

Ham Buns and Potato Salad

By

Tom Vander Well

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Pella, IA 50219
tomvanderwell@gmail.com
515.321.9788

Cast of Characters

<u>Dean De Haas:</u>	Father of Marian. The gentle, kind and amiable "peacemaker".
<u>Arl Van Dam:</u>	Marian's Uncle. Well intentioned but cantakerous, loud-mouthed and opinionated.
<u>Lola Van Dam:</u>	Arl's wife & Marian's Aunt. The champion of any who have "escaped" Hebron.
<u>Betty De Haas:</u>	Marian's mother. Lola's older sister. Loving but concerned with propriety and getting things done.
<u>Abby De Haas:</u>	The sweet 12 year old daughter of Marian.
<u>Marian De Haas:</u>	Schoolteacher and Mother of Abby. Centerpiece of town scandal.
<u>Bob "Old Man" Schuler:</u>	Vietnam vet, feared for his legendary "spells" (flashbacks)
<u>Gladys Iskowitch:</u>	Thomas' agent. An older Jewish dame from a New York show business family.
<u>Thomas Prins:</u>	Native of Hebron who made it as a playwright in New York.
<u>Matt Schuler:</u>	Classmate of Thomas and Marian; son of "Old Man" Schuler

Scene

Front yards of the De Haas and Prins homes. The small farm town of Hebron, Iowa.

Time

Early 1990s

ACT I

Scene 1

When the lights go down there is the sound of a car on the highway, screeching brakes, and a horrendous crash.

As the lights come up on the stage, we find ourselves in the front yard of two houses in Hebron, Iowa (population 318). The De Haas house is set upstage right, and much of the action is set in this back yard. The Prins house stage left is set closer downstage. There is short stair leading up to a screened in porch. In the back yard of the house stage right there are four lawn chairs set downstage center right. Far right there is a small swing set with two swings. Two men in their fifties to sixties are engaged in conversation. These men wear blue jeans or khakis with well-ironed short-sleeve plaid shirts and button-down collars. They are wearing glowing white tennis shoes with dark socks.

DEAN DE HAAS

That was the year that the boys went to state in basketball and lost to Fairfield in the semi finals.

ARL VAN DAM

That's right. That's right. Boy those were the good years. The boys and girls went to state every year. The Vande Meer brothers were on that team, weren't they?

DEAN DE HAAS

Right. Frank and Jesse.

ARL VAN DAM

Yeah, boy. Frank and Jesse. Talk about outlaws. Isn't Frank in construction now?

DEAN DE HAAS

Cement.

ARL VAN DAM

Oh yeah, outlaw all right. I priced a new driveway a few years back. Talk about highway robbery.

DEAN DE HAAS

Yes. He's got that cement business over in Slater county. Jesse moved out west. Colorado, I think. Your wife would know. She keeps track of where everyone ends up.

ARL VAN DAM

Aren't you related to the Vande Meers?

DEAN DE HAAS

No, no. Well now, wait a minute. Let's see - by marriage I am - by marriage. My mom's mom was a De Beer and her sister married a Vande Meer.

ARL VAN DAM

Walter.

DEAN DE HAAS

Yep. Walt and Eunice would have been Franke and Jesse's grandparents.

Lola Van Dam enters the backyard from the house stage right. She carries a two glasses of ice tea.

ARL VAN DAM

Weren't they cousins?

DEAN DE HAAS

Walt and Eunice?

ARL VAN DAM

Yes, they were. His grandmother and her grandfather were brother and sister, if I remember correctly

DEAN DE HAAS

That explains a lot.

ARL VAN DAM

Used to see quite a bit of that back in those days. Weren't that many families around these parts. You were bound to marry someone who was related somehow.

LOLA VAN DAM

Betty and I thought you boys could use a cool drink.

They take the glass from her with a "Thanks" and she sits down with them.

DEAN DE HAAS

Where's Betty?

LOLA VAN DAM

She's finishing up the potato salad for the funeral. We got most of the ham buns made, but I think we may run out of buns. We'll put them in the deep freeze and take them over to the church in the morning (pause) Any sign of him?

DEAN DE HAAS
No.

LOLA VAN DAM
Has anybody talked to him?

DEAN DE HAAS
I don't know. I don't think so. Just the funeral home,
and maybe the preacher.

ARL VAN DAM
It's a shame. What is it now? Ten years since he left?

LOLA VAN DAM
Oh, it's been at least ten. It's gotta be twelve.

DEAN DE HAAS
Twelve.

ARL VAN DAM
Twelve? Are you sure.

DEAN DE HAAS
It was the summer before Abby was born. She's gonna be
twelve.

LOLA VAN DAM
That's right.

DEAN DE HAAS
Twelve years.

ARL VAN DAM
Well, I'll be.

LOLA VAN DAM
Time flies.

*BETTY De Haas enters from the De Haas house, she's
wiping her hands on an apron as she walks up and
joins the crowd.*

BETTY DE HAAS
How you boys doing out here? Any sign of Tommy?

ARL VAN DAM
Not yet. The only traffic has been Zac Vermeer driving
his new car back and forth across town.

DEAN DE HAAS
Where'd Zac get that car?

ARL VAN DAM

They were saying at coffee time down at the cafe that Zac bought it off a man over by New London.

DEAN DE HAAS

What'd he pay for it?

ARL VAN DAM

Don't know. Looks in good shape, though. I think he said it was owned by a woman who died a few months ago.

DEAN DE HAAS

Who would that have been?

ARL VAN DAM

I don't know. She must not have driven it much. That car's at least ten years old.

DEAN DE HAAS

No it's not. It can't be more than five.

ARL VAN DAM

Yes it is. It's got that boxy look on the back and they changed the body style on those things about seven years ago.

LOLA VAN DAM

(changing the subject)

How's Marian?

BETTY DE HAAS

I haven't talked to her today. I called her last night, but she obviously didn't want to talk.

LOLA VAN DAM

Has she seen or heard from Tommy since he moved away?

DEAN DE HAAS

Not a word as far as we know.

LOLA VAN DAM

That is so sad. Those two were thick as thieves all through childhood. They were so cute.

ARL VAN DAM

Boy, when he left - he left for good. It makes you wonder.

LOLA VAN DAM

Oh, Arl!

ARL VAN DAM

Well? What kind of person just ups and leaves and doesn't come back?

LOLA VAN DAM

Don't you start, Arl. Tommy did himself proud going off to New York and making a name for himself. Winning those awards for his plays. He's amounted to a lot more than if he'd stayed in this little two-bit town.

ARL VAN DAM

(Ignoring his wife)

What kind of kid just ups and leaves and forgets his family and friends.

BETTY DE HAAS

He did not forget his family, Arl. You know better than that. John and Esther talked to him.

ARL VAN DAM

Once or twice a year?

BETTY DE HAAS

It might have been more than that.

ARL VAN DAM

Wasn't much more than that.

BETTY DE HAAS

They visited him, too. Don't you remember that? Must have been six or seven years ago.

ARL VAN DAM

Six or seven years ago. You see your kid once in twelve years and it's because you have to go visit him. Oh he's got a close relationship with his children.

LOLA VAN DAM

So, what if never came back home. He has to be busy all the time. He certainly made a name for himself.

ARL VAN DAM

In New York City!

LOLA VAN DAM

Well, that's something.

ARL VAN DAM

Who cares?

DEAN DE HAAS

No one from this little town ever amounted to much, Arl. There he is writing plays and winning awards.

DEAN DE HAAS

You've got to admit, that's pretty good for a local boy.

ARL VAN DAM

He went to school to be a minister.

LOLA VAN DAM

Here we go.

ARL VAN DAM

A minister! When he graduated from high school he said he was headed to school to follow God's call and ends up in New York with all them people.

LOLA VAN DAM

Arl stop it!

ARL VAN DAM

He turned his back on his family. He turned his back on his friends. He turned his back on his roots. He turned his back on God.

BETTY DE HAAS

Arl, we don't know that boys heart.

ARL VAN DAM

Now you just look at Virgil down the street there. Flew all those missions over Germany, wins all those medals, makes all the papers. What did he do? He came back here to his home town of Hebron, Iowa to settle down with his people. He becomes the postman and doesn't say a word about it.

LOLA VAN DAM

That's different Arl.

ARL VAN DAM

No, that's character.

LOLA VAN DAM

Goodness.

DEAN DE HAAS

What about your boy, Arl? As I recall he said when he graduated that he was going to school to be a doctor so he could come back to take ol' Doc De Beer's place right here in Hebron.

ARL VAN DAM

So?

DEAN DE HAAS
So, how is the Waste Management business in Boise these days?

ARL VAN DAM
That's different!

Scene 2

From stage right a ABBY De Haas bounces onto the stage followed by her mother MARIAN De Haas. ABBY is going on twelve years old. She is full of life and smiles - still very much a child at heart. MARIAN is in her late twenties.

ABBY DE HAAS
Grandma!!

BETTY DE HAAS
Well there's my little sugar plum! How are you doing?

ABBY De Haas ends up on her Grandmother's lap - giving her a big hug.

ABBY DE HAAS
Good.

DEAN DE HAAS
What have you two been up to?

MARIAN DE HAAS
Oh, we drove to Des Moines today. Abby's been outgrowing all of her clothes, so we did some shopping.

BETTY DE HAAS
(to ABBY)
You did? (ABBY nods) Did you get some cute clothes?! (ABBY nods again).

ABBY DE HAAS
Mom and me both got a bunch of new clothes. They're beautiful!

BETTY DE HAAS
Oh good! I can't wait to see them!

ARL VAN DAM
Now what did you go all the way to Des Moines for? They've got perfectly good clothes up at the shop on Main Street.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yeah, perfectly good clothes that have been out of style for five years and cost twice as much.

ARL VAN DAM

Yeah, but you don't have to drive to Des Moines!

ABBY DE HAAS

Did you make snicker-doodles, Grandma?

BETTY DE HAAS

Of course I did. You just go in the house and look on the counter.

ABBY DE HAAS

Okay!

ABBY shoots off her grandma's lap and runs for the door.

BETTY DE HAAS

But don't eat too many! They're for the funeral tomorrow!!

MARIAN DE HAAS

(calling to ABBY)
Just two!!

ABBY DE HAAS

(reluctantly, from inside the house)
Okay.

ARL VAN DAM

So besides contributing to the decline of the rural economy, how are you, Marian?

LOLA VAN DAM

(to ARL)
Be nice.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm good, Arl.

ARL VAN DAM

You're old neighbor's coming home tonight.

MARIAN DE HAAS

(sarcastically)
Really? I hadn't heard. Who would that be?

LOLA VAN DAM

ARL!

ARL VAN DAM

What?! I was just making polite conversation.

LOLA VAN DAM

You were just stirring the pot.

MARIAN DE HAAS

It's okay, Lola.

ARL VAN DAM

Have you heard from Tommy?

LOLA VAN DAM

Now, Arl, that's none of your business.

MARIAN DE HAAS

No, Arl - I haven't heard from Thomas since he left town. Just like everyone else.

ARL VAN DAM

Really? Huh. I just wondered.

DEAN DE HAAS

Oh, stop it, Arl. You and I have talked about this a million times.

BETTY DE HAAS

(to MARIAN)

How are you doing, dear?

MARIAN DE HAAS

(frustrated)

I'm fine, mother. It's not a big deal! I could care less about Thomas Prins.

ARL VAN DAM

How much did you spend on the new dress?

MARIAN DE HAAS

The dress is for the mother daughter night at church next month.

LOLA VAN DAM

I don't think he's arrived yet.

DEAN DE HAAS

Nope, not yet. A few cars with out of state plates came through, but it wasn't him.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I don't care! I did not come over here to see if Thomas was back. I came over because Abby knew grandma was making snickerdoodles for the funeral tomorrow.

ARL VAN DAM

(to DEAN)

Do you think he'll have out of state plates? He'll probably fly in from New York and rent a car in Des Moines, don't you think?

DEAN DE HAAS

A lot of those rental cars are from out of state.

ARL VAN DAM

No they're not. Why would they get cars from out of state? They have plenty of good cars right here in Iowa.

DEAN DE HAAS

People drive them from other states and leave them.

ARL VAN DAM

They come here and don't go back? That doesn't make any sense. Nobody comes to Iowa to stay. Everybody's leaving for good, just like Tommy!

MARIAN DE HAAS

(exasperated)

I'm leaving.

BETTY DE HAAS

Oh, honey, don't leave. Stay a while.

LOLA VAN DAM

Don't let these two old buzzards drive you off.

MARIAN DE HAAS

(to the house)

ABBY?! I'm leaving.

ABBY DE HAAS

(from inside house)

I'm staying at grandmas!

MARIAN DE HAAS

(looking at her mother)

Mom?

BETTY DE HAAS

That's fine, dear. I'll send her home after a while. Oh, before you go. I found that casserole recipe you wanted. Why don't you go in and grab it.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Where is it?

BETTY DE HAAS

I think it's on the end table on my end of the couch.
If not, it's on the kitchen counter. Hunt around.
You'll find it.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Okay

MARIAN enters the house.

ARL VAN DAM

(to DEAN and BETTY)

Whatever happened between the two of them, anyway? Like
Lola said, they were thick as thieves when they were
kids.

DEAN DE HAAS

I think only the two of them know.

ARL VAN DAM

But they were dating weren't they?

BETTY DE HAAS

That's the funny thing. We don't know. She's never
talked about it - even back then. We always kind of
wondered...

LOLA VAN DAM

Well, they were inseparable all the way through school.
You just assumed...

BETTY DE HAAS

I know. I know. But we never knew if they were going
together or if they were just good friends. We'd ask
and Marian would just shrug and say, "It is what it
is."

ARL VAN DAM

Boy, it certainly drove Matt Schuler crazy.

DEAN DE HAAS

No one had to drive him crazy. He was born that way.
Chip off the old block.

ARL VAN DAM

Old man Schuler must have gotten into some of that
Agent Orange back in Vietnam.

BETTY DE HAAS

Matt's been calling Marian everyday since John and
Esther passed.

LOLA VAN DAM
You're kidding me!

DEAN DE HAAS
Nope.

LOLA VAN DAM
That boy doesn't have the sense God gave dirt.

ARL VAN DAM
At least he had the sense to stay here in Hebron and help contribute to the community.

LOLA VAN DAM
That boy hasn't contributed anything to this community but a yard that's a public eye sore and noise pollution from that stereo he blasts at all hours of the night!

ARL VAN DAM
(Ignoring his wife; to DEAN)
Maybe the old man took all them drugs they were doing over there. They were all doing drugs in 'Nam.

LOLA VAN DAM
(to BETTY)
What's Matt saying to Marian?

BETTY DE HAAS
She won't talk to him.

LOLA VAN DAM
And it started when he John and Esther passed?

BETTY DE HAAS
The accident was in the morning and the first call was in the afternoon.

LOLA VAN DAM
Well, now, that makes you wonder.

ARL VAN DAM
Well, he probably figured that John and Esther passing would mean Tommy was coming back.

LOLA VAN DAM
But is he jealous?! What would make him up and start calling like that?

BETTY DE HAAS
I don't know. He pined away for Marian all through school. She never gave him the time of day. We were shocked when she was voted Prom Queen and went to prom with him. We figured she'd go with Tommy. But, whatever

BETTY DE HAAS
happened between the two of them ended after prom and she hasn't ever given him the time of day since.

DEAN DE HAAS
Like Arl says, he's a bit like his old man.

ABBY is seen at the screen door of the house.

ABBY DE HAAS
Grandma?

BETTY DE HAAS
Yes, sweetie?

ABBY DE HAAS
Can I look at the old things in your cedar chest?

BETTY DE HAAS
You may. Just be careful with Grandma Jennie's things. They're fragile. And put things back right where you found them!

ABBY DE HAAS
Okay!

ABBY runs from the door.

LOLA VAN DAM
I just wish we knew what happened between all those kids.

ARL VAN DAM
They were in a love triangle.

LOLA VAN DAM
Oh, Arl.

ARL VAN DAM
They were in a love triangle and Marian got pregnant and Tommy skipped town to avoid the responsibility and crazy Matt Schuler has always been jealous.

LOLA VAN DAM
Arl, we don't know that.
(looking to BETTY)
We don't know that, do we?

BETTY DE HAAS
Marian's never said a word.

LOLA VAN DAM

It makes you wonder. Don't you think Abby wonders.

DEAN DE HAAS

If she and Marian have talked about it, the subject has never come up.

LOLA VAN DAM

Well, did you ask Abby?

A gunshot is heard in the distance. Everyone turns towards the back of the stage, then scrambles as if this is a well choreographed drill. Betty heads for the door to warn her granddaughter.

DEAN DE HAAS

It's Old Man Schuler.

ARL VAN DAM

Speak of the devil.

DEAN DE HAAS

He's back in 'Nam again.

LOLA VAN DAM

We'd better call Sheriff De Cook.

ARL VAN DAM

Nah. It's the Sheriff's fishing night. He'll be gone for hours.

LOLA VAN DAM

Well, he's got deputies!

When the shots were fired, BETTY headed to the screen door.

BETTY DE HAAS

ABBY!?

ABBY DE HAAS

(from inside the house)

Yes, Grandma?

BETTY DE HAAS

Old Man Schuler's having a spell again. I want you to go into Grandpa and Grandma's bathroom, sit on the floor, then shut and lock that bathroom door. Right now! Do you hear?!

ABBY DE HAAS

Yes, Grandma!

BETTY returns to the group. MARIAN exits from the house at the same time.

DEAN DE HAAS

Now, mother. You ladies get in the house. Arl and I will go try to find him.

BETTY DE HAAS

You be careful!

DEAN DE HAAS

Don't worry, mother.

ARL VAN DAM

It's alright. Bob's never hurt anyone. Just 'cause he's crazy doesn't mean he's dangerous.

BETTY DE HAAS

He has a GUN.

ARL VAN DAM

It's alright, Betty. Go on into the house.

ARL and DEAN exit stage left.

BETTY DE HAAS

Let's get into the house.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm headed home, mother.

BETTY DE HAAS

You are doing no such thing. Not with Old Man Schuler having a spell.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Mother, despite the way everyone in Hebron talks about Mr. Schuler, ninety-five percent of the time he is quite lucid and perfectly normal. He's not dangerous. He has never hurt so much as a kitten.

BETTY DE HAAS

But he could! We've lost John and Esther this week. I'm not taking any chances!

MARIAN DE HAAS

Good-bye, mother. Send Abby home as soon as Dad and Arl have saved the day.

BETTY DE HAAS

Marian, I'm serious.

MARIAN DE HAAS

So am I, mother. I'm going home.

MARIAN begins to exit. Lola follows after.

BETTY DE HAAS

Lola!

LOLA VAN DAM

Go on in the house and check on Abby. I want to talk to Marian.

BETTY DE HAAS

Lola!

LOLA VAN DAM

It'll be all right, big sister. Go check on your granddaughter.

(shooing her back in the house)

Exasperated, BETTY storms back into the house.

Scene 3

LOLA VAN DAM (CONT'D)

Marian...

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm going home, Aunt Lola.

LOLA VAN DAM

I know you are, dear. That's not what I wanted to talk to you about.

MARIAN DE HAAS

What?

LOLA VAN DAM

(motioning to the swing)

Come on over here and swing with me.

MARIAN sits on a swing next to Lola.

LOLA VAN DAM (CONT'D)

I remember pushing you and Tommy in the swings when you were kids.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yeah. That's been a few years.

LOLA VAN DAM

Doesn't seem that long to me.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yeah, I'm sure. It seems like just yesterday Abby was born.

LOLA VAN DAM

How are you doing, dear?

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm fine, Aunt Lola.

LOLA VAN DAM

(in disbelief)

Really?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yes.

LOLA VAN DAM

Really?

MARIAN DE HAAS

YES!

LOLA VAN DAM

When you were a little girl and had your first crush, who did you tell?

MARIAN DE HAAS

You.

LOLA VAN DAM

Kenny Lindhoven. First grade. Do you remember?

MARIAN DE HAAS

He held my hand after school.

LOLA VAN DAM

And you wanted to know...

MARIAN DE HAAS

If I could kiss him.

LOLA VAN DAM

If you could kiss him and if God would be okay with it.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Oh, Kenny.

LOLA VAN DAM

Yeah, it's a good thing you didn't end up with Kenny.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Where is he, anyway?

LOLA VAN DAM

Last I knew he was selling vacuum cleaners in southern Missouri.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Oh, Lord.

LOLA VAN DAM

Yeah. Be thankful you're not living in a single-wide in the Ozarks.

MARIAN DE HAAS

That's for sure.

LOLA VAN DAM

And when you got your first period, who did you run to.

MARIAN DE HAAS

You.

LOLA VAN DAM

I understand, sweetie. God bless your mother. She's the sweetest thing on God's green earth but when it comes to talking about anything uncomfortable.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Oh, I only know that too well.

LOLA VAN DAM

She means well.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I know.

LOLA VAN DAM

And, she loves you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I know.

LOLA VAN DAM

So, Marian. As your favorite Aunt.

MARIAN DE HAAS

My only aunt.

LOLA VAN DAM

As your FAVORITE Aunt, and the one woman you can run to about the theological implications of kisses or having your first period, I want to know...how are you doing?

MARIAN DE HAAS
Sad.

LOLA VAN DAM
We all are.

MARIAN DE HAAS
John and Esther were the greatest.

LOLA VAN DAM
Yes they were. That's not what I meant.

MARIAN DE HAAS
I know what you meant. I'm sad...and anxious...and
scared.

LOLA VAN DAM
Have you talked to Tommy since he left?

MARIAN DE HAAS
No.

LOLA VAN DAM
Written?

MARIAN DE HAAS
No.

LOLA VAN DAM
Oh, sweetie.

MARIAN DE HAAS
It's not a big deal.

LOLA VAN DAM
Marian?

MARIAN DE HAAS
What?!

LOLA VAN DAM
Say what you want to those two old buzzards, but you
and I both know that the dress you bought in Des Moines
today was NOT about the mother daughter banquet.
(MARIAN smiles knowingly)
Was it?

MARIAN DE HAAS
It's been a long time.

LOLA VAN DAM
Yes, it has.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Will he even remember me?

LOLA VAN DAM

What are you talking about?

MARIAN DE HAAS

It's been twelve years. He lives in New York City and goes to Broadway Galas and rubs.... whatever ... with gorgeous models and actresses and...

LOLA VAN DAM

You know, you're not the only young person to confide in me.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Is that right?

LOLA VAN DAM

That's right. Now, I never, ever, ever betray a confidence. When you told me about that sucker you stole from Gosselinks, do you remember?

MARIAN DE HAAS

And you walked me down there and made me confess and give them their nickle?

LOLA VAN DAM

Yes, but I never said a word to anyone about that.

MARIAN DE HAAS

You didn't have to. Mrs. Gosselink told my mother at Bible Study that night.

LOLA VAN DAM

That's beside the point. I REFUSED to speak to your mother or anyone else about the incident.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Thanks, Aunt Lola.

LOLA VAN DAM

You're welcome. My point is, I don't betray confidences. But I will tell you that a certain young man, who shall remain nameless.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Nameless?

LOLA VAN DAM

Yes, though I'll tell you he used to live next door to you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Hm, I wonder who that was?

LOLA VAN DAM

I'm not going to say. But this young man came to your Aunt Louis in tears.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Tears?

LOLA VAN DAM

Yes.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Thomas?

LOLA VAN DAM

I'm not going to say his name.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Okay.

LOLA VAN DAM

He was in tears, and he wouldn't go into details. But, he wanted to know if a girl goes to a dance with a boy.

MARIAN DE HAAS

A dance?

LOLA VAN DAM

A prom, let's say.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Oh, god.

LOLA VAN DAM

Did that mean that she for sure liked him.

MARIAN DE HAAS

And you said?

LOLA VAN DAM

I told him "no." I told him that girls sometimes make very stupid decisions.

MARIAN DE HAAS

You can say that again.

LOLA VAN DAM

Marian? Sweetie. You know you can trust me.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yes, Aunt Lola. I know.

LOLA VAN DAM

Marian, will you tell me...

*There is a shotgun blast off stage, and we hear
OLD MAN SCHULER from off stage right.*

OLD MAN SCHULER

The whole place is crawlin' with 'em.

LOLA VAN DAM

Oh, lord. We better get in the house.

MARIAN DE HAAS

You got in the house. I'm going home.

OLD MAN SCHULER

X-ray delta this is Foxtrot Alpha. I've lost 'em again.
Over.

LOLA VAN DAM

Marian?

MARIAN DE HAAS

It's okay. Thanks, Aunt Lola. I love you.

LOLA VAN DAM

I love you too, sweetie. Call me!

Scene 4

*Lola enters into the house and MARIAN exits right
passing ARL and DEAN who enter just as OLD MAN
SCHULER enters from stage left. He carries a
shotgun and has a backpack on. He sees DEAN and
ARL and immediately crouches down, making a
gesture to tell them to do the same. DEAN and ARL
oblige.*

OLD MAN SCHULER

What in god's name are you two doing out here. Don't
you know Charlie is all over the place?

DEAN DE HAAS

We've been all through here. We haven't seen anyone
named Charlie.

OLD MAN SCHULER

You boys with 2nd battalion?

ARL VAN DAM

Yeah. Yeah. We were told to clear this area. It's all clear. The gooks are all gone.

OLD MAN SCHULER puts down his shotgun and takes off his back pack, he begins to rummage through it eventually finding an imaginary walkie-talkie.

DEAN DE HAAS

I don't think you're supposed to call them that.

ARL VAN DAM

What's that?

DEAN DE HAAS

Gooks.

ARL VAN DAM

Not now we don't! But back then you did.

DEAN DE HAAS

No I didn't. I never called oriental people gooks.

ARL VAN DAM

I didn't mean you you - I mean you we - the army - back in 'Nam.

DEAN DE HAAS

But I wasn't in the army, Arl. And neither were you!

OLD MAN SCHULER

X-Ray Delta this is Foxtrot Alpha. Hey shorty, I hooked up with 2nd Battalion. They say this sector is all clear, over.

DEAN DE HAAS

It's all clear. No Charlie, uh, gooks, to worry about. You can head back to your base.

ARL VAN DAM

Our orders were to watch this area. You can go back home, to your base, I mean.

OLD MAN SCHULER

Yeah, Shorty. I'm headed back to base, over.

OLD MAN SCHULER stands and ARL and DEAN follow, groaning a bit at the effort required.

OLD MAN SCHULER (CONT'D)

Well, it looks like some college boy at HQ screwed things up again, sending us both out here.

ARL VAN DAM
Sure does.

DEAN DE HAAS
Hey, we've just been...oh, whattaya call it...relieved, that's it. We've been relieved of duty. How about we take you back to base and then we'll catch a ride back to our, whatchamacallit, uh, battalion.

OLD MAN SCHULER
Fine by me. If Charlie shows up on the way back I could use a couple of extra guys.

DEAN begins to exit stage right, leading OLD MAN SCHULER.

DEAN DE HAAS
I think you're base is this way.

OLD MAN SCHULER
Yeah. Come on, I'll buy you boys a beer when we get back.

The men exit stage right.

ARL VAN DAM
(as he exits)
I was just wondering. Do you take a lot of them drugs back at your base?

DEAN DE HAAS
(from off stage)
ARL!

Scene 5

Lola and BETTY peer through the screen door, then slowly make their way outside as they know it's safe.

LOLA VAN DAM
Looks like the boys have it under control. They'll get him back home and settled down.

BETTY DE HAAS
I swear, Betty, someday that man is going to hurt somebody. Thank God he never has. He's done so well the past few years. He hasn't had a flashback for...I can't remember the last one.

LOLA VAN DAM
Fourth of July parade four years ago.

BETTY DE HAAS
Really?

LOLA VAN DAM
Yep. Old Man Schuler thought the clown that was
throwing out candy was throwing hand grenades. He
jumped off the fire truck and tackled Chuckles.

BETTY DE HAAS
I don't remember that.

LOLA VAN DAM
Oh yeah! Broke his horn and everything.

BETTY DE HAAS
Was he hurt?

LOLA VAN DAM
Oh no. Matt was on the fire truck too. Once he saw what
was happening he got his dad back home quick.

BETTY DE HAAS
What about Chuckles?

LOLA VAN DAM
He was fine. The horn was the only casualty.

BETTY DE HAAS
I wonder what caused him to go off again?

LOLA VAN DAM
It was probably Matt going crazy this week!

BETTY DE HAAS
Lola.

LOLA VAN DAM
I bet it was. Matt is just as insane as his old man. I
swear, Betty, some days this little town makes me so
crazy.

*A car is heard pulling in and the engine cuts off.
Two car doors are opened and closed. BETTY
suddenly stiffens and Lola follows. BETTY looks at
Lola and there's a moment of realization. The two
women get up from their chairs and silently
tip-toe downstage until they can peer around the
house on the left.*

BETTY DE HAAS
That's him.

LOLA VAN DAM
It is. Oh, Betty - he's not alone.

BETTY DE HAAS
You're right.

LOLA VAN DAM
Is he married?

BETTY DE HAAS
No! John and Esther would have said something.

LOLA VAN DAM
Maybe he didn't tell them.

BETTY DE HAAS
Tommy wouldn't do that. Besides she looks old.

LOLA VAN DAM
What's Marian gonna do when she finds out he's married?

BETTY DE HAAS
Oh, I think she looked this way. Quick!!

They quickly return to their chairs and try not to look conspicuous as they glance over at the house on the left. THOMAS Prins and GLADYS ISKOWITCH enter from stage left. THOMAS is about thirty. His attire is "business casual" but well appointed. GLADYS is in her forties or fifties, with big hair, a lot of make-up and a thick New York Jewish accent. Her attire screams "New York". THOMAS enters lugging a huge, bright, heavy suitcase. GLADYS follows with a small, black rolling suitcase. The two of them are engaged in conversation as they enter.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Oh my god. And this is the house you grew up in?!

THOMAS PRINS
Yes, Gladys. This is where I grew up.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
It's so quaint! I love Iowa!

THOMAS PRINS
Give it some time, Gladys. You've only been here an hour, and that was in the car.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
(looking at the house)
It looks like that painting. You know, the guy with the pitchfork and his ugly little wife.

THOMAS PRINS

"American Gothic", Gladys. It's called "American Gothic".

THOMAS lets the suitcase fall to the ground with a thud. He is out of breath and looks up at the four or five stairs leading to the door of the house as if it's Mount Everest.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Yeah. Yeah. The one Paul Newman uses on the label of his salad dressing.

THOMAS PRINS

I'm sure Paul's Newman's daughter is glad to know she's the "ugly one."

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

It's Paul Newman, sweetie. Anyone next to Paul Newman is the 'ugly one'.

THOMAS PRINS

(sizing up the ascent of the stairs)

Okay, let's get this suitcase in the house.

(to GLADYS)

I told you this was just going to be a couple of days - I could swear that you packed this much for our last book tour.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I didn't know what to wear in Iowa, so I just packed it all.

(looking at the little overnight suitcase she is rolling)

I need to get one of these little things with the wheels. They're so much easier.

THOMAS PRINS

What you need is that husband you're always talking about finding. Then he would be responsible for lugging your suitcase, not me.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

The right man has never come along, sweetie. Love's a mysterious thing. Finding the right man is like finding a good Jewish deli in... Iowa. But, when I find him - oy he's not gonna know what hit him. A suitcase with the wheels on it, however, that I can find at Macy's.

THOMAS PRINS

They don't make them this big, Gladys. For this, you don't need wheels, you need a forklift.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

(She notices the women next door - off
hand to THOMAS as she passes)
Quit complaining, sweetie. Take it inside....HELLO!

THOMAS PRINS

Glady-...Dear god.

*GLADYS crosses to Lola and BETTY with her hand
extended. GLADYS is excited and thrilled like a
child looking at strange animals in the zoo for
the very first time. Lola and BETTY rise, smile
and nod with Midwestern deference.*

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Hello! I'm Gladys.

BETTY DE HAAS

Hello there.

LOLA VAN DAM

How do you do?

THOMAS PRINS

(following behind, sheepishly)
Hi Mrs. De Haas, Mrs. Van Dam. May I introduce Gladys
Iskowitch

BETTY DE HAAS

(with sincere empathy)
Ohhh Tommy.

*Betty walks over and gives THOMAS a hug, which he
graciously accepts.*

BETTY DE HAAS (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry about your folks.

THOMAS PRINS

Thanks, Mrs. De Haas.

BETTY DE HAAS

They were good people. It's such a shame.

THOMAS PRINS

Thanks.

BETTY DE HAAS

We're glad you're home.

THOMAS PRINS

Thanks. It's been a while.

LOLA VAN DAM

We're so proud of you, Tommy. I mean really. Going off and becoming a famous writer and all. John and Esther were so proud. We all are. I've been keeping track of all the awards and all.

THOMAS PRINS

Thanks, Mrs. Van Dam.

LOLA VAN DAM

(to BETTY)

Doesn't he look good?

BETTY DE HAAS

He looks good.

THOMAS PRINS

Thanks.

Awkward pause.

LOLA VAN DAM

(to GLADYS)

So, how long have you and Tommy...

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Six years.

LOLA VAN DAM

Six years?!

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Six best years of my life.

LOLA VAN DAM

Really?

THOMAS PRINS

(understanding exactly what they are thinking)

She's my agent, Mrs. Van Dam.

LOLA VAN DAM

Agent!? Ohhhhhhhh, I see.

BETTY DE HAAS

She's his agent.

LOLA VAN DAM

His agent.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
I'm his agent.

There's another awkward pause.

THOMAS PRINS
Well, we better get our luggage into the house.

LOLA VAN DAM
Oh, so you're staying with Tommy?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Yeah.

BETTY DE HAAS
In the house here.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Yeah.

THOMAS PRINS
Well, the Hebron Ritz Carlton was all booked up.

BETTY DE HAAS
We do have a guest room, if you...

THOMAS PRINS
(interrupting)
It's okay Mrs. De Haas. Gladys can stay in the guest room here in the house.

There is an awkward pause.

THOMAS PRINS (CONT'D)
You don't have to worry about anything going on.

LOLA VAN DAM
Well, of course not.

BETTY DE HAAS
Of course not. We weren't thinking...

Gladys is looking utterly confused.

LOLA VAN DAM
Well, Betty. We better get the rest of the ham buns ready for the funeral.

BETTY DE HAAS
Yes. You're right.

LOLA VAN DAM

(to GLADYS)

It was certainly nice meeting you.

BETTY DE HAAS

Yes, nice meeting you.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

The pleasure's mine. We'll be seeing you around, I'm sure.

LOLA VAN DAM

Yes you will. We're right next door.

THOMAS PRINS

Come on, Gladys.

THOMAS ushers GLADYS over to the steps and begins to haul the luggage into the house. They exit into the house.

BETTY DE HAAS

She's staying in the house with him.

LOLA VAN DAM

She's his agent. He said so.

BETTY DE HAAS

But, how's that gonna look? He's single. She's single. They're in the same house.

LOLA VAN DAM

How do you know she's single?

BETTY DE HAAS

She wasn't wearing a ring.

LOLA VAN DAM

Oh, Betty. They are adults. And, she's obviously much older than he is.

BETTY DE HAAS

I'm sorry, but that's just not right. John and Esther would never of approved of that.

LOLA VAN DAM

You don't know that.

BETTY DE HAAS

Come on, I better call Marian.

She begins to exit towards the house. Lola follows.

LOLA VAN DAM

I'll finish up those ham buns. It sure is good to see Tommy. I'm so proud of him.

Scene 6

As they enter the house, ARL and DEAN enter from where they'd exited.

DEAN DE HAAS

Well, looky there. There's a car in John and Ester's driveway.

ARL VAN DAM

Tommy must have gotten here. I see he's driving one of those Japanese cars.

DEAN DE HAAS

Well, that's probably not his car. He probably rented it at the airport.

ARL VAN DAM

Oh, and they don't have American cars at the airport?

DEAN DE HAAS

Maybe they were out.

ARL VAN DAM

(sarcastically)

Yeah. Right.

GLADYS exits the house and heads down the porch. She exits in the direction of the car.

ARL VAN DAM (CONT'D)

Who's that?!

DEAN DE HAAS

I don't know. Looks like a woman.

ARL VAN DAM

Of course it's a woman! Tommy brought a woman home with him?

DEAN DE HAAS

Looks that way. She doesn't look familiar.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, I'll be. Gotta be an explanation for that.

DEAN DE HAAS

Explanation for what?

ARL VAN DAM

Bringing a woman home. I thought it'd be a man.

DEAN DE HAAS

Oh, Arl. Tommy is not gay.

ARL VAN DAM

He writes plays.

DEAN DE HAAS

Shakespeare wrote plays. He wasn't gay.

ARL VAN DAM

How do you know? I read the other day that Shakespeare never lived.

DEAN DE HAAS

Well, whether he did or didn't live. He wrote plays and he wasn't gay.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, Shakespeare wasn't on Broadway. Tommy writes plays on Broadway and they're all gay on Broadway.

DEAN DE HAAS

Arl, I swear. Sometimes you...

*GLADYS enters once again headed back to the house.
She sees ARL and DEAN.*

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Hello!

DEAN DE HAAS

Oh, hi there.

ARL VAN DAM

Hello.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I'm Gladys Iskowitch.

DEAN DE HAAS

Dean De Haas.

ARL VAN DAM

I'm Arl Van Dam. Nice to meet you.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Nice to meet you. Are you the neighbors?

DEAN DE HAAS

I am. I live next door here.

ARL VAN DAM

I live up the hill there. Next to Doc De Beer's house.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh, that's nice. A town this size having your own doctor.

ARL VAN DAM

Oh, we don't have a doctor anymore. Doc De Beer died about ten or twelve years ago. Committed suicide.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh.

DEAN DE HAAS

Yeah, good ol' Doc. He was a good man. Had a problem with the bottle, though.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

He was an alcoholic?

DEAN DE HAAS

Yeah, I don't know if you'd say he was an alcoholic - at least not in the way you think. You know, staggering around drunk.

ARL VAN DAM

He was a functioning drunk. He drank a lot, but it didn't seem to impair his judgment much.

DEAN DE HAAS

At least, not until his wife died.

ARL VAN DAM

Yeah. It got worse after Helen passed. Now, everyone goes to the medical clinic in Newton. That's the way it is these days. Doctor's gotta make all that money, so they stay away from small towns like Hebron. We gotta drive up to Des Moines if you need a doctor these days.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh. (changing the subject) I think I met your wives. They were just out here.

DEAN DE HAAS

Oh yeah? Well I bet you did.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

We just got here. Thomas and me. I left my pills in the car, so I had to come out and get them.

ARL VAN DAM
Pills?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Yeah. Blood pressure. I got it from my father's side.
They were in the deli business. Too much red meat.

DEAN DE HAAS
So, you came with Tommy, did you?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Yes. I didn't want him to be alone. You know, his
parents dying like that. So sudden, and all.

ARL VAN DAM
It's a tragedy.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
So, tragic. It's awful.

DEAN DE HAAS
The whole town's broken up about it.

ARL VAN DAM
Have you known Tommy long?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Six years we've been together.

DEAN DE HAAS
(looks at ARL; making a point)
Six years!

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Like I told your wives. The six best years of my life.

DEAN DE HAAS
(still looking at ARL)
Is that right?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
He's the best client an agent could ask for.

ARL VAN DAM
(looks at DEAN; making a counterpoint)
Client?! Oh you're his agent, or something?!

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Yeah. Yeah. Six years now. I'll never forget the day he
walked through my door. Out of the blue. I'm telling
you, my career was on life support. Show business was
on my mother's side. Grandpa Weintein made a killing in
vaudeville. Made a killing in the Pokinos back in the

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
day. By the time I got the family business, it was two months from the final curtain.

DEAN DE HAAS
Is that right?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
It was almost over. Then Thomas Prins walked through the door!

ARL VAN DAM
A real lifesaver, huh?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Oh my gawd. Saved my career. Changed my life. He's such a good boy.

ARL VAN DAM
Well, he comes from good people. That's the way we grow them here in Hebron.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
I'm sure. Did you know his parents well?

ARL VAN DAM
All their lives!

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Is that right?

DEAN DE HAAS
Well, people 'round here - they are usually from here. We don't get a lot of folks moving in. If anything, people are moving out. Goin' to Des Moines or Chicago. Or in Tommy's case, New York.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Everyone here calls him TOMMY, don't they? Oh, I think that's so adorable.

ARL VAN DAM
Can't seem to convince young people to stay these days. Except Dean and Betty's daughter, Marian. She and Tommy dated back in high school.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Is that right?

DEAN DE HAAS
Well, I'm not sure you could say they dated. They were close anyway.

ARL VAN DAM
Does Tommy ever talk about Marian?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
No. He never mentioned her.

ARL VAN DAM
Really?

THOMAS Prins steps out of the house, checking to see what's taking GLADYS so long. He sees her talking to ARL and DEAN and heads right over to rescue her.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
No. But that's not surprising. Thomas has never been too open about his private life.

ARL VAN DAM
That's interesting, because Tommy left town right after Marian found out that...

THOMAS PRINS
(interrupting)
Hi Mr. Van Dam. Mr. De Haas.

ARL VAN DAM
Oh TOMMY!

DEAN DE HAAS
(extending a hand)
Tommy. Welcome home! It's great to see you.

THOMAS PRINS
It's great to see you too.

ARL VAN DAM
(shaking THOMAS' hand)
We're sure sorry about your folks.

THOMAS PRINS
Thank you. I appreciate that.

DEAN DE HAAS
The whole town is broken up about it.

THOMAS PRINS
Thank you.

ARL VAN DAM
It'll be a big turn out at the funeral tomorrow morning. There's a whole caravan coming down from the family camp up by Cedar Falls.

DEAN DE HAAS

Your folks meant a lot to a lot of people.

THOMAS PRINS

I know. They were special.

There is an awkward silence.

Well, Gladys. Your tea is ready. We'd better...

ARL VAN DAM

We were just telling Gladys here about Marian.

DEAN DE HAAS

(whispering to ARL)

Arl.

THOMAS PRINS

Really? What were you telling her.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, about how Marian and you...

DEAN DE HAAS

(interrupting)

Have you talked to Marian since you got back, Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS

No. I haven't. How is Marian?

DEAN DE HAAS

She's doin' fine. She teaches up at the elementary school. Second grade.

THOMAS PRINS

Really? That's great. I'm sure she's a great teacher.

ARL VAN DAM

You should see her daughter, Abby! Such a cute little thing.

THOMAS PRINS

I'll bet she is.

ARL VAN DAM

She's...what? How old is she, Dean?

DEAN DE HAAS

Arl. You know very well that Abby is almost twelve.

ARL VAN DAM

Twelve. That's right. Twelve. Let's see...so you didn't ever see Marian's girl, did you Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS

No. No, I didn't.

ARL VAN DAM

You were gone by the time Abby was born.

THOMAS PRINS

Yes, I was. But, I'm guessing that I'll see Marian and her daughter at the funeral tomorrow.

DEAN DE HAAS

Sure! Marian and Abby loved your folks. Esther was always making her lemon cake because she knew Abby would drag her mom over for a piece.

THOMAS PRINS

Mom's lemon cake would do it. I'm gonna miss that. Well, I'll look forward to seeing Marian and her daughter tomorrow.

DEAN DE HAAS

Alright then. Is there anything you need, Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS

No. We're good.

ARL VAN DAM

You sure?

THOMAS PRINS

I'm sure, Arl. But, thanks.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, you just let us know if we can do anything.

THOMAS PRINS

Gladys, why don't we go in before the tea gets cold.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Sure, hon.

GLADYS follows THOMAS towards the house. ARL and DEAN watch them going in.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH (CONT'D)

(as they get to the stairs)

Who's Marian? Everybody's talking about Marian.

THOMAS PRINS

(opening the porch door for her)

She was my neighbor. And my friend.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

(trails off as she goes in)

Really? Cause, I'm getting the feeling that those two are thinking that...

THOMAS gives a look and a smile to ARL and DEAN and then follows GLADYS into the house.

DEAN DE HAAS

(shaking his head at ARL)

For Pete's sake, Arl. You have all the tact of an atomic bomb.

ARL VAN DAM

What?! I was just making conversation. Don't you want to know if Tommy is Abby's dad?

DEAN DE HAAS

If either Marian or Tommy had wanted us to know that, they'd have shared it a long time ago. It's none of our business.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, it seems to me that Abby ought to know who her father is.

DEAN DE HAAS

Who died and put you in charge of what Abby ought to know, Arl? You're just mad 'cause Tommy moved away from Hebron and became all famous. As if everyone who ever grew up here should stay here.

ARL VAN DAM

And what would be wrong with that? So Tommy is a great writer. We all know that he is. So, why doesn't he stay here in Hebron and write. We haven't had a newspaper in twenty years. People might like that.

DEAN DE HAAS

And Tommy might like to make enough money to live on. There are 312 people in Hebron, Arl. It's not exactly a newspaper publisher's dream.

ARL VAN DAM

There's 318 people in Hebron to be exact and maybe if we had a paper, more people would stay here.

DEAN DE HAAS

Oh yeah. That'd make 'em stay. Live in Hebron. We have a newspaper. You're nuts, Arl. Come on, we better let the girls know we're home safe. Betty probably thinks we got our heads shot off in Vietnam.

Scene 7

ARL and DEAN exit into DEAN and BETTY's house. There is a beat. THOMAS walks out onto the porch. He is holding a cup of tea. He gives a quick glance to see if the coast is clear of DEAN and ARL. GLADYS walks out behind him with a cup of tea. They sit on the porch together.

THOMAS PRINS

That's better. Sorry, Gladys. It's nicer out here. We'll have to give the air conditioner a chance to cool things off. My dad was tight fisted ol' Dutchman. He always turned the air off when he and mom left the house. It's obviously been shut up for a few days.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

That's okay, hon. I like the fresh air.

THOMAS pulls a pack of cigarettes out and holds it as if he's going to smoke it.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH (CONT'D)

Speaking of fresh air, I thought you gave up smoking.

THOMAS PRINS

I did give up smoking. I just haven't given up on the idea of smoking.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

The idea of smoking. Oy. I can't wait to hear this.

THOMAS PRINS

What? There's nothing to hear. I know smoking is bad for you, but there are so many things about smoking that I think are good for you.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Here we go. Now smoking is good for you. What can possibly be good about smoking?

THOMAS PRINS

A handful of times each day I stop for a few minutes to have a smoke. Whatever I'm doing, I stop. I rest. It's good for me to stop and think once in a while rather than constantly doing, doing, doing. Life flies so fast. A little rest is a good thing.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

There are other ways to do that.

THOMAS PRINS

Yeah, but nobody does it unless they have a reason to do it.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Is that it?

THOMAS PRINS

No. Then there's the fraternity.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

The fraternity of smokers?

THOMAS PRINS

Absolutely. Go anywhere in the world at any time of day or night and pull out a cigarette. Not only are you immediately identified as a member of the fraternity, but it's likely that you are about to actually meet a complete stranger merely because of the fact that you smoke. "Buddy, can I get a light?" "Hey there, can I bum a smoke off of you?" Not to mention the shared experience of standing outside in a bone chilling winter wind to have a smoke at the same time. You're comrades. You're survivors. You're brothers and sisters. You talk. You laugh together. You have five minutes to get to know one another while you enjoy a cigarette. Smoking is fellowship. Smoking is community. Smoking could be the answer to world peace.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

And, smoking will KILL you.

THOMAS PRINS

Why are we so convinced that longevity is the holy grail? So I live to be a hundred. Is that such a great deal if the last fifteen years are spent in a nursing home not knowing who I am while my family pines away in guilt that they hate coming to see me?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh, so now smoking is virtuous because it's saving your family from guilt?

THOMAS PRINS

And money.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Dear god.

THOMAS PRINS

Look, all I'm saying is that long life isn't necessarily good life.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I can't believe I'm hearing this. Your parents just died a tragic, premature death. Wouldn't you do anything to have more time with them.

THOMAS PRINS

Yes. Yes, I would. But, you know what? My mom used to always say that she hoped that when the time came, they would go quick. She didn't want either herself or dad to slowly waste away in a nursing home. That's the way she was. She didn't want to be a burden to her only son. So, you're right. I'd give anything for even one more day with both of them, but in the end my mom got her wish.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So, your mother would be okay with you smoking so you can die an early death and won't be a burden on your loved ones.

THOMAS PRINS

Hey, I'm not defending smoking. I quit! I'm just saying that not everything about smoking is bad.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So you're still saying smoking is good?

THOMAS PRINS

Gladys, you're twisting my words. But, just to irritate you further I'll argue that it is debatable. Smoking is pleasurable. It gives me blissful moments of rest each day. It gives me a world-wide fraternity of brothers and sisters. It introduces me to amazing characters, some of whom have ended up in my plays and have made you plenty of money.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So now I'm indebted to smoking for my paycheck? What am I, Phillip Morris? Smoking kills you. It gives you emphysema. It gives you black lung. It causes cancer. It leaves you stooped over hacking up your lungs while you wheel your little bottle of oxygen down the hospital hallway.

THOMAS PRINS

Good point.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

With your bare, bony butt sticking out the back of your hospital gown for the whole world to see.

THOMAS PRINS

Yeah, I get it.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

You shoulda seen my Uncle Ira. Ira Iskowitch. Wheeling his oxygen bottle down the nursing home hallway with his pasty white butt cheeks sticking out for his ten year old niece to see.

THOMAS PRINS

Must have been awful.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

You have no idea.

THOMAS PRINS

I'm sure I don't. Anyway,...like I said, I gave up smoking. I just haven't given up the idea of it.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So now you sit outside with your unlit cigarette.

THOMAS PRINS

And pretend I'm smoking.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

You're mental. For such a sweet boy, you're a complete mental case. Fine, pretend to smoke. I just want you around on this earth as long as possible. I'd rather visit you in the nursing home with Alzheimers than the hospital with lung cancer.

THOMAS PRINS

You just want me around because you don't have a husband and I'm the only one who will drag your suitcase across the country for you. You'd rather I keep writing so you get your commission. And, you'll be long gone before I get Alzheimers or Lung Cancer.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oy. You know how to break it gently to a lady. And speaking of not being married, it's no wonder you haven't found Mrs. Right.

ARL Van Dam and DEAN De Haas walk out of the De Haas house SL and begin walking forward. They are talking.

DEAN DE HAAS

Alright, mother. We will. Back in a second.

ARL VAN DAM

How many, do you think?

DEAN DE HAAS

She thinks two dozen ought to be enough.

ARL VAN DAM

(to THOMAS and GLADYS)

Hello again!

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Hello.

ARL VAN DAM

Everything all right with the house?

THOMAS PRINS

It's a little warm inside. I think the folks turned off the air conditioner before they left. We're letting it cool off.

ARL VAN DAM

(to DEAN)

We should have thought of that. Of course John and Esther turned the air off. John was so tight he turned the air off when they went for a walk. God rest his soul. Sorry, Tommy, I didn't mean to speak ill of the, well you know.

THOMAS PRINS

Don't worry about it. Dad was always proud of his frugality.

DEAN DE HAAS

Well, why don't the two of you go on in the house with Betty and Lola. It's nice in there. Make yourself at home.

THOMAS PRINS

Thanks, Mr. De Haas, but we're fine. It's nice out here and the house is probably already cooled off.

DEAN DE HAAS

Suit yourself. The women are sending us to the store for some more buns. Betty's afraid we're not going to have enough.

THOMAS PRINS

(looking at watch)

Is Gosselink's still open?

DEAN DE HAAS

They close at five, but Betty called Herman, and he's going to meet us down there.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

A Store? I should go. I need a bagel for breakfast in the morning. Bad things happen if I don't have my bagel.

DEAN DE HAAS

You're welcome to come along. I'll show you around Main Street.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh that'd be nice.

GLADYS stands and heads down the steps.

ARL VAN DAM

(to DEAN)

You go on ahead to the store. I'm gonna talk to Tommy for a bit.

DEAN DE HAAS

Alright then. Come on, Gladys. I'll give you the grand tour. Shouldn't take too long.

Scene 8

GLADYS and DEAN exit. ARL steps up and sits next to THOMAS on the steps, he notices the cigarette in THOMAS' hand.

ARL VAN DAM

You a smoker, Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS

No. Not any more.

ARL VAN DAM

I suppose you know your dad used to like a cigarette now and then. Kids always know their parents secrets

THOMAS PRINS

Yes. He used to keep his stash of cigarettes in the shed. He used to always head out to work in the shed after dinner. Mom never said a word.

ARL VAN DAM

Oh, I think your mom gave him an earful from time to time, but she'd stay quiet in front of you. She wouldn't want to admit it in case you didn't know. But of course, you did know because kids always know the secrets of their parents.

THOMAS PRINS

Like the fact that you and dad and Mr. De Haas would meet in the shed to have a little nip at the bottle of Old Crow in the bottom drawer of dad's tool cabinet.

ARL VAN DAM

(mocking incredulity)

I don't know what you're talking about.

THOMAS PRINS

(laughs)

I'm sure you don't.

ARL VAN DAM

So, how ya doin' Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS

I'm doing alright, Arl.

ARL VAN DAM

It's a shame about your folks.

THOMAS PRINS

Yeah. Thanks. Sudden.

ARL VAN DAM

Must be strange to be back here in little ol' Hebron after spending all them years in the Big Apple.

THOMAS PRINS

Yeah. I guess. In some ways it feels like it's been forever, but in other ways it feels like a comfortable old sweater that you pull on each fall. You haven't worn it for a long time, but it's as familiar as the last time you pulled it off.

ARL VAN DAM

Yeah. There's something special about the little town. A lot's changed since you left, though.

THOMAS PRINS

Not many businesses left uptown.

ARL VAN DAM

No. Not many. Cafe still does okay. Gosselink's is still open for now, but Herman's been trying to sell it for the past few years and no one's interested. It'll probably close up when he retires.

THOMAS PRINS

What happened to the Farm and Home store?

ARL VAN DAM

Sam DeCook bought it, but then figured it was better to combine it with the store in Cedar. So, we have to drive over there.

THOMAS PRINS

Makes you sad, doesn't it, Arl?

ARL VAN DAM

I just don't get it. The land around here has been growing a lot more than corn and beans for several generations. It's grown families. Good people and good honest businesses that kept the community going. Now, everyone wants bigger and faster and more crap than they could possibly need. I don't get it.

Thomas listens silently. A beat.

ARL VAN DAM (CONT'D)

What about you, Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS

What about me?

ARL VAN DAM

Weren't you going to be a minister? You were always talking about that back in the day. You know, before you graduated. You were going to go to seminary and come back and pastor the church here.

THOMAS PRINS

I don't know what to tell you, Arl. That was the path that I thought I was going to take when I left, but I suddenly found myself in a different place than I intended. I wrote a script as part of a class at school. I found I had a passion for it. The script would up at the National contest, won an award and suddenly I was a writer.

ARL VAN DAM

You ever think you'll be a minister?

THOMAS PRINS

Who says I'm not?

ARL VAN DAM

Come on. You know what I mean. A minister for real. Seminary trained and official.

THOMAS PRINS

Ministers aren't made by seminaries, Arl. If they were, then Jesus and all twelve disciples wouldn't have made the grade.

ARL VAN DAM

So you think you're a minister?

THOMAS PRINS

If your definition of ministry is being pastor of a church, then you've got God crammed into a really small box.

ARL VAN DAM

So, what you're saying is the way you see it you're a minister with these plays you write.

THOMAS PRINS

Have you read any of my plays, Arl?

ARL VAN DAM

No. Do they talk about Jesus?

THOMAS PRINS

No, but I hope they reveal him. What did Jesus talk about in public? Farmers, fields, fathers, sons, and workers. He spoke truth in simple little word pictures. I'd like to think that I follow that example.

ARL VAN DAM

You got an interesting way of looking at things, Tommy.

THOMAS PRINS

So do you, Arl.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, that's too bad.

THOMAS PRINS

Is it?

ARL VAN DAM

Yeah. Our little church is gonna need a pastor. Preacher is moving at the end of the summer. Going to a church up in Minnesota. We had a hard time finding him. No one wants to take a church like ours any more.

*BETTY and Lola enter out of the DeVries house.
They are talking and BETTY carries a watering can.*

BETTY DE HAAS

(to Lola)

Don't you worry about it, Lola. It won't take me long to finish the ham buns.

LOLA VAN DAM

Are you sure? I don't want you to have to do it all by yourself.

BETTY DE HAAS

I'm fine. Go on home.

ARL VAN DAM

Hello, ladies.

LOLA VAN DAM

I thought you went with Dean to Gosselinks?

ARL VAN DAM

Nope. Dean took Tommy's lady friend. I stayed back to talk to Tommy a bit.

LOLA VAN DAM

Well, we better go home, Arl. I've got to finish laundry if we're going to have clothes for the funeral tomorrow.

ARL VAN DAM

Alright. Good talking to you, Tommy!

THOMAS PRINS

You too, Arl.

LOLA VAN DAM

It's nice to see you, Tommy.

THOMAS PRINS

You too, Mrs. Van Dam.

ARL VAN DAM

See you in the morning!

ARL and Lola exit.

BETTY DE HAAS

You doing okay, Tommy? Is there anything you need?

THOMAS PRINS

I'm fine. The house should be cooled off by now. I better go in and unpack.

BETTY DE HAAS

Well, if there's anything you need, you just call.

THOMAS PRINS

Thanks. I appreciate that.

Scene 9

THOMAS enters the house as BETTY proceeds to water some of the plants outside her house. After a beat, MARIAN enters. She is wearing a dress.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Hey mom.

BETTY DE HAAS
Hi sweetie. You look nice.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Thanks. This is one of the dresses I got in Des Moines.

BETTY DE HAAS
Oh, you just missed Tommy. He went inside five seconds ago. Let me go knock on the door...

MARIAN DE HAAS
NO mother!

BETTY DE HAAS
Don't you want to see him?

MARIAN DE HAAS
No! I mean, yes I'd like to see him, but not right now. I didn't come over here to see Thomas.

BETTY DE HAAS
Then what did you come over for?

MARIAN DE HAAS
Because...I wanted to borrow...that little travel steamer of yours. To steam my dress for the funeral.

BETTY DE HAAS
You came over to borrow my travel steamer? I could have sent it home with Abby.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Yes, but I wanted to get it done now.

BETTY DE HAAS
So you put on a pretty dress to come over and borrow my travel steamer.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Mother!

BETTY DE HAAS
Alright. Alright. I'll go get it.

BETTY exits into the house. MARIAN stares for a moment at the Prins house. She walks slowly over towards the house and looks tries to inconspicuously peek in the windows to catch a glimpse of Thomas. In a moment DEAN DeVRIES and GLADYS ISKOWITCH. They are carrying grocery sacks. They silently stop to see MARIAN looking and watch for a moment.

DEAN DE HAAS

(suddenly)

Well, Hello there sweetie!

MARIAN DE HAAS

(startled, caught)

Daddy! Oh, hi! You, um, startled me.

DEAN DE HAAS

Whatcha doin' sweets?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Nothing.

(she notices GLADYS)

DEAN DE HAAS

This is Gladys Iskowitch.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Hello.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

How do you do?

DEAN DE HAAS

She's Tommy's agent.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Very nice to meet you.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

It's nice to meet you, too.

DEAN DE HAAS

We've just been down to Gosselink's. Mother needed more buns for the funeral and Gladys needed some bagels.

MARIAN DE HAAS

(surprised by the notion)

Did they have bagels?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Yes. Well, kind of. They aren't Kosher, but hey - no one's perfect.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm sorry. I hope that's okay.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

It's alright honey. God will understand, I'm sure. My rabbi, well - we won't tell him.

DEAN DE HAAS

Gladys is Jewish.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Thanks, dad. I'm glad you explained it for me.

DEAN DE HAAS

Have you seen Tommy?

MARIAN DE HAAS

No. No. I'm sure he's inside resting. I'm sure you're both tired from your travel.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Well, let me go get him. I'm sure he'd like to see...

MARIAN DE HAAS

NO! No, that's fine. I think he probably needs his rest.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Are you sure?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Very sure.

Awkward beat.

DEAN DE HAAS

Marian is a school teacher.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Is that right?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yes. I teach second grade.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Isn't that nice.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Is this your first time in Iowa.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

It is. First time. I've traveled all over the country with Tommy on his publicity tours and all, but mostly

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
it's in the big cities. You know. Chicago, Los Angeles,
San Francisco.

MARIAN DE HAAS
I'm sure.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
But, never to Iowa. I guess Iowa isn't real big on
theatre.

MARIAN DE HAAS
No. We're big on farms.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Oh yes! I can smell.

DEAN DE HAAS
Well, we have plays in the schools and things. The high
school does one every year.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Oh, of course.

DEAN DE HAAS
What was that play the kids did at the high school last
year?

MARIAN DE HAAS
(embarrassed)
"The Clumsy Custard Horror Show..."

DEAN DE HAAS
That was it!

MARIAN DE HAAS
...and Ice Cream Clone Review."

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
Oh. Well, isn't that nice.

DEAN DE HAAS
Have you seen that one, Gladys?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
It must have missed Broadway.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Shocking.

DEAN DE HAAS
It was a good one. I also liked the one they did...

MARIAN DE HAAS

(interrupting)

Daddy, I'm sure Gladys is tired after her long trip. Why don't we let her go in and get some rest.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Are you sure you don't want to see Tommy? I'll go get him.

MARIAN DE HAAS

No, really. I need to get Abby and get home. I'll see him at the Funeral tomorrow.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Are you sure?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Very sure. Thank you. It was very nice to meet you.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

The pleasure is all mine, dear. And, thank you, Dean, for the tour of your little town.

DEAN DE HAAS

Quite alright, Gladys. You enjoy some rest. I'm sure we'll see you tomorrow if not before.

GLADYS enters the Prins house as DEAN and MARIAN walk over towards the lawn chairs as BETTY exits from the DeVries house and joins them.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Daddy! Seriously!

DEAN DE HAAS

What?!

MARIAN DE HAAS

"The Clumsy Custard Horror Show?"

DEAN DE HAAS

What about it?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Gladys is an AGENT. From NEW YORK. BROADWAY!

DEAN DE HAAS

What? I was just pointing out that we have plays right here in Hebron.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Oh my gosh, daddy. You are so embarrassing.

BETTY DE HAAS
What's up?

MARIAN DE HAAS
Nothing mother.

BETTY DE HAAS
Here's the travel steamer you wanted. I had to hunt for it. It was stuck in an old picnic basket in the cellar.
(she glares at DEAN)

DEAN DE HAAS
What?! Well I wonder who would have put it in there?

BETTY hands the steamer to MARIAN who looks at it, suddenly remembering she'd asked for it.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Oh...right...thanks.

BETTY DE HAAS
(to DEAN)
Will you go in and put those buns on the counter, dear?

DEAN DE HAAS
Surely will.

BETTY DE HAAS
Thank you. And tell Abby to start cleaning up. Her mother's here to pick her up.

DEAN DE HAAS
Not a problem at all.

DEAN exits into the house leaving MARIAN and BETTY. In the Prins house, THOMAS appears in the door and begins to open it. Seeing BETTY and MARIAN talking, he quickly slips back just inside the house. He watches and listens from inside the screen door.

BETTY DE HAAS
Marian. Just go over there and talk to him.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Stop it mother. I don't care about about Thomas Prins.

BETTY DE HAAS
(looks knowingly at her daughter)
Really.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Really. Is Abby ready? We should go.

BETTY DE HAAS

Abby is fine. She's still playing with my make up. I'll clean up her face and send her home in a bit.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Fine.

MARIAN turns to leave. She is stopped by her mother's gentle, commanding voice.

BETTY DE HAAS

Marian.

MARIAN DE HAAS

(stops)

What?

BETTY DE HAAS

What happened between you and Tommy?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Nothing.

BETTY DE HAAS

We both know that's not true. Listen, dear, your father and I have never asked you about it. We've respected your privacy.

MARIAN DE HAAS

And I appreciate that mother. I wish you would continue respecting my privacy.

BETTY DE HAAS

We love you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I know.

BETTY DE HAAS

We would never do anything to hurt you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I know that.

BETTY DE HAAS

So, why can't you just let us help you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I don't need your help mother. There is nothing wrong.

BETTY DE HAAS

Come on, Marian.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I am just fine. Why can't anyone understand that?

BETTY DE HAAS

Who is Abby's father?

MARIAN DE HAAS

(Shocked by the question)

What?!

BETTY DE HAAS

I know I've never asked you that before.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Mother!

BETTY DE HAAS

Was it Tommy?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Oh, mom.

BETTY DE HAAS

Was it Matt?

MARIAN DE HAAS

(Shakes her head. She is crying.)

It's not important.

BETTY DE HAAS

No?

MARIAN DE HAAS

NO!

BETTY DE HAAS

Then why are you crying?

MARIAN stands shaking her head for a long, silent moment as a silent battle is wages inside her.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm going home. Will you please send Abby.

BETTY DE HAAS

I will.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Thanks.

MARIAN begins to exit, but stops at her mother's voice. She does not look back at her.

BETTY DE HAAS
Marian.

MARIAN DE HAAS
What?!

BETTY DE HAAS
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to push.

MARIAN DE HAAS
I know.

BETTY DE HAAS
I love you.

Scene 10

MARIAN exits without responding. Betty looks after her for a moment, then exits into the house. Once inside, THOMAS steps out of the house from behind the screen door where he's been listening. He is holding a cup of tea. He stares off SR where Marian exited, then sits down on the porch and pulls a cigarette out, holding it as though he's smoking, but not lighting it. ABBY now exits the DeVries house.

ABBY DE HAAS
(to her grandparents within)
I LOVE YOU TOO! SEE YOU TOMORROW!

ABBY starts across the lawn and spots THOMAS, who is looking at her. She smiles and waves at him. He smiles and waves back. She walks over to him.

ABBY DE HAAS (CONT'D)
Hello.

THOMAS PRINS
Hello.

ABBY DE HAAS
I'm Abby.

THOMAS PRINS
I guessed that. You're Marian's daughter aren't you?

ABBY DE HAAS
Yes.

THOMAS PRINS

How do you do, Abby. It's a pleasure to meet you. My name is Thomas.

ABBY DE HAAS

I know. But, Grandma and Grandpa call you Tommy.

THOMAS PRINS

You are right. They do.

ABBY DE HAAS

Why?

THOMAS PRINS

Well, that's what they called me when I was your age and that's what they still call me.

ABBY DE HAAS

Does it bother you?

THOMAS PRINS

Does it bother you when they call you Abby, or would you prefer Abigail.

ABBY DE HAAS

Nobody calls me Abigail.

THOMAS PRINS

Would you like to be?

ABBY DE HAAS

I don't know.

THOMAS PRINS

Well, Abigail, how about I try it and you can tell me what you think?

ABBY DE HAAS

(delighted)

Okay. But, you didn't answer my question. Does it bother you that people still call you Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS

In some ways, I guess I do. But, I understand it, so I don't let it bother me.

ABBY DE HAAS

Understand what?

THOMAS PRINS

Well, I know sometimes grown ups don't like things to change. They like things to stay the way they are. By calling me Tommy, they remember the kid that I was.

ABBY DE HAAS

But you're not a kid.

THOMAS PRINS

No. But, I like to think there's a part of me that's still like a kid. I don't want to grow up completely.

ABBY DE HAAS

Like Peter Pan?

THOMAS PRINS

Yeah. Like Peter Pan.

ABBY DE HAAS

Sometimes I think that Grandma and Grandpa don't want me to grow up.

THOMAS PRINS

Yeah? What makes you say that?

ABBY DE HAAS

They don't want me to get my ears pierced.

THOMAS PRINS

What does your mom say?

ABBY DE HAAS

She says I can when I'm twelve.

THOMAS PRINS

That's not too long now, is it?

ABBY DE HAAS

Seems like forever.

THOMAS PRINS

Yeah. That's another reason grownups don't like things to change?

ABBY DE HAAS

What do you mean?

THOMAS PRINS

When you're almost twelve, a few months feels like forever. The older you get, the more it seems like life goes faster and faster. "Time flies," is what we adults always say. So, we try to find ways to try and slow it down. Like calling adults by kids names. Or, trying to keep your grandkid from getting her ears pierced.

ABBY DE HAAS

That's stupid. Why?

THOMAS PRINS

I think maybe it's because the faster time seems to fly, the more we have to face a really scary truth.

ABBY DE HAAS

What's that?

THOMAS PRINS

We're going to die.

(a beat)

ABBY DE HAAS

Like John and Esther?

THOMAS PRINS

Yes.

ABBY DE HAAS

John and Esther were your mom and dad, weren't they?

THOMAS PRINS

Yes.

ABBY DE HAAS

Are you sad?

THOMAS PRINS

Yes, Abby. I am.

ABBY DE HAAS

You don't seem sad.

THOMAS PRINS

Are you upset that your mom and grandma won't let you get your ears pierced.

ABBY DE HAAS

Yes.

THOMAS PRINS

You don't seem upset.

ABBY DE HAAS

(laughs, then mocks being really mad)

Well maybe I should act MORE UPSET!

THOMAS PRINS

(chuckles, then mocks sadness)

Well, maybe I should act a little more sad.

MATT SCHULER enters from right.

MATT SCHULER

Well, well, well. if it's not Tommy Prins.

THOMAS PRINS

Hi Matt.

MATT SCHULER

Homecoming for Hebron's resident nerd.

THOMAS PRINS

Nice to see you too.

MATT SCHULER

(looks at ABBY)

Hey, Abby.

Abby does not respond.

THOMAS PRINS

How's it going, Matt?

MATT SCHULER

Good.

THOMAS PRINS

What are you up to these days?

MATT SCHULER

Nothing. Hey Abby, speaking of homecomings, did THOMAS here tell you about homecoming our senior year in high school?

ABBY DE HAAS

(perplexed)

No.

MATT SCHULER

Homecoming. That was the year we made it to the state quarter finals and I was first team all state. Your mom and I were homecoming king and queen. Did you know that?

ABBY DE HAAS

No.

MATT SCHULER

We beat Garwood 42 to nothing. I rushed for 183 yards that night and scored five of our six touchdowns. Later that year your mom and I were Prom King and Queen. Did she tell you that?

ABBY DE HAAS
No.

MATT SCHULER
We went to prom together, and we had an AWESOME night.
Do you remember that Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS
No.

MATT SCHULER
Oh, THAT'S RIGHT. You weren't there. What did you do
that night?

THOMAS PRINS
I don't know, Matt. I don't recall.

MATT SCHULER
Yeah. You were probably sitting at home writing your
little plays.

THOMAS PRINS
I didn't write plays in high school. I started when I
was in college.

MATT SCHULER
Where's your mom, Abby?

ABBY DE HAAS
She's gone.

MATT SCHULER
Gone where? Gone home?

ABBY DE HAAS
(dead pan serious)
She moved to Canada. I'm living with Grandpa and
Grandma now.

MATT SCHULER
(makes a face)
Funny. I think I'll go over and see her. How long you
staying in town, Tommy?

THOMAS PRINS
I fly back to New York day after tomorrow.

MATT SCHULER
Good. I'm gonna go check on Marian. See ya.

MATT exits. ABBY and THOMAS watch him go.

ABBY DE HAAS
He's weird.

THOMAS PRINS
(staring off after MATT)
You know how I told you that as you get older time
begins to fly?

ABBY DE HAAS
Yeah.

THOMAS PRINS
Well, there are some people for whom time completely
stops - right about high school.

A beat.

ABBY DE HAAS
Can I ask you a question?

THOMAS PRINS
Sure.

ABBY DE HAAS
Are you my dad?

LIGHTS TO BLACK. END OF ACT

ACT IIScene 1

ACT II It is late afternoon, the following day. As the lights come up there is conversation happening as THOMAS, GLADYS, DEAN, BETTY, Lola, and ARL all enter. BETTY and Lola are carrying containers with leftovers from the funeral lunch. They gather around the lawn chairs center.

LOLA VAN DAM

(presenting leftovers)

Now, Tommy, we've got all these leftovers from the funeral. You've got to take them.

THOMAS PRINS

Lola. Seriously. We're flying back to New York tomorrow. There's more food there than we could eat in a month.

LOLA VAN DAM

It's tradition. The family always has to take the leftovers. It'll be there if you want a midnight snack tonight.

THOMAS PRINS

There are like two dozen ham buns there, and I'm the only one who's going to eat them.

LOLA VAN DAM

Gladys doesn't like ham?

There is an awkward moment as everyone is afraid of admitting the obvious to Lola.

LOLA VAN DAM (CONT'D)

What?

(to GLADYS)

Is it a food allergy?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I'm Jewish, dear. Jews don't eat ham.

LOLA VAN DAM

Really?

ARL VAN DAM

(grabbing the sandwiches from Lola)

It's an Old Testament thing. Come on, Lola, let's put this food in John and Esther's fridge for Tommy.

ARL and Lola take the food from BETTY and take it into the Prins house.

LOLA VAN DAM

Okay.

(to ARL as they enter the house)

I don't get it. What's wrong with ham?

BETTY DE HAAS

(to GLADYS)

I'm sorry, Gladys. I hope you'll forgive my sister. We don't have a lot of Jewish people come through Hebron.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh, it's alright.

DEAN DE HAAS

What about Dick Rosberg who lived in Doc De Beer's house?

BETTY DE HAAS

He was Swedish.

DEAN DE HAAS

Rosberg is SWEDISH?

BETTY DE HAAS

Yes, dear.

DEAN DE HAAS

Well, what do you know about that?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Well, we can't all be perfect.

THOMAS PRINS

Thanks for everything, to both of you. I appreciate all you've done in helping with the funeral and taking care of the house and yard.

BETTY DE HAAS

Oh, it's no problem.

DEAN DE HAAS

No problem 'tall. What are neighbors for?

THOMAS PRINS

Well, I appreciate it.

DEAN DE HAAS

Do you know what you plan to do with the place?

THOMAS PRINS

(considers)

No. I don't know.

BETTY DE HAAS

Oh, of course you don't. It's all too soon. You just take your time. There's no rush. Dean and I will be happy to keep our eye on the place and keep things up.

THOMAS PRINS

Thank you. I think I better go in and make sure Arl and Lola are finding room in the fridge. As usual, mom had it packed pretty full.

DEAN DE HAAS

No problem, Tommy. You go on. We'll just sit and keep Gladys company.

THOMAS exits into the house.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

What a nice service.

DEAN DE HAAS

Yes, it was.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I wish I'd met them. They seemed like such great people

BETTY DE HAAS

You never met John and Esther?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

No! They came to New York once, but I was visiting my Uncle Sid in Boca.

DEAN DE HAAS

Well, that's a shame. John and Esther were good people.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

(looks to see if THOMAS is gone)

So, let me ask you. Was your daughter at the funeral. I didn't meet her.

BETTY DE HAAS

She was there, but she sat towards the back. Slipped in late and left early.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Was she at the reception?

BETTY DE HAAS

She slipped into the kitchen through the back door to see if we needed any help, but then left.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So, she and Thomas haven't...

BETTY DE HAAS

No. They haven't seen or talked to one another as far as I can tell.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Okay. Very interesting.

DEAN DE HAAS

And Tommy never mentioned Marian?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Until yesterday, I didn't know she existed.

BETTY DE HAAS

Gladys, does Tommy have any, you know, girlfriends?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Not really. Other than a date to the occasional fund raiser or awards dinner he doesn't show much interest in a relationship. And believe me, it's not for a lack of trying. I'm not such a bad matchmaker myself.

BETTY DE HAAS

Like Fiddler on the Roof?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Exactly. It's a little curse God gave Jewish women who can't find a husband ourselves.

BETTY DE HAAS

So, you've never been married, Gladys?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

No. The right one has never come along. Can you believe it? Oy. New York, the greatest city in the world. Full of good men.

BETTY DE HAAS

So you've never dated.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh, I've dated, darling. Several times. Everyone of them was a putz. Don't get me started.

BETTY DE HAAS

That's too bad. I just think everyone should be married. I can't stand to think of Marian going through life alone. And little Abby. She needs a daddy.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Well, sometimes I think I'm better off. You know what I mean? If I finally do get a man, then I have to train him, and that feels like a lot of work.

DEAN DE HAAS

Well, now. You never know. The right man comes along, he might just sweep you off your feet. That's what happens sometimes. It's like a lightning strike. You don't know what hit you.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Honey, the last time I got struck like lightning and didn't know what hit me, it turned out to be bad pastrami.

ARL and Lola exit the Prins house. Lola is carrying a cup of tea.

DEAN DE HAAS

Hello there Arl, Lola. Where's Tommy?

LOLA VAN DAM

He's inside getting changed. He looks a little worn out. He said to bring you this.
(hands tea to GLADYS)

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

He's such a good boy. Thank you, dear.

BETTY DE HAAS

It's been a long day for him.

ARL VAN DAM

A long day for all of us. John and Esther are going to be missed in this town.

LOLA VAN DAM

That's for sure.

BETTY DE HAAS

(taking DEAN by the arm)
Speaking of getting changed, we better get in and get changed ourselves.

DEAN DE HAAS

Alright, dear.

DEAN and BETTY exit into their house.

LOLA VAN DAM

Well, Arl. We should get home and get changed, as well.

ARL VAN DAM

Hold on a minute. I need to clear something up with Gladys here.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

What is it dear?

ARL VAN DAM

Well, now. Tell me something. You told me yesterday that Tommy never mentioned Marian.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

We were just talking about that. No, dear. I didn't know anything about Marian until yesterday.

ARL VAN DAM

Isn't that interesting. So, does he have a girl back in New York.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Not really. He has a date to fund raisers and award dinners, but nothing serious. He keeps to himself. Does his own thing. You know.

ARL VAN DAM

Well. That's VERY interesting.

LOLA VAN DAM

Arl?

ARL VAN DAM

So, you don't think he's... you know

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

What dear?

ARL VAN DAM

You know.

LOLA VAN DAM

Oh for goodness sake, Arl. Tommy is not GAY.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, so what if he is. I'm just wondering!

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

(laughs)

Oh my! No, dear. Thomas is definitely NOT gay. I can tell you that.

ARL VAN DAM

Okay. That's settled. Now we know.

LOLA VAN DAM

We've always known, Arl. You're the only one who thought that.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I was hoping to get to talk to Marian today. I met her briefly last night but we didn't get a chance to talk.

LOLA VAN DAM

Oh, I know. She slipped in the back after the service started. I wish those two would just get together and talk it over. Whatever it was that got between the two of them.

ARL VAN DAM

Oh, come on, Lola! We all know what got between the two of them. She got pregnant!

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

You think Marian's daughter belongs to Thomas'?

ARL VAN DAM

Yes, I do! I think,

(checks to see if THOMAS is listening from the house. Lowers his voice.)

I think Tommy got Marian pregnant, then couldn't deal with the responsibility and skipped town. That's why he left.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I don't know, dear. Thomas is the most responsible person I know. That wouldn't be like him.

LOLA VAN DAM

I know! A lot of people think it was Matt Schuler.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Excuse me?

LOLA VAN DAM

Matt Schuler. He was at the funeral today. Sat on the left side four rows from the back. He wore jeans and a black t-shirt.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I didn't notice.

ARL VAN DAM

Abby does not belong to Matt Schuler.

LOLA VAN DAM

We don't know that!

ARL VAN DAM

Abby is sharp as a tack. She could not be Matt Schuler's child. That boy is so dumb he has to get naked to count to 21!

LOLA VAN DAM

Maybe she takes after her mother.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So, the question is, why hasn't Marian and Thomas talked, and why did she avoid him at the funeral today.

ARL VAN DAM

Yes, that's the question.

LOLA VAN DAM

So, Tommy never mentioned Marian. Isn't that interesting.

ARL VAN DAM

Guilty conscience.

LOLA VAN DAM

Arl!

ARL VAN DAM

I'm just saying.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

You've got to remember. Thomas is a thinker. You don't get much out of him. He thinks more than he writes and writes more than he talks.

ARL VAN DAM

He's always been that way. Took after Esther that way.

LOLA VAN DAM

Well, come on Arl. I want to get changed. It's bridge night with Dean and Betty and I have things I want to get done before then.

ARL VAN DAM

Alright. Well, Gladys. I'm sure we'll see you before you leave in the morning. But if not, it's been a pleasure.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh you'll see us, I'm sure.

LOLA VAN DAM

I hope you've enjoyed your visit.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I'm sorry I couldn't visit under better circumstances, but I've loved my visit. It's such a cute little town, and everyone's so friendly.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, you've got to visit us again.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I will. In fact, I wanted to take a little walk around and stretch my legs before going in.

ARL VAN DAM

Another good thing about Hebron. You can't get lost!

LOLA VAN DAM

Enjoy your walk. Let's go, Arl.

ARL VAN DAM

Aright. So long, Gladys.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So long.

Scene 2

ARL and Lola exit. GLADYS looks around, stretches and begins to exit the opposite way. From upstage between the houses OLD MAN SCHULER emerges. He looks normal.

OLD MAN SCHULER

(whispering)

Hey! You!

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

(turning)

Excuse me?

OLD MAN SCHULER steps out of the bushes. And steps forward.

OLD MAN SCHULER

Who are you? What are you doing out here.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

A man sneaks out of the bushes and he wants to know who I am?

GLADYS stares at OLD MAN SCHULER expecting a response. He stares back. There is a moment before GLADYS answers.

I was just getting ready to go for a walk.

OLD MAN SCHULER

A walk? In these parts? Don't you know it's dangerous?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Dangerous?

OLD MAN SCHULER

Yes. Dangerous. Charlie could be hiding anywhere.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Charlie?

(suddenly remembering)

Oh. I've heard people talking about a crazy man in town. Is he around somewhere?

OLD MAN SCHULER

Charlie is everywhere.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Well, maybe I shouldn't take my walk.

OLD MAN SCHULER

What's your name?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Gladys. Gladys Iskowitch. I came with Thomas Prins for the funeral.

OLD MAN SCHULER

Another funeral?

(hangs head)

We've lost a lot of good ones.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Isn't that the truth, sweetie. It seems the older I get the more funerals I attend. Drop like flies.

OLD MAN SCHULER

Hey, I like you.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

(flattered)

You do?

OLD MAN SCHULER

It's been a long time since I talked to a woman. Long time.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Really? You're not married?

OLD MAN SCHULER

No. I had a girl back home. But, she sent me a dear
john letter.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So, you're not from here?

OLD MAN SCHULER

Here? Don't be ridiculous.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

But you live here now?

OLD MAN SCHULER

Hopefully, they'll be sending me home soon.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh really. So, you're here for a job or something?

OLD MAN SCHULER

It's a big job, alright.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

So, what's your job.

OLD MAN SCHULER

(a beat)

Say, you're cute.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

(once again, flattered)

Oh go on...

(a beat)

No, seriously, sweetie go on. I want to hear more.

OLD MAN SCHULER

You were going for a walk, you say?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I was. But, if it's dangerous...

OLD MAN SCHULER

I could escort you. Keep you safe.

*This is what she's waited to hear. She takes him
by the arm.*

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

I thought you'd never ask! Lead the way, sweetie.

OLD MAN SCHULER

Stay close. I wouldn't want anything to happen to you.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Honey, you don't have to ask twice.

OLD MAN SCHULER

Been a long time since I had a woman on my arm.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Is that right? Well, I'm glad I could be here for you.

Scene 3

They exit. There is a beat. MARIAN enters slowly. She is carrying a tupperware container. She goes to the Prins house and gets to the porch. She starts to knock, but then stops, turns and starts to walk toward her parents house. At that moment, THOMAS exits the Prins house. MARIAN hears the door and stops. She hides from his sight line, but stands where she can watch him. He has changed clothes. He has a cigarette in one hand and a plane ticket in the other. He sits on the porch and looks hard at the plane ticket. MARIAN steps towards him, then back. THOMAS catches the movement out of the corner of his eye and turns.

THOMAS PRINS

Hello? Who's there? Mr. Schuler? Is that you?

THOMAS walks down the stairs slowly and toward the place where MARIAN was hiding. He stops. MARIAN steps out into the open.

THOMAS PRINS (CONT'D)

Marian?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Hello Thomas.

There is a strained silence.

THOMAS PRINS

I wondered if I was going to get a chance to talk to you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm in the book.

THOMAS PRINS

I didn't want to call. I wanted to see you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

My address is listed, too.

THOMAS PRINS

I thought I'd see you at the service, or the reception.
You made yourself pretty scarce.

MARIAN does not answer. After a moment, THOMAS motions to lawn chairs down center.

Will you sit with me?

MARIAN walks towards the lawn chairs and sits as Thomas holds the back of the chair for her. He sits in the chair next to her.

MARIAN DE HAAS

(handing him tupperware)

I was at the church helping clean up after the reception. You left without taking the leftover cake, so I thought I'd bring it by.

THOMAS PRINS

(sets tupperware down next to him)

Thank you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Do you smoke?

THOMAS PRINS

No. Not anymore. But I think about smoking. Do you remember?

MARIAN DE HAAS

What? Stealing cigarettes from your dad's stash in the shed?

THOMAS PRINS

Sneaking out into the woods behind the old mill?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Acting like we were sophisticated socialites?

THOMAS PRINS

Talking for hours under the stars?

MARIAN DE HAAS

(a beat)

Seems like another lifetime.

THOMAS PRINS

Like I said. I think about smoking. The truth is, part of me liked it because I always thought about you while I was having a smoke. It felt like having you near.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm sorry about your folks.

THOMAS PRINS

Thank you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

It must have been a shock.

THOMAS PRINS

(nodding)

It was. It is. I'm not sure it's really sunk in. It feels really surreal.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I can only imagine. When was the last time you talked to them?

THOMAS PRINS

A week ago Sunday. We talked on the phone every Sunday afternoon.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Really? I never knew that. Your mom never told me that.

THOMAS PRINS

Really? I figured she was filling everyone in on the gossip.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Only the good things. She and your dad were happy to talk about the latest opening or the awards you won. But, other than that they were pretty tight lipped. They didn't talk much about what you were up to.

THOMAS PRINS

Really? Well, there wasn't much to tell.

MARIAN DE HAAS

It might have been better for you if they had. I hate to break it to you, but the lack of information only created more speculation.

THOMAS PRINS

Ouch.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yeah.

THOMAS PRINS

How bad?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Depends on who you ask.

THOMAS PRINS

I can only imagine what Arl came up with.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Let's just say he was surprised to see you show up in town with a woman.

THOMAS PRINS

Wow.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Did your folks keep you up to date with things back home?

THOMAS PRINS

Oh yeah. The weather report. The grain prices. The blue plate special at the cafe. I got the weekly blow-by-blow.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm sure you were on the edge of your seat.

THOMAS PRINS

Of course. Actually, it was nice. I've never gotten truly used to New York. It was always nice to have a weekly reminder that Hebron was still here and things hadn't changed that much.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I hear you met Abby.

THOMAS PRINS

Yes. She's wonderful.

MARIAN DE HAAS

She's pretty special.

THOMAS PRINS

Beautiful. Articulate. Smart. Just like her mother.

There is a beat.

THOMAS PRINS (CONT'D)

Who is Abigail's father, Marian?

MARIAN DE HAAS

I see we're not beating around the bush.

THOMAS PRINS

I don't see the point. After burying both my parents today, I'm reminded that I better make the most of the present. Besides, the rate things are going, I'm not sure if I'll get another chance to talk to you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

That's right, because phones in New York probably don't connect all the way back to Iowa.

Marian rises and walks away from the chairs.

THOMAS PRINS

I don't know what to tell you, Marian.

MARIAN DE HAAS

You know what's really crazy? You are the first person in twelve years to ask me that question directly. Well, at least until yesterday.

THOMAS PRINS

Really?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Really. It took my mom twelve years and you coming back to town to get up the nerve. My dad was certainly not going to ask. None of my so called friends ever asked. Not even Arl.

THOMAS PRINS

Wow. Not even Arl. That's saying something.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Why doesn't anyone just ask me who Abby's father is? Is it because they don't care? No, that can't be. We're such a loving, tight-knit community. Maybe it's because they do care. "We love you so much that we just won't talk about it." And, in doing so, the little piece of juicy gossip perpetuates itself. Whispers become conversations behind your back which then become legend. It becomes part of the fabric of the community. Maybe that's the real reason no one asks. The truth is that in this little two-bit town we need to have something to talk about each and every day down at the cafe. We can talk about the weather. We can talk about the grain prices. We can talk about Old Man Schuler. That should cover about fifteen minutes, but after that what do we talk about? How about who is the father of Abby De Haas? That's always good for an ongoing argument. Who's Abby's dad? Who did sweet Marian spread her legs for? Let's talk about that.

THOMAS PRINS

I can't imagine what it's been like for you. I'm sorry.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yeah, well. What do you expect?

A beat.

THOMAS PRINS

You still haven't answered the question.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Why did you leave town, Thomas?

THOMAS PRINS

Because I was eighteen. Because I graduated high school and it was time to...

MARIAN DE HAAS

Stop it. Why did you leave?

THOMAS PRINS

Because I was eighteen. Because I was confused, and hurt, and...

MARIAN DE HAAS

(interrupting)

And I wasn't confused and hurt?!

THOMAS PRINS

... and I was selfish, and a coward.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Why didn't you come back? Why didn't you write? Why didn't you call for God's sake?

THOMAS PRINS

I thought about you all the time. I thought about writing. I thought about coming back. I thought about it every time I had a smoke. I would stand there outside my building. Sometimes I was with neighbors, smoking together. Sometimes a stranger would stop and bum a smoke off of me and we'd stand and talk. It didn't matter. Whether I was with someone, or by myself, somehow you were always there with me just like when we were kids sitting on the hill in Vande Meer's pasture smoking my dad's cigarettes and staring at the stars. Then I quit smoking, but I missed hanging out with you. So, I found myself going outside and standing there with an unlit cigarette in my hand just at the chance to feel you near. I would think about writing, but I could never find the words. It's crazy. I can give words to a million different characters, but I could never find the words to write you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Great. That's just great. You were in New York City having a smoke with some fantasy of me. Back here in Iowa, I was changing diapers, finishing college and doing my best to ignore the whispers from the hypocritical old witches in the back pew at church.

THOMAS PRINS

Back pew. Let's see. Back pew. Stage left or stage right? Couldn't be stage right, the back pew was always Mr. And Mrs. Engels. It would have to be the stage left. Oh yeah, Gladys Dekker and Vivian Dunn. The widows of west 2nd street. Are they still alive?

MARIAN DE HAAS

You hurt me, Thomas. You were the one person I could always count on and when I needed you the most I turned and you weren't there.

THOMAS PRINS

I hurt you?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yes.

THOMAS PRINS

You turned and I wasn't there?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Yes.

THOMAS PRINS

(places cigarette in his mouth, patting his pockets)

A match. A match! My kingdom for a match!

MARIAN DE HAAS

Sorry. Can't help you.

THOMAS PRINS

(throws cigarette away)

I hurt you? I seem to remember it the other way around. What about me, Marian? You were the one person I could count on. My whole life you understood me better than anyone else. You knew my every secret. You knew my dreams. You knew my every fault and you still were my best friend. And then, all of a sudden, BAM, you start ignoring me. You act like I don't exist.

MARIAN DE HAAS

You don't understand.

THOMAS PRINS

You're right I don't understand. I didn't understand why you suddenly shut me off. Then it was Matt Schuler, Mr. Hebron all star, and Marian De Haas. Everybody look at the Prom King and Prom Queen. Don't they look perfect together? Marian is going to prom with Matt Schuler and partying with Matt and all his admirers.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I know. I was stupid. I didn't know what else to do.

THOMAS PRINS

So?

MARIAN DE HAAS

So, what?

THOMAS PRINS

Who's the father, Marian? Who is Abigail's father? Because, I know for certain it wasn't me.

MARIAN DE HAAS

That's really all you cared about, isn't it? You and your ego. I'm facing the scariest, most painful moment of my life and all you care about is how it makes you look?

THOMAS PRINS

It had nothing to do with how I looked, Marian. I could care less what anyone in this town thinks of me.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Well, you made that perfectly clear when you left town and never looked back. You're right. You could care less.

THOMAS PRINS

That's not what I said, Marian. That's not fair.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Not fair? Alright, Thomas. Then, tell me. What do you care about? Because you certainly didn't care about me!

THOMAS PRINS

I did care about you Marian. Don't you get it? I loved you. I loved you so much and the most painful moment of my life was when I turned around and you weren't there.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I needed you Thomas.

THOMAS PRINS

And I needed you! I didn't know what to do, Marian.
What was I supposed to think? My best friend is
treating me like a leper and then all of a sudden she's
pregnant? What were my options? Stick around and stand
up with you at your shotgun wedding with Matt Schuler?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Oh, Thomas. You don't get it. I was never going to
marry Matt Schuler. You and I both know that Matt was,
and is, a complete idiot.

THOMAS PRINS

So, is that it?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Is what it?

THOMAS PRINS

Is Matt Abigail's dad?

MARIAN DE HAAS

He wants to think he is.

THOMAS PRINS

Is he?

MARIAN DE HAAS

No.

THOMAS PRINS

He's not?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Feel better?

THOMAS PRINS

Not really.

(a realization)

But, that's what you wanted, wasn't it. Marian? Please,
look at me.

MARIAN looks at THOMAS. She doesn't answer.

THOMAS PRINS (CONT'D)

I know it wasn't me. You say it wasn't Matt. But, you
made sure that everyone would suspect that it was. You
orchestrated the whole thing, didn't you? Marian? Talk
to me.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Did they talk about me?

THOMAS PRINS
Excuse me?

MARIAN DE HAAS
Your folks. On the Sunday afternoon phone calls. Did they ever talk about me?

THOMAS PRINS
Yes. Mom did. All the time.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Really?

THOMAS PRINS
Mom would slip it in. It was always so casual. "Betty told me that Marian graduated. Isn't that nice?" or "Marian directed the play at the high school this week. I can't understand why no one has snatched up such a beautiful, talented young woman."

MARIAN DE HAAS
Really?

THOMAS PRINS
Oh yeah. That was mom. Queen of Subtlety.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Your mom was so sweet. She was always so good to me and Abby. And your dad. He was like another grandpa for her. Abby loved your folks so much.

THOMAS PRINS
I wonder if mom thought Abigail was her granddaughter.

A beat.

THOMAS PRINS (CONT'D)
You still haven't answered the question.

MARIAN DE HAAS
Why should I, Thomas? What right do you have to know? What right does anyone have to know? You left, Thomas.

THOMAS PRINS
Yes, I did. And, I'm sorry. But,...

MARIAN DE HAAS
(interrupting)
Yes! I went to prom with Matt Schuler. Okay? I did. But let's put things in focus. Your fragile male ego was damaged. I was pregnant! Let's have a little perspective, okay?

THOMAS PRINS

Marian. I was eighteen.

MARIAN DE HAAS

So was I!

THOMAS PRINS

I didn't know what to do.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Well you should have! You should have known.

THOMAS PRINS

That's not fair.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I don't care! I needed you to stick by me. I needed someone I could trust, and you left.

THOMAS PRINS

Have you told anyone?

MARIAN DE HAAS

Have I told anyone what?

THOMAS PRINS

You haven't, have you?

MARIAN DE HAAS

What's that got to do with it?

THOMAS PRINS

Oh, Marian.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I don't see...

THOMAS PRINS

Stop.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I am not....

THOMAS PRINS

Stop. Just stop.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Thomas...

THOMAS PRINS

Time out.

(a beat)

Can we back up. Please? Marian, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for everything. I'm sorry for leaving you alone. I'm

THOMAS PRINS

sorry for running away. I'm sorry for not writing, or calling, or coming home.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I don't...

THOMAS PRINS

I'm not finished. I'm sorry for letting my bruised ego blind me to what you were going through. I want you ask for your forgiveness. I want to rewind twelve years. I want my best friend in the whole world to talk to me, and to tell me this painful secret she's kept locked away for so long. Marian? Talk to me.

There is a dramatic beat.

MARIAN DE HAAS

It was early March. Softball practice was starting up. Our senior year. I was turning eighteen in a few months. I had to have my annual physical form signed before I could play. Mom told me it was time for me to have my first woman's exam. You know how Dutch my parents are. I've got to have a physical for softball. Might as well kill two birds with one stone.

THOMAS PRINS

(Quickly connecting the dots)

Marian...

MARIAN DE HAAS

Everyone in town knew about Doc's drinking. It was legendary. But he was a "functioning drunk." Never let it stop him from doing his job. You remember how it got worse after his wife died.

THOMAS PRINS

Oh my god. Marian.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I went in after school. He was drunk that day. I knew it. You remember Geneva White, his old nurse? She had to have known, too. But, she left the room after taking my vitals and didn't come back when Doc came into the room. What was I supposed to do? I was a kid. He was an adult. He was a DOCTOR for God's sake. It all seemed so surreal. I felt paralyzed. I couldn't scream, I couldn't move, I just lay there and smelled his aftershave, his body odor, and the alcohol on his breath.

THOMAS PRINS

Marian. I am so...

MARIAN DE HAAS

When I missed my period I was worried. The morning of Mr. Dingman's Western Civ test on the Great Depression I woke up and puked my guts out. I knew.

THOMAS PRINS

Didn't you tell...

MARIAN DE HAAS

Who?! Who was I going to tell, Thomas? Doc was the most respected man in this town, even with his drinking problem. No one wanted to know that Doc knocked me up. It would have ripped this town apart, and I did not want to be branded the poor little girl that Doc raped in his office. I sure as hell was not going to wear that scarlet letter on my chest for the rest of my life!

THOMAS PRINS

So you went to prom with Matt.

MARIAN DE HAAS

That's right. I went to prom with Matt Schuler, the biggest jerk in the world. And, I gave myself an easy alibi.

THOMAS PRINS

You knew people would think it was me. You knew that everyone would think that I was the one that got you pregnant.

MARIAN DE HAAS

And what was really crazy is that no one asked.

THOMAS PRINS

To this day, no one knows.

MARIAN DE HAAS

No one even suspects. You took off shortly after it became public and gave people reason to suspect that it was you anyway. Doc committed suicide a month or two later. Everyone concluded that it was his drinking and his grief over Helen that finally pushed him over the edge. Who would have ever imagined that he screwed one

THOMAS PRINS

And you never said a word.

MARIAN DE HAAS

No one asked. No one really wanted to know.

THOMAS PRINS

Marian.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I don't know what I thought was going to happen. Doc was dead. You were gone. It was almost easier to live with the speculation than it was to put everyone through the pain of revealing the truth. The town was already grieving over Doc. He was the tragic hero.

THOMAS PRINS

So, nobody knows? You've carried this by yourself...

MARIAN DE HAAS

Well, that's not completely true. My advisor at the community college. Sara. She was the first person I confided in. Somehow she just knew. She was wonderful. She got me involved with a support group on campus. She also introduced with a wonderful therapist in Des Moines. It became my life line. It made a huge difference.

THOMAS PRINS

But no one in Hebron. No one at home -

MARIAN DE HAAS

I just didn't see the point.

THOMAS PRINS

I'm so sorry.

They embrace.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Maybe if I'd told you from the beginning, things would have been different.

Scene 4

MATT SCHULER enters.

MATT SCHULER

Well, well, well, if this isn't nice. Here we are all cozy. Tommy Prins. Mr. High and Mighty comes back for a day and thinks he can just take my girl.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Grow up, Matt. This is not high school and I am not your girl.

MATT SCHULER

You certainly were on prom night.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Matt. Stop it.

MATT SCHULER

That's right, Tommy. Too bad you couldn't have been there on prom night.

ARL & Lola enter, on their way to DEAN & BETTY'S for bridge night.

THOMAS PRINS

Alright, Matt. That's enough.

ARL VAN DAM

Oh, Lord. Lola, you better get Betty and Dean out here.

Lola runs to the De Haas house and returns with DEAN, BETTY, and ABBY in tow.

MATT SCHULER

You know, Marian. Somehow I knew that I was going to find the two of you together.

MARIAN DE HAAS

So what of it.

MATT SCHULER

So, I can't understand what you ever saw in this guy.

Quietly, GLADYS and OLD MAN SCHULER enter with their arms around one another. GLADYS looks slightly disheveled. No one notices. They stand back and observe what's going on.

MARIAN DE HAAS

What? That he's intelligent, thoughtful, and caring? Look, Matt. I have tried to be nice to you all these years, but I am done. I want you to stay away from me and Abby.

MATT SCHULER

You can't do that.

MARIAN DE HAAS

What do you mean I can't do that.

MATT SCHULER

Why don't you just admit it, Marian. Come on. Admit it after all these years.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Matt, don't do this.

MATT SCHULER

Enough playing coy. Let's let everybody know once and for all. Abby is my daughter. You can't keep me away from her.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Matt. Abby is NOT your daughter.

MATT SCHULER

You're just saying that.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'm not just saying it. You would know you're not Abby's father if you had the brains to do the math.

MATT SCHULER

What are you talking about?

MARIAN DE HAAS

I made the mistake of sleeping with you once. ONCE! On prom night which was the first week in May. A pregnancy lasts forty weeks and if you count back forty weeks from Abby's birthday you'll find yourself in March. You are NOT Abby's father.

MATT SCHULER

(looks confused & devastated)

Well, then who is the father?

There is a moment as MARIAN looks around at everyone and then at ABBY, who is standing next to BETTY. MARIAN looks conflicted as everyone stares, waiting for an answer.

THOMAS PRINS

I am.

With a gasp everyone turns and looks at THOMAS.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Thomas...

ABBY DE HAAS

(to her grandma)

I knew it! I knew it! I knew he was my dad!

ARL VAN DAM

(gloating, to Lola)

I told you.

THOMAS PRINS

(winks and smiles at ABBY)

We were kids. I was scared and humiliated, so I left town and didn't come back. Marian was gracious enough to keep it a secret all of these years as a way of protecting me.

(to ABBY)

Abigail, I'm so sorry.

(he's addressing Abby but his gaze moves slowly to Marian)

I'm sorry that I didn't have the courage to stay here in Hebron, to be here for your mom and to do the right thing. I hope you can forgive me, and if it's alright with you, I think I'd like to stay here, and try to make it up to you.

ABBY runs and hugs THOMAS. THOMAS then looks again at MARIAN.

THOMAS PRINS (CONT'D)

That is, if it's okay with you.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I'd like that.

MATT SCHULER

You haven't heard the end of this. I'll hire a lawyer! I'll force a paternity...

OLD MAN SCHULER

BOY!

Everyone turns and notices OLD MAN SCHULER and GLADYS. There has been a change. He is normal and coherent.

OLD MAN SCHULER (CONT'D)

You'll do no such thing!

MATT SCHULER

Dad?

OLD MAN SCHULER

You've caused enough trouble for Marian and Abby. Things are gonna be different from now on, and you're gonna start by apologizing to them.

MATT SCHULER

But, dad, I...

OLD MAN SCHULER

You mind me. NOW!

MATT stares blankly. Astonished.
 Boy, I brought you into this world and, god help me,
 I'll take you out. Now you apologize.

MATT SCHULER
 (cowed)
 I'm sorry.

OLD MAN SCHULER
 Now, go on home. You and I are gonna have a long
 overdue talkin' tonight.

*MATT exits. Everyone is staring at OLD MAN
 SCHULER, astonished by the change in him. GLADYS
 is staring at him adoringly.*

OLD MAN SCHULER (CONT'D)
 (to the crowd)
 I apologize for all that me and my boy have put you
 through these many years. I'm telling you right now I'm
 gonna see to it that we make it up to you.

ARL VAN DAM
 Bob? I can't believe it. What's come over you.

DEAN DE HAAS
 Yeah. You're not in 'Nam anymore!

OLD MAN SCHULER
 Well, I ran into Gladys here this evening and we went
 for a walk together. It's funny.
 (he gets a little embarrassed)
 The more we talked the better I felt. We just sort of
 hit it off I guess. Well, one thing led to another and
 (he pulls her tight against him)
 I guess all I needed all these years was the love of a
 good woman.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
 No, dear. Well, "good" woman, yes. Though, I prefer
 exceptional because, you know, who are we kidding. But,
 "RIGHT" woman is what you really meant to say.

*THOMAS looks incredulously at GLADYS, who catches
 it and shoots back a "What are you looking at?"
 expression*

THOMAS PRINS
 Gladys?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH
 Well, sweetie, what did you expect? I always told you
 that when the right man comes along, he's not gonna
 know what hit him. I wasn't kidding, you know.

THOMAS PRINS

But, Old Man Schuler?

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Love's a mystery, sweetie. Don't try to make sense of it. You'll go crazy.

OLD MAN SCHULER

But the power of it will make you sane!

THOMAS is still holding his plane ticket. He hands it to OLD MAN SCHULER.

THOMAS PRINS

Here you go, Mr. Schuler. Why don't you take this plane ticket, I'm not going to be needing it. Why don't you take Gladys back to New York.

OLD MAN SCHULER

Thank you, Thomas. I've never been to New York before.

GLADYS ISKOWITCH

Oh that's a fabulous idea!

They begin to exit as GLADYS talks.

Come on, sweetie, we've got to get you packed. I am going to show you the town. Wait 'til you try the kosher deli down the street from my apartment, corned beef to die for...

BETTY DE HAAS

Come on, everybody. It's been a long day. The coffee is on. Why don't we all go inside and get a bite to eat?

Everyone begins to head to the De Haas house except THOMAS and MARIAN who embrace once more, and ARL who is standing and smiling at them, continuing to gloat that he was right.

DEAN DE HAAS

(calling from inside the door)

Come on, you two!

THOMAS PRINS

You know what? If we're all going in for a bite then I'm going to make it a potluck. I have a refrigerator full of ham buns and potato salad I need to get rid of.

MARIAN DE HAAS

I think that's a great idea.

THOMAS PRINS

Go on in. I'll be there in a second.

MARIAN DE HAAS

Thomas.

She pulls him SR for a private moment.
I'm scared.

THOMAS PRINS

Me, too.

They embrace.

MARIAN DE HAAS

(spoken from the midst of the embrace)
How is this going to end?

THOMAS PRINS

I don't know. I just know I'm not leaving you again.

MARIAN DE HAAS

She breaks the embrace and steps back to look
THOMAS in the eye.
Thank you.

THOMAS PRINS

No. Thank you.

MARIAN heads into the De Haas house. THOMAS turns
towards his house and ARL is standing there.

ARL VAN DAM

Well, Tommy. I always knew it.

THOMAS PRINS

Knew what?

ARL VAN DAM

That you were Abby's father.

THOMAS PRINS

How'd you know?

ARL VAN DAM

Well, it made sense. Plus, Abby's such a sharp kid just like you were. And, I've always thought she looked like you.

THOMAS PRINS

Well, Arl. What can I say? Nothing escapes you.

ARL VAN DAM

Yeah, well. Wisdom comes with age, I guess.

THOMAS PRINS

That it does.

ARL VAN DAM

I'm glad you're back in Hebron where you belong.

THOMAS PRINS

Me too, Arl. Me too.