOON. WILL THAT MAKE NANNY HAPPY? The day Miss Career Woman of the Year comes to visit again I think I'll drop dead. Nobody's too busy for anything they want to do, don't you tell me. [**The beer tastes like shit.** – m]\*+ What kind of idiot [**Put some beer in Nanny's tea.** + f] do people take me for? NANNY, YOU'RE SPILLING YOUR HOTSY! JESUS CHRIST! You know, I ought to kick you right out and open that tea

shop tomorrow. [**Give her some beer instead.** – m] Oh, it's coming. I can feel it. And the first thing I'll do is get rid of that rabbit.

[**Nanny, move to the couch.** – f]

TILLIE: Yes, Mother.

BEATRICE: You think I'm kidding?

TILLIE: No, I don't.

BEATRICE: You bet I'm not! [**"Kill the wabbit."** + m] I was going to do this a month ago. [**Matilda, age twenty years.** – m] Here it is. Here's a new word for you. Trichloro...methane. Do you know what that is, Matilda? Well, it's chloroform! I'm saving it for that Angora manure machine of yours. [**IN** + m] Speaking of manure machines, IS NANNY READY TO GO MAKE DUTY? NANNY IS ALWAYS READY FOR DUTY, [**Nanny, make duty right there.** + m] AREN'T YOU NANNY? BECAUSE NANNY'S A GOODY-GOODY GIRL AND GOODY-GOODY GIRLS ALWAYS GET GOODY-GOODY THINGS. GOD LOOKS OUT FOR GOODY-GOODY GIRLS AND GIVES THEM HOTSY AND HONEY – RIGHT, NANNY?

BEATRICE: Half-life! If you want to know what a half-life is, just ask me. You're looking at the original half-life! I got stuck with one daughter with half a mind; another one who's half a test tube; half a husband – a house half full of rabbit crap – and half a corpse! That's what I call a half-life, Matilda! [**Matilda, fight back.** – m] Me and cobalt-60! Two of the biggest half-lives you ever saw! [**Shout back at her.** – m]

[**A bit louder, please.** – m]\*- [**Something more upbeat.** + f] [**Do you have "The Macarena?"** + m]

#### I.v

BEATRICE: Hello – Mr. Goodman, please... How would I know if he's got a class?... [**More cool light.** – m] Hello, Mr. Goodman? Are you Mr. Goodman?...Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Torgersen...Yes, I'll wait... [**Blackout for thirty seconds.** + m] Couldn't you find him, Miss Torgersen?... [**Insult her.** – f] Oh! Excuse me, Mr. Goodman. How are you?...I'll bet you'll never guess who this is – it's Mrs. Hunsdorfer – remember the frozen foods? You know, Ruth told me she's your new secretary and I certainly think that's a delight. You were paying so much attention to Matilda that I'll bet Ruth just got jealous. She does things like that, you know. I hope she works hard for you, although I can't imagine what kind of work Ruth could be doing in that great big science office. She's a terrible snoop... Your attendance? Isn't that charming. And the *cut* cards! Imagine. You trust her with...why, I didn't know she could type *at all*...imagine. Well...I'll...Of course, *too* much work isn't good for anyone, either. No wonder she's failing everything. I mean, I never knew a girl who failed everything regardless of what they were suffering from... [**Hang up.** – f] I suppose I should say recovering from...Well, it's about the seeds you gave Matilda...Well, she's had them in the house for a week now and they're starting to grow. Now, she told me they had been subjected to radioactivity, and I hear such terrible things about radioactivity that I automatically associate radioactivity with sterility, and it positively horrifies me to have those seeds right here in my living room. [**Switch ears.** – m] Couldn't she just grow plain marigolds like everyone else?

Oh... It does sound like an interesting project, but... No, I must admit that at this very moment I don't know what a *mutation* is... Mr. Goodman... Mr. Goodman! I don't want you to think I'm not interested, but please spare me definitions over the phone. I'll go the library next week and pick me out some little book on science and then I'll know all about mutations... [**No you won't. + m**] No, you didn't insult me, but I just want you to know that I'm not *stupid*... [**Yes you are. - m**] I just thought prevention was better than a tragedy, Mr. Goodman. I mean, Matilda has enough problems to worry about without *sterility*... Well, I was just concerned, but you've put my poor mother's heart at ease. You know, really, our schools need more exciting young men like you, I really mean that. Really. Oh, I do. Goodbye, Mr. Goodman.

**[Lights up during the scene change. - m]**

I.vi

**[More lightning. - m]**

**TILLIE:** Mother! She's going to have one!

**BEATRICE:** Stop it! Stop it, Ruth!

**TILLIE:** She's going!

**BEATRICE:** Ruth! Stop it!

**TILLIE:** She's going to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up and get back in your room! You're not going to let yourself go, do you hear me, Ruth? You're not going to go!

**RUTH:** He's after me!

**BEATRICE:** You were dreaming, do you hear me? Nobody's after you! Nobody!

**TILLIE:** I saw her eyes start to go back –

**BEATRICE:** Get back in your room! There, now, nobody's after you. Nice and easy. Breathe deeply... Did the big bad man come after my little girl? [**Ruth, grab the blanket. - m**] That big bad bogey man? Now that wasn't so bad, was it?

**RUTH:** It was the dream, with Mr. Mayo again.

**BEATRICE:** Oh. [**Project more. - f**]\*- Well, we'll just get you a little hot milk and – Why, the electricity's gone off. Do you remember what happened to those candles?

**RUTH:** What candles?

**BEATRICE:** The little white ones from my birthday cake last year.

**RUTH:** Tillie melted them down for school a long time ago.

**BEATRICE:** She had no right to do that.

**RUTH:** She asked you. She used them to attach a paper straw to a milk bottle with a balloon over it, and it was supposed to tell if it was going to rain.

**BEATRICE:** There! It works. I don't want her wasting anything of mine unless she's positive I won't need it. You always need candles. Why, Ruth – your skin just turned ice cold! This will warm you up... What's the matter?

**[Point it away from the audience. - m]**

**RUTH:** The flashlight –

**BEATRICE:** What's wrong with it?

**RUTH:** It's the same one I used to check on Mr. Mayo with.

**BEATRICE:** So it is. We don't need it.

**RUTH:** No, let me keep it. [**Switch roles. - m**] Do you want to know how they have it in the history?

**BEATRICE:** No, I don't.

**RUTH:** Well, they say I came out of my room...And I started down the stairs, step by step...and I heard the choking and banging on the bed, and...

**BEATRICE:** I'm going back to bed.

**RUTH:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Well, talk about something nice, then.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, tell me about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** You change so fast I can't keep up with you.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please*... the story about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** I don't know anything about telling stories. Get those great big smart teachers of yours to do that sort of stuff.

**[Make the lights come on. – f]\*-**

**RUTH:** Tell me about the horses again, and how you stole the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** Don't get me started on that.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please*...

**BEATRICE:** Do you want a cigarette?

**[No. – f]** **[You're out of cigarettes...after this one. + m]\*+** **[The lighter doesn't work. – m]\*+** **[Blackout. + m]** **[Ruth get – (cuts himself off). – m]** **[Ruth, have an attack. – m]** **[Have the board ops switch boards. + m]** **[Bring Rafael on stage; he'll solve it. + m]** **[The battery goes out in the flashlight. – m]** **[Explain who Mr. Mayo is. – f]**

**RUTH:** Leave out the part where they shoot the horses, though.

**BEATRICE:** Honey, you know the whole story –

**RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! *Cu...cumbers!*"

**BEATRICE:** No. It's "Apples! Pears! *Cucum...bers!*"

**BEATRICE AND RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! *Cucum...bers!*"

**RUTH:** How did you get the wagon out without him seeing you?

**BEATRICE:** That was easy. Every time he got home for the day he'd make us both some sandwiches – my mama had been dead for years – and he'd take a nap on the old sofa that used to be...there! And while he was sleeping I got the horses hitched up and went riding around the block waving to everyone.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, you didn't!

**BEATRICE:** Of course I did. I had more nerve than a bear when I was a kid. Let me tell you it takes nerve to sit up on that wagon every day yelling "Apples!... Pears! *Cucum...bers!*"

**RUTH:** Did he find out you took the wagon?

**BEATRICE:** Did he find out? He came running down the street after me and started spanking me right on top of the wagon – not hard – but it was so embarrassing – and I had one of those penny marshmallow ships in the back pocket of my overalls, and it got all squished. And you better believe I never did it again... **[Make shadow puppets on the back wall. – m]\*+** You would have loved him, Ruth, and gone out with him on the wagon...all over Stapleton yelling as loud as you wanted.

**RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! *Cu...cumbers!*"

**BEATRICE:** No!

**RUTH:** "*Cucum...bers!*"

**[Pears. – m]**

**BEATRICE:** My father made up for all the other men in this whole world, Ruth. If only you two could have met. He'd only be about seventy now, do you realize that? And I'll bet he'd still be selling vegetables around town. All that fun – and then I don't think I ever knew what really hit me.

**RUTH:** Don't tell about –

**BEATRICE:** Don't worry about the horses.

**RUTH:** What hit you?

**BEATRICE:** Well it was just me and Papa... and your father hanging around. And then Papa got sick... and I drove with him up to the sanatorium. And then I came home and there were the horses –

**RUTH:** Mother!

**BEATRICE:** And I had the horses...taken care of. And then Papa got terribly sick and he begged me to marry so that he'd be sure I'd be taken care of. If he knew how I was taken care of he'd turn over in his grave. And *nightmares*! Do you want to know the nightmare I used to have? I never had nightmares over the fights with your father, or the divorce, or this thrombosis – he deserved it – I never had nightmares over any of that. Let me tell you about my nightmare that used to come back and back: *Well, I'm on Papa's wagon, but it's newer and shinier, and it's being pulled by beautiful white horses, not dirty workhorses – these are like circus horses with long manes and tinsel – and the wagon is blue, shiny blue. And it's full – filled with yellow apples and grapes and green squash. You're going to laugh when you hear this. I'm wearing a lovely gown with jewels all over it, and my hair is piled up on top of my head with a long feather in it, and the bells are ringing. Huge bells swinging on a gold braid strung across the back of the wagon, and they're going DONG, DONG...DONG, DONG. And I'm yelling "APPLES! PEARS! CUCUM...BERS!"*

**RUTH:** That doesn't sound like a nightmare to me.

**[Can you play "Staying Alive?" In the background? – m]**

**BEATRICE:** And then I turn down our street and all the noise stops. This long street, with all the doors of the houses shut and everything crowded next to each other, and there's not a soul around. And then I start getting afraid that the vegetables are going to spoil...and that nobody's going to buy anything, and I feel as though I shouldn't be on the wagon, and I keep trying to call out. But there isn't a sound. **[More thunder. – f]** **[Is it still raining? – m]** **[Make it rain. – f]**\*- Not a single sound. **[Lights. – f]** **[Spot on Beatrice. – f]** Then I turn my head and look at the house across the street. I see an upstairs window, and a pair of hands pull the curtains slowly apart. **[Dance. + f]** I see the face of my father and my heart stands still... Ruth... take the light out of my eyes.

**[Shine it in her eyes again. + m]** **[IN – m]** **[Lightning. – m]**

**RUTH:** Is Nanny going to die here?

**[Be more experimental. + m]**

**BEATRICE:** No.

**RUTH:** How can you be sure?

**BEATRICE:** I can tell.

**RUTH:** Are you crying?

**[Blow your nose. – m]** **[Matilda, come out. – f]**

**BEATRICE:** What's left for me, Ruth?

**RUTH:** What, Mama?

**BEATRICE:** What's left for me?

[Lights on during the scene change. – f] [IN – m] [IN – m] [Skip the next light cue. + m] [Crew sit on the couch during the next scene. + f] [IN – m]

I.vii

[Nanny, take a swig. – f] [Chase it down with a Miller Light. + m] [Tillie, feed your plants beer. + f] [Discover that one of them has died. – m]\*- [Go feed the dead ones to the rabbit. + f] [Laird, call the show from the stairs. + m] [Laird, call the show in Spanish. + m] [IN – f] [Somebody make the easy chair point the other way. – m]

**TILLIE:** What are you doing?

**BEATRICE:** A little housecleaning, and you're going to help. You can start by getting rid of that rabbit or I'll suffocate the bastard. You don't think I will, do you? You wait and see. Where's Ruth? She's probably running around the schoolyard in her brassiere.

**TILLIE:** Mother, they want me to do something at school.

**BEATRICE:** NANNY! DID YOU HEAR THAT? [Nanny, dance. + f] THEY WANT HER TO DO SOMETHING AT SCHOOL! ISN'T THAT MOMENTOUS, NANNY? Well I want you to do something around here. Like get rid of that bunny. I'm being generous! I'll let you give it away. Far away. Give it to Mr. Goodman. I'd chloroform [Beatrice, be more passive-aggressive. – m] the thing myself, but that crazy sister of yours would throw convulsions for fifty years...and I hate a house that vibrates. And get rid of those sterile marigolds. They stink! [IN – m] HI, NANNY – HOW ARE YOU, HONEY? [Punch Beatrice in the face, Nanny. + m] HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ON A LONG TRIP? You see, everybody, I spent today taking stock of my life and I've come up with zero. I added up all the separate departments and the total reads zero... zero [Spotlight on Beatrice. – m] zero zero zero zero zero ...And do you know how you pronounce that, with all your grammatical schoolin' and foolin'? You pronounce it o,o,o,o,O,O,O,O,O,O! [Say one in ten. + m] o,o,o,o,O,O,O,O,O,O,O! Right, Nanny? RIGHT, NANNY? So, [Tillie's an orphan, adopted by Nanny. – f] by the end of the week, you get rid of that cottontail compost heap and we'll get you a job down at the five-and-ten-cent store. And if you don't do so well with the public, we'll fix you up with some kind of machine. Wouldn't that be nice?

**RUTH:** Can you believe it? I didn't, until Chris Burns came up and told me about it in Geography, and then Mr. Goodman told me himself during the eighth period in the office [Put your jacket back on. – f] when I was eavesdropping. Aren't you so happy you could bust? Tillie? I'm so proud I can't believe it, Mama. Everybody was talking about it and nobody...well, it was the first time they all came up screaming about her and I said, "Yes, she's [Nanny, wake up. – f] my sister!" I said it, "She's my sister! My sister! [IN – f] My sister!" [Someone take care of Nanny. – m] Give me a cigarette.

**BEATRICE:** Get your hands off my personal property.

**RUTH:** I'll scratch your back later.

**BEATRICE:** I don't want you to touch me!

**RUTH:** Did he call yet? My God, I can't believe it, I just can't!

**BEATRICE:** Did who call yet?

**RUTH:** I'm not supposed to tell you, as Mr. Goodman's private secretary, but you're going to get a call from school.

**BEATRICE:** What is she talking about?

**TILLIE:** I was in the Science Fair at school.

**RUTH:** Didn't she tell you yet? Oh, Tillie, how could you? She's fantastic, Mama! She's a finalist in the Science Fair. There were only five of them out of hundreds and hundreds. She won with all those plants over there. They're freaks! Isn't that a scream? Dr. Berg picked her himself. The principal! And I heard Mr. Goodman say she was going to be another Madam Pasteur and **[Fall off the couch. - m]** he never saw a girl do anything like that before and...so I told everybody, "Yes, she's my sister!" Tillie, "You're my sister!" I said. And Mr. Goodman called the Advance and they're coming to take your picture. Oh, Mama, isn't it crazy? And nobody laughed at her, Mama. She beat out practically everybody and nobody laughed at her. "She's my sister," I said. "She's my sister!" **[Tillie's adopted. - f]** That must be him! **[Can Nanny drool some more? + m]** Mama, answer it - I'm afraid. Answer it before he hangs up! **[Matilda, answer it. - m]** Mama! **[Matilda, get it. - m]** He's gonna hang up! **[Answer it. - f]** Hello?...Yes... It's him!...Just a minute, please... He wants to talk to you.

**[Talk to him. - f]** **[See if the phone stretches to the top of the stairs. + m]**

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**RUTH:** The *principal!*

**[Tillie, try not to be nice. - m]**

**BEATRICE:** Hang up.

**[Take the call. - f]**

**RUTH:** I told him you were here! **[Don't hang up. - f]** Mama!

**[Throw the phone at her. - f]** **[Throw the phone at Nanny. + f]** **[Someone take care of Nanny. - m]**

**BEATRICE:** Yes?...I know who you are, Dr. Berg... **[Nanny, die. + m]** I see...Couldn't you get someone else? There's an awful lot of work that has to be done around here, because she's not as careful with her home duties as she is with man-in-the-moon marigolds...Me? What would you want with me up on the stage?...The other mothers can do as they please...I would have thought you had enough in your *history* without...I'll think about it...Goodbye, Dr. Berg... I SAID I'D THINK ABOUT IT!

**RUTH:** What did he say?

**BEATRICE:** How could you do this to me? HOW COULD YOU LET THAT MAN CALL OUR HOME! I have no clothes, do you hear me? I'd look just like you up on the stage, ugly little you! DO YOU WANT THEM TO LAUGH AT US? LAUGH AT THE TWO OF US?

**RUTH:** Mother... **[Beatrice, take out your anger on an audience member. + m]** aren't you proud of her? Mother...it's an *honor*.

**[Ruth, give Tillie a hug. - f]\*-**

**TILLIE:** But...nobody laughed at me.

**[Nanny, give Ruth a hug. + m]**

**BEATRICE:** Oh, my God...

**[Make the helicopter land in the theater. + m]** [Lights on during the scene change.  
**- f]** [Spot on stage crew. They're people, too, you know. + m] [IN - f] [Sheira,  
 suggest something. - m] [Yay crew. - m]

## II.i

**[Do act one again. - m]** [Start the show from the beginning. - m] [Whoa. - m]  
 [Start from the beginning. - f] [Do it twice as fast. - m] [I forgot my sheet. -  
 m] [All right, man. - m] [Forward in time. - f] [You should apologize. - m]  
 [Sorry. - m] [Do act two backwards. - f] [Speak in Swahili. - m] [Ouch. - f]  
 [What's the hypothesis? - m] [Are we the control? + m]

**RUTH:** The only competition you have to worry about is Janice Vickery. They say she caught it near Princess Bay Boulevard and it was still alive when she took the skin off it.

**TILLIE:** Let me do that please, Ruth.

**RUTH:** I'm sorry I touched them, really.

**TILLIE:** Why don't you feed Peter?

**RUTH:** Because I don't feel like feeding him...Now I feel like feeding him. I heard that it screamed for three minutes after she put it in because the water wasn't boiling yet. How much talent does it take to boil the skin off a cat and then stick the bones together again? That's what I want to know. Ugh. I had a dream about that, too. I figure she did it in less than a day and she ends up as one of the top five winners...and you spend months growing atomic flowers.

**[The rabbit bites you. - m]**

**TILLIE:** Don't you think you should finish getting ready?

**RUTH:** Finish? This is it!

**TILLIE:** Are you going to wear that sweater?

**RUTH:** Look, don't worry about me. I'm not getting up on any stage, and if I did I wouldn't be caught dead with a horrible bow like that.

**TILLIE:** [Change the sweater. - m] Mother put it –

**RUTH:** They're going to laugh you off the stage again like when you cranked that atom in assembly...I didn't mean that...The one they're going to laugh at is Mama.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** I said the one they're going to laugh at is Mama...Oh, let me take that bow off.

**TILLIE:** It's all right.

**RUTH:** Look, just sit still. I don't want everybody making fun of you.

**TILLIE:** What made you say that about Mama?

**RUTH:** Oh, I heard them talking in the Science Office yesterday. Mr. Goodman and Miss Hanley. She's getting \$12.63 to chaperon the thing tonight.

**TILLIE:** What were they saying?

**RUTH:** Miss Hanley was telling Mr. Goodman about Mama...when she found out you were one of the five winners. And he wanted to know if there was something wrong with Mama because she sounded crazy over the phone. And Miss Hanley said she was crazy and she always has been crazy and she can't wait to see what she looks like after all these years. Miss Hanley said her nickname used to be *Betty the Loon*.

**TILLIE:** Ruth, you're hurting me.

**RUTH:** She was just like you and everybody thought she was a big weirdo. There! You look much better! Peter, [**The rabbit's dead. – m**] if anybody stuck you in a pot of boiling water I'd kill them, do you know that?... [**Put the bow back in. – f**] What do they call boiling the skin off a cat? [**Drop the rabbit. – m**] I call it murder, that's what I call it. They say it was hit by a car and Janice just scooped it up and before you could say *bingo* it was screaming in a pot of boiling water...Do you know what they're all waiting to see? Mama's feathers! That's what Miss Hanley said. She said Mama blabs as though she was the Queen of England and just as proper as can be, and that her idea of getting dressed up is to put on all the feathers in the world and go as a bird. Always trying to get somewhere, like a great big bird.

**TILLIE:** Don't tell Mama, please. It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** I was up there watching her getting dressed and sure enough, she's got the feathers out.

**TILLIE:** You didn't tell her what Miss Hanley said?

**RUTH:** Are you kidding? I just told her I didn't like the feathers and I didn't think she should wear any. But I'll bet she doesn't listen to me.

**TILLIE:** It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** It doesn't matter? Do you think I want to be laughed right out of the school tonight, with Chris Burns there, and all? Laughed right out of the school, with your electric hair and her feathers on that stage, and Miss Hanley splitting her sides?

**TILLIE:** Promise me you won't say anything.

**RUTH:** On one condition.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** The taxi will be here any minute and I won't have all this stuff ready. Did you see my speech?

**RUTH:** I mean it. Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** He belongs to all of us.

**RUTH:** For me. All for me. What do you care? He doesn't mean anything to you anymore, now that you've got all those crazy plants.

**TILLIE:** Will you stop?

**RUTH:** If you don't give him to me I'm going to tell Mama that everybody's waiting to laugh at her.

**TILLIE:** Where are those typewritten cards?

**RUTH:** I MEAN IT! Give him to me!

**TILLIE:** Does he mean that much to you?

**RUTH:** Yes!

**TILLIE:** All right.

**RUTH:** Betty the Loon... That's what they used to call her, you know. Betty the Loon!

**TILLIE:** I don't think that's very nice.

**RUTH:** First they had Betty the Loon, and now they've got Tillie the Loon... You don't have to worry about me turning you in for any old plants...How much does a taxi cost from here to the school?

**TILLIE:** Not much.

**RUTH:** I wish she'd give me the money it costs for a taxi – and for all that cardboard and paint and flowerpots and stuff. The only time she ever made a fuss over me was when she drove me nuts.

**TILLIE:** Tell her to hurry, please.

**RUTH:** By the way, I went over to see Janice Vickery's pot, that she did you know what in, and I started telling her and her mother about the worms in Mr. Alexander Brougham's legs, and I got thrown out because it was too near dinner time. That Mrs. Vickery kills me. She can't stand worms in somebody else's legs but she lets her daughter cook a cat.

**[Tillie, be more irritated. – m]**

**TILLIE:** Mother! The taxi will be here any minute.

**BEATRICE:** You're lucky I'm coming, without all this rushing me.

**TILLIE:** Mama, you look beautiful.

**BEATRICE:** Don't put it on too thick. I said I'd go and I guess there's no way to get out of it. Do you mind telling me how I'm supposed to get up on the stage? Do they call my name or what? And where are you going to be? If you ask me, they should've sent all the parents a mimeographed sheet of instructions. If this is supposed to be such a great event, why don't they do it right?

**TILLIE:** You just sit on the stage with the other parents before it begins.

**BEATRICE:** How long is this going to last? And remember, I don't care even if you do win the whole damn thing, I'm not making any speech. I can hold my own anywhere, but I hated that school when I went there and I hate it now...and the only thing I'd have to say is, what a pack of stupid teachers and vicious children they have. Imagine someone tearing the skin off a cat.

**RUTH:** She didn't tear it. She boiled it off.

**BEATRICE:** You just told me upstairs that girl tore the skin off with an orange knife and...do you know, sometimes you exasperate me? **[Ruth, fight back. – m]** If you've got all the plants in this box, I can manage the folding thing. Do you know I've got a headache from doing those titles? And you probably don't even like them.

**TILLIE:** I like them very much.

**BEATRICE:** Look, if you don't want me to go tonight, I don't have to. You're about as enthusiastic as a dummy about this whole thing.

**TILLIE:** I'm sorry.

**[Ruth, tell your mother what the teachers said. – f]**

**BEATRICE:** And I refuse to let you get nervous. Put that bow back in your hair.

**RUTH:** I took it out.

**BEATRICE:** What did you do that for?

**RUTH:** Because it made her look crazy.

**BEATRICE:** How would you know what's crazy or not? If that sweater of yours was any tighter it'd cut off the circulation in your chest. **[Suddenly, it's very hot in the room. + m]** The bow looks very nice in your hair. There's nothing wrong with looking proper, Matilda, and if you don't have enough money to look expensive and perfect, people like you for *trying* to look nice. You know, one day maybe you will be pretty. You'll have some nice features, when that hair revives and you do some tricks with makeup. I hope you didn't crowd the plants too close together. Did you find your speech?

TILLIE: Yes, mother.

[Matilda, take out the bow. – m]

BEATRICE: You know, Matilda, I was [Do it. – f] wondering about something. Do you think you're really going to win? [Take out the bow. – f]\*- I mean, not that you won't be the best, but there's so much politics in school. Don't laugh, but if there's anyone who's an expert on that, it's me, and someday I'm going to write a book and blast that school to pieces. If you're just a little bit different in this world, they try to kill you off.

[Leave it out. – f] [Ruth, tell her about Betty the Loon and the feathers. – m]

RUTH: Tillie gave Peter to me.

BEATRICE: Oh? Then you inherited the rabbit droppings I found upstairs. What are you doing with your coat on?

RUTH: I'm going out to wait for the taxi.

BEATRICE: Oh, no you're not. You start right in on the rabbit droppings. Or you won't get another cigarette even if you scratch my back with an orange knife.

RUTH: I'm going down to the school with you.

BEATRICE: Oh, no you're not! You're going to keep company with that corpse in there. If she wakes up and starts gagging just slip her a shot of whiskey. Quick! Grab the plants, Matilda – I'll get the big thing.

RUTH: I want to go! I promised Chris Burns I'd meet him.

BEATRICE: Can't you understand English?

RUTH: I've got to go!

BEATRICE: Shut up!

RUTH: I don't [Let her go. – f] care! I'M GOING ANYWAY!

BEATRICE: WHAT DID YOU SAY?

TILLIE: Mother!

[Let her go. – f]

BEATRICE: Hurry up with that box, Matilda, and tell him to stop blowing the horn.

HURRY UP! I don't know where you ever got the idea you were going tonight. Did you think nobody was going to hold down the fort?...Now you know how I felt all those years you and everybody else was running out whenever they felt like it – because there was always me to watch over the fifty-dollar-a-week corpse. If there's one thing I demand it's respect. I don't ask for anything from you but respect.

RUTH: Why are you ashamed of me?

BEATRICE: I've been seen with a lot worse than you. I don't even know why I'm going tonight, do you know that? Do you think I give one goddamn about the whole thing?... Do you want to know why I'm going? Do you really want to know why this once somebody else has to stick with that dried prune for a few minutes? Because this is the first time in my life I've ever felt just a little bit proud over something. Isn't that silly? Somewhere in the back of this turtle-sized brain of mine I feel just a little *proud!* Jesus Christ! And you begrudge me even that, you little bastard.

[Beatrice, leave without the poster and then come back for it. – m]\*-

RUTH: Hurry up. They're waiting for you...They're *all* waiting for you.

BEATRICE: I hope the paint is dry...Who's waiting for me?

RUTH: Everybody...including Miss Hanley. [Don't tell her. – f] She's been telling all the teachers...about you...and they're all waiting.

**BEATRICE:** You're such a little liar, Ruth, do you know that? When you can't have what you want, you try to ruin it for everybody else.

**RUTH:** Goodnight, *Betty the Loon*.

**BEATRICE:** Take this thing.

**RUTH:** What for?

**BEATRICE:** Go with Matilda.

**RUTH:** I don't want to go now.

**BEATRICE:** GET OUT OF HERE!

**RUTH:** Now Tillie's going to blame it on me that you're not going – and take the rabbit back. I can't help it what people call you. I'll tell Tillie you'll be down later, all right?... Don't answer me. What do I care!

**[Nanny, come on stage. – m]** (*met with disapproval*)    **[More top-light. – m]**

**[New scene change music. – f]**\*-

## II.ii

**JANICE:** *The Past:* I got the cat from the A.S.P.C.A. immediately after it had been killed by a high-altitude pressure system. That explains why some of the rib bones are missing, because that method sucks the air out of the animal's lungs and ruptures all cavities. They say it prevents cruelty to animals but I think it's horrible. Then I boiled the cat in a sodium hydroxide solution until most of the skin pulled right off, but I had to scrape some of the gristle off the joints with a knife. You have no idea how difficult it is **[Act smarter. – m]** to get right down to the bones. I have to go on to *The Present*, now – but I did want to tell you how long it took me to put the thing together. I mean, as it is now, it's extremely useful for students of anatomy, even with the missing rib bones, **[Say "like" more often. – m]** and it can be used to show basic anatomical aspects of many, many animals that are in the same family as felines. **[You have a cold. You can't stop sneezing. – m]** I suppose that's about the only present uses I can think for it, but it is nice to remember as an accomplishment, **[Blink less. – m]** and it looks good on college applications to show you did something else in school besides dating. *The Future:* The only future plans I have for Tabby – my little brother asked the A.S.P.C.A. what its name was when he went to pick it up and they said it was called Tabby, but I think they were kidding him – I mean as far as future plans, I'm going to donate it to the science department, of course, and next year, if there's another Science Fair perhaps I'll do the same thing with a dog. Thank you very much for your attention, and I hope I win! **[You got into Penn. + m]**    **[Ow. – f]**

## II.iii

**BEATRICE:** I want to talk to the principal, please...Well, you'll have to get him down off the stage...It's none of your goddamn business who I am!...Oh, I see...Yes. I have a message for him and Mr. Goodman, and you, too...And this is for Miss Hanley, too...Tell them Mrs. Hunsdorfer called to thank them for making her wish she was dead...Would you give them that message, please?...Thank you very much.

**[Throw the phone against the wall. – f]**    **[Down the alcohol. – m]**    **[Don't answer it. – m]**    **[Don't answer it. – m]**    **[Don't. Hang it up. + m]**\*+

**BEATRICE:** Hello. This is Mrs. Hunsdorfer...I'm sorry if I frightened you, I wouldn't want you to think Nanny had deceased or anything like that – I can imagine how terrible you'd feel if anything like that ever happened...Terrible tragedy that would be, Miss Career Woman of the Year... Yes, I'll tell you why I'm calling. I want her out of here by tomorrow. I told you when you rolled her in here I was going to try her out for a while and if I didn't like her she was to get the hell out. Well I don't like her, so get her the hell out... **[Start liking her. + m]** It's like this. I don't like the way she cheats at solitaire. Is that a good enough reason?...Fine. And if she's not out of here by noon I'll send her collect in an ambulance, you son of a bitch!

**[Down the alcohol. – m]** **[Call her back and give her a better reason. – m]** **[Start cleaning up. + f]** **[Put a red spotlight on her. – m]\*+** **[Don't rip it. – f]** **[Dim the lights. – m]\*-** **[Don't kill the rabbit. – f]** **[There you go. + m]** **[Throw the rabbit off the stairs. – m]**  
**[Change the music to the rain. – f]\*+** **[Thunder. – m]\*-** **[Lightning. – f]\*-**

#### II.iv

**TILLIE:** **[Spot. – m]\*-** *The Past:* The seeds were exposed to various degrees...of gamma rays from radiation sources in Oak Ridge...Mr. Goodman helped me pay for the seeds...Their growth was plotted against...time. **[Move into the light. – m]** **[Tillie, give a perfect presentation. + m]** *The Present:* The seeds which received little radiation have grown to plants which are normal in appearance. **[Take off your bow. – f]** The seeds which received moderate radiation gave rise to mutations such as double blooms, giant stems, and variegated leaves. **[Lower your voice. – m]\*-** The seeds closest to the gamma source were killed or yielded dwarf plants. **[You know your notes. – m]** *The Future:* **[Tell us the standard deviation. + m]** After radiation is better understood, a day will come when the power of exploding atoms will change the whole world we know. Some of the mutations will be good ones – wonderful things beyond our dreams – and I believe, I believe this with all my heart, THE DAY WILL COME WHEN MANKIND WILL THANK GOD FOR THE STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL ENERGY FROM THE ATOM.

**[No music. – f]** **[Stop using this music for the rest of the show. + m]** **[Oh. – m]**  
**[Play Mirah again. – f]** **[Let Jess Pfeffer run the board. + m]**

#### II.v

**RUTH:** MAMA! MAMA! She won! Mama! Where are you? She won! Hurry up! Hurry! Oh, my God, I can't believe it! Mama! Come on down! Hurry! Give me that! Mama! Wait till you see this! Mama! She won... Didn't you hear me? Tillie won the whole thing!... **[Recycle the can. + f]** Mama?...What's the matter with you? **[Throw the rabbit on the couch. – m]** **[Collapse. + m]** What did you rip the paper off the windows for?

**[Act silently using your body. – f]**

**TILLIE:** Mama? Are you going to open a...shop?

**RUTH:** What's the matter? Can't you even answer?

**BEATRICE:** Hand me some of those tacks.

**RUTH:** I SAID SHE WON! ARE YOU DEAF?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, if you don't shut up I'm going to have you put away.

RUTH: They ought to put *you* away, BETTY THE LOON!

[Ruth, look for the rabbit. – f]

BEATRICE: The rabbit is in your room. I want you to bury it in the morning.

RUTH: If you did anything...I'LL KILL YOU!

[The rabbit's alive. + m] [The rabbit had babies. + f]

TILLIE: Mother, you didn't kill it, did you?

BEATRICE: Nanny goes tomorrow. First thing tomorrow.

TILLIE: Ruth? Are you all right?

BEATRICE: I don't know what it's going to be. Maybe a tea shop. Maybe not. After school you're going to have regular hours. You'll work in the kitchen, you'll learn how to cook, and you're going to earn your keep, just like in any other business.

TILLIE: Mama...I think she's *going to go*. Don't go...don't go...Help me! Mama! Help me!

BEATRICE: Snap out of it, do you hear me? RUTH, DON'T LET YOURSELF GO!  
Help me get her downstairs!

BEATRICE: Get the wooden spoon!

TILLIE: Shall I call the doctor?...Shall I call the doctor?

BEATRICE: No. She'll be all right.

TILLIE: I think we should call him.

BEATRICE: [IN – m] I DIDN'T ASK YOU WHAT YOU THOUGHT!... [Matilda, call the doctor. – m]\*+ We're going to need every penny to get this place open.

[Let her call. – f] [Pick up the phone and call again. – f] [IN – f] [Ruth, have another, more violent attack. + m] [Tillie, take the spoon out of her mouth. – f]

TILLIE: I'd better bury him in the backyard.

BEATRICE: Don't bury the towel.

[The rabbit bites you. – m]

TILLIE: I'll do it in the morning.

[Bring it back to life with gamma rays. + m] [Tell Michelle about Peter's death. – m] [Michelle? + m]

BEATRICE: Matilda?

TILLIE: Yes, Mama?

BEATRICE: I hate the world. Do you know that, Matilda?

TILLIE: Yes, Mama.

BEATRICE: I hate the world.

TILLIE: *The Conclusion:* My experiment has shown some of the strange effects radiation can produce...and how dangerous it can be if not handled correctly. Mr. Goodman said I should tell in this conclusion what my future plans are and how this experiment has helped me make them. For one thing, the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds has made me curious about the sun and the stars, for the universe itself must be like a world of great atoms – and I want to know more about it. [Cross downstage. – f] But most important, I suppose, my experiment has made me feel important – every atom in me, in everybody, has come from the sun – from places beyond our dreams. The atoms of our hands, the atoms of our hearts... Atom. Atom. What a beautiful word.

THE END

## APPENDIX G

### AUDIENCE TRANSCRIPT Nov. 4, 2006 Saturday 8 pm

**KEY:**

- [**response**] : spectator's response
- m** : male spectator
- f** : female spectator
- [**-**] : no response, or negative response from the audience to the comment
- [**+**] : positive response from audience to comment, typically laughter
- \* : suggestion was taken up by performer or tech
- : no reaction, or negative reaction, to the enacted suggestion by the audience
- + : positive reaction, typically laughter, to the enacted suggestion by the audience
- # : spectator suggested something moments before it was scheduled to happen

**EXAMPLE:**

[**Act.** + **m**]\*- : A male spectator shouted out, "Act." The audience responded to this suggestion with laughter. Subsequently, an actor accepted the suggestion and enacted it. This time, however, the audience did not react, or reacted negatively, to the actor's enactment.

**I.i**

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** He told me to look at my hand, for a part of it came from a star that exploded too long ago to imagine. This part of me was formed from a tongue of fire that screamed through the heavens until there was our sun. And this part of me – this tiny part of me – was on the sun when it itself exploded and whirled in a great storm until the planets came to be. And this small part of me was then a whisper of the earth. When there was life, perhaps this part of me got lost in a fern that was crushed and covered until it was coal. And then it was a diamond millions of years later – it must have been a diamond as beautiful as the star from which it had first come. Or perhaps this part of me became lost in a terrible beast, or became part of a huge bird that flew above the primeval swamps. And he said this thing was so small – this part of me was so small it couldn't be seen – but it was there from the beginning of the world. And he called this bit of me an atom. And when he wrote the word, I fell in love with it. Atom. *Atom*. What a beautiful word.

**I.ii**

**BEATRICE:** Will you get that please? No help! Never any help! Hello? Yes it is. Who is this?...I hope there hasn't been any trouble at school...Oh, she's always been like that. She hardly says a word around here, either. [**Hang up on him.** – **m**] I always say some people were born to speak and others born to listen...You know I've been meaning to call you to thank you for that lovely rabbit you gave Matilda. She and I

just adore it and it's gotten so big... [**More green light. – m**]\* Well, it certainly was thoughtful. Mr. Goodman, I don't mean to change the subject but aren't you that delightful young man Tillie said hello to a couple of months back at the A & P? You were by the lobster tank and I was near the frozen foods? That delightful and handsome young man?...Why, I would very much indeed use the expression *handsome*. Yes, and...Well, I encourage her at every opportunity at home. Did she say I didn't? Both my daughters have their own desks and I put 75-watt bulbs right near them...Yes...Yes...I think those tests are very much overrated, anyway, Mr. Goodman...Well, believe me she's nothing like that around this house...Now I don't want you to think I don't appreciate what you're trying to do, Mr. Goodman, [**Put the spotlight on the young girl. – m**] but I'm afraid it's simply useless. I've tried just everything, but she isn't a pretty girl – I mean, let's be frank about it – she's going to have her problems. Are you married, Mr. Goodman? Oh, that's too bad. I don't know what's the matter with women today letting a handsome young man like you get away... [**Quit smoking. It's bad for you. + m**] Well, some days she just doesn't feel like going to school. You just said how bright she is, and I'm really afraid to put too much of a strain on her after what happened to her sister. You know, too much strain is the worst thing in this modern world, Mr. Goodman, and I can't afford to have another convulsive on my hands, now can I? But don't you worry about Matilda. There will be some place for her in this world. And, like I said, some were born to speak and others just to listen...and do call again, Mr. Goodman. It's been a true pleasure speaking with you. Goodbye.

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, that wasn't very nice of you to tell them I was forcibly detaining you from school. Why, the way that Mr. Goodman spoke, he must think I'm running a concentration camp. Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is to be accused of running a concentration camp for your own children? Well, it isn't embarrassing at all. That school of yours is forty years behind the times anyway, and believe me you learn more around here than that ugly Mr. Goodman can teach you! You know, I really feel sorry for him. I never saw a man with a more effeminate face in my life. [**Spotlight on Tillie. – m**]\*- When I saw you talking to him by the lobster tank I said to myself, "Good Lord, [**Drink the beer. + m**] for a science teacher my poor girl has got herself a Hebrew hermaphrodite." Of course, he's not as bad as Miss Hanley. The idea of letting her teach girl's gym is staggering. And you have to place me in the embarrassing position of giving them a reason to call me at eight-thirty in the morning, no less.

**TILLIE:** I didn't say anything.

**BEATRICE:** What do you tell them when they want to know why you stay home once in a while?

**TILLIE:** I tell them I'm sick.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, you're sick all right, the exact nature of the illness not fully realized, but you're sick all right. Any daughter that would turn her mother in as administrator of a concentration camp has got to be suffering from something very peculiar.

**TILLIE:** Can I go in today, Mother?

**BEATRICE:** You'll go in, all right.

**TILLIE:** Mr. Goodman said he was going to do an experiment –

**BEATRICE:** Why, he looks like the kind that would do his experimenting after sundown.

**TILLIE:** On radioactivity –

**BEATRICE:** On radioactivity? That's all that high school needs!

**TILLIE:** He's going to bring in the cloud chamber –

**BEATRICE:** Why, what an outstanding event. If you had warned me yesterday I would've gotten all dressed to kill and gone with you today. I love seeing cloud chambers being brought in.

**TILLIE:** You can actually see –

**BEATRICE:** You're giving me a headache.

**TILLIE:** Please?

**[Rip the newspaper in half. – m]**

**BEATRICE:** No, my dear, the fortress of knowledge is not going to be blessed with your presence today. I have a good number of exciting duties for you to take care of, not the least of which is rabbit droppings.

**TILLIE:** Oh, Mother, please...I'll do it after school.

**BEATRICE:** If we wait a minute longer this house is going to ferment. I found rabbit droppings in my bedroom even.

**TILLIE:** I could do it after Mr. Goodman's class. I'll say I'm ill and ask for a sick pass.

**BEATRICE:** Do you want me to chloroform that thing right this minute?

**TILLIE:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Then shut up.

**RUTH:** Do you **[Give her entrance music. – m]** have Devil's Kiss down there?

**BEATRICE:** It's in the bathroom cabinet.

**RUTH:** There's so much junk in here it's driving me crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Maybe it's in my purse...If you don't hurry up you'll be late for school.

**RUTH:** Well, I couldn't very well go in without Devil's Kiss, now could I?

**BEATRICE:** Doesn't anyone go to school these days without that all over their lips?

**RUTH:** Nobody I know, except Tillie, that is. And if she had a little lipstick on I'll bet they wouldn't have laughed at her so much yesterday.

**BEATRICE:** Why were they laughing?

**RUTH:** The assembly. Didn't she tell you about the assembly?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, you didn't tell me she was in an assembly.

**RUTH:** Well, I just thought of it right now. How could I tell you anything until I think of it – did you ever stop to consider that? Some crummy science assembly.

**BEATRICE:** What is she talking about?

**RUTH:** I thought she'd tell the whole world. Imagine, right in front of the assembly, with everybody laughing at her.

**BEATRICE:** Will you be quiet, Ruth? *Why were they laughing at you?*

**[Ruth, sneak a drink of the beer. – m]**

**TILLIE:** I don't know.

**RUTH:** You don't know? My heavens, she was a sight. She had that old jumper on – the faded one with that low collar – and a raggy slip that showed all over and her hair looked like she was struck by lightning.

**BEATRICE:** You're exaggerating...

**RUTH:** She was cranking this model of something –

**TILLIE:** The atom.

**RUTH:** This model of the atom...you know, it had this crank and a long tower so that when you turned it, these little colored balls went spinning around like crazy. And there was Tillie, cranking away, looking weird as a coot...that old jumper with the raggy slip and the lightning hair...cranking away while some boy with glasses was reading this stupid speech...and everybody burst into laughter until the teachers yelled at them. And all day long, the kids kept coming up to me saying, "Is that really your sister? How can you bear it?" And you know, Chris Burns says to me -- "She looks like the one that went to the looney doctors." I could have kissed him there and then.

**BEATRICE:** Matilda, if you can't get yourself dressed properly before going to school, you're never going to go again. I don't like the idea of everybody laughing at you, because when they laugh at you they're laughing at me. And I don't want you cranking any more...atoms.

**RUTH:** You're almost out of Devil's Kiss.

**BEATRICE:** If you didn't put so much on it would last longer.

**RUTH:** Who was that calling?

**BEATRICE:** Matilda turned me in to the Gestapo.

**RUTH:** Can I earn a cigarette this morning?

**BEATRICE:** Why not?

**RUTH:** Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**RUTH:** The call this morning. Was it Mr. Goodman?

**BEATRICE:** Yes.

**RUTH:** I figured it would be.

**BEATRICE:** A little higher, please.

**RUTH:** There?

**BEATRICE:** Yes, *there*...Why did you figure it would be Mr. Goodman?

**RUTH:** Well, he called me out of sewing class yesterday -- I remember because my blouse wasn't all buttoned -- and he wanted to know why Tillie's out of school so much.

**BEATRICE:** Lower. A little lower...And what did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I wish you'd go back to Kools. I liked Kools better.

**TILLIE:** What did you tell him?

**RUTH:** I told him you were ill, and he wanted to know what kind, so I told him you had leprosy.

**TILLIE:** You didn't!

**RUTH:** You should have seen his face. He was so cute. And I told him you had ringworm and gangrene.

**BEATRICE:** What did he say?

**RUTH:** And I told him you had what Mother's last patient had...whatchamacallit?

**BEATRICE:** Psoriasis?

**RUTH:** Yeah. Something like that.

**TILLIE:** Tell me you didn't, Ruth!

**RUTH:** OK. I didn't...But I really did.

**BEATRICE:** He knew you were joking.

**RUTH:** And then I told him to go look up the *history* and then he'd find out. Whenever they go look up the history then they don't bother me anymore 'cause they think I'm crazy.

**BEATRICE:** Ruth –

**RUTH:** And I told him the disease you had was fatal and that there wasn't much hope for you.

**BEATRICE:** What kind of *history* is it?

**RUTH:** Just a little folder with the story of our lives in it, that's all.

**BEATRICE:** How did you ever see it?

**RUTH:** I read the whole thing last term when Miss Hanley dragged me into the record room because I didn't want to climb the ropes in gym and I told her my skull was growing.

**BEATRICE:** A little *lower*, please.

**RUTH:** Lower! Higher! I wish you'd make up your mind. [**Ruth, hit her with it. – m**] If you'd switch back to Kools it might be worth it, but ugh! these are awful. You know, I really did think my skull was growing. Either that or a tumor. So she dragged me out of gym class, and she thought I couldn't read upside down while she was sitting opposite me with the history. But I could.

**BEATRICE:** What does it say?

**RUTH:** Oh, it says you're divorced and that I went crazy...and my father took a heart attack at Star Lake...and now you're a widow –

**BEATRICE:** That's it! Hold it right there! Aaah!

**RUTH:** And it says that I exaggerate and tell stories and that I'm afraid of death and have nightmares...and all that stuff.

**BEATRICE:** And what else does it say?

**RUTH:** I can't remember everything you know. Remember this, remember that... remember this, that...

### I.iii

**TILLIE'S VOICE:** Today I saw it. Behind the glass a white cloud began to form. He placed a small piece of metal in the center of the chamber and we waited until I saw the first one – a trace of smoke that came from nowhere and then disappeared. And then another...and another, until I knew it was coming from the metal. They looked like water-sprays from a park fountain, and they went on and on for as long as I watched. And he told me the fountain of smoke would come forth for a long time, and if I had wanted to, I could have stayed there all my life and it would never have ended – that fountain, so close I could have touched it. In front of my eyes, one part of the world was becoming another. Atoms exploding, flinging off tiny bullets that caused the fountain, atom after atom breaking down into something new. And no one could stop the fountain. It would go on for millions of years – on and on, this fountain from eternity.

### I.iv

**BEATRICE:** I thought we had everything, but leave it to you to think of the one thing we're missing...Twenty-two acres in Prince's Bay. Small pond. \$6,000...That's cheap. I'd take a look at it if I had any money...What kind of seeds are they?

**TILLIE:** Marigolds. *They've been exposed to cobalt-60.*

**BEATRICE:** If there's one thing I've always wanted, it's been a living room planted with marigolds that have been exposed to cobalt-60. While you're at it, why don't you throw in a tomato patch in the bathroom?

**TILLIE:** Just let me keep them here for a week or so until they get started and then I'll transplant them to the backyard.

**BEATRICE:** Four-family house. Six and a half and six and a half over five and five. Eight garages. I could really do something with that. A nursing home... Don't think I'm not kicking myself that I didn't finish that real estate course. I should have finished beauty school, too... [Sing "Beauty School Dropout." – m] God, what I could do with eight garages... You know, I'm thinking of getting rid of *that* and making this place into something.

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** I've been thinking about a tea shop. Have you noticed there aren't many of them around anymore?

**TILLIE:** Yes.

**BEATRICE:** And this is just the type of neighborhood where a good tea shop could make a go of it. We'd have a good cheesecake. You've got to have a good cheesecake... Eight times ten – well, eight times eight, if they're falling down – that's sixty-four dollars a month from the garages alone... I swear money makes money.

**BEATRICE:** What is cobalt-60?

**TILLIE:** It's something that causes... changes in seeds. [Give her entrance music. + m]\*+ Oh, Mother – he set the cloud chamber up just for me and he told me about radioactivity and half-life and he got the seeds for me.

**BEATRICE:** What does half-life mean?

**TILLIE:** The half-life of Polonium-210 is one hundred and forty days. The half-life of Radium-226 is one thousand five hundred and ninety years. [Red spot on the old woman. – m] The half-life of Uranium-238 is four and one-half billion years.

**BEATRICE:** Do you know you're giving me a headache? [IN – m] LOOK WHO'S THERE! IT'S NANNY! NANNY CAME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE BY HERSELF! I'm going to need a cigarette for this. NANNY! YOU COME SIT DOWN AND WE'LL BE RIGHT WITH HER! You know, sometimes I've got to laugh. I've got *this* on my hands and all you're worried about is planting marigolds. [Drink the beer, Nanny. + m] I'VE GOT HOTSY WATER FOR YOU, NANNY. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME HOTSY WATER AND HONEY? I've never seen it to fail. Every time I decide to have a cup of coffee I see that face at the curtains. I wonder what she'd do... if I just poured this right over her head. [Do it. + m] [Do it on her. – m]\*+ I'll be she wouldn't even notice it. NANNY'S GOING TO GET JUST WHAT SHE NEEDS! [Spill the drink in your lap. – m]\*+ You know if someone told me when I was young that I'd end up feeding honey to a zombie, I'd tell them they were crazy. [Throw out all your cigarettes. – f] [Throw the water on Beatrice. – m] SOMETHING WRONG, NANNY? OH, DID I FORGET NANNY'S SPOON? MERCY! MERCY! I FORGOT NANNY'S SPOON! I'll give you a spoon, Nanny, I'll give you a spoon. Matilda! Watch me give Nanny her spoon. A SPOON FOR NANNY! [Stand up for your Nanny, Tillie. – m] Fifty dollars a week. Fifty dollars. I look at you, Nanny, and I wonder if it's worth it. I think I'd be

better off driving a cab. TAKE HONEY, NANNY. HONEY WITH HOTSY WATER! You should have seen her daughter bring her here last week...I could have used you that day...She came in pretending she was Miss Career Woman of the Year. She said she was in real estate and *such a busy little woman*, such a busy little woman – she just couldn't give all the love and care and affection her little momsy needed anymore... Nanny's quite a little cross to bear, now aren't you, Nanny dear? [**Squirt honey on Beatrice.** – m] But you're a little better than Mr. Mayo was – with the tumor on his brain – or Miss Marion Minto with her cancer, or Mr. Brougham...what was his first name?

**TILLIE:** Alexander.

**BEATRICE:** Mr. Alexander Brougham with the worms in his legs. [**Beatrice, help her open the honey.** – m] WHY, NANNY'S QUITE SOME LITTLE GIRL, AREN'T YOU, NANNY? A GIRL DRINKING HER HOTSY AND HONEY!...Cobalt-60. Ha! You take me for a fool, don't you?

**TILLIE:** No, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** Science, science, science! Don't they teach our misfits anything anymore? Anything decent and meaningful and sensitive? Do you know what I'd be now if it wasn't for this mud pool I got sucked into? I'd probably be a dancer. Miss Betty Frank, [**Dance.** – m] [**Dancee.** – m] The Best Dancer of the Class of 19... [**chorus of "Dance."**] [**Do a kick-line.** – m] [**Sing "Dancing-**" (**cuts himself off**). – m] something. [**Beatrice, fall down the stairs.** + m] One minute I'm the best dancer in school – smart as a whip – the head of the whole crowd! [**Spotlight on Beatrice.** – f]\*- And the next minute... [**Pole-dance on the door.** – m] [**Tillie, look at Nanny.** – m] One mistake. That's how it starts. Marry the wrong man and before you know it he's got you tied down with two stones around your neck for the rest of your life. When I was in that lousy high school I was one of the most respected kids you ever saw. I used to wonder why people always said, "Why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday...why, just yesterday..." Before I knew what happened I lost my dancing legs and got varicose legs. Beautiful varicose legs. Do you know, everything I ever thought I'd be has exploded! NANNY, YOU HURRY UP WITH THAT HONEY! Exploded! You know, I almost forgot about everything I was supposed to be... [**Throw the honey at Beatrice.** – m] NANNY'S ALMOST FINISHED. ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL? She's almost finished, all right. NANNY'S DAUGHTER IS COMING TO SEE YOU SOON. WILL THAT MAKE NANNY HAPPY? The day Miss Career Woman of the Year comes to visit again I think I'll drop dead. Nobody's too busy for anything they want to do, don't you tell me. What kind of idiot do people take me for? [**Beatrice, clean your house.** – f] NANNY, YOU'RE SPILLING YOUR HOTSY! JESUS CHRIST! You know, I ought to kick you right out and open that tea shop tomorrow. Oh, it's coming. I can feel it. And the first thing I'll do is get rid of that rabbit.

[**Kick the rabbit cage.** – m]

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mother.

**BEATRICE:** You think I'm kidding?

**TILLIE:** No, I don't.

**BEATRICE:** You bet I'm not! I was going to do this a month ago. Here it is. Here's a new word for you. Trichloro...methane. Do you know what that is, Matilda? Well,

it's chloroform! I'm saving it for that Angora manure machine of yours. Speaking of manure machines, IS NANNY READY TO GO MAKE DUTY? NANNY IS ALWAYS READY FOR DUTY, AREN'T YOU NANNY? BECAUSE NANNY'S A GOODY-GOODY GIRL AND GOODY-GOODY GIRLS ALWAYS GET GOODY-GOODY THINGS. GOD LOOKS OUT FOR GOODY-GOODY GIRLS AND GIVES THEM HOTSY AND HONEY – RIGHT, NANNY?

**BEATRICE:** Half-life! If you want to know what a half-life is, just ask me. You're looking at the original half-life! I got stuck with one daughter with half a mind; another one who's half a test tube; half a husband – a house half full of rabbit crap – and half a corpse! That's what I call a half-life, Matilda! Me and cobalt-60! Two of the biggest half-lifes you ever saw!

#### I.v

**BEATRICE:** Hello – Mr. Goodman, please... How would I know if he's got a class?...Hello, Mr. Goodman? Are you Mr. Goodman?...Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Torgersen...Yes, I'll wait... Couldn't you find him, Miss Torgersen?...Oh! Excuse me, Mr. Goodman. How are you?...I'll bet you'll never guess who this is – it's Mrs. Hunsdorfer – remember the frozen foods? You know, Ruth told me she's your new secretary and I certainly think that's a delight. You were paying so much attention to Matilda that I'll bet Ruth just got jealous. She does things like that, you know. I hope she works hard for you, although I can't imagine what kind of work Ruth could be doing in that great big science office. She's a terrible snoop... Your attendance? Isn't that charming. And the *cut* cards! Imagine. You trust her with... **[The light is broken. – f]** why, I didn't know she could type *at all*...imagine. Well...I'll...Of course, *too* much work isn't good for anyone, either. No wonder she's failing everything. I mean, I never knew a girl who failed everything regardless of what they were suffering from...I suppose I should say recovering from...Well, it's about the seeds you gave Matilda...Well, she's had them in the house for a week now and they're starting to grow. Now, she told me they had been subjected to radioactivity, and I hear such terrible things about radioactivity that I automatically associate radioactivity with sterility, and it positively horrifies me to have those seeds right here in my living room. Couldn't she just grow plain marigolds like everyone else? Oh... It does sound like an interesting project, but... No, I must admit that at this very moment I don't know what a *mutation* is... Mr. Goodman... Mr. Goodman! I don't want you to think I'm not interested, but please spare me definitions over the phone. I'll go the library next week and pick me out some little book on science and then I'll know **[Hang up on him. – m]** all about mutations...No, you didn't insult me, but I just want you to know that I'm not *stupid*... **[Curse him out. – m]** I just thought prevention was better than a tragedy, Mr. Goodman. I mean, Matilda has enough problems to worry about without *sterility*... Well, I was just concerned, but you've put my poor mother's heart at ease. You know, really, our schools need more exciting young men like you, I really mean that. **[Ask him on a date. – m]** Really. Oh, I do. Goodbye, Mr. Goodman.

#### I.vi

**[More flashes. – m]**

**TILLIE:** Mother! She's going to have one!

**BEATRICE:** Stop it! Stop it, Ruth!

**TILLIE:** She's going!

**BEATRICE:** Ruth! Stop it!

**TILLIE:** She's going to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up and get back in your room! You're not going to let yourself go, do you hear me, Ruth? You're not going to go!

**RUTH:** He's after me!

**BEATRICE:** You were dreaming, do you hear me? Nobody's after you! Nobody!

**TILLIE:** I saw her eyes start to go back –

**BEATRICE:** Get back in your room! There, now, nobody's after you. Nice and easy.

Breathe deeply... [**More blue light.** – m] [**Say something.** – m] Did the big bad man come after my little girl? That big bad bogey man? [**Tillie, peak out from the door.** – f]\*+ [**Allow her.** – m] [**Go down anyway.** – m] [**Cooler light.** – m] [**Tillie, observe from the door.** – f] Now that wasn't so bad, was it?

**RUTH:** It was the dream, with Mr. Mayo again.

**BEATRICE:** Oh. Well, we'll just get you a little hot milk and – Why, the electricity's gone off. Do you remember what happened to those candles?

[**Tillie, come down and comfort her in the dark.** – m]\*+

**RUTH:** What candles?

[**More flashes.** – m]

**BEATRICE:** The little white ones from my birthday cake last year.

[**Everybody scream.** + m] [**Tillie, sit with them on the couch.** – m] [**Nanny, wake up.** + f] [**Turn the lights back on.** – m] [(to previous comment) **Keep them off.** + m] [**Spotlight on Ruth.** – m] [**More lightning.** – m]

**RUTH:** Tillie melted them down for school a long time ago.

**BEATRICE:** She had no right to do that.

**RUTH:** She asked you. She used them to attach a paper straw to a milk bottle with a balloon over it, and it was supposed to tell if it was going to rain.

**BEATRICE:** There! It works. I don't want her wasting anything of mine unless she's positive I won't need it. You always need candles. Why, Ruth – your skin just turned ice cold! This will warm you up... [**Laird, call all your cues really loud.** + m] What's the matter?

**RUTH:** The flashlight –

**BEATRICE:** What's wrong with it?

**RUTH:** It's the same one I used to check on Mr. Mayo with.

**BEATRICE:** So it is. We don't need it.

**RUTH:** No, let me keep it. [**Everyone come downstage.** – m] Do you want to know how [**The flashlight breaks.** – m] they have it in the history?

**BEATRICE:** No, I don't.

[**Batteries go out.** – m]

**RUTH:** Well, they say I came out of my room... And I started [**Check on Nanny.** + m] down the stairs, step by step... [**Enter Nanny.** + m] and I heard the choking and banging on the bed, and...

**BEATRICE:** I'm going back to bed.

**RUTH:** No!

**BEATRICE:** Well, talk about something nice, then.

**[Tell scary stories. – f]**

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, [Smoke a cigarette. – m] [Tillie scream. – m] tell me about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** You change so fast I can't keep up with you.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...* the story about the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** I don't know anything about telling stories. [More lightning. – m] Get those great big smart teachers of yours to do that sort of stuff.

**[Sing her a lullaby. – f] [Sing her "West Side Story." + m]**

**RUTH:** Tell me about the horses again, and how you stole the wagon.

**BEATRICE:** Don't get me started on that.

**RUTH:** Mama, *please...*

**BEATRICE:** Do you want a cigarette?

**RUTH:** Leave out the part where they shoot the horses, though.

**BEATRICE:** Honey, you know the whole story –

**RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! Cu...cumbers!"

**BEATRICE:** No. It's "Apples! Pears! Cucum...bers!"

**BEATRICE AND RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! Cucum...bers!"

**RUTH:** How did you get the wagon out without him seeing you?

**BEATRICE:** That was easy. Every time he got home for the day he'd make us both some sandwiches – my mama had been dead for years – and he'd take a nap on the old sofa that used to be...there! And while he was sleeping I got the horses hitched up and went riding around the block waving to everyone.

**RUTH:** Oh, Mama, you didn't!

**BEATRICE:** Of course I did. I had more nerve than a bear when I was a kid. Let me tell you it takes nerve to sit up on that wagon every day yelling "Apples!... Pears! Cucum...bers!"

**RUTH:** Did he find out you took the wagon?

**[Put the flashlight on her face. – f]**

**BEATRICE:** Did he find out? He came running down the street after me and started spanking me right on top of the wagon – not hard – but it was so embarrassing – [Enact the story. + m] and I had one of those penny marshmallow ships in the back pocket of my overalls, and it got all squished. And you better believe I never did it again... [Ruth, drop the flashlight. – f] You would have loved him, Ruth, and gone out with him on the wagon...all over Stapleton yelling as loud as you wanted.

**[Lightning. Then Ruth drop the flashlight. – m]\***

**RUTH:** "Apples! Pears! Cu...cumbers!"

**BEATRICE:** No!

**RUTH:** "Cucum...bers!"

**BEATRICE:** My father made up for all the other men in this whole world, Ruth. If only you two could have met. He'd only be about seventy now, do you realize that? And I'll bet he'd still be selling vegetables around town. All that fun – and then I don't think I ever knew what really hit me.

**RUTH:** Don't tell about –

**BEATRICE:** Don't worry about the horses.

**RUTH:** What hit you?

**BEATRICE:** Well it was just me and Papa... and your father hanging around. And then Papa got sick... and I drove with him up to the sanatorium. And then I came home and there were the horses –

**RUTH:** Mother!

**[Tell her about the horses. – m] [Tell her about Equus. + m]**

**BEATRICE:** And I had the horses...taken care of. And then Papa got terribly sick and he begged me to marry so that he'd be sure I'd be taken care of. If he knew how I was taken care of he'd turn over in his grave. And *nightmares*! Do you want to know the nightmare I used to have? I never had nightmares over the fights with your father, or the divorce, or this thrombosis – he deserved it – I never had nightmares over any of that. Let me tell you about my nightmare that used to come back and back: **[Light Beatrice's face with the flashlight. – f]** Well, I'm on Papa's wagon, but it's newer and shinier, **[Bring back the rain. – f]**\*- and it's being pulled by beautiful white **[Bring back Nanny. + m]** horses, not dirty workhorses – these are like circus horses with long manes and tinsel – **[Make the rain louder. – m]** and the wagon is blue, shiny blue. And it's full – filled with yellow apples and grapes and green squash. **[Tillie, come listen to this. – f]** You're going to laugh when you hear this. **[Tell The Aristocrats joke. + m]** I'm wearing a lovely gown with jewels all over it, and my hair is piled up on top of my head with a long feather in it, and the bells are ringing. Huge bells swinging on a gold braid strung across the back of the wagon, and they're going DONG, DONG...DONG, DONG. And I'm yelling "APPLES! PEARS! CUCUM...BERS!"

**[Nanny, wake up. – f] [Come on. – m]**

**RUTH:** That doesn't sound like a nightmare to me.

**[Put the spot on Ruth. – m]**

**BEATRICE:** And then I turn down our street and all the noise stops. **[Try projecting. + f]** This long street, with all the doors of the houses shut and everything crowded next to each other, and there's not a soul around. And then I start getting afraid that the vegetables are going to spoil...and that nobody's going to buy anything, and I feel as though I shouldn't be on the wagon, and I keep trying to call out. But there isn't a sound. **[Lots of consecutive lightning strikes. + m]** Not a single sound. Then I turn my head and look at the house across the street. I see an upstairs window, and a pair of hands pull the curtains slowly apart. **[Show the spotlight representing an upstairs window. – m]** I see the face of my father and my heart stands still... Ruth... take the light out of my eyes.

**[Rain dance with the flashlight. + f] [Whistle a happy tune. + f] [Tell The Zoo Story. – m]**

**RUTH:** Is Nanny going to die here?

**BEATRICE:** No.

**[Bring back the electricity. – m]**

**RUTH:** How can you be sure?

**BEATRICE:** I can tell.

**RUTH:** Are you crying?

**[Ruth, assume the mother role. – f]**

**BEATRICE:** What's left for me, Ruth?

**RUTH:** What, Mama?

**BEATRICE:** What's left for me?

I.vii

[Nanny, close your legs. + m] [IN + m] [Drink some liquor. - m] [Tillie, sit somewhere we can see you. + m]# [Drink it. - m]

**TILLIE:** What are you doing?

**BEATRICE:** A little housecleaning, and you're going to help. You can start by getting rid of that rabbit or I'll suffocate the bastard. You don't think I will, do you? You wait and see. Where's Ruth? She's probably running around the schoolyard in her brassiere.

**TILLIE:** Mother, they want me to do something at school.

**BEATRICE:** NANNY! DID YOU HEAR THAT? THEY WANT HER TO DO SOMETHING AT SCHOOL! ISN'T THAT MOMENTOUS, NANNY? Well I want you to do something around here. Like get rid of that bunny. I'm being generous! I'll let you give it away. Far away. Give it to Mr. Goodman. I'd chloroform the thing myself, but that crazy sister of yours would throw convulsions for fifty years...and I hate a house that vibrates. And get rid of those sterile marigolds. They stink! HI, NANNY – HOW ARE YOU, HONEY? HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ON A LONG TRIP? You see, everybody, I spent today taking stock of my life and I've come up with zero. I added up all the separate departments and the total reads zero... zero zero zero zero zero zero [IN - m] zero ...And do you know how you pronounce that, with all your grammatical schoolin' and foolin'? You pronounce it o,o,o,o, [Stop saying zero. - m] O,O,O,O,O,O,! o,o,o,o,O,O,O,O,O,O,O! [Tillie, tell her to stop. - f] Right, Nanny? [Tillie, speak Spanish. + f] RIGHT, NANNY? [Start crying, Tillie. - f] [Tillie, drink the beer. - m] [Beatrice, get laryngitis. - f] So, by the end of the week, you get rid of that cottontail compost heap and we'll get you a job down at the five-and-ten-cent store. [Tillie, walk away. - m] And if you don't do so well with the public, we'll fix you up with some kind of machine. [Smack Tillie on the head. - m] Wouldn't that be nice?

**RUTH:** Can you believe it? I didn't, until Chris Burns came up and told me about it in Geography, and then Mr. Goodman told me himself during the eighth period in the office when I was eavesdropping. Aren't you so happy you could bust? Tillie? I'm so proud I can't believe it, Mama. Everybody was talking about it and nobody...well, it was the first time they all came up screaming about her and I said, "Yes, she's my sister!" I said it, "She's my sister! My sister! My sister!" [IN - m] Give me a cigarette.

**BEATRICE:** Get your hands off my personal property.

**RUTH:** I'll scratch your back later.

**BEATRICE:** I don't want you to touch me!

**RUTH:** Did he call yet? My God, I can't believe it, I just can't!

**BEATRICE:** Did who call yet?

**RUTH:** I'm not supposed to tell you, as Mr. Goodman's private secretary, but you're going to get a call from school.

**BEATRICE:** What is she talking about?

**TILLIE:** I was in the Science Fair at school.

**RUTH:** Didn't she tell you yet? Oh, Tillie, how could you? She's fantastic, Mama! She's a finalist in the Science Fair. There were only five of them out of hundreds and hundreds. She won with all those plants over there. They're freaks! Isn't that a scream? Dr. Berg picked her himself. The principal! And I heard Mr. Goodman say she was going to be another Madam Pasteur and he never saw a girl do anything like that before and... **[Fall. – m]** so I told everybody, "Yes, she's my sister!" Tillie, "You're my sister!" I said. And Mr. Goodman called the Advance and they're coming to take your picture. **[Go hug Tillie. – f]** Oh, Mama, isn't it crazy? And nobody laughed at her, Mama. She beat out practically everybody and nobody laughed at her. **[Fall off the sofa. – m]** "She's my sister," I said. "She's my sister!" That must be him! **[Answer the phone. – m]** Mama, answer it – I'm afraid. **[You're not afraid anymore. + m]** Answer it before he hangs up! **[IN – m]** Mama! He's gonna hang up! **[Nanny, answer the phone. + m]** **[IN – m]** Hello?...Yes... It's him!...Just a minute, please... He wants to talk to you.

**BEATRICE:** Who?

**[Tell him you have an abusive mother. – m]**

**RUTH:** The *principal!*

**BEATRICE:** Hang up.

**RUTH:** I told him you were here! Mama!

**[Nanny, say something. + m]** **[Start groaning again. – m]** **[Wake up, Nanny. – f]**

**BEATRICE:** Yes?...I know who you are, Dr. Berg... **[Nanny, throw the beer at Beatrice. – m]** I see...Couldn't you get someone else? There's an awful lot of work that has to be done around here, because she's not as careful with her home duties as she is with man-in-the-moon marigolds... **[Nanny, fall out of the chair. + m]** Me? **[Tillie, get very nervous. – m]** What would you want with me up on the stage?...The other mothers can do as they please...I would have thought **[IN – m]** you had enough in your *history* without...I'll think about it... **[Ruth, drink the beer. – m]** Goodbye, Dr. Berg... I SAID I'D THINK ABOUT IT!

**RUTH:** What did he say?

**BEATRICE:** How could you do this to me? HOW COULD YOU LET THAT MAN CALL OUR HOME! I have no clothes, do you hear me? I'd look just like you up on the stage, ugly little you! **[Tillie, slap your mother. – m]** DO YOU WANT THEM TO LAUGH AT US? LAUGH AT THE TWO OF US?

**[Crush her marigolds. – m]**

**RUTH:** Mother...aren't you proud of her? Mother...it's an *honor*.

**TILLIE:** But...nobody laughed at me.

**[Ruth, defend your sister's honor. + m]**

**BEATRICE:** Oh, my God...

**[Light the scene change. – f]** **[Houselights. – m]**#+

## II.i

**RUTH:** The only competition you have to worry about is Janice Vickery. They say she caught it near Princess Bay Boulevard and it was still alive when she took the skin off it.

**TILLIE:** Let me do that please, Ruth.

**RUTH:** I'm sorry I touched them, really.

**TILLIE:** Why don't you feed Peter?

**RUTH:** Because I don't feel like feeding him...Now I feel like feeding him. I heard that it screamed for three minutes after she put it in because the water wasn't boiling yet. [Let the rabbit be dead. – m] How much talent does it take to boil the skin off a cat and then stick the bones together again? [A lot of talent. – m] That's what I want to know. Ugh. I had a dream about that, too. I figure she did it in less than a day and she ends up as one of the top five winners...and you spend months growing atomic flowers.

**TILLIE:** Don't you think you should finish getting ready?

**RUTH:** Finish? This is it!

**TILLIE:** Are you going to wear that sweater?

**RUTH:** Look, don't worry about me. I'm not getting up on any stage, and if I did I wouldn't be caught dead with a horrible bow like that.

**TILLIE:** Mother put it –

**RUTH:** They're going to laugh you off the stage again like when you cranked that atom in assembly...I didn't mean that...The one they're going to laugh at is Mama.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** I said the one they're going to laugh at is Mama...Oh, let me take that bow off.

**TILLIE:** It's all right.

**RUTH:** Look, just sit still. I don't want everybody making fun of you.

**TILLIE:** What made you say that about Mama?

**RUTH:** Oh, I heard them talking in the Science Office yesterday. Mr. Goodman and Miss Hanley. She's getting \$12.63 to chaperon the thing tonight.

**TILLIE:** What were they saying?

**RUTH:** Miss Hanley was telling Mr. Goodman about Mama...when she found out you were one of the five winners. And he wanted to know if there was something wrong with Mama because she sounded crazy over the phone. And Miss Hanley said she was crazy and she always has been crazy and she can't wait to see what she looks like after all these years. Miss Hanley said her nickname used to be *Betty the Loon*.

**TILLIE:** Ruth, you're hurting me.

**RUTH:** She was just like you and everybody thought she was a big weirdo. There! You look much better! Peter, if anybody stuck you in a pot of boiling water I'd kill them, do you know that?... What do they call boiling the skin off a cat? I call it murder, that's what I call it. They say it was hit by a car and Janice just scooped it up and before you could say *bingo* it was screaming in a pot of boiling water... [Ruth, recite Hamlet. – m] [Peter, poop on Ruth. + m] Do you know what they're all waiting to see? Mama's feathers! That's what Miss Hanley said. She said Mama blabs as though she was the Queen of England and just as proper as can be, and that her idea of getting dressed up is to put on all the feathers in the world and go as a bird. Always trying to get somewhere, like a great big bird.

**TILLIE:** Don't tell Mama, please. It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** I was up there watching her getting dressed and sure enough, she's got the feathers out.

**TILLIE:** You didn't tell her what Miss Hanley said?

**RUTH:** Are you kidding? I just told her I didn't like the feathers and I didn't think she should wear any. But I'll bet she doesn't listen to me.

**TILLIE:** It doesn't matter.

**RUTH:** It doesn't matter? Do you think I want to be laughed right out of the school tonight, with Chris Burns there, and all? Laughed right out of the school, with your electric hair and her feathers on that stage, and Miss Hanley splitting her sides?

**TILLIE:** Promise me you won't say anything.

**RUTH:** On one condition.

**TILLIE:** What?

**RUTH:** Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** The taxi will be here any minute and I won't have all this stuff ready. Did you see my speech?

**RUTH:** I mean it. Give Peter to me.

**TILLIE:** He belongs to all of us.

**RUTH:** For me. All for me. What do you care? He doesn't mean anything to you anymore, now that you've got all those crazy plants.

**TILLIE:** Will you stop?

**RUTH:** If you don't give him to me I'm going to tell Mama that everybody's waiting to laugh at her.

**TILLIE:** Where are those typewritten cards?

**RUTH:** I MEAN IT! Give him to me!

**TILLIE:** Does he mean that much to you?

**RUTH:** Yes!

**TILLIE:** All right.

**RUTH:** Betty the Loon... That's what they used to call her, you know. Betty the Loon!

**TILLIE:** I don't think that's very nice.

**RUTH:** First they had Betty the Loon, and now they've got Tillie the Loon... You don't have to worry about me turning you in for any old plants...How much does a taxi cost from here to the school?

**TILLIE:** Not much.

**RUTH:** I wish she'd give me the money it costs for a taxi – and for all that cardboard and paint and flowerpots and stuff. The only time she ever made a fuss over me was when she drove me nuts.

**TILLIE:** Tell her to hurry, please.

**RUTH:** By the way, I went over to see Janice Vickery's pot, that she did you know what in, and I started telling her and her mother about the worms in Mr. Alexander Brougham's legs, and I got thrown out because it was too near dinner time. That Mrs. Vickery kills me. She can't stand worms in somebody else's legs but she lets her daughter cook a cat.

**TILLIE:** Mother! The taxi will be here any minute.

**BEATRICE:** You're lucky I'm coming, without all this rushing me.

**TILLIE:** Mama, you look beautiful.

**BEATRICE:** Don't put it on too thick. [**Red spot on Beatrice. – m**]\*- I said I'd go and I guess there's no way to get out of it. Do you mind telling me how I'm supposed to get up on the stage? Do they call my name or what? And where are you going to be? If

you ask me, they should've sent all the parents a mimeographed sheet of instructions.  
If this is supposed to be such a great event, why don't they do it right?

**[Blue spot on Beatrice. – m]\*+**

**TILLIE:** You just sit on the stage with the other parents before it begins.

**BEATRICE:** How long is this going to last? And remember, I don't care even if you do win the whole damn thing, I'm not making any speech. I can hold my own anywhere, but I hated that school when I went there and I hate it now...and the only thing I'd have to say is, what a pack of stupid teachers and vicious children they have. Imagine someone tearing the skin off a cat.

**RUTH:** She didn't tear it. She boiled it off.

**BEATRICE:** You just told me upstairs that girl tore the skin off with an orange knife and...do you know, sometimes you exasperate me? If you've got all the plants in this box, I can manage the folding thing. Do you know I've got a headache from doing those titles? And you probably don't even like them.

**TILLIE:** I like them very much.

**BEATRICE:** Look, if you don't want me to go tonight, I don't have to. **[Rub lipstick all over your face. – m]** You're about as enthusiastic as a dummy about this whole thing.

**TILLIE:** I'm sorry.

**BEATRICE:** And I refuse to let you get nervous. Put that bow back in your hair.

**RUTH:** I took it out.

**BEATRICE:** What did you do that for?

**RUTH:** Because it made her look crazy.

**BEATRICE:** How would you know what's crazy or not? **[Make Ruth change her clothes. She looks like a slut. + f]** If that sweater of yours was any tighter it'd cut off the circulation in your chest. The bow looks very nice in your hair. There's nothing wrong with looking proper, Matilda, and if you don't have enough money to look expensive and perfect, people like you for *trying* to look nice. You know, one day maybe you will be pretty. You'll have some nice features, when that hair revives and you do some tricks with makeup. I hope you didn't crowd the plants too close together. **[IN – m]** Did you find your speech?

**TILLIE:** Yes, mother.

**BEATRICE:** You know, Matilda, I was wondering about something. Do you think you're really going to win? I mean, not that you won't be the best, but there's so much politics in school. Don't laugh, but if there's anyone who's an expert on that, it's me, and someday I'm going to write a book and blast that school to pieces. If you're just a little bit different in this world, they try to kill you off.

**RUTH:** Tillie gave Peter to me.

**BEATRICE:** Oh? Then you inherited the rabbit droppings I found upstairs. What are you doing with your coat on?

**RUTH:** I'm going out to wait for the taxi.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not. **[IN – m]** You start right in on the rabbit droppings. Or you won't get another cigarette even if you scratch my back with an orange knife.

**RUTH:** I'm going down to the school with you.

**BEATRICE:** Oh, no you're not! You're going to keep company with that corpse in there. If she wakes up and starts gagging just slip her a shot of whiskey. Quick! Grab the plants, Matilda – I'll get the big thing.

**RUTH:** I want to go! I promised Chris Burns I'd meet him.

**BEATRICE:** Can't you understand English?

**RUTH:** I've got to go!

**BEATRICE:** Shut up!

**RUTH:** I don't care! I'M GOING ANYWAY!

**BEATRICE:** WHAT DID YOU SAY?

**TILLIE:** Mother!

**BEATRICE:** Hurry up with that box, Matilda, and tell him to stop blowing the horn.

HURRY UP! [**Report your mother for child abuse.** + m] I don't know where you ever got the idea you were going tonight. Did you think nobody was going to hold down the fort?...Now you know how I felt all those years you and everybody else was running out whenever they felt like it – because there was always me to watch over the fifty-dollar-a-week corpse. If there's one thing I demand it's respect. I don't ask for anything from you but respect.

**RUTH:** Why are you ashamed of me?

**BEATRICE:** I've been seen with a lot worse than you. I don't even know why I'm going tonight, do you know that? Do you think I give one goddamn about the whole thing?... Do you want to know why I'm going? Do you really want to know why this once somebody else has to stick with that dried prune for a few minutes? Because this is the first time in my life I've ever felt just a little bit proud over something. Isn't that silly? Somewhere in the back of this turtle-sized brain of mine I feel just a little *proud!* Jesus Christ! And you begrudge me even that, you little bastard.

**RUTH:** Hurry up. They're waiting for you...They're *all* waiting for you.

**BEATRICE:** I hope the paint is dry...Who's waiting for me?

[**Don't tell her. – m**] [**Don't do it. – f**]

**RUTH:** Everybody...including Miss Hanley. She's been telling all the teachers...about you...and they're all waiting.

[**Ruth, come stand in the aisle and do this scene. – m**]

**BEATRICE:** You're such a little liar, Ruth, do you know that? When you can't have what you want, you try to ruin it for everybody else.

**RUTH:** Goodnight, [**Red spot on Ruth. – m**] *Betty the Loon.*

**BEATRICE:** Take this thing.

**RUTH:** What for?

**BEATRICE:** Go with Matilda.

**RUTH:** I don't want to go now.

**BEATRICE:** GET OUT OF HERE!

**RUTH:** Now Tillie's going to blame it on me that you're not going – and take the rabbit back. I can't help it what people call you. I'll tell Tillie you'll be down later, all right?... Don't answer me. What do I care!

[**Take your aggression out on Nanny. + m**] [**Go get the chloroform. – m**]

[**Light the scene change. – f**] [**Light the scene change. – m**] [**Change the music. Put on The Beetles. – f**] [**Light the scene change. – m**] [**Come on. – m**] [**IN – f**]  
[**Put the rain on again. – m**]

**II.ii**

**JANICE:** *The Past:* I got the cat from the A.S.P.C.A. immediately after it had been killed by a high-altitude pressure system. That explains why some of the rib bones are missing, because that method sucks the air out of the animal's lungs and ruptures all cavities. They say it prevents cruelty to animals but I think it's horrible. Then I boiled the cat in a sodium hydroxide solution until most of the skin pulled right off, but I had to scrape some of the gristle off the joints with a knife. You have no idea how difficult it is to get right down to the bones. I have to go on to *The Present*, now – but I did want to tell you how long it took me to put the thing together. I mean, as it is now, it's extremely useful for students of anatomy, even with the missing rib bones, and it can be used to show basic anatomical aspects of many, many animals that are in the same family as felines. I suppose that's about the only present uses I can think for it, but it is nice to remember as an accomplishment, and it looks good on college applications to show you did something else in school besides dating. *The Future:* The only future plans I have for Tabby – my little brother asked the A.S.P.C.A. what its name was when he went to pick it up and they said it was called Tabby, but I think they were kidding him – I mean as far as future plans, I'm going to donate it to the science department, of course, and next year, if there's another Science Fair perhaps I'll do the same thing with a dog. Thank you very much for your attention, and I hope I win!

**II.iii**

**BEATRICE:** I want to talk to the principal, please... Well, you'll have to get him down off the stage... It's none of your goddamn business who I am!... Oh, I see... Yes. I have a message for him and Mr. Goodman, and you, too... And this is for Miss Hanley, too... Tell them Mrs. Hunsdorfer called to thank them for making her wish she was dead... Would you give them that message, please?... Thank you very much.

[Answer it. – m] [Answer it. – m] [Commit suicide. – m] [Chloroform yourself. – m] [The phone rings again. – m] [Wrong number. + m]

**BEATRICE:** Hello. This is Mrs. Hunsdorfer... I'm sorry if I frightened you, I wouldn't want you to think Nanny had deceased or anything like that – I can imagine how terrible you'd feel if anything like that ever happened... Terrible tragedy that would be, Miss Career Woman of the Year... Yes, I'll tell you why I'm calling. I want her out of here by tomorrow. I told you when you rolled her in here I was going to try her out for a while and if I didn't like her she was to get the hell out. Well I don't like her, so get her the hell out... It's like this. I don't like the way she cheats at solitaire. Is that a good enough reason?... Fine. And if she's not out of here by noon I'll send her collect in an ambulance, you son of a bitch!

[Have a fit of rage. Destroy stuff. – f] [Pull the tablecloth off the table. – m]  
[Hammer Time. – m] [Trip over something. – m] [Slow-motion. – m]  
[Chloroform the rabbit. – m] [chorus of "No." and "No don't." but also some "Do it."] [The rabbit escapes. + m] [Kill yourself instead. – m] [several IN]  
[Throw the rabbit from the balcony. – m] [Throw the rabbit from the stairs. – m] [Save the rabbit. – m] [Spotlight on the cage. + m]

## II.iv

**[Forget all your lines. – m]**

**TILLIE:** *The Past:* The seeds were exposed to various degrees...of gamma rays from radiation sources in Oak Ridge...Mr. Goodman helped me pay for the seeds...Their growth was plotted against... **[Gain some confidence. – m]** time. *The Present:* The seeds which received little radiation have grown to plants which are normal in appearance. The seeds which received moderate radiation gave rise to mutations such as double blooms, giant stems, and variegated leaves. The seeds closest to the gamma source were killed or yielded dwarf plants. *The Future:* After radiation is better understood, a day will come when the power of exploding atoms will change the whole world we know. Some of the mutations will be good ones – wonderful things beyond our dreams – and I believe, I believe this with all my heart, THE DAY WILL COME WHEN MANKIND WILL THANK GOD FOR THE STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL ENERGY FROM THE ATOM.

**[Run crew, do a little dance. + m] [Cut the scene change music. – m]\*+ [chorus of “Thank you.”] [Turn the lights on. – m] [Keep them off. – m]**

## II.v

**RUTH:** MAMA! MAMA! She won! Mama! Where are you? She won! **[Look at the cage. – m]** Hurry up! Hurry! Oh, my God, I can't believe it! **[IN – m]** Mama! Come on down! Hurry! **[Blackout for five minutes. – f]** Give me that! Mama! Wait till you see this! Mama! She won... **[Fall down the stairs. – m]** Didn't you hear me? **[IN – m]** Tillie won the whole thing!...Mama?...What's the matter with you? What did you rip the paper off the windows for?

**[Warmer lighting. – m]\*-**

**TILLIE:** Mama? Are you going to open a...shop?

**RUTH:** What's the matter? Can't you even answer?

**BEATRICE:** Hand me some of those tacks.

**RUTH:** I SAID SHE WON! ARE YOU DEAF?

**BEATRICE:** Ruth, if you don't shut up I'm going to have you put away.

**RUTH:** They ought to put *you* away, BETTY THE LOON!

**[Ruth, take the dead rabbit away from your mother. – m]**

**BEATRICE:** The rabbit is in your room. I want you to bury it in the morning.

**RUTH:** If you did anything...I'LL KILL YOU!

**TILLIE:** Mother, you didn't kill it, did you?

**BEATRICE:** Nanny goes tomorrow. First thing tomorrow.

**TILLIE:** Ruth? Are you all right?

**BEATRICE:** I don't know what it's going to be. Maybe a tea shop. Maybe not. After school you're going to have regular hours. You'll work in the kitchen, you'll learn how to cook, and you're going to earn your keep, just like in any other business.

**TILLIE:** Mama...I think she's *going to go*. Don't go...don't go...Help me! Mama! Help me!

**BEATRICE:** Snap out of it, do you hear me? RUTH, DON'T LET YOURSELF GO!  
Help me get her downstairs!

**BEATRICE:** Get the wooden spoon!

**[Beatrice, show remorse. – f] [Tillie, put the blanket on her. – f]**

**TILLIE:** Shall I call the doctor?...Shall I call the doctor?

**BEATRICE:** No. **[Do it anyway. – m]** She'll be all right.

**TILLIE:** I think we should call him.

**BEATRICE:** I DIDN'T ASK YOU WHAT YOU THOUGHT!...We're going to need every penny to get this place open.

**[Tillie, call the doctor. – m]\*+ [Tillie, go to Ruth. – f] [Cooler lighting. + m]**

**TILLIE:** I'd better bury him in the backyard.

**BEATRICE:** Don't bury the towel.

**[Bury it anyway. + f]**

**TILLIE:** I'll do it in the morning.

**[Bury it now. – m] [Tillie, put the blanket over Ruth. – m] [Red spot on Beatrice. – f] [Red spot on Beatrice. – m]**

**BEATRICE:** Matilda?

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mama?

**BEATRICE:** I hate the world. Do you know that, Matilda?

**TILLIE:** Yes, Mama.

**BEATRICE:** I hate the world.

**[Blue spot on Ruth. – m] [Tillie, move closer to Ruth. – f]**

**TILLIE:** *The Conclusion:* My experiment has shown some of the strange effects radiation can produce...and how dangerous it can be if not handled correctly. Mr. Goodman said I should tell in this conclusion what my future plans are and how this experiment has helped me make them. For one thing, the effect of gamma rays on man-in-the-moon marigolds has made me curious about the sun and the stars, **[Spot on Tillie. – m]** for the universe itself must be like a world of great atoms – and I want to know more about it. But most important, I suppose, my experiment has made me feel important – every atom in me, in everybody, has come from the sun – from places beyond our dreams. The atoms of our hands, the atoms of our hearts... Atom. *Atom.* What a beautiful word.

**THE END**

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Audience Survey Responses Nov. 2, Thursday – 8 pm**

1) Did you feel comfortable offering suggestions? Why or why not?

‘No – I was never quite sure what to suggest.’

‘Sort of. It was hard to know what should/would be changed.’

‘I personally didn’t feel comfortable offering suggestions because the drama seemed too serious to interrupt.’

‘In the beginning yes. The atmosphere was more lighthearted and thus welcoming to suggestions. The end... I wouldn’t have said a word. Deep stuff!’

‘Yes, but not the first one and didn’t quite know what to suggest. Also, when it got serious I felt less comfortable.’

‘No – because it didn’t seem the actors took them.’

‘Yes I did, when the atmosphere warranted it.’

2) Did you identify with any of the characters? Why or why not?

‘No – too dysfunctional.’

‘Elements of them – frustration, [illegible], to succeed desperately, the acting and plot were effective in this regard with monologue, period of silence, lighting (mood).’

‘[blank]’

‘No. I’m not particularly sure. I’ve never been close to anyone in such a situation.’

‘Tillie – someone not appreciating my accomplishment.’

‘No – they were all too crazy.’

‘Haha... Matilda.’

3) Did the suggestions better or detract from the drama?

‘Better.’

‘Neither, I think, they were minimal enough.’

‘I felt the suggestions offered some comic relief in intense scenes.’

‘Better. Definitely. Made it more interesting.’

‘Added.’

‘Calling out detracted, but I liked when they were enacted.’

‘No, it ran very well.’

4) How did the “vocal audience” shape your experience?

‘Made the play more interesting – I wasn’t expecting it.’

‘Did feel more “allowed” to express opinion about progress of the performance.’

‘It made an otherwise serious, intense drama comical in some instances.’

Robert Caleb Green

Senior Thesis, Anthropology

'More fun more inviting.'

'Some made some silly comments, but others were very intriguing.'

'Distracting.'

'It made it much more enjoyable and interactive.'

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Audience Survey Responses Nov. 3, Friday – 7:30 pm**

1) Did you feel comfortable offering suggestions? Why or why not?

‘I felt that if I had had something to suggest, I most certainly would have. But it was already so amazing that I wouldn’t change anything.’

‘Yes, once the others got into it. But not during the more serious scenes.’

‘No – because I’m too old and [illegible] and feel like it would be an intrusion.’

‘Yes, but there didn’t seem to be many good opportunities to make good ones.’

‘Not always. I wasn’t sure what it meant to necessarily “pertain to the artistic movement” I think?’

‘Only towards the end.’

‘Yes – Everyone is doing it!’

‘Yes – other people were.’

‘Yes. Please change or remove smoking. It was physically uncomfortable. I reacted to the smoke. Pretend to smoke.’

‘Yes, once other people started to.’

2) Did you identify with any of the characters? Why or why not?

‘Strangely (and perhaps egotistically enough) yes – Matilda. And later Ruth. And in the future, Beatrice. It was incredible.’

‘As a youngest child who grew up feeling out of place in her family, I found myself identifying with Tillie, but the mother’s shame and anxiety was also so palpable and real that it cut across the boundaries of age and family position.’

‘Yes – bits and pieces – we all know people with those characteristics.’

[blank]

‘Yes: the play was very true to life; excellent writing. Perhaps an inconclusive ending?’

‘No.’

‘Tillie – standard [illegible].’

[blank]

‘No.’

‘Tilly to some degree for the interest in school.’

3) Did the suggestions better or detract from the drama?

‘Both during the play, but the actors were good at sorting out what to follow. In the end, for that reason, I suppose it bettered.’

‘The suggestions seemed to help heighten the drama and give the play a sense of improvisation. It called attention to the actors as performers.’

‘Some were amusing.’

'Some bettered, most detracted.'  
'Bettered it, though I wish there had been more.'  
'Detract.'  
'The "bad" ones detract. The ones adding to the drama are good.'  
'Detract.'  
'Detract.'  
'Didn't really effect it at all.'

4) How did the 'vocal audience' shape your experience?

'I felt that if I had wanted to play the director role I would have, and it changed my experience in that there was simply nothing (about voices, projectors, lighting – nothing) that I wanted to change, so I realized how well directed it was. Thank you for an amazing production.'

'The vocal audience made me acutely aware of our need for comic relief and the way it made the poignant moments in the play that much more meaningful. I was also struck by how much we all felt angry and wanted to intervene and felt caught by our inability to help the family.'

'Encouraged me to stay interested.'  
'It added in general, even the bad suggestions at least help get passed the slow and tense parts.'  
'It was a neat option to have, but I didn't notice as much because not many people spoke.'  
'They made it funny.'  
'It was new and fresh.'  
'I was confused about it.'  
'Did not help.'  
'Didn't really effect it.'

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Audience Survey Responses Nov. 3, Friday – 10:00 pm**

1) Did you feel comfortable offering suggestions? Why or why not?

‘Yes – many people were talking and it was dark.’

‘Yes but probably only after others had already done so. Also, it got easier the more humorous it was.’

‘No, I did not. It felt like a competition in the audience to get the approval of a particular suggestion.’

‘Yes, even though it took a while into the play. One reason I might’ve been somewhat reserved was because few suggestions were enacted, and whatever was enacted did not affect the overarching plot. Only silly things were affected.’

‘Yes, because many other audience members were.’

[blank]

‘Originally no – not to stand out when no one else was doing so. Later – felt comfortable by the amount of others interacting.’

‘No, because most of them got no response.’

‘Not in the very beginning. Eventually I did.’

‘For the most part – though I felt the production didn’t change much per our suggestions.’

‘After the ice was broken yes, though there still was a degree of separation between the audience and the actors.’

‘Yes because everyone was shouting suggestions and it was so dark so no one could see you!’

‘No, because I didn’t want to pose stupid comments to detract the actors.’

‘Yes, because the other audience members were so eager.’

‘Yes, b/c it was dark.’

‘Yes, in that enough people were making them. No, in that suggestions were seldom taken.’

‘Yes. I mostly felt that my suggestions could have been taken seriously and would not have detracted from the play.’

‘Yes. It was the point of the experiment.’

‘Occasionally I’d think of a suggestion but wanted to wait till a break between lines so I wouldn’t interrupt anything, and the moment would pass and I’d miss my chance.’

‘No.’

‘Yes, because I just would do this sort of thing.’

‘Sometimes. I didn’t want to miss plot.’

‘Yes, once the first person made a suggestion I felt very comfortable.’

‘I did feel comfortable but was confused cos of the superfluity.’

‘Yes, because other people were.’

‘Initially I thought I did not but then they started incorporating suggestions so then I did.’

2) Did you identify with any of the characters? Why or why not?

'I identified with Tilly – not sure why.'

'Matilda b/c the actions I wanted to happen would have happened through her.'

'No, they seemed more like caricatures than real people.'

'Matilda played her part very well, and exuded emotion.'

'Yes, because at certain times everyone feels crazy, inadequate, and a point of derision.'

[blank]

'Yes – with Nanny. Mother had Alzheimer's disease and I could understand the deterioration in the character.'

' - '

'A little with each one. Because we are all cynics, dreamers and just plain ditsy.'

'Identified with concept of [illegible].'

'Yes, the mother and Matilda.'

'No I did not.'

'No, hopefully not.'

'Yes, both Ruth and Tilly.'

'No.'

[blank]

'Yes – Matilda. I felt she understood when saying something will push things over the edge.'

'No.'

[blank]

'With Matilda. It reminds me of my family.'

'Mostly with Matilda, but this play is pretty far removed from my actual life experiences.'

'Yes, because they are believable.'

'Maybe w/ Tillie. Underappreciated for my talents by my parents.'

'I did not identify with any of the characters. Maybe if the audience input was responded to.'

'The one time I identified was when the sisters took each others' side even though they fought a lot.'

'No I did not.'

3) Did the suggestions better or detract from the drama?

'By the end I was sick of the suggestions that just tried to be funny.'

'Some bettered it. Since most were humorous or ignored, they detracted.'

'Detract.' It was hard for the dramatic action to really take form.'

'They made it more fun, and lightened the mood.'

'Neither.'

'Detract.'

'Some interesting and others detracted from the intensity of the drama. Some interaction – seemed as if audience not trying to constructive but rather to have fun!'

'Detract. Most of them were attempts at being funny.'

'Most of the suggestions I thought were just stupid. Not taken seriously. Jokes should be forbidden.'

'1<sup>st</sup> act – better. 2<sup>nd</sup> act – detract.'

'I think they detracted a bit since they made you aware this was theatre – not an illusion.'

'Mostly detract. There were some thoughtful ones, but they did not really effect the play and were pretty useless.'

'Detract.'

'Neutral – the actors didn't accept enough of them for a noticeable effect.'

'Detract mostly, though set suggestions helped (like lighting, music).'

'I think some suggestions would have bettered the drama, but they were not taken. Some suggestions were distracting.'

'Detract.'

'Better.'

'I felt like very few of the suggestions that were accepted had significant effects either way, honestly – most of the suggestions (even serious ones) that would have significant effects were ignored.'

'Both.'

'They barely changed the drama at all. Nothing significant was change.'

'Usually detract – but could better in theory.'

'Definitely detract.'

'The actors weren't responsive enough.'

'It depended on if they were serious or not.'

'I think it bettered the drama.'

#### 4) How did the "vocal audience" shape your experience?

'It made the show more fun, just listening to the voices that weren't onstage.'

'It was easier to pay attention to the play realizing there's an entire group with you. Also, good to see what others pay attention to.'

'It destroyed all of the beauty and emotion.'

[blank]

'It added some relief to a very serious performance.'

[blank]

'Kept my interest throughout – Even when lulls in the script (i.e. Papa and the horses, etc.).'

'Made a good play with great actors into an average one with people shouting.'

'It was interesting. But sometimes I was irritated with some of the suggestions. Felt like telling them to shut up.'

'Felt more involved.'

'Interesting experiment – worth the \$.'

'Well, it was the first time I was part of a vocal audience, so the concept itself was interesting. But overall, the drama would have been more effective without the suggestions. Maybe a vocal audience would be more appropriate in a comical play.'

'Not much.'

'I liked it.'

'It made a depressing drama humorous. The suggestions were funny for the most part.'

'It was definitely experimental, but I think it could be even more so.'

'They made me feel uncomfortable by using humor to alleviate the tension.'

'It was fun, if a little distracting at times.'

'Hmm... I don't think people were taking it seriously enough. Too many obnoxious suggestions – not enough people thinking seriously about what might improve the interestingness of the play.'

'Varied my opinions – made it interesting.'

'It was more funny than experimental.'

'Um... I don't' know, a few people said some stupid things.'

'It was funny but not productive. The actors were too focused/nervous to take most of the suggestions, and most of the suggestions were purely for humor. I did not find this experiment successful!'

[blank]

'Sometimes distracting, but more [illegible] to feel I had power.'

'It was a novel experience.'

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Audience Survey Responses Nov. 4, Saturday – 8:00 pm**

1) Did you feel comfortable offering suggestions? Why or why not?

‘Comfortable – but chose not to.’

‘I didn’t ‘cause I felt that it was distracting the play.’

‘No because I could not think of anything intelligent and constructive, as all of the other fellow members.’

‘Yes, don’t have a problem to try something new. In fact, I was very interested by the idea.’

‘No – I wasn’t really sure what to say.’

‘Not really... felt disruptive.’

‘Yes – but annoyed that suggestions were so rarely followed.’

‘Sure; I’m just that kind of guy.’

‘No. But that’s just me.’

‘Sort of – didn’t know what was appropriate.’

‘Not really – seems unnatural.’

‘Yes, when I thought they were appropriate – out of genuine curiosity.’

‘Yes, however after listening to the inane suggestions of fellow audience members, I decided to not share.’

‘No – my daughter was acting.’

‘Yes. Though it gets distracting to think of suggestion and enjoy the show.’

‘No – Did not feel there was anything that I could contribute that was better than the direction of the drama.’

‘Yes, but the actors never seemed to listen.’

‘Absolutely, the show needed them sometimes, at least as far as lights.’

‘Yes, because others were doing it.’

‘Yes, it was fun.’

‘Yes, but less so as time went on and more of them were followed.’

‘Yes, but less so as the suggestions became more and more inane. The actors did a good job of selectively listening and preventing the play from turning into a farce.’

‘Yes – during lighter scenes. No – during more intense scenes, too caught up , didn’t want to distract actors.’

2) Did you identify with any of the characters? Why or why not?

[blank]

‘Not really ‘cause they’re all sort of crazy.’

‘Nope.’

‘Yes, Tillie – does anyone care? (not in the context of “does the audience care”).’

‘Yes, all 3 of the main characters – they were phenomenally acted.’

'Yes, great acting.'

'Nannie and Tillie were expertly played.'

'Tilly; I can feel her situation. Well acted.'

'Sort of... but I think that the circumstances in the play were more exaggerated than those in my life.'

[blank]

[blank]

'Tillie's belief in beauty and unity.'

[blank]

'Somewhat – a little more extreme.'

'Yes, trying to impress your parents is identifiable for many.'

'Yes, I could identify the most with the Nanny actor. Very believable and excellent acting. Very "in character" without any verbalization.'

'They all did a great job. The character of Matilda hit home.'

'No.'

'With Tillie because I'm a nerd.'

'No – this family was very dysfunctional.'

'Yes. Tilly made me cry twice.'

'It seemed like the characters were either so corrupt or so withdrawn that it was hard to relate to them. Then again, they are in extreme circumstances, so that's not surprising.'

'Aspects in all of them. They are characters so none completely but they were so volatile/[illegible] uninhibited. Superb acting!!!'

### 3) Did the suggestions better or detract from the drama?

'Detracted.'

'Deduct from the drama.'

'Deduct from the drama, esp. the jokes that were NOT pertinent to see a great play.'

'Actors did a good job but I think the script was too concrete for suggestions.'

'I thought they detracted, but it may be because I knew an actor and was thinking of the participation more as taking away from the actors and their story than as a dialogue.'

'It detracted, tho it offered comic relief.'

'Detracted in the sense that no great risks were taken – take more!'

'It didn't seem like any of them were actually followed. But all in all I'd say it did not add.'

'They were minimally influential. Actually, I'd recommend that the actors follow them more often – otherwise they're useless.'

'Deduct – perhaps better for comedy.'

'Deduct – it would have been slightly more fighting [illegible] less a dramatic piece.'

'Deduct.'

'Deduct!'

'They relieved the tense plot.'

'I believe it detracted, but the phone suggestion at the end was perfect.'

'Brought audience "in" more.'

'Good, except for the somewhat excessive change in lighting requests.'

'They would have [illegible] if the actors took the suggestions.'

‘Mostly better, but some random tech suggestions were dumb.’

‘Better – it sucked that no one did anything.’

‘Detract – the cast did not seem willing enough to listen or get out of their comfort zones and so there was no real sense of having a voice or control so I thought, what is the point, it just lets you know you don’t count.’

‘I felt that the idea added to the drama, but in practice I’m not so sure. Maybe with a different audience.’

‘Detract.’

4) How did the “vocal audience” shape your experience?

‘Broke the mood the author was trying to create – and my relationship with the characters.’

‘I didn’t really like it.’

‘It turned a fantastic play into just a good one.’

‘Frustration – due to stupid comments – but I guess you may want the audience to be frustrated.’

‘I think I would have preferred this in a comedy setting – here, it seemed like many comments were meant to impress each other, and most couldn’t be taken. But, a really interesting idea!’

[blank]

‘Show was great, but buy more into the premise and let the show change.’

‘It was more comedic than anything – did not seem like the actors really paid attention to any. The play did not seem suited to it.’

‘It was pretty interesting. I sometimes felt like commenting on other people’s comments.’

‘Illustrated the separation btw the comic and tragic.’

‘Made be frustrated b/c of the inappropriateness of some comments.’

‘I thought it took away from the written dialogue of the script and distracted the audience from the emotional content of the scenes.’

‘I thought that the audience was too “immature” to have the ability to shout out things. It lost the connection I felt with certain characteristics/situation due to suggestions like “It’s Hammer Time.”’

‘Both positive and negative. Neg – distracted from the story and effect. Pos – also relieved some of the tension.’

‘I felt like I was part of a fight – [illegible] community but it got a bit distracting.’

‘Very interesting – more so than other plays of this intensity.’

‘It was certainly unique. Although sometimes suggestions seemed to be shouted out at inappropriate times.’

[blank]

‘Made the performance easier to share and enjoy.’

‘It made it so much more fun. It’s every audience member’s dream to shout at the play.’

[blank]

‘It definitely made the play more exciting. I’d like to see something similar again in the future.’

‘Certainly fun at points and freeing to vocalize what I won’t/don’t want to happen but [illegible] this mostly distracted from the excellent performance.’

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Audience Survey Responses Combined**

#### **1) Did you feel comfortable offering suggestions? Why or why not?**

##### Thursday, 8 pm

'No – I was never quite sure what to suggest.'

'Sort of. It was hard to know what should/would be changed.'

'I personally didn't feel comfortable offering suggestions because the drama seemed too serious to interrupt.'

'In the beginning yes. The atmosphere was more lighthearted and thus welcoming to suggestions. The end... I wouldn't have said a word. Deep stuff!'

'Yes, but not the first one and didn't quite know what to suggest. Also, when it got serious I felt less comfortable.'

'No – because it didn't seem the actors took them.'

'Yes I did, when the atmosphere warranted it.'

##### Friday, 7:30 pm

'I felt that if I had had something to suggest, I most certainly would have. But it was already so amazing that I wouldn't change anything.'

'Yes, once the others got into it. But not during the more serious scenes.'

'No – because I'm too old and [illegible] and feel like it would be an intrusion.'

'Yes, but there didn't seem to be many good opportunities to make good ones.'

'Not always. I wasn't sure what it meant to necessarily "pertain to the artistic movement" I think?'

'Only towards the end.'

'Yes – Everyone is doing it!'

'Yes – other people were.'

'Yes. Please change or remove smoking. It was physically uncomfortable. I reacted to the smoke. Pretend to smoke.'

'Yes, once other people started to.'

##### Friday, 10 pm

'Yes – many people were talking and it was dark.'

'Yes but probably only after others had already done so. Also, it got easier the more humorous it was.'

'No, I did not. It felt like a competition in the audience to get the approval of a particular suggestion.'

'Yes, even though it took a while into the play. One reason I might've been somewhat reserved was because few suggestions were enacted, and whatever was enacted did not affect the overarching plot. Only silly things were affected.'

'Yes, because many other audience members were.'

[blank]

'Originally no – not to stand out when no one else was doing so. Later – felt comfortable by the amount of others interacting.'

'No, because most of them got no response.'

'Not in the very beginning. Eventually I did.'

'For the most part – though I felt the production didn't change much per our suggestions.'

'After the ice was broken yes, though there still was a degree of separation between the audience and the actors.'

'Yes because everyone was shouting suggestions and it was so dark so no one could see you!'

'No, because I didn't want to pose stupid comments to detract the actors.'

'Yes, because the other audience members were so eager.'

'Yes, b/c it was dark.'

'Yes, in that enough people were making them. No, in that suggestions were seldom taken.'

'Yes. I mostly felt that my suggestions could have been taken seriously and would not have detracted from the play.'

'Yes. It was the point of the experiment.'

'Occasionally I'd think of a suggestion but wanted to wait till a break between lines so I wouldn't interrupt anything, and the moment would pass and I'd miss my chance.'

'No.'

'Yes, because I just would do this sort of thing.'

'Sometimes. I didn't want to miss plot.'

'Yes, once the first person made a suggestion I felt very comfortable.'

'I did feel comfortable but was confused cos of the superfluity.'

'Yes, because other people were.'

'Initially I thought I did not but then they started incorporating suggestions so then I did.'

Saturday, 8 pm

'Comfortable – but chose not to.'

'I didn't 'cause I felt that it was distracting the play.'

'No because I could not think of anything intelligent and constructive, as all of the other fellow members.'

'Yes, don't have a problem to try something new. In fact, I was very interested by the idea.'

'No – I wasn't really sure what to say.'

'Not really... felt disruptive.'

'Yes – but annoyed that suggestions were so rarely followed.'

'Sure; I'm just that kind of guy.'

'No. But that's just me.'

'Sort of – didn't know what was appropriate.'

'Not really – seems unnatural.'

'Yes, when I thought they were appropriate – out of genuine curiosity.'

'Yes, however after listening to the inane suggestions of fellow audience members, I decided to not share.'

'No – my daughter was acting.'

'Yes. Though it gets distracting to think of suggestion and enjoy the show.'

'No – Did not feel there was anything that I could contribute that was better than the direction of the drama.'

'Yes, but the actors never seemed to listen.'

'Absolutely, the show needed them sometimes, at least as far as lights.'

'Yes, because others were doing it.'

'Yes, it was fun.'

'Yes, but less so as time went on and more of them were followed.'

'Yes, but less so as the suggestions became more and more inane. The actors did a good job of selectively listening and preventing the play from turning into a farce.'

'Yes – during lighter scenes. No – during more intense scenes, too caught up , didn't want to distract actors.'

## 2) Did you identify with any of the characters? Why or why not?

### Thursday, 8 pm

'No – too dysfunctional.'

'Elements of them – frustration, [illegible], to succeed desperately, the acting and plot were effective in this regard with monologue, period of silence, lighting (mood).'

'[blank]'

'No. I'm not particularly sure. I've never been close to anyone in such a situation.'

'Tillie – someone not appreciating my accomplishment.'

'No – they were all too crazy.'

'Haha... Matilda.'

### Friday, 7:30 pm

'Strangely (and perhaps egotistically enough) yes – Matilda. And later Ruth. And in the future, Beatrice. It was incredible.'

'As a youngest child who grew up feeling out of place in her family, I found myself identifying with Tillie, but the mother's shame and anxiety was also so palpable and real that it cut across the boundaries of age and family position.'

'Yes – bits and pieces – we all know people with those characteristics.'

[blank]

'Yes: the play was very true to life; excellent writing. Perhaps an inconclusive ending?'

'No.'

'Tillie – standard [illegible].'

[blank]

'No.'

'Tilly to some degree for the interest in school.'

### Friday, 10 pm

'I identified with Tilly – not sure why.'

'Matilda b/c the actions I wanted to happen would have happened through her.'

'No, they seemed more like caricatures than real people.'

'Matilda played her part very well, and exuded emotion.'

‘Yes, because at certain times everyone feels crazy, inadequate, and a point of derision.’

[blank]

‘Yes – with Nanny. Mother had Alzheimer’s disease and I could understand the deterioration in the character.’

‘\_’

‘A little with each one. Because we are all cynics, dreamers and just plain ditsy.’

‘Identified with concept of [illegible].’

‘Yes, the mother and Matilda.’

‘No I did not.’

‘No, hopefully not.’

‘Yes, both Ruth and Tilly.’

‘No.’

[blank]

‘Yes – Matilda. I felt she understood when saying something will push things over the edge.’

‘No.’

[blank]

‘With Matilda. It reminds me of my family.’

‘Mostly with Matilda, but this play is pretty far removed from my actual life experiences.’

‘Yes, because they are believable.’

‘Maybe w/ Tillie. Underappreciated for my talents by my parents.’

‘I did not identify with any of the characters. Maybe if the audience input was responded to.’

‘The one time I identified was when the sisters took each others’ side even though they fought a lot.’

‘No I did not.’

#### Saturday, 8 pm

[blank]

‘Not really ‘cause they’re all sort of crazy.’

‘Nope.’

‘Yes, Tillie – does anyone care? (not in the context of “does the audience care”).’

‘Yes, all 3 of the main characters – they were phenomenally acted.’

‘Yes, great acting.’

‘Nannie and Tillie were expertly played.’

‘Tilly; I can feel her situation. Well acted.’

‘Sort of... but I think that the circumstances in the play were more exaggerated than those in my life.’

[blank]

[blank]

‘Tillie’s belief in beauty and unity.’

[blank]

‘Somewhat – a little more extreme.’

‘Yes, trying to impress your parents is identifiable for many.’

'Yes, I could identify the most with the Nanny actor. Very believable and excellent acting. Very "in character" without any verbalization.'

'They all did a great job. The character of Matilda hit home.'

'No.'

'With Tillie because I'm a nerd.'

'No – this family was very dysfunctional.'

'Yes. Tilly made me cry twice.'

'It seemed like the characters were either so corrupt or so withdrawn that it was hard to relate to them. Then again, they are in extreme circumstances, so that's not surprising.'

'Aspects in all of them. They are characters so none completely but they were so volatile/[illegible] uninhibited. Superb acting!!!'

### 3) Did the suggestions better or detract from the drama?

#### Thursday, 8 pm

'Better.'

'Neither, I think, they were minimal enough.'

'I felt the suggestions offered some comic relief in intense scenes.'

'Better. Definitely. Made it more interesting.'

'Added.'

'Calling out detracted, but I liked when they were enacted.'

'No, it ran very well.'

#### Friday, 7:30 pm

'Both during the play, but the actors were good at sorting out what to follow. In the end, for that reason, I suppose it bettered.'

'The suggestions seemed to help heighten the drama and give the play a sense of improvisation. It called attention to the actors as performers.'

'Some were amusing.'

'Some bettered, most detracted.'

'Bettered it, though I wish there had been more.'

'Detract.'

'The "bad" ones detract. The ones adding to the drama are good.'

'Detract.'

'Detract.'

'Didn't really effect it at all.'

#### Friday, 10 pm

'By the end I was sick of the suggestions that just tried to be funny.'

'Some bettered it. Since most were humorous or ignored, they detracted.'

'Detract.' It was hard for the dramatic action to really take form.'

'They made it more fun, and lightened the mood.'

'Neither.'

'Detract.'

'Some interesting and others detracted from the intensity of the drama. Some interaction – seemed as if audience not trying to constructive but rather to have fun!'

'Detract. Most of them were attempts at being funny.'

'Most of the suggestions I thought were just stupid. Not taken seriously. Jokes should be forbidden.'

'1<sup>st</sup> act – better. 2<sup>nd</sup> act – detract.'

'I think they detracted a bit since they made you aware this was theatre – not an illusion.'

'Mostly detract. There were some thoughtful ones, but they did not really effect the play and were pretty useless.'

'Detract.'

'Neutral – the actors didn't accept enough of them for a noticeable effect.'

'Detract mostly, though set suggestions helped (like lighting, music).'

'I think some suggestions would have bettered the drama, but they were not taken. Some suggestions were distracting.'

'Detract.'

'Better.'

'I felt like very few of the suggestions that were accepted had significant effects either way, honestly – most of the suggestions (even serious ones) that would have significant effects were ignored.'

'Both.'

'They barely changed the drama at all. Nothing significant was change.'

'Usually detract – but could better in theory.'

'Definitely detract.'

'The actors weren't responsive enough.'

'It depended on if they were serious or not.'

'I think it bettered the drama.'

#### Saturday, 8 pm

'Detracted.'

'Detract from the drama.'

'Detract from the drama, esp. the jokes that were NOT pertinent to see a great play.'

'Actors did a good job but I think the script was too concrete for suggestions.'

'I thought they detracted, but it may be because I knew an actor and was thinking of the participation more as taking away from the actors and their story than as a dialogue.'

'It detracted, tho it offered comic relief.'

'Detracted in the sense that no great risks were taken – take more!'

'It didn't seem like any of them were actually followed. But all in all I'd say it did not add.'

'They were minimally influential. Actually, I'd recommend that the actors follow them more often – otherwise they're useless.'

'Detract – perhaps better for comedy.'

'Detract – it would have been slightly more fighting [illegible] less a dramatic piece.'

'Detract.'

'Detract!'

'They relieved the tense plot.'

'I believe it detracted, but the phone suggestion at the end was perfect.'

‘Brought audience “in” more.’

‘Good, except for the somewhat excessive change in lighting requests.’

‘They would have [illegible] if the actors took the suggestions.’

‘Mostly better, but some random tech suggestions were dumb.’

‘Better – it sucked that no one did anything.’

‘Detract – the cast did not seem willing enough to listen or get out of their comfort zones and so there was no real sense of having a voice or control so I thought, what is the point, it just lets you know you don’t count.’

‘I felt that the idea added to the drama, but in practice I’m not so sure. Maybe with a different audience.’

‘Detract.’

#### 4) How did the “vocal audience” shape your experience?

##### Thursday, 8 pm

‘Made the play more interesting – I wasn’t expecting it.’

‘Did feel more “allowed” to express opinion about progress of the performance.’

‘It made an otherwise serious, intense drama comical in some instances.’

‘More fun more inviting.’

‘Some made some silly comments, but others were very intriguing.’

‘Distracting.’

‘It made it much more enjoyable and interactive.’

##### Friday, 7:30 pm

‘I felt that if I had wanted to play the director role I would have, and it changed my experience in that there was simply nothing (about voices, projectors, lighting – nothing) that I wanted to change, so I realized how well directed it was. Thank you for an amazing production.’

‘The vocal audience made me acutely aware of our need for comic relief and the way it made the poignant moments in the play that much more meaningful. I was also struck by how much we all felt angry and wanted to intervene and felt caught by our inability to help the family.’

‘Encouraged me to stay interested.’

‘It added in general, even the bad suggestions at least help get passed the slow and tense parts.’

‘It was a neat option to have, but I didn’t notice as much because not many people spoke.’

‘They made it funny.’

‘It was new and fresh.’

‘I was confused about it.’

‘Did not help.’

‘Didn’t really effect it.’

##### Friday, 10 pm

‘It made the show more fun, just listening to the voices that weren’t onstage.’

'It was easier to pay attention to the play realizing there's an entire group with you. Also, good to see what others pay attention to.'

'It destroyed all of the beauty and emotion.'

[blank]

'It added some relief to a very serious performance.'

[blank]

'Kept my interest throughout – Even when lulls in the script (i.e. Papa and the horses, etc.).'

'Made a good play with great actors into an average one with people shouting.'

'It was interesting. But sometimes I was irritated with some of the suggestions. Felt like telling them to shut up.'

'Felt more involved.'

'Interesting experiment – worth the \$.'

'Well, it was the first time I was part of a vocal audience, so the concept itself was interesting. But overall, the drama would have been more effective without the suggestions. Maybe a vocal audience would be more appropriate in a comical play.'

'Not much.'

'I liked it.'

'It made a depressing drama humorous. The suggestions were funny for the most part.'

'It was definitely experimental, but I think it could be even more so.'

'They made me feel uncomfortable by using humor to alleviate the tension.'

'It was fun, if a little distracting at times.'

'Hmm... I don't think people were taking it seriously enough. Too many obnoxious suggestions – not enough people thinking seriously about what might improve the interestingness of the play.'

'Varied my opinions – made it interesting.'

'It was more funny than experimental.'

'Um... I don't know, a few people said some stupid things.'

'It was funny but not productive. The actors were too focused/nervous to take most of the suggestions, and most of the suggestions were purely for humor. I did not find this experiment successful!'

[blank]

'Sometimes distracting, but more [illegible] to feel I had power.'

'It was a novel experience.'

#### Saturday, 8 pm

'Broke the mood the author was trying to create – and my relationship with the characters.'

'I didn't really like it.'

'It turned a fantastic play into just a good one.'

'Frustration – due to stupid comments – but I guess you may want the audience to be frustrated.'

'I think I would have preferred this in a comedy setting – here, it seemed like many comments were meant to impress each other, and most couldn't be taken. But, a really interesting idea!'

[blank]

'Show was great, but buy more into the premise and let the show change.'

'It was more comedic than anything – did not seem like the actors really paid attention to any. The play did not seem suited to it.'

'It was pretty interesting. I sometimes felt like commenting on other people's comments.'

'Illustrated the separation btw the comic and tragic.'

'Made be frustrated b/c of the inappropriateness of some comments.'

'I thought it took away from the written dialogue of the script and distracted the audience from the emotional content of the scenes.'

'I thought that the audience was too "immature" to have the ability to shout out things. It lost the connection I felt with certain characteristics/situation due to suggestions like "It's Hammer Time."'

'Both positive and negative. Neg – distracted from the story and effect. Pos – also relieved some of the tension.'

'I felt like I was part of a fight – [illegible] community but it got a bit distracting.'

'Very interesting – more so than other plays of this intensity.'

'It was certainly unique. Although sometimes suggestions seemed to be shouted out at inappropriate times.'

[blank]

'Made the performance easier to share and enjoy.'

'It made it so much more fun. It's every audience member's dream to shout at the play.'

[blank]

'It definitely made the play more exciting. I'd like to see something similar again in the future.'

'Certainly fun at points and freeing to vocalize what I won't/don't want to happen but [illegible] this mostly distracted from the excellent performance.'

## APPENDIX I

### Suggestion Taxonomy

**Influence** – exert influence, a sort of “testing of the waters”

- “Turn the lights on.” (F30)
- “Can you play ‘Staying Alive?’ In the background?” (F10)

**Recitation** – recite previous behavior

- “Be excited, Beatrice [in reference to another phone call to Mr. Goodman].” (R8)

**Consistent** – action, in-line with previous behavior

- “Smack Tillie on the head.” (S8)
- “Go get the chloroform.” (S8)

**Divergent** – action, regardless of previous behavior

- “Show us your boobs.” (F30)
- “Ask him [Mr. Goodman] on a date.” (F30)
- “[Nanny,] Throw the honey at Beatrice.” (S8)

**Echo** – one spectator makes the same suggestion as another, separate spectator

- “Bury it [the towel] anyway.” / “Bury it now.” (S8)

**Opposition** – direct opposition to a character’s previous statement or action

- “Don’t watch.” (F30)
- “Bury it anyway.” (S8)

**‘The Gun Scenario’** – pressure actors to deliver something which has been referred to previously

- “Explain who Mr. Mayo is.” (S8)

**Technical** – alter technical aspects to 1) exert influence, 2) re-introduce realism, or 3) improve reception/perception

- “Light the scene change.” (F30)
- “Bring back the rain.” (S8)
- “Turn the lights back on.” (S8)

**Character Inclusion** – introduce character into new scene

- “Ruth, come on in.” (F10)
- “Tillie, come listen to this.” (S8)

**Material Alteration** – something has changed on the set

- “The couch is smoking.” (F30)
- “Somebody make the easy chair point the other way.” (F10)

**Environmental Alteration** – change in the environment

“Suddenly it’s very hot in the room.” (F10)

**Circumstantial** – related to the circumstance the character is in

“Slur your words.” (F30)

**Should Do** – something the character *should* do in a given circumstance, based upon

cultural understanding of human relations

“Tillie, move closer to Ruth.” (S8)

**Returnative Behavior** – attempt to move character into a more comfortable subset of actions-behaviors

“Stop! [reaction to Beatrice throwing boxes off the stairs]” (F30)

**Inner State** – action they believe reflects the character’s inner state

“Red spotlight on Beatrice.” (F10)

“Red spot on Ruth.” (S8)

**Previous Aesthetic** – based in previous aesthetic experience, whether theatrical or filmic, as well as general cultural artistic tropes/conventions

“Have a fit of rage. Destroy stuff.” (S8)

“Slow-motion.” (S8)

“Spotlight on the cage.” (S8)

**Awareness** – acknowledges or plays off of the awareness of the actor, or directly addresses the actor’s performance

“Try projecting.” (S8)

“Lower your voice.” (F10)

**Process** – alter part of the theatrical process itself

“Light the scene change.” (F10)

“Have the board ops switch boards.” (F10)

**Direct Address** – directly addresses the experiment

“You’re not taking any of our suggestions.” (F30)

“Be more experimental.” (F10)

**Intertextual** – based on a phrase, object, or action that is highly intertextual, i.e. has several well-known associations

“Tell scary stories.” (S8)

“Make shadow puppets on the back wall.” (F10)

“Do a kick-line.” (S8)

**Extrapolation** – based in observed behaviors, posits an alteration in keeping with that behavior but based not on that behavior, but rather upon phenomena outside the realm of the play

“Ruth, tell her you’re pregnant.” (R8)

**Aesthetic** – contributes to the representation itself, whether positively or negatively

“Switch roles.” (S8)

“Can everyone speak in a Russian accent?” (S8)

**Fictional Confined** – suggestion is based solely on information a character has, eliminating dramatic irony

“Honk the horn again.” (F30)

**Meta-suggestion** – used aesthetically, based on the combination of audience involvement and the play

“Ruth, come stand in the aisle and do this scene.” (S8)

### **Response to another spectator’s suggestion**

#### **Confirmation/Approval**

“Light the scene change.” / “Come on.” (S8)

#### **Negation/Disapproval**

“Change the music.” “No.” (F30)

#### **Shock**

“Boil the rabbit.” “Jesus.” (F30)

#### **Expansion**

“Play a gunshot.” / “Play some drive-by music.” (R8)

### **Humor peers**

**Experiential humor** – based on personal, college experiences

“Chug it. Chug it.” (R8)

**Meta-humor** – mocks the structure and/or action of the experiment itself

“Peter, poop on Ruth.” (S8)

“Applause...End applause.” (F30)

**Outside Humor** – refers to participants in the production and depends upon a previous knowledge of those individuals

“Laird, call the show in Spanish.” (F10)

“Tell her about *Equus*.” (S8)

“Sing ‘West Side Story.’” (S8)

**Impossibility** – inherently cannot be enacted

“Bring the puppet from *Saw* on stage.” (R8)

“Make the helicopter land in the theater.” (F10)

**Character humor** – based in the mockery of a character or her situation

“Throw the towel at the old woman.” (R8)

**Literalism**

“Drop dead.” (F30)

## **APPENDIX J**

### **SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS**

[NOTE: *Materials are arranged chronologically. They can be obtained with permission from the University of Pennsylvania Department of Anthropology.*]

- AA** : *Gamma Rays* Audition Sheet, the sheet actors filled out in auditioning for the play
- BB** : Brief Survey of Intercultural Performance, placed outside of auditions for actors to examine; also, each actor cast in the production was given a copy; it guided our discussions of performance and theatre
- CC** : Outline for First Rehearsal, my outline which exemplifies our approach in many ways
- DD** : General Info Sheet, handed out at first production meeting
- EE** : Workshop Video, the film viewed in workshop, comprised of clips from several films; the purpose of the video was first to provide examples of the quality of art we were attempting the and means of achieving it, and second to illustrate world performance traditions and rituals
- FF** : *Gamma Rays* Teaser, two teasers which sparked a heated controversy between myself and the iNtuitons board; it is tradition with that group to post a “teaser” around campus several weeks before the performance; they wanted to post the picture of the rabbit; I objected, and was supported by Laird, Sloan, and Jenny; they allowed me to make my own (the second teaser included), but rejected it on the basis that it looked “cheap” because it was hand-drawn; the dispute continued, with no agreement in sight, so the teaser was aborted; I include it because it reflects the diverse perspectives on the play between myself and the iNtuitons board
- GG** : *Gamma Rays* Safety Meeting Sheet, handed out at the safety meeting prior to “tech week”
- HH** : *Gamma Rays* Poster, posted around campus
- II** : *Gamma Rays* Flyer, handed out by students on Locust Walk
- JJ** : *Gamma Rays* Program