

Tending Roses

By

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Cast of Characters

(in order of appearance)

Spencer Conklin	a man in his early 70's
Grace Conklin	a woman in her 60's
Bridget O'Byrne	a middle aged woman
Jason Conklin	a man about 40 years old
Sarah Conklin	a woman about 35 years old
Tucker Pressman	a man about 40 years old

Time: The Present

Location: Spencer Conklin's Den

Act 1 Scene 1 Late afternoon

Lights come up on an elegantly decorated den. The appointments suggest affluence. Upstage center is a fireplace. To either side are French windows. In front of the fireplace are matching easy chairs, a coffee table, end tables and a bookstand. Stage left is an arched entry leading to a hallway and front door. The upstage wall is replete with diplomas, awards and photographs. On the downstage left wall is a gun cabinet. Stage right is a swinging door leading to the kitchen. On the upstage right wall is a flat panel TV. Adjacent to the TV is a bar. Down stage right is a desk with a lamp. The desk is piled with papers and books.

A casually dressed man enters stage left. He walks to his desk, sits and works on his papers. A woman enters stage right with a bouquet of roses. She places them in a vase. Another woman enters stage right with a pitcher of water. She fills the vase with water.

BRIDGET

You outdid yourself, Miss.

GRACE

Thank you, Bridget. I took your advice.

BRIDGET

Glad I could help.

Bridget exits

Grace picks up a book and quietly sits in an easy chair.

GRACE

Will my reading disturb you?

SPENCER

When has it ever?

(Pointing to the roses)

Your garden?

GRACE

Yes.

SPENCER

I'm impressed.

GRACE

(somewhat sardonic)

Nice of you to notice.

(beat)

Are we going to talk about it?

SPENCER

What's to discuss?

GRACE

Have you told them anything t?

SPENCER

I'm retiring. What more can I say?

GRACE

I meant the other matter.

SPENCER

Not yet.

GRACE

Will you, or should I?

SPENCER

Are you going to read your book or do you prefer to pester me?

GRACE

A simple answer will suffice.

SPENCER

When it's appropriate. (beat) Is that a suitable answer?

Spencer moves to the bar

Shall I fix your martini?

GRACE

Extra dry. One olive.

(beat)

How do you think they'll react?

SPENCER

Who knows?

GRACE

I'm sure they'll be quite upset.

SPENCER

Your insight is better than mine.

GRACE

Do you really believe they lack compassion?

SPENCER

Not sure. What I do know is that our relationship has become an expansive gulf.
Or, is it a chasm?

GRACE

You're bordering on melodrama.

SPENCER

I thought I was being perceptive.

GRACE

You're being judgmental . . . As usual.

SPENCER

I'll be satisfied if they respond as mature adults.

GRACE

If only you had one ounce of sensitivity.
(beat)
Children can never embrace mortality.

SPENCER

Not their own, perhaps, but certainly their doddering parents.

GRACE

I'd rather you not include me among the "doddering."

SPENCER

I was speaking for myself.

GRACE

(subdued)
Not yet.

Spencer hands Grace a martini. He clinks his glass of bourbon with hers.
She buries herself in her book.
Spencer unsteadily walks to his gun case and pulls out a pistol. He begins to polish it.

GRACE
New toy?

SPENCER
A Walther PPK. It was a prop in a movie.

GRACE
You, and your toys.

SPENCER
And your rose garden?

GRACE
Touche

SPENCER
Grace?

GRACE
What?

SPENCER
Are you comfortable?

GRACE
You mean in this chair?

SPENCER
You know perfectly well what I mean.

GRACE
How could anyone be comfortable?

SPENCER
Would you rather she risks another episode?

GRACE
Knowing something in her head could go “poof” ... No.

SPENCER
I meant with me.

GRACE
(gesturing)
I'm as comfortable as I would be with anyone rummaging around in my sister's head.

SPENCER
Rummaging? Is that the best way to describe my expertise?

GRACE
(dismissive)
Just an expression.

SPENCER
Your vote of confidence is rather . . . underwhelming.

GRACE
Does my opinion matter?

SPENCER
Of course it does.

GRACE
Really?
If I condone this surgery and something goes wrong they'll say I should have questioned your ability.

SPENCER
Can't we focus on it going right? (beat) I am the most qualified.

GRACE
You know, Spence, there was a time when watching you in the operating room filled me with awe. Right now, I find your self-confidence... annoying.

SPENCER
Would you rather I defer to someone else?

GRACE
Were you listening?

SPENCER
(Waving his hands)
Do you really believe these hands have turned to clay?

Spencer returns a pistol to the gun case. He sits in an easy chair. Grace approaches and sits on his lap holding her martini glass. She snuggles with Spencer. They embrace as he pets her. They manifest an iconic pose.

GRACE

You know you're the only guy I'd ever let do this.

SPENCER

(holding out his hand)

Even with . . .

GRACE

(with a finality that belies her hesitance)

Yes.

(beat)

How about a little bit of . . . later . . . upstairs?

SPENCER

After surgery.

GRACE

Is that what you tell Sheila?

SPENCER

Let's not go there, shall we.

GRACE

Do you?

SPENCER

Must I constantly remind you,
Sheila is my scrub nurse. You are my wife.

GRACE

That never stopped you when I was scrubbing in.

SPENCER

REALLY! Now?

GRACE

She was my best friend.

SPENCER

You never cease to remind me.

GRACE

Well, silly me! I was the one who groomed her for the job

The doorbell rings.

BRIDGET O.S.

I'll get it.

Bridget enters from the kitchen and walks cross stage to open the front door.
Jason and Sarah enter with luggage. Hugs all around.

BRIDGET

Well, as I live and breathe. Look at the two of you.

JASON

Hi, Bridge. Looking sexy as ever.

BRIDGET

Oh, fresh you are.

SARAH

So nice to see you, Bridget. It's been too long.

BRIDGET

Indeed, indeed. Come into the den. Your folks are anxious to see you.

(aside to Jason)

I have something special for you in the oven.

Jason acknowledges
Bridget exits to the kitchen.

JASON

We're not home a minute and I feel the walls closing in.

SARAH

Oh! Stop it.

You sound like a drama queen

Sarah and Jason hesitate for a moment and enter the den.

JASON

Hi, Mom.

Jason moves to embrace Grace.

SARAH
Hi, Mom. Hi, Daddy.

SPENCER
Welcome home, Sarah.
(to Jason)
No Hi for your Dad?

JASON
(playful)
Need a hug? (beat) Or, do you prefer a macho handshake?

SPENCER
A little affection for the old guy wouldn't hurt.

Jason embraces his father and exaggerates the hug.

JASON
There now, does the big guy feel better?

SPENCER
Ah, you were always a pain in the ass. (beat) How was your flight?

JASON
A pain in the ass.

Spencer moves to the bar with an unsteady gait.

SPENCER
Been there, done that.
And let me tell you, first class is not what it used to be.

JASON
I wouldn't know.

SPENCER
Is it still bourbon?

JASON
Ice. No fruit.

SPENCER
(to Sarah)
And wine for you.

SARAH
Not yet, thank you.

Spencer goes to hand Jason his cocktail, but drops it.

SPENCER
Bridget!!

Bridget enters with a towel and begins to mop up the mess.

BRIDGET
Saints preserve us! You sound as if someone died.
Why don't you fix another while I mop this up?

Spencer returns to the bar
Bridget wipes the floor and picks up the glass. As she is leaving

BRIDGET
(cont'd)
It's not like you to be so clumsy.

SPENCER
(- -)

GRACE
(to Sarah trying to avoid the awkward)
So, how was Cancun?

SARAH
Great! Until I got Daddy's text.

GRACE
Well I'm glad you enjoyed yourself.

SPENCER
When has she not?

SARAH
Daddy!

SPENCER
Aren't you past your prime for that sort of thing?

SARAH
It was a job, Daddy.

SPENCER
Maybe so, but isn't it time to move on?
(teasingly)
You know, boyfriends, babies ... a few rug rats in this house to make us smile?

JASON
Give her a break, Dad! Sarah hasn't skied all the mountains in Europe.

SPENCER
Well, what about you, buster? You're not getting any younger.

SARAH
Don't bother, Jason. Until we have children, our lives are meaningless.
After all, his immortality is at stake.

GRACE
Spence! You're such a hard ass!

Grace gestures to Spencer

SPENCER
As you wish
(to Sarah)
So! How was your flight?

SARAH
Horrible.

SPENCER
Well, by the sound of that I guess I'm in the doghouse.

GRACE
Come Sarah, you can tell me all the juicy stuff in the kitchen.

Grace and Sarah begin to exit to the kitchen.

SARAH
What a beautiful bouquet of roses.

GRACE
So nice of you to notice.

SARAH
From your garden?

Grace and Sarah exit.
Jason moves to the gun cabinet and peers in.

JASON
I see you've added to your arsenal.

SPENCER
You like it?

JASON
What is it?

SPENCER
A Walther PPK.

JASON
(gesturing)
Wasn't that the pistol Hitler ... (beat) Don't tell me you purchased the original?

SPENCER
No, no. But I wish I could have.
I was assured it was a prop in a James Bond movie.

JASON
What are you going to do with it?
You've never so much as fired a BB gun.
(beat)
God, you have enough here to outfit a militia.

SPENCER
Owning rare and beautiful firearms is its own reward.

JASON
You mean it's the ultimate one-up. I own it and you don't.

SPENCER
You know very well that's not why I collect fine weaponry.

JASON

I don't get it. With all the mayhem that's going on out there . . .

(beat)

Some day you'll have to make sense of it for me.

SPENCER

Some day. Indeed.

(Pause)

(trying to be collegial)

So. Have you sold any of your music?

JASON

You'd be the first to know.

SPENCER

No. I think that news would be reserved for your mother.

JASON

Are we inventing a new competition?

SPENCER

What else is there?

JASON

O.K. We won't go down that rabbit hole.

SPENCER

Let's catch up . . . exchange a little family banter?

JASON

When have we ever done that?

Grace and Sarah enter.

GRACE

Spence, you must see Sarah's photos.

SPENCER

Some other time.

JASON

Well, I know you didn't call us home to engage in polite conversation,
or discuss the arts in California, so why are we here?

SPENCER

Well, that's going for the jugular.

SARAH

Your text was rather strange, dad. What's the urgency?

GRACE

That's my cue. I'm going to get ready for dinner.

(Shaking her glass at Spencer)

I'll have another when I return.

SPENCER

At your service.

Grace exits holding her martini glass aloft.

SPENCER

Well, frankly, there's something you both should know . . .

JASON

And . . .

SPENCER

I'm stepping down as Chief of Neurosurgery.

SARAH

You're joking!

JASON

Ah, so the hospital is making the old guy an offer he can't refuse.

SPENCER

Actually, the hospital is preparing a retirement ceremony and,
I thought it would be nice if my children were present for it.

JASON

Shall we applaud like trained seals?

SPENCER

Are there no bounds for your insolence?

JASON

How will you possibly survive without your cherished title?

SPENCER

I'll have you know I earned my titles ... with hard work and dedication.
I sacrificed my personal life for it.

JASON

Your absence has been duly noted.

SPENCER

We all make sacrifices in life, Jason. I made mine for academic excellence.

JASON

I know. You wear them like laurel wreaths.

SPENCER

Perhaps I do. But I'm entitled. What I do changes people's lives.
My life has meaning.

JASON

Are you telling me my life is a waste?

SPENCER

You're the only judge of that.

SARAH

Dad, what will you possibly do if you step down?

SPENCER

I don't know.
But, before I do, I'll have one last surgery to perform.

SARAH

Why is that so important?

SPENCER

It's for your Aunt Betty.

JASON

What? You're going to operate on Aunt Betty?

SARAH

Why you?

SPENCER
Who better?

JASON
(outraged)
Is Mom's sister another trophy?(beat)
How could you?

SPENCER
Because at my worst, I'm the best at what I do!

JASON
Just like you.
Your ego is boundless.
Aren't there rules against it?

SARAH
When, Daddy?

SPENCER
Tomorrow.

JASON
Tomorrow? Thanks for the heads-up.

SPENCER
Her condition became urgent.
And it's not why I called you home

(Pause)
(subdued)
It will be the last major surgery I ever perform.

SARAH
Because you're stepping down?

Bridget enters with a tray of hors d'ouvres.

BRIDGET
I made your favorite, Jason. Pigs in a blanket.

SPENCER
Perfect timing.

JASON
I always said you are my other-mother.

BRIDGET
Oh, you!

SARAH
(winking at Jason)
May I have one?

BRIDGET
Help yourselves. Dinner, in an hour.

Bridget exits.

SARAH
Where were we?

SPENCER
I was about to tell you . . .
Spencer collects himself

Fate, in a vicious twist of irony,
has dealt this neurosurgeon a rare neurological disease.

(Awkward pause)

JASON
(subdued)
Which one?

SPENCER
Supranuclear Palsy.
(beat)
Before you ask, it's incurable.

SARAH
How long have you known?

SPENCER
I've suspected it for some time.

SARAH
How ... long ...

SPENCER
There's no timetable.

JASON
So, Betty will be your last performance.

SPENCER
Do you include sarcasm in your lyrics, or is that reserved just for me?

JASON
No, I get it. You intend to exit the surgical stage with fanfare and flourishes.
Your residents will cheer but there'll be no encore.

SPENCER
It seems you have no limits to your . . .

JASON
(gesturing)
How can I be otherwise when I see you like this and know what you are about to do?

SARAH
Should I cancel my summer vacation?

SPENCER
Does my disease inconvenience you?

SARAH
Daddy, I ...

SPENCER
What a pity! You won't be able to sun bathe in Nice or St. Tropez this year.

SARAH
Daddy, don't be cruel. You know I meant ...

SPENCER
I expect nothing from either of you.
I thought it best that I should be the one to tell you.

SARAH
Does the doctor have a doctor?

SPENCER

I've asked Dr. Pressman to look after me.

SARAH

I thought Dr. pressman died.

SPENCER

He did. I asked his son.

SARAH

(shocked)

Tucker? How can you possible ask Tucker?

SPENCER

On a first name basis, are we?

SARAH

I meant ...

SPENCER

Why not him?

SARAH

(hesitant)

He's, he's our age for God's sake.

SPENCER

Are you in a position to judge his competence?

SARAH

There must be someone more experienced.

SPENCER

He's my best friend's son.

He also happened to spend four years at the N.I.H.

Does that qualify him?

SARAH

Daddy, stop.

I just had a flashback of him tutoring Jason in high school.

SPENCER

I can't think of another person I could trust more.

JASON

Why don't you go to someone who's an authority or,
a world-renowned clinic like any sane person?

SPENCER

Because I am Dr. Spencer Conklin, goddamn it!
I will not subject myself to having any random fool gawk at me.
(beat)
You two have no idea how my journey will end.

SARAH

Daddy, I'm so sorry.

SPENCER

Thank you Sarah but I forbid you to engage in maudlin sentimentality.

JASON

What about mother?

SPENCER

What about her?

JASON

(gesturing)

Is she agreeable having you ... operate on her sister? With your

SPENCER

I was hoping the two of you are capable of ...
(Spencer catches himself)
I hope the two of you can do your best to reassure her.

JASON

Is she agreeable?

SPENCER

Doing nothing is not an option, Jason.
Surgery is her only hope.

JASON

What are her odds?

SPENCER

Odds are for racetracks and casinos. They serve no purpose. (beat)
Tucker will be arriving any minute. I need to get properly dressed.

Spencer walks to the archway and turns around

I'm not dead, yet.

Spencer exits.

Jason slumps in a chair. Sarah approaches him.

SARAH

Can you believe what we just heard?

JASON

No.

SARAH

What are you thinking?

JASON

What am I thinking?

How the fuck can he operate on anyone's brain with his hands shaking like a leaf?

SARAH

He must feel confident he can do it.

JASON

It's, it's all macho . . . bullshit.

And I'm sure his illness is worse than he's letting on.

You know him!

SARAH

Why do you think he needs us to reassure Mom?

JASON

Who knows? Probably, because mom can't say no to him. She never could.

Judging by the way he's tried to run my life, I'm sure he's got a plan.

(absently) Right down to writing his eulogy.

SARAH

Don't be vile.

JASON

And don't you be naïve. Operating on anyone in his condition is unconscionable.
Operating on your sister-in-law is unforgivable.

SARAH

Because she's family?

JASON

Because he's physically compromised!

SARAH

Are you sure of that?

JASON

Are you dense? He just told you!
Don't you see him stagger? Don't you see his hands shake?
Didn't you see him drop my cocktail?
It's all about his ego --- and his stupid self-centered . . .

SARAH

Daddy has never asked us for anything in his life. Why now?

JASON

He wants us to share the guilt ... if he screws up.

SARAH

That's stupid! Everyone knows Daddy's reputation.
Don't you trust your own father?

JASON

Really? Is that a real question?

SARAH

I'm sure he believes he's doing the right thing.

JASON

I'll try to remember that if . . .
This sucks! I'm sorry I came home.
I'm out of here.

Jason exits. Sarah stand alone - bewildered
End scene

Act 1 Scene 2 Early evening

Spencer enters. He is more formally dressed. Sarah is seated working on her computer.

SPENCER

Where's your brother?

SARAH

I don't know.

SPENCER

He wasn't at dinner.

SARAH

I'm sure Bridget served him something special.

(beat)

He went for a run this afternoon.

SPENCER

You're joking.

SARAH

Daddy, why do you constantly belittle Jason?

Just because he didn't choose to be a doctor like you?

SPENCER

No one can be like me!

SARAH

You're impossible, Daddy!

Your standards are beyond anyone's reach.

SPENCER

I don't expect much, Sarah. But, It would be nice if he stood up and assumed some responsibility ... became productive ... chose something meaningful ... instead of wasting his education on trivia.

SARAH

Writing musical scores for movies is not trivial, Daddy.

SPENCER

You are loyal. I'll give you that.
I hope your aspirations are loftier than ... pop music.
You need to get focused. A career, perhaps.

SARAH

I chose one. Remember?

SPENCER

It wasn't suitable.

SARAH

For whom?

SPENCER

Who else?

SARAH

Was photojournalism so unsuitable or
was it a Conklin by-line that embarrassed you?

SPENCER

You know damn well that's not why I objected.

(Pause)

Have you ever thought about marriage?

SARAH

That would be a consideration, but I haven't had a glass of wine yet.

SPENCER

Well, hop-scotching around the world photographing resort openings is not a noble pursuit.

SARAH

You are hopelessly oblivious!
I have a career... on my own terms ...in my own time.

SPENCER

Calm down, Sarah.

SARAH

I always knew what Jason is up against!
Somehow, I hoped I would be spared.
How stupid of me!?

SPENCER

Sarah, listen ... I only meant ...

The doorbell rings.

SARAH

Oh, thank god. I'll get it.

Sarah exits to the hallway.

Spencer resumes working on his papers.

Sarah opens the door and sees Tucker.

SARAH

It's you!

TUCKER

And, it's so nice to see you, too.

SARAH

How could you do this and not tell me?

TUCKER

He asked. How could I say no?

SARAH

Do you think he knows?

TUCKER

Not from anything I've said.

SARAH

This is not the time to tell him.

TUCKER

Will it ever be?

Sarah begins to leave. Tucker reaches out and hugs her affectionately. Sarah responds. Spencer looks up from his paperwork, looks toward the hallway, witnesses the exchange and returns to his paperwork.

Tucker knocks on the wall. He enters.

TUCKER

Anyone home?

SPENCER

Ah, Tucker. Thank you for coming.

TUCKER

Not at all, Dr. Conklin. I'm honored.

SPENCER

Now that you're a colleague and my doctor,
I think it's time you call me Spencer.

TUCKER

That'll be a tall order.

SPENCER

It shouldn't be a problem for my best friend's son.

TUCKER

Dad felt the same way.
He told me so many stories about when you two were in medical school.

SPENCER

Fine man your father. Too bad what happened.

Bridget enters

BRIDGET

Saints alive! It's Tucker Pressman.
No! It's Doctor Tucker Pressman.

TUCKER

Aw, c'mon Bridget. You knew me when.

BRIDGET

Wet behind the ears you were.
But I always knew you'd be a success.
Can I offer you a cocktail?

TUCKER

Bourbon. Neat.

BRIDGET

So nice to see you, after all these years.

TUCKER

Likewise, Bridget

Bridget pours a drink and exits.

SPENCER

Well, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

TUCKER

I suppose I have some of my dad's DNA.
You couldn't live in his home and not learn a thing or two.

SPENCER

I'm certain you learned much more than you think
In some ways he was larger than life.

TUCKER

I always felt that way, too.
(beat)
I'm not sure I'll ever fill his shoes.

SPENCER

Frankly, that's why I asked you to be my physician.

TUCKER

Because I lack my father's wisdom?

SPENCER

No, because you're humble enough to admit it.

TUCKER

Thank you for saying that but now that I'm in practice, I can fully appreciate how
competent he was. They say he was a doctor's doctor.

SPENCER

Tucker, indeed he was. What endeared me most was how he accepted everyone for who
they were, rich and poor alike. He was a paragon of humility and kindness.

TUCKER

And what about you?

SPENCER

Ah, I spend so much time in the operating room ... I must confess; I'm a bit insular.
But I so admired that your father was so ... non-judgmental.

TUCKER
Aren't you?

SPENCER
I hear the gossip.
They say I'm ... arrogant . . . pompous.

(uncomfortable long pause)

TUCKER
Tell me, what was my father like ... when he was young?

SPENCER
Smart. Considerate. Compassionate. He was born to be a doctor.
Some of us had to learn how to blend the art of medicine with the science of medicine.
With your father, it flowed seamlessly.

TUCKER
Mom tells me he was a hell-raiser.

SPENCER
(Laughing)
Joe? He had a devilish side, all right. A prankster, really. You don't have to be profoundly serious all the time just to demonstrate your humanity. He could show compassion with a lame joke just as easily as a pat on the hand or a bear hug. And let me tell you, he was the king of lame jokes.

TUCKER
In that case I think I take after my mother.

SPENCER
And how is she these days?

TUCKER
She carries on. Volunteers. Active in Hadassah.
Somehow she fills her days without intruding in my life.
It must be difficult to lose your partner after so many years together.

SPENCER
Really?

TUCKER
I'm sorry. That was insensitive.

SPENCER

Not at all. (beat) We all must accept our own reality.

TUCKER

Have you read the literature I sent?

SPENCER

Yes.

TUCKER

Then you know what's in store.

SPENCER

Of course.

TUCKER

What do you expect of me?

SPENCER

I have no preconceptions.

TUCKER

If you had none then any neurologist could have cared for you. Why me?

SPENCER

Your father and I were best friends, Tucker, even though I was a lapsed Catholic and he was a devout Jew. We came from vastly different backgrounds.

Yet, we shared a philosophy about life.

TUCKER

And?

SPENCER

We wondered if we were good enough to leave a mark on the world,
you know, to leave a legacy.

We often sat up for hours late at night debating what it means to be alive and what would
happen when we were not.

TUCKER

You both might have been better off if you went out for a couple of beers.

SPENCER

Ah, we did that, too. And, if you must know, we stayed up 'til the break of dawn.

But it was those discussions that drew me close to your father. (beat)

I miss him. I miss his kindness. I miss his intellect.

(Pause)

Well, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

I presume you enjoy some of your father's philosophy on life.

TUCKER

It's hard to know.

Dad took me to a few baseball games

but we never sat around a campfire discussing the meaning of life.

SPENCER

I'm sure the way he conducted himself

and the way he practiced medicine came through loud and clear.

TUCKER

Well, I know he was deeply religious and he had high moral standards.

But other than my Bar Mitzvah, he never imposed any of it on me.

So I don't know if I'm the chip off the block you remember.

SPENCER

All the same. All the same.

TUCKER

Well, if you have no questions, I'll be getting along.

Tucker moves to the archway. He takes notice of the gun cabinet for the first time.

TUCKER (cont'd)

I didn't know you had an arsenal in your home.

SPENCER

It's a collection, Tucker.

TUCKER

Whatever for?

SPENCER

A hobby. It's all about power.

TUCKER

Who's?

SPENCER

(inattentive)

Here, look at this Le Mat revolver, and this Remington.
And I have a pristine English Webley.
Every revolver is priceless.

TUCKER

Frankly, Dr Spencer, I'm not the least bit interested.
And I don't think my father would have approved.

SPENCER

Truth be told, it's the one thing we vehemently disagreed on.

TUCKER

I've got to go.

Tucker moves to the archway and Spencer reaches out to touch his shoulder.

SPENCER

There is one more thing, Tucker.

TUCKER

Yes.

SPENCER

At the end, when my disease gets ... I hope you'll do the right thing.

JASON

I'm not sure I know what you mean.

SPENCER

You'll know when the time comes.

TUCKER

All I can promise is that I will treat you with dignity and respect.

SPENCER

Well, I suppose that's all anyone can expect.

Tucker turns and begins to exit.

And Tucker, I'd like you to look in on Grace's sister after surgery.

TUCKER
(shocked)
You're operating on . . . ?

Tucker makes an attempt to question Spencer but Bridget enters from the kitchen and begins to tidy up the bar.

Tucker exits in frustration.

Spencer fills his glass with Bourbon and slumps in his chair.

BRIDGET
Will you need me for anything else?

SPENCER
No, thank you, Bridget. I'll just sit here and finish my drink.

BRIDGET
You won't find answers in the bottom of that glass.

SPENCER
I wasn't looking for any.

BRIDGET
You'd have fooled me.

SPENCER
Oh?

BRIDGET
You've been a cranky old bear ever since you started dropping things.

SPENCER
Is it that obvious?

BRIDGET
Frankly, Dr. Conklin, it's unbecoming.

SPENCER
You're a wonderful lady, Bridget.
I want you to know how deeply I appreciate what you do for us.

BRIDGET
Nothing I wouldn't do for your family.

SPENCER
All the same ...

BRIDGET
... no need.

(Pause)

SPENCER
What do you think my colleagues will say when they find out I'm still operating?

BRIDGET
Do you really care?

SPENCER
I wouldn't want to lose their respect.

BRIDGET
Well, since when has that been a concern of yours?

SPENCER
You know, Bridget, sometimes I think you know me better than I know myself.

BRIDGET
They surely must know how capable you've been.
Whatever happens ... its God's Will.

SPENCER
That's a wonderful way to accept life.
I wish I had your faith.
It must be a comfort to believe in a God.

BRIDGET
And how could anyone not!?
A son of Erin like you!
God is merciful ... I've always believed that.

SPENCER
The trouble is ... I'm the one who'll operate
and no one will show me any mercy if it doesn't go well.

BRIDGET
You're a good man Dr. Conklin.
You shouldn't doubt yourself now for something that's in God's hands.

SPENCER

What if surgery doesn't go well?

BRIDGET

I suppose your family will be angry ... with you ... they'll be confused.
Who else are they going to blame?

SPENCER

I must say I don't understand it.

BRIDGET

You're just too busy being a doctor.
You've lost sight of the spiritual side.

SPENCER

I didn't lose it, Bridget. I never had it to begin with.

BRIDGET

If that's the case, it's a real pity.
Every one has to believe in something bigger than them self.
(beat)
You never go to church, do you?

SPENCER

No. Not in a very long time.
Surgery is my religion.
The operating room is my cathedral.

BRIDGET

Would there be any more answers there than in the bottom of that glass?

SPENCER

You wouldn't ask if you were in my operating room.
I take my responsibilities quite seriously.

BRIDGET

Dr. Conklin, I didn't meant to say what you do isn't important.

SPENCER

Important? Oh, it's much more than that, Bridget.
I feel closer to a God in the Operating Room than anywhere else.

(beat)

Does that make sense to you?

BRIDGET

I'm a simple woman, Dr. Conklin.
There are many things I don't understand.
I guess we all find God in our own way.

SPENCER

I'll try to keep that in mind.

BRIDGET

Good night, Dr. Conklin.

SPENCER

And Bridget ... let's keep this conversation to ourselves.

Bridget exits

Spencer refills his glass with bourbon and slumps in his easy chair.

Lights fade

End Scene

Act 1 Scene 3 The next morning - Early

Jason is in the den idly flipping through his father's journals.
Bridget enters carrying a service of coffee.

BRIDGET
What are you looking for?

JASON
Just looking at Dad's journals.

BRIDGET
Looking for something in particular?

JASON
No.

BRIDGET
Do you want to read something about your father's problem?

JASON
Even if I found an article I wouldn't understand it.

BRIDGET
Oh! I doubt that.

JASON
Has he said anything more about his disease?

BRIDGET
Not to me.

JASON
Really?

BRIDGET
Why don't you ask him yourself?

JASON
I'm not sure he'd give me a straight answer.

BRIDGET
You must know by now, he has his own ways.

Spencer enters

SPENCER

Fancy seeing you at this hour of the morning.

JASON

I got up early.

SPENCER

Why?

JASON

I wanted a little private time with you.

SPENCER

Any reason in particular?

JASON

Actually, to learn more about your diagnosis.

SPENCER

I'm flattered by your concern.

Bridget pours Spencer a cup of coffee

Thank you, Bridget.

(to Jason)

Care to join me?

JASON

Sure. Why not?

Bridget pours a cup of coffee and exits.

SPENCER

I see you've been rummaging through my journals?

JASON

I was looking for something to read about your illness.

SPENCER

Disease, Jason. I have a neurological disease.

JASON
Always the teacher.

SPENCER
A lifelong habit.
(beat)
Aren't lyrics a subtle form of teaching?

JASON
I never looked at it that way.

SPENCER
Persuasion, perhaps?
But lyrics for pop music?

JASON
I earn enough to live on my own.

SPENCER
Not without your mother's help.

JASON
What?

SPENCER
You think I don't know?

JASON
I hope this is not a prelude to the "I'm wasting my life lecture."

Sarah enters but at first doesn't see Spencer

SARAH
(to Jason)
Are we in a better mood today?
(to Spencer)
Oh, is this a private conversation?

SPENCER
Join in.

SARAH
Is there any coffee in that pot??

SPENCER

Your brother and I were discussing his profession and my predicament.
Is there anything in your life you wish to include?

SARAH

Not really.

SPENCER

Isn't it time there was.

SARAH

I'm not the one who's unhappy with my life!

JASON

Don't you ever get tired of brow beating us?

SPENCER

You can afford to be insolent once you've accomplished something.

JASON

I have!

SPENCER

Really?

SARAH

Daddy, why does every conversation with you always end up this way?

SPENCER

Stay out of this. This is between Jason and me.

JASON

Look, I know you don't approve of what I do.

SPENCER

Approve? Now, that's an understatement.

JASON

It's my life. It's what I want to do.
Why can't you accept that?

SPENCER

How fulfilling can it possibly be?

JASON

You really are clueless!
You think composing music and writing lyrics is child's play.

SARAH

Please Jason, don't go there. He's hopeless.

SPENCER

It doesn't appear to require a degree from an Ivy League college.

JASON

Why not? Cole Porter graduated from Yale.
Has that bit of trivia escaped you?

(beat)

Look, you found fulfillment in creative surgery. For me, it's music and lyrics.

SPENCER

And what may I ask makes that so special?

JASON

It's like writing poetry.

SPENCER

(sarcastic)

Really? I was always led to believe that poetry expressed a noble emotion.
What's so noble about pop or rap or whatever passes for music these days?

JASON

You truly are clueless. (beat) The words have to fit the music.
There's a cadence, a rhythm, a beat and at the end, my lyrics tell a story.
It's creating something from nothing.
And when I get it right, it's a high you can't even begin to imagine.

SPENCER

Jason, I understand we all dance to a different drummer
but I am absolutely convinced you could do more with your life.

JASON

Based on what? Your expectations? Society?
Who arbitrates what I do with my life?

SPENCER

I've spent a king's ransom educating the two of you and what have either of you achieved?

SARAH

Nothing that would ever please you!
You want more than anyone can deliver.

SPENCER

I hoped that one day the both of you would make something more of your life.
If pleasing me is a burden, I will soon relieve you.

JASON

Hallelulia!

SARAH

For Christ sake, Jason, at least be civil.

SPENCER

A bit of civility would be most welcome right about now.

(Pause)

There are wrenching decisions to be made
and I hope the two of you can rise to the occasion.

JASON

Well, I'm sure whatever you decide will be in your own best interest.

SARAH

Jason, please!

JASON

I'm sorry.

SARAH

I can't stand either of you! Perhaps mom is in a better mood.

Sarah exits

Dead awkward silence

JASON

So what's going to happen to you, Dad?

SPENCER

Do you recall what I told you yesterday?

JASON

Yes. Of, course.

SPENCER
Did it sink in?

JASON
You're stepping down as Chief.

SPENCER
My disease. I have a fatal disease.

JASON
I, I'm having a difficult time ... accepting ... actually, with the prospect of you . . .

SPENCER
I understand, Jason. Believe me, I do.
Your mother said you'd have trouble with this.
Truth be told, so am I.
But there are no options, Jason.
There's inevitability to my journey.

JASON
Dad, what do you want us to do? What do you want me to do?

SPENCER
Jason, there comes a time when every man faces certain trials . . .alone.
And some decisions we make . . . alone.
I do not ask you nor do I expect you to help me make mine.

JASON
What are you saying?

SPENCER
What I'm trying to say is,
I hope you can understand what I'm about to do from here on out.

JASON
Frankly, Dad, what you do for yourself is your business.

SPENCER
And what about yours?

JASON
You needn't worry about me.
I'll be O.K. ...in spite of your reservations

Bridget enters

SPENCER

There's only one thing to do for Aunt Betty. And that's surgery.

JASON

I don't question that.

SPENCER

Then what do you question?

JASON

Your doing it.

SPENCER

Your mother is agreeable Why aren't you?

JASON

Because, unlike Mom, I no longer blindly worship at your altar!
And I do question both your judgment and ability.

SPENCER

I will live with my judgment!

JASON

The question is, will Aunt Betty?

SPENCER

How dare you question my competence!

Spencer slams down a book and begins to leave.

SPENCER (cont'd)

I have surgery to perform.
And, by the way, the dedication is next Tuesday.

Spencer storms out of the den.

BRIDGET

Saints preserve us!
I never thought I'd ever see the day you spoke to your father like that.

JASON

I said what needed to be said.

BRIDGET

I know my place but I have to say, you are out of line, Jason.

JASON

Bridget, you've raised me since I was a child and I respect you for all the mothering you've given me but someone has to question what Dad is about to do.

BRIDGET

Maybe so, but you could have done it with more respect.

JASON

Well, Mom can't, so I did.

BRIDGET

You have no idea how hard this is for him.

Sarah enters.

Bridget pours her coffee.

JASON

How's mom?

SARAH

As usual. Kneeling at his altar. Nothing but platitudes and praise.

(beat)

How did you sleep?

JASON

Like shit!

SARAH

Me too. I couldn't stop thinking.

JASON

You?

SARAH

Don't be a smart ass. It's too early.

BRIDGET

So, Jason, tell me your exciting news.

JASON

Not much to tell, Bridge. I'm trying to sell my music but it isn't easy.

BRIDGET

Nothing worthwhile ever is. (beat)
And how about you young lady?

SARAH

I'm O. K. Really tired but the job is really good.

BRIDGET

Work has you running around?

SARAH

Yeah. Pretty much. My boss wants a jump on all the new beach resorts so it's back and forth
to the Bahamas, St. Tropez, Rio . . .

JASON

What a terrible job.

SARAH

Shut up. It is. I'm exhausted. To tell the truth I'm glad for the down time.
(realizing what she said)
Oh. God. I didn't mean it that way.
(suddenly crying)
Oh. Shit this came from nowhere.

BRIDGET

Now, Sarah, don't you fret. God never sends us anything we can't handle.
(beat)
I'll get more coffee.

Bridget exits

SARAH

I think I'm losing my mind.

JASON

Surgery on Aunt Betty and Tucker Pressman. Are we going for a Trifecta?

SARAH

Don't say anything you'll regret.

JASON

Wasn't he the guy slobbering over you in High School?

SARAH

You really know how to be a pest.

Grace enters

GRACE

Is this something new? Breakfast in the den?

SARAH

We were having a conversation with Dad.

JASON

Is that what you call it?

GRACE

A good night's sleep hasn't tempered your tongue.
Our bedtime banter was all about you ... and your mouth.

SARAH

My feelings haven't changed either.

GRACE

When are the two of you going to learn to accept your father for who he is?

JASON

Not any time soon.

GRACE

Then it's time you both grew up.

SARAH

Jason doesn't think Dad should be operating . . . on anyone.
Certainly not Aunt Betty!

JASON

I can speak for myself, thank you.

SARAH

Then do so!

Bridget enters with a plate of breakfast pastry.

JASON
Do you go along with this madness?

GRACE
I've known your father to have the hands of a Michelangelo.

JASON
That was then. We're talking now.

BRIDGET
Anything to eat, Miss?

GRACE
No, thank you.

JASON
Don't you at least consider the possibility that his judgment could be clouded?

GRACE
Judgment? Clouded? Do you really know your father?

JASON
I'm well aware of his reputation.

GRACE
Your father assumes responsibility beyond what most surgeons would ever consider.
The least you can do is support it.

SARAH
Aren't you the least bit concerned? I mean, with his physical ability.

GRACE
Of course I am. How could I not?
(beat)
But, I've seen your father do truly miraculous things in the operating room.
I don't believe for a minute all his skills have deserted him.
(beat)
At least, I pray not.

BRIDGET
Nothing like prayer, Miss.

GRACE

I didn't mean it that way, Bridget.

BRIDGET

I know. Just my Irish way of putting in two cents.

Bridget exits

GRACE

Where was I? Your father. Your father had to overcome insurmountable obstacles to get where he is. He had to scratch and claw his way to the top of his profession.

JASON

Probably no more than any one else.

GRACE

Is that what you think?

His father was a truck driver, for heaven's sake.

You think that was a passport to an Ivy League education?!

JASON

Are you going to throw my education in my face, too?

GRACE

No. But I do want to remind you he didn't grow up in a house like this.

He wasn't welcomed with open arms into the inner circle.

Those doors were forced open by his ability and skill and perseverance.

SARAH

That doesn't excuse him from being so obstinate.

GRACE

Look, I know he can be brusque with you.

But, with me he's more like a pussycat than a grizzly bear.

(beat)

He's like a lot of self-made men ... he's ashamed of his roots.

He's insulated himself. His demeanor is a facade.

SARAH

It's not just that, Mom.

GRACE

(wistful)

He was the most gifted surgeon I ever saw.

(beat)

When he asked me to marry him I felt like the luckiest woman alive.

SARAH

Mom, no one doubts your love for Dad.

GRACE

And you shouldn't doubt his love for both of you.
Having to step down from a position he cherishes, one that he worked his whole life to
achieve is, is emotionally . . . devastating.

JASON

Are you trying to convince us, or are you trying to convince yourself?

GRACE

How can you be so cynical?

JASON

Sometimes, mom, you get to see the whole picture the farther away you are.

(beat)

(relenting)

O.K., O. K. When he comes home I'll apologize.

Jason exits

SARAH

Speaking of love, Mom.

GRACE

Yes?

SARAH

I think I'm in love with Tucker.

GRACE

Think?

SARAH

I'm so confused. What do you suppose Daddy will say?

GRACE

What does your heart tell you?

SARAH

He's a wonderful person, Mom.
He's just so right for me.
I really do love him.

GRACE

So what's the problem?

SARAH

Dad. I have no clue how he'll react.

GRACE

Listen to your heart, Sarah.
Your father will have no choice but to accept your decision.

SARAH

What about his religion?

GRACE

Your father is in no position to judge that.

SARAH

How do you make it work, mom?

GRACE

To me, marriage is like tending a rose bush, Sarah.
It needs fertilizer. Call that love.
It needs to be pruned. Call that forgiveness.
It needs sunshine. Call that providing space.
And keep in mind, you'll always encounter thorns.

SARAH

What do you call them?

GRACE

The unexpected hurts.

SARAH

How do you deal with them?

GRACE

Well, Sarah, if I knew the answer to that I'd be happier than I am.

End scene

Act 1 Scene 4 One week later Late afternoon.

Lights up on an empty set. We hear murmurings off stage. All enter through the front door. Spencer throws a program at the couch. He staggers to the bar. Bridget moves to the kitchen. Sarah and Grace take a seat and sit quietly. Jason stands by the bar.

SPENCER

A fucking portrait!

That's what they think my contributions are worth.

My picture . . . on a fucking wall!

JASON

What did you expect?

SPENCER

God damn it! I put that hospital on the map.

I recruited patients from all over the world.

I'm the one responsible for its economic success.

The least they could do is name a wing after me, name the fucking hospital after me.

JASON

Do you think what happened to Aunt Betty had anything to do with their decision?

SPENCER

Your Aunt Betty benefited from elegant surgery.

In my operating theater!

JASON

Aunt Betty died!

SPENCER

Everyone dies!

I gave her the best chance to live.

Can't you not understand that?

JASON

(compassionate)

Dad, there's nothing more I should say right now.

Jason exits. Sarah quietly follows him.

GRACE
(subdued)
I saw Sheila at the dedication.

SPENCER
Of course you did.
Why would she not be there?

GRACE
She sat in the front row.

SPENCER
Did you not hear me?

GRACE
I sat in the gallery.

SPENCER
You should have said something.

GRACE
I'm saying something now.

SPENCER
Shall I fix your martini?

GRACE
Extra dry. One olive.

Grace picks up a book and sits in her usual chair.

GRACE
Will my reading disturb you?

SPENCER
When has it ever?

Black out. End Act 1

Act 2 Scene 1 Weeks later

Spencer is at his desk, a walker by his side. He gets up and clumsily staggers to his easy chair. He ungracefully flops in it.

Spencer appears to be watching the flat panel TV on the far wall. He awkwardly moves his head from side to side writhing somewhat in his chair. He tries to scratch his nose but does so clumsily. He leans back in the chair.

SPENCER
Bridget!

Bridget enters from the kitchen.

BRIDGET
Must you bellow? You'll wake the dead.

SPENCER
Are you busy?

BRIDGET
Just fixing dinner.

SPENCER
Let me know when Dr. Pressman arrives.

BRIDGET
He's talking to Sarah on the porch. I'll tell him you want him.

Bridget exits. Spencer fidgets. A few moments later Tucker enters from the hallway. He is carrying a medical bag tucked under one arm and a stethoscope in the other.

SPENCER
Are you here to see me, or, my daughter?

TUCKER
Both.

SPENCER
Am I now the subject of hospital gossip?

TUCKER
As you would expect.

SPENCER

What I expect is for the Trustees of that miserable institution
to come to their senses and do the right thing.

TUCKER

The probability of that happening is rather remote.

SPENCER

Please do not destroy my illusion.
It's all I have left.

TUCKER

You still have your life.

SPENCER

What life? You call this living?

TUCKER

Your mind is clear. Be grateful for that.

SPENCER

I can't.

(Pause)

SPENCER (cont'd)

I want you to help me end it.

TUCKER

What? Don't be ridiculous!

SPENCER

I don't mean now. But when I say it's the right time.

TUCKER

I can't do that.

SPENCER

Can't or won't? Your father would have helped me.

TUCKER

(forceful)

Do not attempt to bludgeon me with my father's memory.

SPENCER

What other options do I have?

TUCKER

There's always Oregon.

SPENCER

(sarcastic)

Really? Do you think I'll live long enough to qualify as a resident?

Spencer motions to Tucker to help him get out of the chair. He takes his walker and while slowly shuffling back to his desk continues.

SPENCER (cont'd)

You're not taking me seriously, are you?

(beat)

You think my prattling is merely the frustration of a debilitated old fool.

Will you help me or not?

TUCKER

If you knew my father so well, you'd know my answer.

SPENCER

Not now! Think about what your answer will be.

TUCKER

Spencer . . . I'll attend to your illness.

I'll practice the best medicine I know but I won't help you kill yourself.

SPENCER

Why not? If I had cancer you'd prescribe enough morphine to let me sleep forever.

TUCKER

Terminal sedation is acceptable practice.

SPENCER

So, in addition to my neurological misfortune, I'm a victim of cookbook medicine.

And my disease doesn't fit into an arbitrary pigeonhole?

Is that it?

TUCKER

You're not in pain.

SPENCER

There are equally horrific symptoms.

TUCKER

Since when have you become philosophical?

SPENCER

So you won't make an accommodation for me, your father's best friend.

TUCKER

What kind of half-assed guilt trip are you trying to lay on me?

SPENCER

Look, no one can practice for a lifetime without killing at least one patient.
What's one more when this patient is a willing subject?

TUCKER

Is this your idea of a confession?

SPENCER

There is nothing for me to confess.

TUCKER

What about Aunt Betty?

SPENCER

She was privileged to receive the best surgical care imaginable.

TUCKER

You're baiting me Doctor Conklin. And I don't like it.

Spencer grabs Tucker's arm.

SPENCER

Tucker! I know I'm going to die. I can live with that.
I just don't want to degenerate into a slobbering bag of protoplasm.

TUCKER

Spencer, I don't make the rules.

SPENCER

What is it that makes you so reluctant?

TUCKER

My faith.

SPENCER

Tell me you're joking.
When did you get so religious?

TUCKER

I'm not the kind of Jew who makes a show of attending Shul.

SPENCER

So, chanting in a Shul uplifts your soul.

TUCKER

Yeah, there's comfort in that.
And, despite the obvious trappings of Torahs, crosses, yarmulkes and statues,
there are fundamental truths in all religions.

SPENCER

I don't believe in any of it.

TUCKER

Maybe that's why you're so miserable.

SPENCER

Shit! You sound like my housekeeper.

TUCKER

Sometimes there's wisdom in simplicity.
(beat)
Aren't you supposed to believe in a hereafter?

SPENCER

Heaven? Where is it? Please! That's a sop for the masses.
(beat)
And what about your faith? The Talmud doesn't even mention a heaven or a hell.
So, what is it that keeps you from helping me end my life?

TUCKER

Euthanasia is immoral, not to mention illegal.
Our reward is to do good, seek truth and gain wisdom.

SPENCER

Well, there's no wisdom emanating from the nine black robed, senile old fools on the Supreme Court. Even they have an agenda.

TUCKER

What are you railing at now?

SPENCER

Hypocrisy. Hell, one minute they allow obstetricians to squash a baby's skull in the birth canal and label that an abortion.

But if the baby somehow pops out or it's a breech, it's a homicide.

TUCKER

What's your point?

SPENCER

The legal distinction between abortion and homicide is gossamer.

Those clowns couldn't even deal with that dilemma. Could they?

TUCKER

Congress banned partial birth abortion.

SPENCER

My point exactly! Morality changes with the whim of the court. Or Congress.

More importantly, the pressure brought to bear upon it.

There is nothing immutable about morality.

TUCKER

Sometimes, the pendulum swings too far.

But eventually it finds a comfortable middle.

SPENCER

That's bullshit!

TUCKER

The courts only respond to what society demands.

I grant you they may take extreme positions but they do modify them in time.

SPENCER

How long does that take?

Enlightened societies like the Netherlands sanction euthanasia and here the nine nitwits agonized for months calling in countless “experts” just to allow terminal sedation for patients with intractable cancer pain.

Where is the logic or the morality in that?

Or, the compassion, for God’s sake!

TUCKER

All morality begins with personal belief and most moral people believe in a deity.

Where does that leave you?

SPENCER

It leaves me bereft of hope.

TUCKER

You really don’t want me to help you die.

You want me to absolve your guilt.

SPENCER

Guilt? What have I got to be guilty for?

TUCKER

(forceful)

What happened in your operating room?

SPENCER

Elegant surgery was performed in my operating room.

TUCKER

Now you’re bullshitting me.

SPENCER

You think you know?

TUCKER

What’s that aphorism ... something about the truth setting you free?

SPENCER

I don’t need to be liberated!

TUCKER

Do you think I’m oblivious to your physical incapacity?

SPENCER

You weren't there in my operating room.

TUCKER

I didn't have to be.

Actually, I'm the one who should be guilty.

SPENCER

You?

TUCKER

Yes! Me!

I should have blown the whistle on you.

I should have reported you to the ethics committee.

Compromised doctors, like you,
should be barred from doing things they are no longer capable.

SPENCER

God damn you!

I thought I could control my hands.

TUCKER

(sarcastic)

Is that a confession or an explanation?

SPENCER

How dare you?

TUCKER

No, Spencer. How dare you?

Blackout

Act 2 Scene 2 Later that day

Jason is seated in the den, a computer on his lap.
Sarah enters.

SARAH
What's up?

JASON
Trying to catch up.
(gesturing)
My album.

SARAH
Are you going back to L.A.?

JASON
Probably.

SARAH
What about dad?

JASON
There's nothing I can do for him, except just be there.

SARAH
Isn't that enough?

JASON
What about you?

SARAH
I'm in a funk. I think Tucker is going to ask me to marry him.

JASON
Congratulations. You could do worse.

SARAH
Is that a compliment?

JASON
Just breaking them on you.
I'm good at that.
He's a great guy. He'll make you happy.

SARAH

If he does, I'll have to stay.
But, then I'll be involved with dad's care.

JASON

I don't want to sound insensitive, but I'm not sure how long dad can last.

SARAH

You're right. That was insensitive.

JASON

Hey, let me talk to Tucker.
Maybe he can shed some light, so we can organize our lives.

SARAH

I've tried. But, he's like a clam when talking about dad.
He keeps yapping about HIPPA rules.
(beat)
So, what do you think about what happened at the dedication?

JASON

Isn't it pretty obvious? Dad got a royal screwing.

SARAH

Why?

JASON

Probably because a bunch of pricks were jealous of his success.
It happens all the time in my industry.

SARAH

You know, Jason. For all the aggravation he's heaped on me over the years,
I truly feel sorry for him.

JASON

Because he's sick?

SARAH

No. Because he didn't get what he was owed.

JASON

I'm in your camp. He deserves a lot better than he got.

SARAH

It frustrates me that there is nothing we can do.

JASON

Just be the daughter he thinks you are.

Grace enters.

GRACE

Where's your father?

JASON

I don't know.

SARAH.

How are you holding up, mom?

GRACE

I'm trying to hold it together. I miss my sister.

And, I don't know how to grieve.

I feel so empty.

JASON

I don't think I should participate in this conversation.

I'm sure to say something I'll regret.

SARAH

Suit yourself.

Jason exits

GRACE

Why is your brother so angry?

SARAH

Mom! Aren't you the least bit upset with dad?

GRACE

More than you know.

SARAH

Because of what happened to Betty?

GRACE

That, of course. But it's much more.

SARAH
Care to share it with me?

GRACE
It's not in my nature to complain.

SARAH
Don't I know it?
Isn't it about time you shared your feelings ?

GRACE
I suppose.
You recall I told you about thorns in a marriage?

SARAH
Yes.

GRACE
Well, in the last few days there are more than I can bear.

SARAH
Mom, stop with the riddles.
For God's sake, I'm your daughter.
Just once in your life, be honest with yourself.
Open up. Let it out.

Grace walks about and adjusts the roses in the vase.

GRACE
I'm certain your father is carrying on with Sheila.

SARAH
What? How do you know?

GRACE
She sat in the front row at the dedication and we sat in the gallery.

SARAH
That may have been insulting but it doesn't rise to fooling around.

GRACE
When I was his Head nurse, he was fooling around with me.
How do you think Jason came along?
Do the math.

SARAH
Oh, mom, I'm so sorry.

GACE
And lately, he hasn't come near me.
And I don't think its his illness.

Grace rearranges her roses.

Grace (cont'd)
Just thorns, Sarah!

SARAH
Does his condition keep you from confronting him?

GRACE
Perhaps.
It's so difficult to see him this way when he's been so vibrant all his life.
I do love him. You should know that.
And I don't want to add to his misery,
but there are thorns . . . and they hurt.

SARAH
I just don't know what to say.

GRACE
Say nothing . . . to anyone.

End scene

Act 2 Scene 3 months later. Evening

Spencer is seated in an easy chair. A wheelchair is nearby. He appears to be watching TV. He attempts to scratch his nose but fails miserably. He picks up the TV remote and drops it in his lap. He lies back in his chair. Tucker enters with his medical bag. Throughout the scene Tucker is performing neurological tests.

TUCKER
Are you awake?

SPENCER
Just daydreaming.

TUCKER
Thinking about better times?

SPENCER
I no longer indulge in sentimental reverie.
(beat)
It's a useless exercise, Tucker.
It's a zero sum game.
The ugly cancels the good.

TUCKER
One misfortune doesn't erase a lifetime of work.
There's not a doctor worth his salt who doesn't admire your talent.

SPENCER
It's of little comfort now.

TUCKER
It should be.
Your surgical skills should confirm your legacy
and make your disease more bearable.

SPENCER
No one gives a good god-damn about my legacy.
After what happened to Betty, I got a portrait instead of meaningful accolade.

(Pause)

TUCKER
What do you daydream about?

SPENCER

Nothing that will be included in my eulogy. That's for sure.

(beat)

Mostly the things I wish I had accomplished.

You know, life's unfinished business.

TUCKER

I'm beginning to have similar thoughts.

SPENCER

Well then, get busy!

(nodding at the TV)

Anything is better than watching this drivel.

(beat)

Don't let your life degenerate into watching reruns of Bonanza.

(Pause)

Why aren't you married?

TUCKER

What brought that up?

SPENCER

Merely an observation.

TUCKER

I've thought about it ... it's never been the right time.

SPENCER

Marriage isn't about timing, Tucker;
it's about finding someone who'll put up with you - and your baggage.

TUCKER

That's an interesting perspective.
I was always led to believe it was about falling in love.

SPENCER

The only one we truly love is our self.

TUCKER

Not even your mother?

SPENCER

Don't get me started.

(Pause)

Seems like you were here yesterday. Has it been a week?

TUCKER

Did you miss me?

SPENCER

Like a boil on my backside.

TUCKER

Will that be my place in your catalogue of reverie?

SPENCER

Don't expect a Hosanna or an Hallelulah.

TUCKER

From you? Hardly.

SPENCER

Am I that austere?

TUCKER

I don't recall you ever praising anyone's astute diagnosis.

SPENCER

It's probably because they didn't deserve it.

TUCKER

(Mildly mocking)

Every once in a while I have a fleeting image of you at Grand Rounds - strutting down the corridor ... your sycophants in full throat. And there you are, lapping up their adulation as you make one diagnostic pronouncement after another!

SPENCER

Eh! I had my day in the sun.

TUCKER

You had dedicated acolytes singing your praise ...

SPENCER
And look at me now.

TUCKER
... Dr. Spencer Conklin, Emperor of the operating room!

SPENCER
Don't be insolent. Your father would not have approved.

TUCKER
May I remind you, sir, I am not who you want me to be.

SPENCER
How well I know. How well I know.
(beat)
He, my good young doctor, would have known how to accommodate my desperation.
He would have readily agreed to be my collaborator.

TUCKER
Was he an acolyte? Or just someone you knew how to manipulate?

SPENCER
Your father understood the human condition, Tucker.
He knew how to lavish compassion.
He knew me. And he would have granted my wish!

(Awkward Pause)

TUCKER
Let me take your blood pressure.

SPENCER
What for?

Tucker takes Spencer's arm.
It is limp and flops on the armrest as Tucker wraps a cuff around it.

TUCKER
(dismissive)
To see if you're still alive.

SPENCER
Well then, go ahead. Take it.
And if by chance you find none tell me promptly so I can rejoice.

TUCKER

Why are you carrying on like this?

SPENCER

Do I provoke you?

TUCKER

You've read the literature. I keep you abreast of all the research, whatever is on the horizon.
I've applied for an experimental protocol. Why do you question what I do for you?

SPENCER

Because competence and compassion are quite distinct!

TUCKER

Do you think I don't know that?

SPENCER

Others may judge that you've acquired wisdom enough to distinguish between the two.
But as for me, the jury is still out.

TUCKER

Then why did you ask me to be your physician?

SPENCER

My how that word rolls off your tongue ... with reverence as if it were a privilege.
(Lyric)
Physician.

TUCKER

Wasn't twelve years of training sufficient to earn it?

SPENCER

In my book you can only earn that title by caring for people, facing the impossible.
My god, they don't even call your generation "Doctor" anymore ...
you're now called a, a vendor ... or ... a provider.
You're lumped in with all those who deliver toilet paper and syringes.

TUCKER

We don't need agencies to validate who we are.
We validate ourselves by what we do.

SPENCER

Ah, what you do. You practice by protocols.
You've abdicated your clinical judgment.
Cookbook medicine ... that's what it is.
You've become glorified technicians shoving tubes into every available orifice and worse,
fixated on entering data into computers.

TUCKER

And what was it you called the surgery you performed? Elegant?

SPENCER

I was first a physician.

TUCKER

What were you when you assessed Betty's condition, a physician or a technician?

SPENCER

I made a sound judgment!

TUCKER

You make that sound so saintly.

SPENCER

I say it with authority! Surgeons like me are autonomous.
At least, we once were.
A physician of my stature has latitude.
It was a different world before alphabet soup medicine.
That concept is foreign to you. Isn't it?
I guess you can't miss what you never knew.

TUCKER

What I know is that we don't have doctors running off willy-nilly trying every crackpot
idea on desperate people.
I do not apologize for following protocols.
I do not apologize for being mainstream.

SPENCER

And I do not apologize for attempting to save a person's life.

TUCKER

Should Betty's family be grateful?

(beat)

Should Grace?

(Pause)

Do you want me to transfer your care to someone else?

SPENCER

I ask myself that very question every waking moment of this miserable existence.

Sarah enters

SARAH

Hi Daddy!

Sarah attempts to surreptitiously touch Tucker. Tucker looks at her lovingly.
Spencer notices but turns away.

Hi Dr. Pressman.

TUCKER

Good God Sarah! I'm in your home. Will you ever address me as Tucker?

SARAH

Daddy is old school.

He's enthralled with ritual and tradition.

Aren't you Daddy?

"Respect the profession, not the professor."

SPENCER

Well, it's a comfort to know you sometimes listen to me.

(beat)

Where have you been?

SARAH

With Jason.

We were discussing Aunt Betty.

SPENCER

Ah! A meeting of two great minds.

SARAH

Do you think Mom had any idea what might happen to Betty?

SPENCER

Do you think a head nurse in a neurosurgical suite was oblivious?

SARAH

That was a long time ago.

SPENCER

Your mother never questioned my judgment.
If she had any reservations she never expressed them to me.

SARAH

Jason and I tried to talk her out of approving it.

SPENCER

Well, you know better than most, there are no guarantees ...

SARAH

If you had it to do over again, would you?

TUCKER

Perhaps you two should have this conversation when I'm not here.

SARAH

Tucker, that would be lovely in a Utopian world.
Here in the real world, Daddy prefers not to discuss anything that relates to his health.
Certainly, not with me.

SPENCER

I would but you are fundamentally ignorant of my neurological disease.

SARAH

I'm not your doctor, Daddy.
I'm your daughter. Remember?
I only want what's best.

SPENCER

For whom?

SARAH

You!
Are you absolutely clueless ?

TUCKER
I think I should excuse myself.

Tucker exits to the kitchen.

SARAH
What makes you so insufferable when Tucker is here?

SPENCER
My life does not revolve around Tucker.

SARAH
Oh?

SPENCER
Besides, your behavior is not quite so exemplary, either.

SARAH
You always behave this way when there's an audience.

SPENCER
Not so. I've behaved like this all my life.
And I'm not about to change because I'm at the end of it.

SARAH
Stop hanging crepe!

SPENCER
Isn't that what you're doing?

SARAH
Not at all!
I'm living my life to its fullest. In spite of you.
(beat)
And you should, too. You don't know what discovery is just around the corner.

SPENCER
If I have my way, bliss would be around the corner.
(beat)
Today, tomorrow; they're all the same now.
(Pause)
Where's Bridget?

SARAH

I gave her the afternoon off.

SPENCER

Why?

SARAH

Why? Do you ever listen to yourself?
I gave her time off so she doesn't lose her mind.

SPENCER

And where is the heir-apparent?

SARAH

I think he's making reservations to go back to L.A.

SPENCER

When all the fun is done, no doubt.

Tucker enters

TUCKER

Where is Bridget? I could use some help.

SARAH

She has the afternoon off.

SPENCER

They paroled her.

TUCKER

(...)

SPENCER

It's to preserve her sanity.
My daughter thinks I'm an irascible scoundrel abusing the help, driving them to the brink.

TUCKER

I never knew you for hyperbole.

SPENCER

The times cry out for it.

TUCKER

O.K Sarah, I need to enlist you. Help me get him up.

Together Tucker and Sarah lift Spencer out of his easy chair. He is limp as a rag doll and clumsy, incapable of supporting himself or contributing to the effort. Tucker gives Spencer an injection. They adjust his shirt to expose his buttock and reposition him in the chair.

SPENCER
Wasn't that fun!?

SARAH
Don't!

SPENCER
The Emperor of the operating room ... reduced to having his diaper changed like a child.

SARAH
Stop it! I won't have you do this to us.

SPENCER
Us? Am I not the guest of honor at this party?

TUCKER
We all do the best we know how, Sarah.
There's no perfection in medicine.

SARAH
Or in doctors, I suppose.

Sarah exits

TUCKER
You really can be cruel.

SPENCER
I'm not cruel. My disease is cruel.

TUCKER
It's no reason to take it out on your daughter.

SPENCER
It's my way of preparing her for the inevitable.
I'd like to think of it as wielding my scalpel.
You can't excise unless you incise.

TUCKER

You could wield your scalpel a bit more delicately.

SPENCER

And you should disguise your lust a little better.

TUCKER

Desire, Spencer. My eyes are filled with desire.
Lust is not one of my vices.

SPENCER

Do you plan on marriage?

TUCKER

Do you object?

SPENCER

I suppose you expect me to sanction the union.

TUCKER

It would be nice but not essential.

SPENCER

Only because I soon won't be here to object.

TUCKER

Spencer ... do not ruin the rest of her life!
(beat)
I have to get back to the hospital.

SPENCER

When you return will you bring a syringe filled with cyanide?

TUCKER

Stop it!

SPENCER

Then leave. You've said enough for one afternoon.

TUCKER

I need to wash up before I go.

Tucker moves to the kitchen
Jason enters carrying his iPhone

JASON
Hey, Tuck.

TUCKER
Hey, Jason.

JASON
Can I get an answer to a few questions?

TUCKER
I'll try.
Just remember, I'm bound by HIPPA rules.

JASON
It's me Tucker. Let's stop the bullshit.
(beat)
How long does dad have?

TUCKER
I don't have that crystal ball.

JASON
Best guess.

TUCKER
Look, in most cases his disease is rapidly progressive.
But, I've seen some that lasted quite a while.
So, I make it a policy to abstain from making those predictions.

JASON
Thanks for being honest with me.

TUCKER
If it means anything to you, I know what you're going through.
My dad suffered in a similar way.

JASON
Yeah, I know. It's why I think dad chose you to look after him.

TUCKER
You know, that never entered my mind.

Jason leaves forgetting his iPhone.

Tucker sees it and brings it to the Den.

TUCKER

Here, I have something to keep you occupied.

Tucker places the iPhone by Spencer's side table.

SPENCER

Stop it. I don't want to listen to crap music.

Tucker presses a button and exits.

We hear the music and see Spencer swoon in reverie. He realizes it is Jason's music and begins to sob.

Grace enters. She sees Spencer listening to the music. She shuts off the phone.

SPENCER

Why did you do that?

GRACE

(seething)

You never gave him the right time of day.

You shit on everything he tried to do.

You think now you can unscramble that egg.

She walks to the bar and pours a drink. She takes a sip. She adjusts her bouquet of roses.

GRACE

My roses have wilted.

She turns to look at Spencer, raises her glass and exits.

End scene

Act 2 Scene 4

It is the middle of the night. Spencer is in his wheelchair, a walker by his side. He manages to get out of the wheelchair and shuffle to the gun cabinet. He struggles to stand erect and takes out a pistol. As he flops back into his wheelchair the gun discharges.

Jason enters in his pajamas

JASON

Good God! What have you done?

Jason attempts to examine his father to see if there is injury.

SPENCER

What are you doing?

JASON

What do you think you're doing?

SPENCER

What does it look like?

JASON

It's not like you to do something stupid.

SPENCER

Let's say I tried to remove the roadblock, lift the curtain, unlock the gate.
Choose your metaphor.

JASON

I don't see it that way.

SPENCER

How do you see it?

JASON

I see a strong man who's afraid to admit he's frightened.

SPENCER

Once was.

JASON

Once was ... what?

SPENCER
A strong man.

JASON
You still are.

SPENCER
Nature has reduced me to a limp bag of pulp, Jason.

JASON
I thought you were a fighter, Dad.

SPENCER
I only fight for what's achievable.

JASON
You certainly don't have to fight for death.

SPENCER
But I want to.

JASON
Why?

SPENCER
Death has been lurking for months, Jason.
It's been hovering over this body with anticipation.
And I don't want to keep it at bay any longer.

JASON
Death will find us all soon enough.

SPENCER
Not soon enough for my taste.

JASON
Don't you fear it ... even a little?

SPENCER
Fear is normal, I suppose.
We all fear the unknown but I've been familiar with death my entire professional life.
I am intimate with it.
I am ready to embrace it, especially now that my body has abandoned me.

JASON

What you're doing is cheating ... you're cheating us.

SPENCER

Cheat you? How will my departure cheat you?

JASON

Perhaps I should have said you're cheating yourself.
Don't you want to live long enough to know what happens to Sarah or for that matter ...
me?

SPENCER

I suspect you'll all do just fine.

JASON

Not without you.

SPENCER

You're suggesting that it is I who motivate you.

JASON

I don't need you to motivate me, Dad. I'm not competing with you.

SPENCER

Well, at last you've come to terms with that.

(Pause)

Did I ever tell you my father wanted me to join the Teamsters?

JASON

No way!

SPENCER

It was his idea of security.

JASON

In my wildest dreams I can't see you driving a rig.

SPENCER

Frankly, neither could I. But I'm sure I disappointed him.

JASON

Do I disappoint you?

SPENCER

Do you disappoint yourself?

JASON

You can piss me off no end, Dad, with your pomposity and arrogance.
You're so goddamn judgmental. Don't you believe I love you?

SPENCER

I've never doubted it.

JASON

Then why can't you accept what I do?

SPENCER

All I want is to see you grow up ... be responsible ... take charge.
That's all I ever wanted of you, Jason.

JASON

Have you ever allowed yourself to consider I *am* somebody?

SPENCER

You are Jason. You are. I've heard you music.
It speaks for itself.

With every ounce of strength Spencer pulls Jason close

Never let anyone define who you are, Jason. Not even me.

JASON

What's making you so mellow? Or is it your disease speaking?

SPENCER

Mellow? Never. My disease? Perhaps.
As I descend deeper into this dark dungeon of paralysis I've had time to reflect.

JASON

And all that comes to mind is that your father wanted you to be a truck driver.

SPENCER

My defiance wasn't easy, Jason. But it was liberating.

JASON

Certainly you don't believe your suicide will liberate me.

SPENCER

I don't want to end my life merely to help you grow up.

JASON

Are you doing this because of what happened to Betty?

Sarah enters

Where were you?

SARAH

Having dinner with Tucker.

Jason shows her the pistol.

Oh my god, what's going on?

JASON

Care to tell her, Dad?

SPENCER

You're the wordsmith. You can tell her.

JASON

Since when have you been at a loss for words?

SARAH

Why would he explain anything to me?

He treats me like a pane of glass.

JASON

(holding the gun)

Dad never shot a BB gun. But, he thought he could fire this.

SARAH

Oh my God! Why? Don't you want to get well?

SPENCER

Come here, Sarah.

Sarah complies and sits by Spencer.

SPENCER

You must accept I will never be well. You must accept that.

All your optimism will change nothing.

There is finality to my journey.

All I want is to accelerate its end.

SARAH
I could never give up hope.

SPENCER
That would be your choice.

SARAH
I can only imagine what this illness is doing to you, Daddy.
To be at the pinnacle of success and reduced to this.
But regardless of what you think of me, I do know how much you're suffering.
I can understand how humiliating it is to lose control. Especially you.
But this . . . this . . . is incomprehensible.

SPENCER
It wouldn't be if you were in my shoes.

SARAH
And how are we to answer when they ask if Dr. Spencer Conklin, the eminent
neurosurgeon, really took his own life? Shall we thump our chest with pride and say how
courageous you were, or shall we draw the shades and hide in shame?

JASON
(To Sarah)
That was eloquent, Sarah. I couldn't have said it better.
(To Spencer)
I can't imagine what you're going through, Dad.
But other people endure far worse and they fight for every breath of life.

SPENCER
It's their choice.

SARAH
Why don't you choose to fight?

SPENCER
Don't you see? That's what I'm fighting for.
Choice.
It should be my choice . . . to live or die.

SARAH
It's a terrible choice!

(Pause)

SPENCER
You should know, I asked Tucker to do something heroic for me.

SARAH
You've agreed to go to a medical center?

SPENCER
No, I asked him to help me peacefully end my life.
(beat)
But he declined.

SARAH
Of all people, how could you ask that of him?

SPENCER
Is there something you want to tell me?

SARAH
If you must know, there's something very special between Tucker and me.
It's every girl's dream to have her dad walk her down the aisle.

SPENCER
And how, pray tell, am I going to do that?

JASON
I'll wheel you my self.

SARAH
But all you want to do is end your life for your own selfish reasons.
I will marry Tucker. In your absence, if I must, but I'd prefer your being there.

SPENCER
I'm deeply touched. Really, I am Sarah.
And I'm happy for you.
But it doesn't alter the predicament I'm in or the choice I've made.

JASON
You've really lost your mind!

SPENCER

On the contrary, I've made the most lucid decision of my life.

JASON

I won't allow you to do this.

SPENCER

It's not in your province to grant me permission.
Didn't I once hear you say, "Who arbitrates what I do with my life?"

JASON

How can you possibly compare what I said to this?

SARAH

We should all have a say in this.

SPENCER

You want to participate?
How can you when you've never made a difficult decision in your entire life

SARAH

You're doing it again! How can you be so cruel?

SPENCER

I don't mean to be, Sarah, I only want to provoke you.

SARAH

Why?

SPENCER

So you can prove to me that you are not irrelevant.

SARAH

You mean all the awful things you say are on purpose?

SPENCER

Yes.

SARAH

Is that why you kept me from photojournalism?

SPENCER

I could never imagine my beautiful daughter tromping through mayhem and war
just to record another picture of inhumanity.

SARAH

You sure have a perverse way of showing your love.

SPENCER

And you need to take a stand for something.

SARAH

I am marrying Tucker!

He's not Irish or Catholic! Isn't that bold enough for you?

Bridget enters

SPENCER

I thought you forgot about me.

BRIDGET

Mother of God! Would you be reserving your place in Hell?

She begins to tidy the room.

SPENCER

I don't need a scolding from you. Not now.

BRIDGET

Well you know what the Irish say, "neither give cherries to a pig, nor advice to a fool."

SPENCER

My thoughts, exactly.

BRIDGET

You need a fresh shirt.

Bridget exits

JASON

You once told me that certain decisions a man makes, he makes alone.

SPENCER

Indeed.

JASON

Well, this is not one of them.

We're the ones who will be victimized by your folly.

That entitles us to participate.

Tucker enters

SPENCER

What are you doing here?

TUCKER

Call it a hunch.

SPENCER

Well, since you wouldn't take me seriously, I took matters in my own hand.

TUCKER

Why are you hell bent on doing this?

SPENCER

You know Tucker, no one asked for my permission to enter this world.

While I've been in it, I've used my talents to the best of my ability.

I've contributed to the common good.

Now I demand the right to end my time on my own terms.

TUCKER

In my world they call that chutzpah.

Who the hell do you think you are?

SPENCER

One man. One voice -- pleading for a basic human right.

TUCKER

There is no right to die!

SPENCER

Where is that written? The Bible? The Quran? The Talmud?

TUCKER

The Talmud tells us that God made a covenant with Noah that suicide

SPENCER

Noah? Jesus, can you go back any further in unrecorded history?

Can't you find another illiterate guy hallucinating on hashish?

TUCKER

Your consummate cynicism is in full display.

SPENCER

For your enlightenment, the Catholic Church tells us we're not supposed to kill ourselves
because our body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.
Does this body look like a temple to you?

TUCKER

I thought you said you were a non-practicing Catholic.

SPENCER

I'm not

TUCKER

Both your religion and mine believe in the same Ten Commandments.

SPENCER

None of it is incompatible with my wanting to end my life.

TUCKER

Have you forgotten the fifth commandment?

SPENCER

They were all promulgated too long ago to be relevant.

TUCKER

You're ready to trash two great religions in a dump heap?

SPENCER

Let me remind you -- both religions have subscribed to wars, condoned killing and
underwritten mayhem on an epic scale. All I want to do is kill myself.

(Silence)

SARAH

You won't be party to this will you, Tucker?

TUCKER

How well do you really know me?

Bridget enters with a hospital gown

SPENCER

Speaking of religion, can the two of you think past your hormones?

TUCKER
Do you object to our marriage?

BRIDGET
(wagging her finger at Spencer)
A silent mouth is sweet to hear.

SPENCER
For a guy with such devout faith how the hell are you going to explain an Irish Catholic mother when your children arrive?

TUCKER
For a guy who doesn't believe in God, why do you care?

BRIDGET
Oh, he believes in God all right.
In the operating room he believes he is God.

SPENCER
That conversation was private!

BRIDGET
Dr. Conklin, God is not an inconvenience!
Even Atheists believe in something.

Grace enters in her nightgown.

GRACE
What is all the chatter about?

Jason shows her the pistol.
Grace stares at it. She then walks to the window and peers out

GRACE
My rosebushes ... are dead.
It's time to start all over.

SARAH
Mom?

All present look at each other uncomfortably

GRACE (cont'd)
It's time for all of you to leave.
Your father and I have some unfinished business.

SARAH
See you tomorrow, Daddy.

Tucker and Sarah exit.

JASON
Will you behave?

SPENCER
I have been duly admonished.
I will suffer for the good of my family.

JASON
You're flirting with melodrama.

SPENCER
Exactly what your mother once said to me.
(beat)
Allow me some liberty, Jason.
I need a few crumbs to nourish my intellect.

JASON
Will you be all right?

SPENCER
I'm fine, Jason. I'm quite content now. With both of you.

JASON
So we're cool?

SPENCER
Cool? Cole Porter must be turning over in his grave.

Jason laughs. He reaches out and touches Spencer's hand affectionately.

JASON
See you tomorrow?

SPENCER
Yes. Tomorrow.

Jason exits.

Spencer tries to prop himself up. He tries to reach for a pillow. Grace pours herself a drink.

SPENCER

Will you fix one for me?

Grace ignores him and walks over to his chair. She sits in his lap as she did in Act 1 Scene 1. She takes a pillow and places it beside his head in a way that leaves doubt as to her intentions. She sips her martini and begins to hum. A few moments later Spencer's fingers twitch. His arm slides off the armchair and remains limp.

Blackout.