

**AMERICAN PIES, HAPPY LIVES, BLUE SKIES AND OTHER LIES**

A Drama in Two Acts

by

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(AMERICAN PIES, HAPPY LIVES, BLUE SKIES AND OTHER LIES)

# **AMERICAN PIES, HAPPY LIVES, BLUE SKIES AND OTHER LIES**

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS (2 male, 1 female)

ANGEL ADAMS.....about 28, the All-American girl next door.

SAM ADAMS.....30, an American patriot, Angels husband.

TOM CHARLES.....about 30, a soldier of misfortune.

## The Setting

The home of a successful well-adjusted modern couple anywhere in the US or British Isles. The play as it is written here is set in Cambridge, MA. But this drama could just as well take place in Denver, Houston, San Antonio or Tulsa.

## The Time

1978--Nine years after Sam and Tom left for a tour of duty in Vietnam.

## Playwright's Note

While the audience is being seated and prior to curtain rise, it is suggested that music such as George M. Cohan's "Over There", Gordon Lightfoot's "Patriot's Dream" and Billy Joel's "Goodnight Saigon" be played softly in the background.

dwc

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ACT I, SCENE I

SCENE: The interior of a lovely American home in a fashionable section of Cambridge, MA is visible on a dimly illuminated stage. Four rooms are at least partially visible--a master bedroom and nursery upstairs; downstairs there is a dining room and an adjacent den/family room. In the dining room the table is set elegantly for three with fine crystal and china, and in the den a gun case is visible along with a bar and an abundance of green plants. The flavor of the furnishings in the house is distinguished by an air of patriotism. In the dim light, VOICES can be heard coming from the bedroom.

SAM (impatiently)

What's wrong?

ANGEL (irritated)

Nothing! Nothing's wrong!

(Bed sounds, silence, then:)

	SAM
You're not concentrating.	
	ANGEL
I shouldn't <b>have</b> to concentrate; it's supposed to be natural.	
	SAM
Then be natural.	
	ANGEL
I can't.	
	SAM
Why not?	
	ANGEL
I'm concentrating.	
	SAM
Jesus!	
	(SAM switches on a bedside lamp, and the lights come up. He is in bed with ANGEL, his wife. Both are about thirty. He is plump; she, thin, a very attractive blue eyed blond, cut from the Miss America mold.)
	SAM
What the hell?	
	ANGEL
I'm sorry, Sam, but I just can't do it like this. I have to feel something.	
	SAM (grabbing her hand)
Feel this.	
	ANGEL (jerking away)
Stop it!	

(She gets up, slips on a robe, and goes to her dressing table.)

SAM

Come here, baby. Come to uncle Sam.

ANGEL

No! This is insane; there isn't time; I'm nervous. And I don't understand why you came home demanding sex.

SAM

There's plenty of time.

ANGEL (checks time)

No, there isn't. He'll be early. I remember that; he always came early.

SAM

That's too bad.

ANGEL

He always **arrived** early.

SAM

Oh, well, he won't be early tonight. (A beat.) Nine years is a long time. You don't even know what he's like now. He could have changed. Come here.

ANGEL

No.

SAM

Angel. Baby.

ANGEL

Why? **Why?**

SAM

I want you.

ANGEL

Why **now?** (Silence.) I know why . . . you want him to catch us, don't you? That's it, isn't it, Sam?

SAM

What are you talking about?

ANGEL

Oh, I see it clearly now. You want to answer the door while you're pulling up your pants so he'll know. You want to rub it in.

SAM

He does know. We're **married**.

ANGEL

But you have to rub it in. Don't you?

SAM

You're crazy!

ANGEL

Why do you hate him so much?

SAM

Hate him?

SAM (rising and putting on robe)

**Hate him!** We grew up together, went through hell together. See these? (Displays scars on back of legs and buttocks.) I owe him my life!

ANGEL (snaps)

So do I.

SAM

What is **that** supposed to mean?

ANGEL

Just that if it weren't for Tom Charles, I wouldn't be where I am today.

SAM

And just where is that?

ANGEL

Under the limitless blue skies of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

SAM

You go to hell!

ANGEL

I already have!

SAM

God, I see you're going to be your own sweet self tonight.

ANGEL

I'll try.

SAM

I don't give a damn how you treat me, but the least you can do is to treat Tom like a guest.

ANGEL

Because he's such a dear friend?

SAM

Yes! Because he's a friend, an old and dear friend.

ANGEL

Then why didn't you see him before now? Why did you wait all these year to get together with your old and dear friend Tom?

SAM

You know why. Because--because I didn't know how he'd react to my--

ANGEL

Marrying me? Marrying his girl, his lover?

SAM

You weren't his girl when I married you, Angel. You weren't anybody's girl, or is that what you **were**--anybody's girl?

ANGEL (hurt, reflectively)

No, I guess I wasn't Tom's girl. If he had wanted me, he'd have come home.

SAM

You just keep that in mind tonight. Okay?

(ANGEL just stares at him.)

SAM

Anyway, I lost contact with him when I got back. I didn't even know where to begin looking for him.

ANGEL

Or you didn't want to find him.

SAM

Because of you?

ANGEL

No, because of you--or him.

SAM

Don't be ridiculous. Tom was my best friend, the best friend I ever had.

ANGEL

Was? Had?

SAM

**Is!** Okay? **Have.**

ANGEL

Okay. (A beat.) He certainly has you upset; I'll say that for him.

SAM

Me? What about you? When you can't even screw there's definitely something wrong. And I'm not upset--just--anxious.

ANGEL

To see your dear friend, Tom?

SAM

Yeah, yeah! To see my friend, Tom. Okay? (ANGEL just smiles.) Angel, you don't know what war does to men--being that close to dying, to have your friends dying all around you. It--it means something; it . . . I can't explain it. It's something you have to experience, something you have to live through.

ANGEL

Sam, please, spare me the macho Hemingway bullshit. Before--before Tom stopped writing he told me what the war was like for both of you. Until the TET offensive you'd had a pretty easy time of it.

SAM

That's a lie! We were into all kinds of bad shit from day one. He--he just didn't want you to worry.

ANGEL (bitterly)

Ha! Didn't want me to worry. He didn't give a damn whether I worried or not.

SAM

What else did he tell you . . . before he stopped writing?

ANGEL (hard, then nearly breaking)  
Oh, he wrote often of his love and adoration for me. Of plans for our future, of how we would love each other, grow old and finally die together because neither of us would want to go on living without the other. (A beat.) He had a way with words.

SAM  
Things changed.

ANGEL  
Dammit, I know that! And I want to know **what** changed them. I want to know what happened over there!

SAM  
A war happened, a great big beautiful war. The men that left here weren't the same one that came back. Some men it made better, some--

ANGEL  
It made **you** better?

SAM  
It made a man out of me, made me grow up.

ANGEL  
And what did it do to Tom Charles? He was already a man. What did that "great big beautiful war" of yours do to the men that didn't need to grow up?

SAM  
I don't know. Ask Tom.

ANGEL  
I intend to.

SAM  
Well, let me tell you something first, for your own good.

ANGEL  
Something about Tom?

SAM  
And you. (A beat.) If he loved you, he sure as hell didn't show it, not over there anyway?

ANGEL

**Liar!**

SAM

Tom had more whores than supply chits.

ANGEL

I don't believe that . . . besides, why should I care? We weren't married. I didn't expect him to abstain from sex for a year. (A beat.) I didn't. Did I?

SAM (smiling)

You sure didn't.

ANGEL

Oh no, while your best friend, no--no, your--your **war buddy** was still in Nha Trang, you were shacked up with his best girl in Boston.

SAM

It was just one of those things.

ANGEL

Just one of those wonderful things--you got me pregnant!

SAM

And an abortion. Don't forget the good part.

ANGEL

**After** we were married!

SAM

I didn't want you to be stuck with a kid **and** a husband you didn't want.

ANGEL

But you didn't mind getting stuck with a woman you didn't love, but also one that you still refuse to give up. (A beat.) Why did you marry me, Sam? (Silence.) To hurt Tom? Why?

SAM

Darling, I married you for love.

ANGEL

You don't know what love is. You didn't then; you don't now.

SAM

What about you, Angel? You didn't have to marry me.

ANGEL

But I **did** have to. I was pregnant. That was almost nine years ago; things were different then, and I was a respectable, if slightly tarnished, young woman

ANGEL (continuing)

from a good family. I had to that's all. You don't think I married you for love?

SAM

Why did you then? Or do you even know?

ANGEL

I know. I know all right.

SAM

My charm, huh? Or was it my body? Just couldn't get enough of it, could you? (A beat.) At least there's the money now--this house, the club, that BMW you drive, nice clothes. You could have done a lot worse.

ANGEL

You could have too.

SAM

Jesus! Why don't we quit this? Nothing changes.

ANGEL

Only because you won't let it.

SAM

And because you don't want things to get better.

ANGEL

Better! Better than what? Sam, I can't love a man that doesn't love me and never has.

SAM

Does the tennis pro at the club love you? I know all about that, you know. Been working overtime on your backhand, Angel darling?

ANGEL

And I know all about your . . . lady friends.

SAM  
You don't know jack squat!

ANGEL  
I know what I am to you--a receptacle, nothing more.

SAM  
And you love it.

ANGEL  
Like hell I do. I want . . . to be needed, cared for. There's nothing here but sex. No need, no commitment--

SAM  
No, "love, sweet love."

ANGEL  
Bastard! (A beat.) I have a surprise for you, Sam.

SAM  
Great! I love surprises.

ANGEL  
You won't love this one.

SAM  
No?

ANGEL (sweetly)  
No. I'm pregnant, again. Surprise.

SAM  
**What?**

ANGEL  
I'm pregnant, knocked up, heavy with child. I'm going to have a little baby, a child.

SAM  
How the hell could--

ANGEL  
It's not yours.

SAM  
Bitch! Slut! You'd better be lying. (SAM slaps her.) If you're not—

ANGEL  
Not what? Pregnant? Or lying?

SAM  
Whose is it?

ANGEL  
I don't know. Could be almost anyone's.

(He slaps her again.)

SAM  
Liar! Whose?

ANGEL  
Tom's.

SAM  
Liar! Bitch! Slut! Tell me the truth.

ANGEL  
Yours.

(SAM slaps her again and again. ANGEL is laughing and crying.)

SAM  
Damn you! Bitch! Whore!

ANGEL  
You talk so nice.

SAM  
Shut up! (He thinks while her laughter/crying dies away.) Angel--Angel! **Are** you pregnant? Dammit, don't you lie to me; I'm warning you. Don't you lie to me.

ANGEL (smiles)  
No.

SAM

You're a liar! By god, I'm telling you. This kid had better have blue eyes and my blood type.

ANGEL

What about skin? Almond? Chocolate brown? Yellow?

SAM

You're such a sweet bitch. No wonder I love you so.

ANGEL

Don't flatter me so, Sam. It just makes me all weak and wet inside.

SAM

I love you so.

ANGEL

You're **so** good to me, always hitting me with your open hand. In all these years of marriage you've never left a mark. I really appreciate that.

SAM

I do what I can. We're such a great team. (Checks time.) Almost seven. Shall we get ready to greet our guest?

ANGEL

**Your** guest, darling. He's your friend.

SAM

But he's an old friend of yours too, a close friend.

ANGEL

But **not** a war buddy; that makes a difference.

SAM

You bet it does. It's like--

ANGEL

Don't try to explain. I wouldn't understand. You have to live through that sort of thing. (A beat.) What are you going to wear, Sam? (Pause.) I know. Your uniform! Why don't you wear your uniform just for old times sake?

SAM

I don't think that's necessary.

ANGEL

Yes, yes of course. Your uniform! Full dress with medals--Purple Heart, Cross of Gallantry, everything. That would be splendid.

SAM

No, Angel.

ANGEL

Are you ashamed, Sam? Sorry you defended American democracy from the yellow peril?

SAM

No! I'm not ashamed.

ANGEL

Wear it then. You look so--heroic; and I just melt when I see a man in uniform. You want to wear it; I know you do. You had the coat on just yesterday, studying yourself in front of the mirror. I saw you. Chest out, head up, chin down--is that the way it goes? I'll put on some marching tunes, and you and Tom can march around, call cadence, just have a grand ole time. And I'll even act like the whore that I am for you two soldier boys.

SAM

That's enough! I'll wear the uniform if it will make you shut up, but nothing else. No music, no marching. And you just be yourself--that's whole enough for both of us.

ANGEL

I'll be with the two men who would know best.

(Silently they begin dressing. He drags a Marine dress uniform from the closet; ANGEL removes an ao-dai from her dresser. She places it on the bed as SAM almost unconsciously begins humming the Marine Corps Hymn. After a moment he turns and sees the ao-dai.)

SAM

What the hell is that?

ANGEL

An ao-dai; it's what the women in Vietnam wear.

I know that!

SAM

Then why did you ask me what it was?

ANGEL

Where did it **come from**?

SAM

Saigon. A shop called Gay--

ANGEL (checking label)

Shit! Where did **you** get it?

SAM

From Tom. He sent it to me years ago. (She holds it up to her body.) You like soldier?

ANGEL

You're not wearing it! I won't have you looking like some gook whore. Not in my house.

SAM

Don't tell me what clothes to wear. If you can play soldier then I can play my game too.

ANGEL

Jesus! Why tonight? Why did you have to drag it out tonight?

SAM

For Tom. I want to wear it for Tom, if he was so fond of Vietnamese women. And I want to wear it because--because tonight is going to be a very special night. I can feel it.

ANGEL

Special? How?

SAM

Tonight is going to be special because I'm going to find out what happened over there. I'm going to find out why Tom didn't come home, and why I married you instead of him.

SAM

Tom didn't come back because he didn't want to, because he didn't want you.

ANGEL

I don't believe that.

SAM

He's not here is he? Hasn't been here for nine years, has he? (Silence.) Angel?

ANGEL

No. No! He's not!. (A beat.) And I want to know why.

SAM

You just keep your mouth shut. What happened over there happened to us; it happened to the guys who fought the war.

ANGEL

No. It happened to me too; it happened to all of us. How can you say it didn't happen to us? We . . . what is it, Sam? Does this talk of the war frighten you?

SAM

No, it doesn't frighten me. It's just that--that some things are best not remembered. If Tom wants to talk, I'll let him, but don't push him. It would be hard on him because--because he was--different from the rest of us. He didn't like--to talk about it.

ANGEL

Oh, I've never pushed Tom. If I had maybe he'd married me before he left, and--

SAM

Well, aren't you the lucky one?

ANGEL

Oh, I get down on my knees and thank God every night.

SAM

Is that what you're doing down there?

ANGEL

You go to hell!

SAM

Show me the way, Angel. You seem to think you know it.

ANGEL  
You know why I detest you so much?

SAM  
Can't be my charm.

ANGEL  
Because you make me hate myself. You've made me such a bitch.

SAM  
I have a knack for bringing out the best in people.

ANGEL  
How about, Tom? Did you bring out the best in Tom?

SAM (reflects, then)  
Oh, yes. I brought out the best in Tom, the very best. I made us both heroes--  
Tom terrific and Sam--

ANGEL  
The sham!

SAM  
Very funny, Angel.

ANGEL  
So, Tom's a hero too? You never told me that.

SAM  
I don't like to talk about it.

ANGEL  
What? The war!

SAM  
Yeah! The war! I don't like to talk about it.

ANGEL  
But that's practically all you ever talk about. Your glory days as a Cong killer.  
You've never mentioned Tom though, except in a derogatory sense.

SAM  
That's a lie! Tom . . .

Tom . . . what?

ANGEL

SAM

Tom was a good soldier; he just didn't--fit in. I already told you he was different.

ANGEL

I know he was different. But you fit just fine, an exemplary grunt.

SAM

I did my job.

ANGEL

Which was what?

SAM

To do what I was told, to keep my mouth shut. To serve my country. I'm not ashamed; I can hold my head up.

ANGEL

To whom?

SAM

God, you **are** a bitch. You can't see the good side of anything.

ANGEL

Good side! My God, Sam, you know how many kids on both sides died in that war? And for what?

(The bell rings below.)

SAM

There he is.

ANGEL

You get it. I'll be down in a while.

SAM

Don't be long. I know he'll be anxious to see you.

ANGEL

Oh, yes, I know he's **very** anxious to see me--after all these years.

SAM

You just keep that in mind, okay? Nine years. **Nine** years!

ANGEL

I can count, Sam. Just get the door.

SAM

Don't be long.

ANGEL

I'll just give you boys a chance to reminisce about all those things a wife and former lover wouldn't want to hear about. You know--**man** talk. I mean, Jesus, how many super bowls did you boys miss seeing together?

(Bell rings again, longer.)

SAM

I'll get the door now.

ANGEL

Do that, Sam. I'll be down indirectly.

(SAM goes below while ANGEL continues dressing. She sits down at a dressing table with her back to the audience and begins applying her make-up. Downstairs, SAM goes to the bar, pours some scotch, gulps it down, and starts for the door. The bell rings again. SAM hesitates before opening the door.)

SAM

Tom! Tom Charles! Goddammit man! Come in; come in here!

(TOM CHARLES, a thin sullen but attractive man of about 30 enters. Somehow he looks used, almost broken.)

SAM

Son of a bitch, it's good to see you! Come on in. Get in here. Let me look at you for chrissake!

TOM (woodenly)

Hello, Sam.

SAM

Goddamn. Gooooodamn! You look. . . great, a little on the thin side maybe, but great. Let me get you a drink. Son of a bitch! Nine years. Nine fucking years! Haven't changed a bit.

TOM

I've changed.

SAM

So, how has life been treating you?

TOM

Indifferently.

SAM (at stairs)

Honey. Honey! Come on down. He's here. **Tom's here!** (SAM goes to bar.)  
Scotch, Tom? Still drinking scotch?

TOM

Never did. Rum. **You** drink scotch. You and Hal, at least Hal used too.

SAM

Right, **rum**. You used to say, "Right as rum, right?" How could I forget?

TOM

Just slipped your mind, I guess.

SAM

Yeah, well . . . one rum-coco coming up. (A beat.) Hal drank scotch, yeah.  
How the hell is ole Hal?

TOM

Dead.

SAM

What?

TOM

He's dead; ole Hal is dead as a boot.

SAM

No shit?

No. Dead!

TOM

How?

SAM

Mortar frag took his face off a month after you got out.

TOM

Goddammit, that's rough. Lousy fucking war.

SAM

I thought you liked it, Sam?

TOM

No, no, I didn't like it. I mean it was a war, the only one we had. You--you had to make the best of it. But shit. . . mortar frag, that's rough.

SAM

He may be better off than a lot of us.

TOM

His family all right? Didn't he have a wife, a couple of kids?

SAM

They got their check. . . and a flag. The government gave them the flag that the box was wrapped in--no charge.

TOM

Well, that's something. Ten grand, nothing to bitch about.

SAM

And they can use that flag for a bedspread, a beach towel--all kinds of things.

TOM

Look, Tom, I'm serious.

SAM

So am I.

TOM

The gooks didn't give their people anything.

SAM

Gave'em hell. The same thing that we gave'em.

TOM

Still bitter, aren't you?

SAM

Me? Bitter?

TOM

Shit, Tom, let's not get off on that track. There's been too much of that already. Let's remember the **good times**.

SAM

(SAM hands TOM a drink then pours himself another tumbler of scotch.)

To the good times.

SAM

Jesus! There were so many of them I hardly know which one to toast. To--all of them, **all** the good times.

TOM

Yeah . . . cheers.

SAM (uncomfortably)

(Silence. Then:)

You look . . . fit enough, Sam.

TOM

Yeah, I'm fine, great.

SAM

Uniform's a little tight though.

TOM

A hazard of the good life, I guess, but I can still squeeze into it. Once a Marine--

SAM (pats his stomach)

Always a Marine.

TOM

SAM  
Took the words right out of my mouth.

TOM  
Sorry.

(Silence.)

SAM  
Damn! Nine years. Seems like a hundred.

TOM  
Two.

SAM  
Two?

TOM  
Two **hundred**.

SAM  
Yeah, yeah, **two** hundred. Time flies--

TOM  
Like a speeding bullet.

SAM (nervously)  
Yeah, shit . . . too bad about Hal.

TOM  
Especially for him.

SAM  
Yeah . . . shit I can't believe you're really here, Tom.

TOM  
I can't either.

SAM  
In the flesh. (A beat.) Jesus, Nam! We had some times, didn't we?

TOM  
Did we?

(SAM gulps his drink and pours another.)

SAM

Goddammit, Tom, I'm trying to be civil. You called, told me you were in town. I--I invited you into my house, as an old friend, a war buddy. I wanted you to see Angel. Now what the hell?

TOM

You're right. I'm sorry, Sam; I'm being a shit--nerves, I guess. Things have been a little rough. You understand.

SAM

Yeah, yeah, it's all right. Sorry I flared up; I'm a little on edge myself. (Goes to stairs.) Angel. Angel! Hurry up. (To TOM.) Women.

TOM

Yeah . . . women.

SAM

So, how are things?

TOM

Which things?

SAM

You know, just--things, things in general.

TOM

We lost the war.

SAM (confused)

What?

TOM

The war. The one we fought in . . . we lost.

SAM

Yeah, yeah . . . I know. Jesus!

(TOM surveys the surroundings.)

TOM

Nice place, Sam.

SAM (shrugs)

Thanks. It works for us. And at two hundred grand, believe me, it was a steal.

TOM

I bet. (A beat.) You're doing all right then?

SAM

Hey, I'm doing a whole lot better than all right. I make a killing in the market every day--buy and sell, buy and sell, I get paid a commission for both regardless of what a stock does. (A beat.) It's amazing what you can do with a few brains in this country.

TOM

And amazing what a few brains in this country can do.

SAM

Isn't that what I just said?

TOM

Was it?

SAM (lost)

I thought so. Jesus . . .

TOM

You're a broker, huh?

SAM

Yeah, right, a broker. Just started my own firm--business thriving, bull market, money pouring in from all over. Let me tell you something.

TOM

A hot tip? **Inside** info?

SAM

No. Just a fundamental principle of our economic system.

TOM

Shoot.

SAM

If you've got it, it ain't hard to make it. Cheers!

TOM

That's what they say, all right.

SAM

It's true. Absolutely.

TOM

Happy huh?

SAM

Happy? That's not the word for it.

TOM

I didn't think so.

SAM

I've got it all: beautiful wife--

TOM

I know.

SAM

Lovely home, position, respect--

TOM

All the ingredients of an American pie.

SAM

Yeah, right--what?!

TOM

An American pie.

SAM

I don't get it.

(TOM stares at him for a moment.)

TOM

Of course you don't. It's got you--and me and damn near everybody else. That's the thing about an American pie.

SAM

Jesus, Tom! What the shit? What the hell's an **American pie**?

TOM

Don't you know, Sam? Some honor, or what we mistake as honor; some noble intentions, a sprinkling of twisted logic, a dash of fear, two cups of greed, power--lots of power, and a plausible excuse. Put it all together. Cover it with some palatable lies, simmer for two hundred years, and you come up with a Vietnam, or a Korea, or a Wounded Knee, or some other goddamn thing.

(SAM just stares at him; he still doesn't get it.)

TOM

Dig it, Sam! That's what got me: swallowed too much pie, and I just got a small piece. But **you**. You're still trying to swallow the whole damn thing, but you can't. When you do that you become part of the whole.

SAM

Tom! What the hell are you talking about? American Pie?

TOM

You. Me. Angel. This country. Can't you see that?

SAM

I can see that your mind is still somewhere out there in left field. What have you been reading anyway?

TOM (sighs heavily)

The Betty Crocker Cookbook.

SAM

I thought so. That American pie business sure sounds like a **crock** to me. (A beat.) Another drink?

TOM

I'm fine. You go ahead though. (He does.) How's Angel?

SAM

Angel? Good. Fine. You know Angel.

TOM

Yeah, I know her.

SAM

I didn't mean that.

TOM  
Didn't mean what?

SAM  
That--that you **knew** her. I mean, I know that you knew her--before . . . shit, forget it.

TOM  
It's a hard thing to forget, Sam.

SAM  
I didn't mean that!

TOM  
I didn't either.

SAM  
No, I . . . anyway, Angel is fine, just fine. She's not--hard to please.

TOM  
I know that too. (A beat.) You married well, Sam.

SAM  
My charm, I guess.

TOM  
Undoubtedly.

SAM  
Shit it's good to see you, Tom. I really mean that.

TOM  
I've been looking forward to it for a long time. Seeing both you and Angel, re-establishing ties, making contact. (A beat.) I guess I owe her some kind of an explanation. Did you ever . . .

SAM  
No, no! I never said anything--about that. I--I--didn't think it was my place to tell her. Of course she wondered what happened; she would naturally be curious, but . . . I just never said.

TOM  
I appreciate that, Sam; I really do. It's the least you **couldn't** have done.

SAM

Goddammit, Tom! You keep playing these word games. I never know when you're serious. "The least I couldn't have done." What the fuck does that mean?

TOM

It simply means that you couldn't have done more--and you didn't.

SAM

Shit!

TOM

It's the scotch, Sam. You **do** drink scotch. It has your mind all muddled. It's perfectly clear to me.

SAM

Don't try to explain.

TOM

I couldn't if I wanted to, which I don't. (Silence.) Did you hear about Captain Able?

SAM

No, no I didn't. What about him?

TOM

He made Major.

SAM

Oh. (A beat.) That's it? That's **all**?

TOM

No, that's not all. It was a field promotion. He attacked an NVA tank with a handful of grenades and his .45.

SAM

Jesus! And he made Major posthumously. That's not funny, Tom.

TOM

Not funny? It's hilarious--he took the tank, dropped a grenade down the hatch, just like John Wayne. Finished off the crew with his .45.

SAM

No shit?

TOM

True story. Got a Silver Star for his trouble. Would have won a Medal of Honor if he'd had taken even the slightest wound.

SAM

Some fucking guy--took a tank with a .45! No shit! You seen him?

TOM

Why, I wouldn't go near him. But I understand he's an instructor at the Academy--undoubtedly teaching Middies how to take tanks with .45s.

SAM

Even you've got to admit that took some guts. Jesus!

TOM

Sure as hell wasn't brains.

(SAM goes to stairs.)

SAM

Angel. Angel! Goddammit, get down here!

ANGEL

Coming dear. Is Tom here?

SAM

Hell yes! I told you he was.

ANGEL

Was?

SAM

**Is!** Tom is here, right here, right now, in the flesh. Now hurry up.

ANGEL

Don't you mean down?

SAM

Okay, down. (To TOM.) Great sense of humor, that girl.

TOM

Terrific.

(As a final touch ANGEL takes out a black wig and places it carefully on her head. Then she turns away from the mirror. She has made herself up to look like an Oriental, and in the wig and ao-dai she bears a striking resemblance to a Vietnamese beauty.)

SAM

Wait 'til you see her, Tom; she's as beautiful as ever. Hasn't changed a bit. (Looks up the stairs and sees her.) Jesus Christ! (Bolts up a few steps and grabs her.) What the hell are you doing?

ANGEL

Let me go!

SAM

Not like that.

ANGEL

Don't cause a scene, Sam. You know how you hate scenes. And you don't want to make our friend Tom uncomfortable.

(She continues on down.)

SAM

Angel!

ANGEL (ignoring SAM)

Hello, Tom.

(He turns see her and just stares.)

SAM

I--I guess she has--changed a little.

TOM

Angel.

ANGEL

Long time.

TOM

Yeah, long time. I . . . (He shrugs and looks away.)

ANGEL

You're what? Sorry?

TOM

Yes, I'm sorry. At the very least, I'm very sorry. I should have called--

ANGEL

Or written, or wired, or sent a runner, or a message by drums. You could have done **something!**

TOM

Angel, you don't . . . understand.

ANGEL

I--"don't understand." Of course you're right; I don't. I don't even fully

ANGEL

This is the first time I've worn the ao-dai.

TOM

It's very attractive. Really.

SAM

Angel can wear anything with her figure.

ANGEL

What Sam means is that he likes to put me on his leash and take me out in public. Would you take me out like this, Sam?

SAM

Sure, on Halloween.

ANGEL

How about you, Tom?

SAM

He's trying to be civil. Give him a chance.

ANGEL (snaps)

He had his chance! (Silence.) Well, isn't this a delightful little reunion? A trio; I

ANGEL (continuing)

mean that in the carnal sense. A carnal trio. Sounds like a porno novel. You could write it, Tom. You **do** still write?

TOM

I still write.

ANGEL

Oh, no, you don't. I forgot. You **quit** writing, at least to me. Where I was concerned, you never wrote another word.

TOM

Angel . . .

ANGEL (hard)

What? Angel **what**?

TOM

Let's--keep it friendly. All right?

ANGEL

Friendly. Of course, we **are** old friends after all. I nearly forgot. You'll have to forgive me. I'm sorry for the lapse of memory, but it's just been so long.

TOM

You don't have to be sorry.

ANGEL

But I **do**. I do have to be sorry. That's what I do best is apologize. I'm sorry for this, sorry for that. I have so much to be sorry for. Mostly I'm sorry for myself, but that's another story, one you probably wouldn't want to hear.

TOM

Another time maybe.

ANGEL

Maybe. Say in another nine years. Or are you planning on dropping in on my life again before then?

TOM

I couldn't say.

ANGEL

You, "couldn't say."

TOM (snaps)

That's what I said!

SAM

Why don't you two knock it off?

ANGEL (ignores SAM)

I know what you said. You said you, "couldn't say," but what I want to know is what it is that you can't say.

TOM

There are a number of things I can't say.

ANGEL

Anymore?

TOM

Anymore.

SAM

Well, shit, I think I'll mosey over here to the bar and fix myself another drink. You folks interested? (A beat.) In drinks?

ANGEL

How about this one, Tom? "I can't," no, no, "I **don't want** to live without you." Can you say **that** anymore?

TOM (looks away)

I don't have anyone to say it to.

ANGEL

Or, "I'll never let you go." Remember that?

TOM

That was a long time ago.

ANGEL (pressing)

Do you remember?

TOM

Yes, I remember.

ANGEL

Do you say **that** anymore?

TOM

Angel, there's something that you don't know.

ANGEL (bitterly)

Oh, there's **plenty** that I don't know! (A beat.) Dammit! There I go again being a bitch. Forgive me, Tom. You're our guest, having come all the way from . . . from where to see us.

TOM

Manhattan.

SAM

Shit, Tom! I didn't know you were a New Yorker.

TOM

I'm not.

SAM

Oh. . .

ANGEL

So, how are things in, or is it, **on**, Manhattan?

TOM

I wouldn't know.

ANGEL

Know what? Whether it's on or in? Or know how things are in, or, on Manhattan?

TOM

Neither. Or both.

ANGEL

You clever boy. Isn't Tom clever, Sam?

SAM

He always did have a way with words.

ANGEL

I was just saying that very thing earlier--that Tom always did have a way with words.

SAM

Right, Tom. She said it all right. I was right there in the room with her, upstairs, our bedroom.

TOM

What do you want, Angel?

ANGEL

Me? Why, I want . . . only to be the perfect hostess, of course. To please the man in my life, and the man not in it.

SAM

Shit!

ANGEL (to TOM)

What do **you** want?

TOM

I want somehow for you . . . to understand.

ANGEL

Dammit! For nine years I've been trying to understand. But how could I understand without hearing anything from you?

TOM

I should have come sooner; I thought that maybe Sam had said something.

ANGEL

Sam did! Sam said plenty.

SAM

Wait a minute, Angel.

ANGEL

But Sam has a way of dealing with the truth.

SAM (covering)

I--I told her the truth--that--that you went a little crazy towards the end. All that talk about us being the enemy, the gooks the good guys. You were all screwed up; that talk about getting out, joining up with the hippies when you got home. Then you wouldn't even associate with your own Company, starting hanging out with the gooks all the time. You went Oriental, Tom. It happens, Angel. A guy gets mixed up with some chick, thinks he's in love, marries her. She either won't leave or can't so he stays on--buys a bar, puts on a pair of thongs, eats nothing but rice and fish, maybe a little tofu and never comes back. Happens all

SAM (continuing)

the time--Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan the Philippines.

TOM

But that's not what happened to me, Sam. You know that. Maybe I did go Oriental to some degree, but that's not **what happened**. Don't you remember?

SAM

No, no. I thought that was it. No shit.

ANGEL

Did you have a girl, Tom? A little Oriental flower?

TOM

I had a friend.

ANGEL  
A friend? Sounds cozy.

TOM  
It wasn't like that.

ANGEL  
No? What was it like? Tell me about her. Was she young? Or an older, but not necessarily wiser, woman? Long black hair like this? Small? Dark eyes I bet. Slight smile. Delicate features. Did you buy her drinks? Saigon tea?

TOM  
She wasn't a whore.

ANGEL  
None of them are. Hey, soldier boy, buy me drink? Saigon tea?

TOM (digs it)  
You go upstairs? You give number one blow job?

ANGEL (rushes at him)  
Bastard!

SAM (grabbing Angel, laughing it off)  
Hey, hold on there tiger. Told you about her sense of humor, Tom. And--and he took right to you, Honey. But let's stop the game now or play something else. Freshen our drinks, Angel. (He practically drags her to the bar.) I'm drinking scotch, Tom, rum-coco.

(ANGEL is all torn up inside now, breaking and trying to keep from breaking. She starts working on the drinks, and pours one for herself, a healthy shot of gin.)

ANGEL  
I'm sorry, Tom.

TOM  
So am I.

ANGEL  
For what?

TOM  
Everything. Nothing. (Gestures to room.) This.

ANGEL  
No you're not.

(ANGEL gives TOM his drink then goes back to the bar where she climbs on a bar stool and crosses her legs provocatively.)

ANGEL  
Is this the way they do it?

(TOM refuses to answer.)

SAM  
Well, this is a little more like it. Old friends getting together for a civil drink. Talking about old times.

ANGEL (woodenly)  
Cheers.

SAM  
Right. Right! Cheers! To Tom--and--and Angel. All of us.

ANGEL  
All the happy people.  
(They drink.)

ANGEL  
So, how have things been, Tom?

SAM  
You have to specify which things you want to know about, Angel. I've already been down this road with Tom.

ANGEL  
So, how's your love life, Tom?

SAM (under his breath)  
Jesus Christ!

ANGEL  
Married?

No. TOM

Divorced? ANGEL

Never married. TOM

Living with someone? Cohabiting? ANGEL

A cat; I have a cat. TOM

You have a little pussy around then? ANGEL

Goddammit, Angel! SAM

You stay out of this! ANGEL

He's our guest. SAM

It's all right, Sam. I don't blame her. TOM

Tom, you look terrible. What's wrong? ANGEL (suddenly moved)

What's right? TOM

"What's right?" (Reflects, then:) Right is what you do with God's blessing, or your government's. ANGEL

No, that's wrong. TOM

Is than an opinion or a definition? ANGEL

Both. TOM

I see. ANGEL

I don't! (A beat.) Jesus! Hey, look, Tom, what have you been doing since the war? Where the hell you been? SAM

**What--have I been doing since the war?** TOM (dramatically)

Yeah, that's what I asked. SAM

Since the war, I have been--drifting--writing--and, somewhere along the line that I drifted along, I acquired a cat. TOM

Writing, huh? SAM

And drifting and acquiring cats. ANGEL

**One** cat, a Siamese. TOM

Pardon me. **One** cat. ANGEL

What are you writing about, Tom? SAM

People, places and things. TOM

Good subject matter. SAM

Jesus!

ANGEL

What--kinds of people?

SAM

Good ones, some that aren't so good. Heroes--cowards. Grunts.

TOM

A book, Tom? Articles? Stories? A novel, what?

ANGEL

The great American novel, of course.

TOM

Has it got a title?

ANGEL

I call it *War Games*.

TOM

Never heard of it.

SAM

It hasn't been published.

TOM

Oh, well--I'll be looking for it.

SAM

I bet you will.

TOM

Did you put that chaplain in it? That crazy bastard--what was his name?

SAM

Goodman.

TOM

Yeah, yeah, Goodman, crazy bastard! Did you put him in it?

SAM

No, I put **a** chaplain in it, of course, but not Goodman. None of my characters, you see, are based on real people, either living or dead.

TOM

ANGEL

Of course not.

SAM

Should have seen this guy, Angel. A chaplain, a man of God, you know, the clergy?

ANGEL

A preacher in uniform. I think I have it figured out.

SAM

Always packed a sidearm, and knew what to do with it. Said he'd blow Charlie to hell if he couldn't get there on his own. Used to say the craziest things. (A beat.) Hey, and you could do him, Tom!

TOM

Hal did him. I couldn't do him.

(SAM shows some disappointment.)

SAM

No, it was you. I remember. Hal did Westmoreland; **you** did Goodman. Do him now; do Chaplain Goodman for Angel. She'd get a kick out of that.

TOM

I don't do Marines anymore.

SAM

He was **Navy**. Come on, Tom. Do him for Angel.

ANGEL

You could always act, Tom. Give me another free show.

SAM

Yeah, do the funny stuff. **God** he was funny. Said he had a laugh for every bullet in Nam. Come on, Tom.

TOM

All right, all right. I'll do one thing, but for you, Sam, not Angel. Just for you; Angel wouldn't understand.

SAM

Okay, fine, but Angel can watch.

Sure. Angel can watch.

TOM

(Tom goes to the dinner table, takes a white napkin and stuffs it around his collar. Then he takes up a position somewhere behind the bar, using it as a podium.)

TOM

You have to remember that my podium is constructed from empty ammo crates, my candle holders from expended recoilless rifle shells, and that my government issue religious icon is dual purpose, reversible--having the Protestant cross on one side, a crucifix on the other.

SAM

And that--that he's packing a .45 on his hip.

TOM

That too. (Brief pause for TOM to get into character.) Now, if we might close this service with a prayer, but let me ask you not to bow your heads, but to hold them up high like the proud soldiers that you are--

SAM

That's it. Yeah--yeah, he used to say that.

TOM (clears his throat)

--like the proud soldiers that you are for you have no reason whatsoever to hang your heads. Hold them up high so that you might see **God**, and so that **God** might see the shining faces of his young servants. Let us pray: Our most gracious and loving Heavenly Father, today we come to thee humbly, asking only that we might serve Thee while in the service of our Christian brothers in this pitiless and war torn land. We pray that Thou wouldst--

SAM

"Wouldst." He was always saying shit like that. "Wouldst, Thou, Thine, Jesus! Go on, Tom, I mean, Reverend.

TOM

We pray that Thou wouldst give us the strength and courage so that we might dispatch--

SAM

"Dispatch!" We didn't even know what he was talking about--whether the VC

SAM (continuing)

were in dispatch or datpatch; remember that guy, Tom? From Mobile? Black dude! (TOM just stares at him.) Oh, sorry--Reverend. Go on. Don't mind me; I won't interrupt again. Scouts honor.

TOM

--give us the strength and courage so that we might dispatch Thine enemies. We pray most humbly that we might make widows of Thine enemy's women, orphans of his children. We pray that they might feel the sting of death and--

SAM (disturbed)

Wait, Tom.

TOM

--the sharp edge of Thy sword. May the beast of fear enter their cold hearts, the pain of hunger touch their empty bellies. We pray that they may be left homeless and destitute, that they will be no stranger to suffering, not unacquainted with death. And may the souls of Thine enemies burn in everlasting hell, and may Thine Almighty hand crush his will to resist the love we offer. We beg also Dear Lord that Thine blanket of everlasting love and mercy cover Thine servants as they go forth to do Thine will. Protect them from the spears of the heathen, from the barbs of un-Christian souls. And finally Dear Lord, in the loving name of our savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord, we beseech Thee that Thy will be done. Amen.

SAM (confused)

No, no. He--he never said that shit. That--that was all wrong. Goodman was funny! What he told us was funny. He made us all laugh, made a joke out of everything.

TOM (removing "collar")

Don't you see, Sam? That was just the flip side of what he said, the unspecified, the consequences of having his prayers answered.

SAM

No, that's not right; he was funny. He didn't mean any harm. I mean--they were **gooks** he was talking about. They--they weren't like us. Remember a--a "gook a day to pave the Lord's way?"

TOM

That's right! They were **fond** of dying, didn't care about life. And they were yellow and had those funny looking eyes.

SAM

Yeah, yeah. And they ate such shit. And the whole country smelled. Dammit, Tom! You turn everything around.

TOM

I don't turn things around, Sam. You do--you and Goodman and all the rest.

SAM

No, that's not true. I . . .

ANGEL

Tom . . . Tom? What happened over there?

SAM (anxiously)

What about dinner? About ready, Honey?

ANGEL

Tom?

(He doesn't answer. Irritated with him  
ANGEL starts to leave.)

ANGEL

I'll check on dinner.

(She exits to kitchen off dining room.)

SAM

I'm sorry about her, Tom. I don't know what she's trying to do--that getup. I didn't even know she had it.

TOM

I sent her the ao-dai from Saigon.

SAM

Yeah, that's what she said.

TOM

I sent it **before** you married her.

SAM

Oh, yeah, yeah, I understand that. I didn't mean anything. It's . . . okay. Another drink?

I'm fine.

TOM

SAM

Don't mind if I have another? For the nerves. (A beat.) And I'm just so damn glad to see you.

TOM

I know what you mean.

SAM

Dammit! I **mean** . . . that I **am** glad to see you.

TOM

That's exactly what I thought you meant. (TOM wanders over to the gun cabinet.) Yours, Sam?

SAM

Yeah, mine. Some--memorabilia from Nam.

TOM

I can see that. (A beat.) Funny, but--a lot of guys I know are trying to forget the war. I guess you never know what people are going to be interested in.

SAM

No, you never know.

(ANGEL enters.)

SAM

All ready?

ANGEL

Two hours.

SAM

What?!

ANGEL

I forgot to turn on the oven; it will be two hours.

SAM

How could you?

ANGEL

Simple. There's a little switch on the range; you distracted me when you got home, and I forgot to flip it. Sorry. So, you can have it raw, which you boys might like, or we can wait. Or, I could whip up a little fish and rice for you boys, just for old times sake.

SAM

No, none of that shit. I want the roast; we'll wait. There's plenty of booze, and it will give us more time to talk with Tom. Right, Tom? I mean we got some ground to cover, huh Bro?

TOM

Right on, ole buddy. It will give us more time to talk, time to re-acquaint ourselves with ourselves and each other.

ANGEL

Well . . . what shall we talk about? (Silence.) Did you notice the heat today, Tom.

TOM

I can stand the heat.

SAM

And the humidity.

TOM

Doesn't bother me either.

SAM

Jesus! Hot and humid, just like--

TOM

Nam? Is that what you were going to say?

SAM

Yeah, like Nam.

TOM

Don't be afraid to say it, Sam. I understand. It **was** hot over there, hot and humid. That's the truth.

SAM

Damn, I'll say. And mosquitoes as big as your fist.

TOM

Rats and skunks, all manner of vermin.

SAM

Skunks?

TOM

Oh, yeah, they were all over the place.

SAM

Dammit, Angel! How could you forget the roast?

ANGEL

Oh, I just got all excited when you got home and completely forgot about it. I told you. (A beat.) More drinks?

SAM

She never was worth a damn at doing the little domestic chores around the house, but she's--

TOM

Great in the ole sack! I know.

(SAM chokes on his drink.)

SAM (forcing it)

Jesus! What a sense of humor. You haven't changed one bit.

TOM

Naw, not a bit. The same ole happy-go-lucky guy I always was. Maybe even more so.

SAM

Hey, I know all about that, about you two, remember? And what the hell! You can't wear one of those things out . . . least of all her's. Believe me, I've tried.

ANGEL

And you've had plenty of help too, Sam.

SAM

Hey, both of you--such characters. What a gang, our own little gang of stand up comics. Such humor I've hardly seen before.

ANGEL  
Did Sam tell you that I'm pregnant, Tom?

SAM  
Angel!

TOM  
No, he didn't mention it.

ANGEL  
It's true. There's a beautiful little brown baby or yellow baby or red baby or white baby growing inside me at this very moment. Sam couldn't be happier; I suspect he's the happiest man alive

TOM (uncomfortably)  
Congratulations. (A beat.) Your first?

SAM  
Yes.

ANGEL (simultaneously with SAM)  
No.

TOM (confused)  
I'm sorry, I don't understand.

ANGEL  
It's not **my** first, but it is his first, if it is his at all.

SAM  
That's a lie! You had a baby before. Why don't you tell Tom about your baby? Tell our friend Tom. Show him the nursery.

ANGEL  
You go to hell!

SAM  
You shut up then. And quit acting like a slut; Tom's liable to get the right idea about you.

(They glare at each other through a long silence. Then ANGEL goes on.)

ANGEL

Well, Tom, you should feel honored that Sam and I can relax and just be ourselves even with you here; you haven't upset the domestic tranquillity that characterizes our lives together a bit. Most of the time Sam gets all uptight when his friends come over.

SAM

Tom isn't just **my** friend, Angel.

ANGEL

Of course. You're right. How could I forget? And I haven't even given him a proper greeting.

(She goes to TOM and kisses him hard on the mouth. Afterward he just stares at her.)

ANGEL

Did you feel the French influence?

TOM (hard)

*Parlez-vous francais?*

ANGEL

No, you see I'm not really Vietnamese, but I can do it the French way, if you're interested.

TOM

What's happened to you, Angel?

ANGEL

Me? (A beat.) A war. Sam. You. They all took their toll.

TOM

I'm sorry, I--

ANGEL

Oh, I can see how sorry you are!

SAM

Goddammit, will you two just stop it? Let's just . . . be mellow. Okay? Let's just —relax.

ANGEL

Laid back, Sam. Mellow was last year. (To TOM.) Sam just can't keep up with the vernacular; he's such a devoted husband he hardly has time for anything else, catering to my every whim. Now, I'll just sit here by Tom, and we'll get nice and laid back, but not too far back, of course, not in my delicate condition. Because that would complicate an already highly complicated situation, wouldn't it? Oh, Tom, I didn't even ask: You don't have anything against Orientals do you?

TOM

Nothing at all.

ANGEL

I didn't think so. And I know I'm safe with you. Because you would never do anything to degrade them, particularly their women, would you?

TOM

Angel, you don't know what you're talking about.

ANGEL

No?

TOM

Hell no!

ANGEL

Then why don't you tell me all about what I'm talking about? (TOM doesn't respond.) Sam told me all about your affinity for the Vietnamese ladies. I thought I would please you.

SAM

I--I just told her how you treated them; told her that you were nice to them. I never said **how** nice. And you **did** like their women; you said so, said you thought they were a beautiful people.

TOM (To ANGEL)

Yeah, I found Vietnamese women to be very attractive--when they weren't made up like whores.

ANGEL

Well, pardon me, but when a woman get treated like a whore, she eventually begins to feel like one.

TOM

I never treated you like a whore.

ANGEL

You left and didn't come back; the only thing you didn't do was to toss a few bills on my bureau.

TOM

I was going to come back.

ANGEL

But you didn't. Why?

TOM

I couldn't.

ANGEL (screams)

Dammit, why? I want to know why! (A few beats.) Damn you! Damn both of you.

SAM

Seen anymore of the guys, Tom. Evans? Thompson? I haven't seen anybody for years. (No response from TOM.) Tom?

TOM (woodenly)

Thompson shipped over. He's D.I. in San Diego.

SAM

Shipped over? Thompson?

TOM

That's what I said--shipped over.

SAM

He's the guy that couldn't wait to get out; and he's a D.I., giving those boots hell I bet.

TOM

That's his job, to make men out of boys. (A beat.) Making boys out of men comes later.

SAM

What about Evans? I heard he took a hit after I got out, but I never did confirm it or hear how he made out.

TOM

Evans is in a V.A. hospital in Philly; they haven't gotten him put back together yet.

SAM

That sucks.

TOM

Sorry you asked?

SAM

Yeah--**no**, I'm not sorry. Dammit, Tom, gimme a break.

TOM

What about me, Sam? You going to ask about me?

SAM

I already asked about you. And I can see--that you're doing all right, getting along; you might be a little thin is all.

TOM

Right. I'm fine, a little thin maybe, but otherwise just great--considering.

ANGEL (from bar)

Considering what?

TOM

Considering . . . an unfortunate sequence of events.

SAM (anxiously)

What about--Mehan? Where's Mehan?

TOM

Mehan is a short-order cook at a greasy spoon outside Dallas. About six months ago he made me a sandwich and gave my cat a warm bowl of milk.

SAM

Damn! Still cooking. (To ANGEL.) This guy--Mehan--was Charlie Company cook; we called him, "Cookie."

ANGEL

Was that your idea, Sam?

SAM

Yeah, he hated it though, but that's what he called him. God, he used to put

SAM (continuing)

together some rank shit. Remember those rabbit burgers, Tom? Nobody knew what was in them, but he told us that it was rabbit and mule in equal proportions--one rabbit to one mule. He was a funny son of a bitch too.

TOM

Couple a guys nearly died laughing.

SAM

I don't remember that. Anyway, not only could he not cook, but he never made enough of anything. And his girl--what was her name, Tom?

TOM

Cynthia. She's his wife now, and **she's** actually the one that made me the sandwich in Dallas.

ANGEL

You mean **their** romance wasn't a casualty of the war?

SAM

His wife? No, shit. Anyway, she used to write him the wildest letters, and he'd read them to the whole company--every intimate detail. Mehan, what a fucking guy.

ANGEL

Tom used to get lots of letters too. Didn't you, Tom?

TOM

I got my share.

ANGEL

But you didn't read them to the boys?

TOM

No.

ANGEL

I'm surprised.

TOM

I didn't have to read them to the anybody. Everybody knew I--

Had a girl? ANGEL

Yes, everybody knew that. TOM

But they didn't know that you were in love with this girl . . . because you weren't. Never mind what you told that girl; that was just soldier talk. ANGEL

I didn't tell her anything that wasn't true at the time. TOM

Jesus! I gotta go to the head. SAM

(He exits.)

You **did** love this girl then? This anonymous author of these letters that you didn't share with the boys. ANGEL

Stop it Angel. TOM

You didn't love her? ANGEL

Angel, please. TOM

You **did**? Yes? No? Maybe? You just loved her in bed? What? ANGEL

Yes, dammit, I loved her! TOM

At the time? ANGEL (bitterly)

At the time. TOM

ANGEL

But something changed?

TOM

You know it did.

ANGEL

But I don't know what. I want to know what! **What** changed?

(TOM turns away refusing to answer.)

ANGEL

Tom . . . please. Tell me.

TOM

I did. **I** changed; the war changed me.

ANGEL (acidly)

Oh, my poor wounded soldier, living through all that Hemingway slop. Poor Jake, poor Bret, poor Papa. (A beat.) Can't you be honest with me?

TOM

No, I can't.

ANGEL

I know what's wrong with you. You're just like he is, like Sam. You loved it; you adored it. You were so sure you'd hate it--gentle, sensitive Tom. You were sure you'd hate the filth and misery and the killing and the degeneracy, but, no, no, you loved it instead, loved every minute of it. For you it held all the romance of all the war movies and novels that you'd ever seen and read. I'm sure the war still holds your fondest memories--the girls, the bars, the escapades, the camaraderie. What a bunch of crap!

TOM

You don't know, Angel. You just don't know.

ANGEL

Of course, I know. You loved it, loved everything about it; you just can't admit that to yourself.

TOM

I detested it, hated it!

ANGEL

You loved it!

Dammit, Angel, I hated it!

TOM

You loved it! Admit it! Be honest with yourself: Men love war.

ANGEL

Stop it!

TOM

No, I won't stop! Face it. You loved it; you love war. You'd like to go back.

ANGEL

Goddammit, I hated it! Hated what we did, hated being part of it. (Suddenly he pulls her against him savagely; they cling to one another for a long moment.) Angel . . . didn't you read my letters? Couldn't you feel my pain?

TOM (grabs her)

Yes, I felt it.

ANGEL (confused)

Then you must have known how I felt, what I felt.

TOM

I thought I did, but then--then you didn't come back. You never came back; the letters stopped and you disappeared. Then I didn't know what to believe--about the war, about you, us.

ANGEL

I loved you, Angel. Christ I loved you.

TOM

(They kiss hard, passionately; TOM finally breaks away and walks off.)

What is it?

ANGEL

Sam. He'll be back.

TOM

I hate him.

ANGEL

You married him.

TOM

I still hate him.

ANGEL

Why?

TOM

Because he corrupts everything he touches.

ANGEL

Why did you marry him?

TOM

Don't you know? (He has a hard time looking at her now.) Because you didn't come back.

ANGEL

God, Angel . . . this is all crazy. What am I doing here?

TOM

Hold me, Tom. Just hold me for a moment--please. (He goes to her and wraps her in his arms.) I don't think I ever stopped loving you, not really. There were times, plenty of times, when I hated you for leaving me, but what I felt for you wouldn't die. Not even Sam could kill that. Tom, there still time--

ANGEL

Oh, Jesus, Angel, don't. Please.

TOM

Why? (A beat.) I don't understand.

ANGEL

(SAM wanders back into the room from the head; he is pretty drunk by now.)

SAM

Well, isn't this sweet. I'm glad to see that you two are getting on a little better now.

ANGEL

I love him, Sam.

SAM (not threatened at all)

Goddamn, Tom! You must have really turned on the old charm. I walk out of the room to take a leak, and my wife falls for you. I guess this means that you were getting it on, instead of just getting on just now. You work fast.

ANGEL

I never **stopped** loving him. And I never started loving you.

SAM

Well, now, I find that somewhat surprising . . . considering.

ANGEL

That I married you?

SAM

That's a good point.

ANGEL

I married you for the same reason that you married me: To hurt Tom. He left me; the only way I had to get back at him was to marry you. I've never loved you.

SAM

I find that interesting, considering how you love to get down on your knees and--

ANGEL

You shut up!

SAM

Or is it just my body that you can't do without? (A beat.) You've got to watch her, Tom. She'll treat a man like a sex object.

ANGEL

Take me away from this, Tom. Please take me away.

SAM

Go ahead, Tom. Take her, but keep this in mind: she's a hard woman to keep satisfied. She just can't seem to get enough of it.

TOM

You go to hell, Sam! You go goddamn straight to hell!

SAM

What'd I do, Tom, touch a soft spot?

Screw you, Sam!

TOM

I'm ready. What are friends for?

SAM

I didn't come here for this. I swear I didn't, but don't push me, Sam, or we'll play war games. I don't want . . . to hurt you. That's not what I'm here for. I came here to--

TOM

I'm not afraid of your games.

SAM

Let's play then. Let's play, "Sam in the bunker." Want to play that one, Sam?

SAM

Hey, can't you take a little ribbing, a joke, just for old times' sake. (Crosses to ANGEL.) Why, I adore this little angel; I wouldn't let her go for anything, not even for an old friend. Not with her about to give me another beautiful baby.

TOM

I thought there wasn't a baby.

SAM

Of course, there's a baby. Isn't there, Angel?

ANGEL

No, we've never had a baby.

SAM

What? Why, what's that we keep up there in the nursery then?

ANGEL

Hopes. Dreams. Memories. Nothing that you know anything about.

SAM

Because you won't share them.

ANGEL

You're damn right I won't, not with you. Because all you'd do is corrupt them!

SAM

There will be plenty of room for a new baby then. A sweet innocent child. My own flesh and blood.

ANGEL

She's not yours. I already told you.

SAM

Angel! Tom's going to get the impression that your moral fiber is--somewhat frayed, talking like that. Why you're as faithful as a--as a bitch in heat. And dressed like that too. He's going to take you for some gook whore. (A beat.) But you wouldn't mind that, would you Tom?

ANGEL

You're such a shit.

SAM

I try to be sociable. I cooperate.

ANGEL

Then why don't you play war games with Tom? I think I'd like to see that. Tom?

TOM

No, no, I don't want to play. I shouldn't have brought it up.

ANGEL

Come on, Tom, play.

SAM

**I** know what we can play! (Pushes ANGEL to the bar.) Let's play the bar girl game; it's a variation on a theme, and Tom already knows how to play. You sit here, Angel; you're the bar girl, obviously, and you be the handsome soldier, Tom. I'll direct.

ANGEL

I don't want to play.

SAM

Yes, yes, come on. I insist. **And** you might learn something. First, we need music--some period piece. (SAM goes to boom box and inserts a tape of *Black is Black I Want My Baby Back*.) Oh, that's just right--perfect. But there's too much

SAM (continuing)

light. (Dims lights.) Better. Much better. Okay--Angel, you're the whore, pardon me, the bar girl. And, Tom, is, of course, the handsome soldier like I said before, number one virgin from midland U.S.A. (Thinks, then:) Imagine there's this big overhead fan--whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, a few mosquitoes, and the faint smell of something . . . burning. Ready? Let's begin. Tom you enter from over there, and just say what I say, you too, Angel. You just came out of the bright sun, and you have to let your eyes adjust to the darkness. You spot him right off Angel--the handsome soldier, with money--and you give him a faint, somewhat provocative smile. Not too much because you don't want him to think you're a whore--yet. Come and sit down at the bar now Tom, away from her. You don't want her to think you're just interested in her body--yet. I'll be the barkeep. ((SAM takes station behind the bar.) Tom, you say: Sumbitch, some kinda hot out there. (Pause.) Say it.

TOM

Sumbitch, some kinda hot out there.

SAM

Saigon always hot afternoon. Even war stop because heat. Very bad. Drink handsome soldier? Just say beer, Tom.

TOM

Rum-coco.

SAM

Goddammit Tom! I said to say beer.

TOM

I don't want a beer. I want a rum-coco.

SAM

Well, **say**, "beer," and I'll give you a goddamn rum-coco! (A beat.) Say it.

TOM

Gimme a beer.

SAM

Okay, Tiger beer for number one handsome soldier.

(SAM mixes a rum-coco and serves it to TOM. TOM takes a sip and looks at SAM surprised.)

TOM

This is a rum-coco.

SAM

Goddammit, Tom, you're **really** beginning to piss me off! Now quit fucking around with me. I'm warning you.

(SAM moves down to ANGEL.)

SAM

Angel, you say: Tell handsome soldier buy Saigon tea.

ANGEL (tight-lipped)

Tell handsome soldier buy Saigon tea.

(SAM goes back to TOM.)

SAM (nods to ANGEL)

Lady like you buy Saigon tea.

TOM

Tell her I'll buy her a rum-coco.

SAM

Dammit, Tom! Nobody but you drank rum-cocos in Nam. Now play it right. Shit!

ANGEL

Easy Sam, it's only a game.

SAM

But I want it to be played right. (A beat.) Okay, that's better. We'll go on. Now, again, Tom: Lady like you buy Saigon tea.

TOM

All right--gimme a Saigon tea.

SAM

Not **you**. **Her**!

TOM

You didn't say that.

SAM

You know what I meant . . . fuck it! I don't want to play if you're not going to play right.

ANGEL

This is fun now. Let's go on; we'll play right.

SAM (pouting)

Tom won't.

TOM

Give me one more chance, Sam. I'll play right.

SAM

No you won't.

TOM

I will--for you. I promise.

SAM

Okay. One more chance, and no bullshit. Make a proper response this time. (Pause.) Okay: Lady like you buy Saigon tea.

TOM

Okay, give the lady a Saigon tea.

SAM

That's better.

(SAM serves a drink to ANGEL.)

SAM

Angel, now you move on down here next to the handsome soldier. (She does.) Good. Good. Nice movement; you really know your stuff.

ANGEL

I've had lots of practice.

SAM

I can see that you have. Sit down next to him now and thank him.

ANGEL

Thank you Saigon tea.

TOM

I'm a soldier, not a drink. You mean, thank you soldier **for** the Saigon tea.

SAM

Don't get grammatical, Tom. Just play along. (A beat.) Ask him where he's from, Angel.

ANGEL

Where from handsome soldier?

TOM

America. North. The United States.

SAM

Shit!

(SAM is clearly angry now.)

TOM

Kansas! I'm from Independence, Kansas ma'am. How 'bout chew?

ANGEL

Vietnam.

TOM

No shit?

SAM

Wait a minute! He knows you're from Vietnam, Angel. Christ! **Where** in Vietnam?

ANGEL

How the hell do I know? You didn't tell me.

SAM

Hanoi! Just say Hanoi.

ANGEL (yells)

Hanoi!

TOM (reflects, then:)

Oh . . . that near here?

ANGEL

Closer than Kansas.

SAM

Knock it off. No bullshit. Ask him how he likes Vietnamese women.

ANGEL

Hey, number one handsome soldier from Independence, Kansas, how you like Vietnamese womens?

SAM

Tell her you like'em with big tits like hers.

ANGEL

I don't like this game now.

SAM

Tell her!

TOM (wavering)

I--I like'em with . . . big tits like yours.

SAM

Rub against him now, Angel. Ask him if he'd like to see them, feel them skin to skin.

ANGEL

No!

(SAM leans over the bar and grabs her hand.)

SAM

Ask him if he wants to fucky--fuck. Tell him you want to see what he's got right there!

(He forces her hand into TOM'S crotch.)

TOM

Goddamn you!

(TOM jumps up and smashes SAM in the face. SAM goes down behind the bar,

unconscious. TOM starts to go after him, but is restrained by ANGEL.)

ANGEL

Leave him alone, Tom; he's out. He's drunk and sick.

TOM (To SAM)

By god you keep it up and we'll play my game before this night is over! You hear me. Get up you lousy bastard!

(TOM pulls away from ANGEL and comes downstage. In a moment she follows him, taking his arm.)

I'll go away with you, Tom. I'll pack a bag and leave right now. (He laughs bitterly.) Tom . . . I mean it. I'll leave him.

TOM

Angel, I don't even have a place to take you. You know where I live? Nowhere. What I do? Whatever it takes to keep me alive for another week. I drift, I exist . . . why? I don't even know why I go to the trouble.

(ANGEL touches his shoulder.)

ANGEL

I won't be a burden; I can carry my share of the load, live anywhere, do whatever I have to do.

(TOM goes to the dinner table.)

TOM

Waterford crystal, sterling, fine china, real roses. It all has a way of getting under your skin. After a while you tend to think that you deserve it. You couldn't give it up so easily.

ANGEL

They're all for show, for Sam and his friends; it's like they're having some huge contest. They mean nothing to me; symbols of something I don't even care about. I could give them up.

TOM (bitterly, starting to break)

If you gave them up for me you'd be giving them up for nothing. Because that's what I am--**nothing**. Not even a man.

ANGEL

I . . . don't understand.

TOM

Angel, I want to love you; I **do** love you, but I **can't** love you.

ANGEL

Why not? What's wrong with me?

TOM

It's not **you**, Angel. It's me.

ANGEL

Then what's wrong with you? (No response.) Can a war so change someone?

TOM

It did me.

ANGEL

Tom, the war was horrible for all of us; you changed, I changed, the entire country changed, except maybe for Sam. But in spite of those changes you have to go on living. You can lock yourself away in a cloak of unresolved guilt; you can't live with the memories that you had nothing to do with making. Get out of this sullen hole. Live again! Love someone! Love **me!**

TOM

I can't, Angel.

ANGEL

Then I pity you. Because if you can't love, you don't have anything to live for.

TOM

I'm very well aware of that. (A beat.) Who do you love, Angel? What do you live for?

ANGEL

For almost nine years I didn't think I loved anybody, least of all myself. And malice is what I've lived for during that time. I married Sam and stayed with him all this time waiting for this moment, the moment you came through that door. I wanted to hurt you because you deserted me, but I only hurt myself. I should hate you; I have every reason to hate you. Look what you've done to me, you and Sam. I'm a bitch. Cheerful, optimistic, Angel, the girl that used to love just getting up to see what every new day would bring, the girl with unlimited potential for doing something good, something useful. Even when you

ANGEL (continuing)

left for Vietnam I felt good because I knew that you were really still with me in an important way. Then that feeling went away; it went away when you did, and everything came crashing down around me. Dreams die hard, Tom, and when you find you don't have any anymore, you have to replace them with something else. With malice or anger or hate or a self destructive kind of cynicism. I went so long without feeling anything good that I didn't know if I had that capacity in me any longer. But you've shown me that I do. It isn't all lost yet.

(She touches his face.)

TOM

God, Angel, don't. Please.

ANGEL

Why? Why are you rejecting me? (He turns away from her.) Tom, I'm reaching out for you, trying to make some kind of human contact. Why can't you hold out your hand?

TOM

Don't you know? Don't you know what happened to me over there. (A beat.) When Sam pushed your hand into my crotch--what did you feel?

ANGEL

Nothing. I didn't . . . feel anything. (A beat.) Oh, my baby. My poor, poor baby. How could they do that to you? How could they do it to anyone?

TOM (woodenly)

With no trouble at all.

ANGEL

Oh, god . . . dammit!

TOM

That's why I didn't, couldn't, come back; why you didn't hear from me. I wanted you to think that I was dead, because I was--am. Only they wouldn't let me die like I wanted to. Chaplain Goodman was very kind, very understanding. He explained to me how I should feel honored to make such a sacrifice for my country--as if democracy in Asia depended on my balls. Goddamn him! Goddamn them every one!

(TOM breaks, cries. She cradles him then takes his hand.)

ANGEL

Come with me.

TOM

I can't.

ANGEL

Yes.

TOM

Where?

ANGEL

To my room.

TOM

I can't. No. I--don't want you to see me.

ANGEL

Tom, just touch me, hold me. I have to have you hold me.

TOM

Angel, I . . .

ANGEL

Please. Come with me.

(She starts up the stairs, still holding his hand. He finally follows her reluctantly. As they climb the stairs the lights slowly fade to darkness. END ACT I.)

**AMERICAN PIES, HAPPY LIVES, BLUE SKIES AND OTHER LIES**

by

David W. Christner

ACT II, SCENE I

SCENE: The same an hour later. ANGEL is on the bed; she has on a slip. Her wig and Oriental make-up are gone; she is an American again. TOM is sitting on the edge of the bed, dressing. He is quiet, distant. As they begin talking, SAM gets up from behind the bar downstairs, shakes his head, then stumbles off into the head.)

ANGEL

Tom . . . I feel so close to you. (No response.) It was good, Tom, so good--really.

TOM

But not--enough.

ANGEL

More than enough. (A beat.) You made **me** feel--**whole**, instead of like --nevermind. I feel good now, about you, about myself. And I haven't felt good in years. If we were together we could work something out.

TOM

Work something out? For you, you mean, other men? Whole men?

ANGEL

Don't spoil this moment; don't be bitter.

TOM

"Don't be bitter!" Goddammit, Angel, you don't know what I feel . . . or what I don't.

ANGEL

Tom, if I love you, and I think I still do, it's because of what you **are**, not because of--of what you can do to or for me physically. I love another human being. Not an object.

TOM

But not a man.

ANGEL

You are a man, a man full of love and compassion.

TOM

And bitterness and hate and envy, especially envy. I envy every man I pass on the street--rich or poor, black or white, dead or alive. I'm not even a person anymore, and certainly not the person you fell in love with.

ANGEL

Neither am I.

TOM

In a week you'd despise me, and I thank you for trying to make me into something that I can't possibly be. I'm a different person, Angel, and not necessarily a better person. What I lost in that war goes far beyond what I lost with my wound.

ANGEL

We all lost something.

TOM

Everybody but Sam. And I lost more than anyone.

ANGEL

It could have been worse.

TOM

How? Goddammit, you tell me how!

ANGEL

You could have lost your self-respect. Sam did.

TOM

I don't have an ounce of self-respect left.

ANGEL

I don't believe that.

TOM

Believe it. It's true. I often find myself detesting myself.

ANGEL

Then tell me this. Why do you go on at all? Why don't you just quit, drop out, kill yourself? Why don't you just let the world rush by and collect your disability check every month? (No response.) Tom?

TOM

Screw them! Blood money! They can't buy me off. I know what I saw, what we did. I've never touched a cent of that.

ANGEL

Sam has. He gets a tax-free check every month for some movement he lost in his left leg, but you'd never know it if you saw him scurrying after the twenty year olds at the country club.

TOM

Sam's a shit . . . but he's still a man.

ANGEL

Only in one sense.

TOM

The most important one. Angel. There's no way I can explain to you what I feel. I would gladly trade a foot, an arm, a leg, an eye--both eyes, **anything** to be whole again.

ANGEL

I don't believe it; it's not that important, not to you, not even to me. What we had before wasn't based on sex. You've just forgotten how to love because you think you can't love anymore, but you **can**. You can love with something that comes from inside you, something that has nothing to do with your body. You just showed that to me.

TOM

It was awful for me in a way. I was frightened.

ANGEL

Tom, just let me love you again. That's all I want, that chance.

TOM

Why?

ANGEL

Because if there's any love left in me I want to share it with you. I can't exist any longer without loving someone.

TOM

Dammit, why does it have to be me?

ANGEL

Because it's always been you; because I'm enough of a romantic, even now, to believe you're the only one I can love. Maybe because I'm nuts or a blind idealist. I don't know! Why does anybody love anybody?

TOM

Because their love is returned.

ANGEL

You're just afraid. You're afraid to feel anything good again because you don't think that you should ever feel good because of what you did in the war and what it did to you.

TOM

I don't deny that.

ANGEL

And I don't believe that you're **that** frightened.

TOM

I am! Take my word for it. I don't want to feel again. I don't want to love. It hurts too much when you lose it.

ANGEL

You never stopped loving, and you know it. You just managed to suppress it with hate and envy, but it kept breaking through because your capacity to love is so much greater than your capacity for anything evil.

TOM

My capacity for love is gone; it no longer exists.

ANGEL

Love comes from the human heart, not the groin. It can exist without sex.

TOM

Can it? What of passion, desire? You're a young woman, Angel.

ANGEL

You just satisfied my desires, my passion.

TOM

For how long? And was it enough? (No response.) Angel?

ANGEL

I don't know.

TOM

Goddammit, Angel, you're making me feel things that I don't have any way of deal with.

ANGEL

You came here tonight because you felt something.

TOM

I don't know why I came.

ANGEL

It wasn't to see Sam; we both know that. He was never your friend, not before the war, certainly not now. So, if you didn't come for Sam, you must have come for me. It's that simple.

TOM

It's not that simple. I might very well have come for Sam, but you're right, not because he was my friend.

ANGEL (curiously)

Why then? (A beat.) Is he your enemy, your nemesis?

TOM (evasively)  
Get dressed. I--I don't want to talk about it.

ANGEL  
About what?

TOM  
Anything.

(They finish dressing in silence. ANGEL slips on a short silk kimono. TOM finishes first and waits for her in the hall across from the nursery. After a moment he starts to go in.)

ANGEL  
Don't go in there!

TOM (entering the nursery)  
Is the baby, sleeping?

(He goes to the crib and looks in. He looks back at ANGEL and is clearly confused.)

TOM  
I--don't understand.

ANGEL  
Neither do I.

(She takes his hand, and they descend the stairs without speaking. At the bottom she turns, kisses him, and they both try to smile.)

ANGEL  
Fix me a drink, would you, Tom?

TOM (cheerfully)  
Saigon tea?

ANGEL

Rum-coco. (A beat.) You spoiled his game, you know. Really treated him like a shit. He's not used to that, thinks he deserves much better.

TOM

I know what he deserves.

ANGEL

And what he doesn't?

TOM

Yeah, I know that too. (A beat.) What do you want, Angel?

ANGEL

Gin.

TOM

Not to drink.

ANGEL

Oh . . . I want someone to touch me, somebody to touch me like you used to. Not my body, but something else deep down inside the very quick of my being. I want to be needed, for my existence to be something of value, to get back what I've lost.

TOM

To get back what you've lost? I don't think you're any more capable of doing that than I am.

ANGEL

Then I want to start over again. (A beat.) You, Tom? What do you want?

TOM

Answers. Reasons. But not the ones that I've already heard. I want someone to justify what happened to me, to my friends, to you and me.

ANGEL

To **all** of us.

TOM

Yeah.

ANGEL

We're not innocent anymore, or young, or naive. Or even stupid. You can't even blame it on stupidity. It was something else--fear, greed, someone's dream of

You go to hell, **buddy**; she's **my** wife, not yours. (To ANGEL.) Did you? Did you show Tom the baby, your precious baby?

ANGEL

There's **not** a baby!

SAM

No, no, I didn't think there was a baby; but there **was** a baby at one time. Did you tell Tom about the baby that isn't anymore but was once upon a time? Did you tell him about what pretty babies you make?

TOM

I don't want to hear about the baby.

SAM

But you **must** hear about the baby; it's imperative that you hear about the baby. Angel?

TOM

What are you drinking, Sam?

SAM (checks)

What am I drinking? Yes, now that's a good question. What **am** I drinking? Why, I'm not drinking anything at the moment. What a pity. I **was** drinking scotch, but it all came out of me and went into the potty. Chivas too; I should get a gold potty. Tell me Tom, how do you--

TOM (handing him a drink)

Here!

SAM

Why, thank you, Tom. How very good of you. And here I thought we were on bad terms when you smashed my nose. Well, you never know; you think you know, but you never do. (Drinks.) Ah, now that is what I call smooth, so very, very smooth. Thank you, Tom, Tommy, best friend of mine.

TOM

How is the nose?

SAM

Well, broken I think. But I've decided not to file suit, since you gave me a scotch. Even though it is my scotch. Chivas too. **And** it was my game. I just never realized that it was going to get so rough, but--when the going gets rough--

ANGEL

Somebody gets a broken nose.

SAM

Exactly. (A beat.) By the way, Tom, how is your wound?

TOM

I've learned to live with--out it.

SAM

Now **that** is clever. Did you hear what Tom said, Angel? "I've learned to live with--out it." That's what I call clever. You always did have a way with words. Keep it up. Oh, sorry, I was referring to your writing, of course.

TOM

You're pushing awfully hard, Sam. I didn't come here to destroy you, but you'd better stop pushing.

SAM

Destroy me! You certainly didn't do my nose any good. And I'm a crippled war veteran too, card carrying member of the VFW in good standing.

TOM

How **is** your wound, Sam?

SAM

Just a few scars remain. Old Ernest would love it, not as much as he would love yours, of course.

ANGEL

Sam wasn't hurt seriously.

TOM

I know.

SAM

Now that's a matter of perspective. It could have been much more serious. Right, Tom?

TOM

She knows, Sam. She **knows!** Okay?

SAM

Then you two **were** playing bedroom games. I should have known, but then the husband is always the last to know. I may just have to file suit after all. (A

SAM (continuing)

beat.) But then I don't suppose anything happened, under the circumstances. And I didn't hear the vibrator.

ANGEL

See why I'm so fond of him, Tom?

SAM

Tom ain't seen nothing yet. No, that' not right, on the contrary, you see nothing all the time, don't you, Tom?

(Tom turns away, angry.)

SAM

Oh, darling, I'm afraid I've offended our oldest and dearest friend. What could I possibly do to make amends?

ANGEL

Why don't you hang yourself?

SAM

Because I'm already hung. Oh, God, there I go again; what an insensitive lout I am. I can't seem to open my mouth without stepping on my . . . without putting my foot in it. And I realize how sensitive Tom must be about--these things.

TOM

All right, Sam. Time for one of my games now: The wounded soldier game. I want to play this one because--because I want to see if it's possible for you to **feel** anything.

SAM

Why, I feel just fine, but it sounds like fun. How do you play?

TOM

Oh, you **know** how to play, Sam. You were there, but . . . I want you to have my wound, instead of yours. But you don't know what it is that you've lost, no, not in the beginning. That's what I'll be there for--Chaplain Goodman--to tell you, to break it to you gently. But you'll sense that you've suffered--a loss, that you've lost . . . something, but you don't know what it is because it's no longer there. You see, you can't feel what's not there, so you don't know if it's there until you feel there and find that it's not. (A beat.) Lie down on the couch there.

Angel, we'll need a sheet, a clean white sheet to put over the remains of the wounded soldier.

(ANGEL gets a white table cloth from a cabinet in the dining room.)

ANGEL

This work?

TOM (Covers SAM on the couch.)

Fine. Perfect. Now, Sam, remember, you must keep your hands outside the sheet until--until . . . you'll know when. Okay? Everybody ready?

SAM

Ready, Doc.

TOM

No, that's wrong. I'm the chaplain, **not** the doctor. The doctors have already done as much as they can do; it's out of their hands now.

SAM

Out of yours too.

TOM

Don't be nasty, Sam.

SAM

Right, sorry. It's only a game.

TOM

To you maybe! (A beat.) Angel, you sit over there and observe--observe the story of the wounded soldier.

ANGEL

Are you sure you want to do this, Tom?

TOM

I'm not sure of anything right now, least of all of what I want to do, but maybe-- I need to do this. In any case, it will help pass the time until the roast is done.

ANGEL

I don't think I can stand it.

SAM

If he wants to play, Angel, let him play. It might help him.

ANGEL

Help him what?

SAM

Face--the situation.

TOM

It might at that. Who knows? But we're not really playing for me, Sam. We're playing for you. Ready: Lights. Camera. Action. The scene: The recovery area of a field hospital in IV Corps. The time: post op--after surgery. The weather: Hot and humid. The situation: The blues. You wake up, Sam. You have some vague memory of being hit, sort of, but not when--or where.

SAM (sings)

I can't remember where or when.

TOM

Just listen. As your eyes come into focus the first thing you see is the smiling face of the Charlie Company chaplain--the reverend Armstrong T. Goodman. Now go ahead, just ad-lib, you know what happened. I'll fill in the gaps.

SAM

Ah, ahhh--who's that. Who's there.

TOM

Why it's the most reverend Armstrong T. Goodman, the Charlie Company chaplain, my son. (To ANGEL.) He always referred to you as "my son" when you were dying or when you suffered a "terrible" wound.

ANGEL (woodenly)

I see.

SAM

Was I hit? I remember getting hit. Where? Where was I hit.

TOM

A rice paddy north of Vung Tau. (To ANGEL.) The chaplain always got right to the point.

SAM

No, no. Where was I hit? Am I all here?

TOM

My son, you're going to be fine.

SAM

What's wrong? What happened? My legs! My God, my legs! I can't feel my legs.

TOM (tapping SAM'S foot)

Feel that? It's just the anesthetic; it takes time to wear off. Your legs are fine.

SAM

Thank God.

TOM

Yes, thank God. You **are** alive.

SAM

What is wrong? (No response from TOM.) What is it?

TOM

My son, you have suffered . . . a terrible wound.

SAM

What?! Terrible wound? What--my God, no, no! (Feels beneath the sheet.) Oh, my God. No, no, **no!** (Begins yelling then stops abruptly.) How's that, Tom? About right? More? Louder? A little more anguish? (TOM doesn't respond, so SAM begins yelling again.) Ahhh . . .

TOM

You have suffered a terrible wound, but you have your life.

SAM

My life?

TOM

Don't say anything else, Sam. Just listen, and think, feel, if you can. (Pause.) You have your life, son, and your sight, the full use of your arms and legs. You're really very fortunate. And your government won't forget what you sacrificed for it; you'll receive full compensation. But more importantly, you can hold your head up high because you served your country in a time of great need. Whatever any of us gives is really too little when you consider what we get in return.

SAM

What did you give, Reverend?

TOM  
I give the VC hell everyday, twice on Sunday. In the spiritual sense, of course.

SAM  
Of course.

ANGEL  
Please stop. No more.

(TOM glances at her and nods.)

TOM  
Okay. Game's over.

SAM  
How'd I do, Tom? How about that scream? I just tried to imagine what--it would be like to--

TOM  
You did a fine job, Sam. Absolutely first rate, a very sensitive performance.

SAM  
And you know I **felt** something too, Tom. When I put my hands under the sheet, I really did feel something. (A beat.) Any more games?

TOM (lashing out)  
How about Sam in the bunker? That's a good one. Want to play that?

SAM  
I guess I've had enough fun for one night. Let's eat. Check the roast, Angel.

TOM  
Come on, Sam. One more game.

SAM  
You go to hell! I don't want to play one more game.

TOM  
Then get off my case and stay off of it!

SAM

You're absolutely right; that's no way for me to treat a friend, an old war dog like yourself. Let's just settle down now. Let's get nice and mellow--laid back. I'll even fix some soft drinks to show they're no hard feeling, or should it be hard drinks to show that they are no soft feelings? Angel, the roast.

ANGEL

Come with me, Tom.

(ANGEL takes his hand and they exit to the kitchen. SAM hurries over to the gun cabinet, loads a revolver, and puts it in a drawer of the cabinet. Then he goes to the bar and gulps down a scotch and pours another. TOM and ANGEL return.)

SAM

Ready or not?

ANGEL

A few more minutes.

SAM

Don't overcook it now. I like it rare, Tom too.

ANGEL

I know how you like it.

SAM

Prime rib, Tom. Good American beef, corn fed, best beef in the world. None of that gook shit here, and--and fine crystal, sterling silver--

ANGEL

He's seen it, Sam.

TOM

And I can't tell you how impressed I am. And to think that I was right there in the trenches with you.

SAM

The best money can buy. No wooden bowls, no chopsticks, no rice, no fish, no gooks.

TOM

Don't call them that!

SAM

Tom . . . buddy, let's call a gook a gook, huh? At least in my house.

TOM

Don't you call them anything.

SAM

That's right, I forgot. You liked the little yellow bastards.

TOM

They're people, Sam. Just like you and me and Angel. They live and die, same as we do.

SAM

Animals! Live like them, smell like them.

TOM

You never should have been given the opportunity to find out, none of us should have.

SAM

Oh, here it comes again, still alive after all these years--the holier-than-thou trip. If you detested the war so much you could have split. We could have--fought it without you.

TOM

You almost said **won**, didn't you? You didn't win, Sam. You lost. For the first time in history we were the losers.

SAM

And you were right there with us ole buddy, ole pal of mine.

TOM

I know. I already told you why: Swallowed too much pie. It was 1967, and I was a red-blooded American boy following his heart instead of his head. I didn't think this country was capable of making such a mistake, of being so wrong. But I learned, and I detest myself for having to learn the way I learned.

SAM

Well, let me tell you something. I'm not ashamed that we fought there, not at all. We didn't do anything that our fathers and our grandfathers didn't do. My only shame comes from the fact that we didn't do it as well.

TOM

Oh, we killed as well, Sam; we invented new ways of killing. We just didn't kill as much.

SAM

And that's a shame.

ANGEL

I think I'm going to be sick.

SAM

Morning sickness? Or mourn-ing sickness.

ANGEL

I pity you, Sam. I pity you because you can't feel anything for anybody but yourself.

SAM

Nothing could be further from the truth. Why I feel absolutely awful for all those good Americans who had their hard-earned money invested in the arms industry and suddenly had the war shut off right in their faces. Now I'm faced with the task of turning a profit for them during peacetime, and that is a difficult proposition. Why in Vietnam I never heard a round go off or saw napalm illuminate the distant horizon that I didn't thank my lucky stars and stripes forever.

ANGEL (rushing out)

Excuse me.

SAM

Just you and me, Tom, Tommy. Just like in Nam. Jesus, we had some times, didn't we? The bars. The girls. Kicking those street kids' asses.

TOM

You must be thinking of somebody else.

SAM

No, you were there. Always there, never with us, but always there. I never turned around that I didn't see you looking down on me. (A beat.) Can't look down now though.

TOM

Is that why you married Angel, Sam? To somehow defeat me, to somehow beat me down because what I did for you was something you couldn't do for yourself?

SAM

Tom, it was love. I married Angel for love.

TOM

You didn't get it.

SAM

That's where you're wrong. I get it all the time.

TOM

Shut up!

SAM

And it's such a pleasure, because I know when I'm fucking Angel, I'm giving you a real good fucking too.

TOM

I hate your guts.

SAM

Tom! Is that anyway to talk to an old war buddy, a chum, a comrade in arms? I should say not.

TOM

She's leaving you. Do you know that?

SAM

For you? What for? (A beat.) You have to understand Angel, Tom. Now I know her, know what she likes, and, Tom, I'm sorry, but you just can't give it to her. I mean, under the circumstances.

TOM (reflects, then:)

Sam, I can destroy you. I know exactly how to destroy you, you and your Purple Heart and your Cross of Gallantry, your business and your life, everything you stand for. Don't make me do that. Don't make me play anymore war games.

SAM

Don't even try, Tom. I'll kill you if you even try.

TOM

Are you afraid, afraid of what the truth would do to you?

SAM

I'm not afraid of you.

TOM

The truth, Sam. I'm talking about the truth. I'm talking about looking into the mirror and seeing who we **really** are.

SAM

Just don't talk at all.

TOM

Then you are afraid? (No response.) I don't blame you. Fear does funny things to a man. It makes you do things that you didn't know you were capable of doing, and it keeps you from doing the things that you were sure you could do. Funny thing--fear. (A beat.) Now what about Angel?

SAM

Angel? She's not afraid of anything.

TOM

Sammy?

SAM

So, you think you'd like to have Angel. (TOM nods.) Jesus, Tom, I'd like to help, I really would, but the fact is: I've grown accustomed to her face. Is that the way it goes? Her breathing out and breathing in? Her smile, her frown, her ups and downs?

TOM

Why?

SAM

Tom, **Tommy**, I'm thinking of **you**. Believe me. It just wouldn't, couldn't work. A passionate young woman like Angel. You must realize that she'd need to see other men. I mean, she has other men **now**, and I'm banging her three, fours time a week minimum.

TOM

She wouldn't have to love them; she doesn't love you.

SAM

Still, be a realist. Think of what it would be like--the waiting, the wondering. Who is it this time--the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker? Did the baker

maker? Or did the candlestick maker? (A beat.) Who is it that said that both heaven and hell dwell between a woman's legs in that—den of inequity?

TOM

Shakespeare.

SAM

Was . . . no, why Tom, such Tomfoolery, trying to trick your uncle Sam. I think it was more likely Henry Miller. Anyway, it doesn't matter. What matters is that it would be pure hell for you, Tom, pure unadulterated hell.

TOM

I've been through worse things.

SAM

Have you now? (Calls.) Angel. Angel, come back in here. We need you.

(After a moment ANGEL enters. SAM goes to her, hugs her from behind, cupping her breasts.)

ANGEL (pulling away)

Get away from me!

SAM

No, no, you don't understand. We're going upstairs. Not for me. For you and Tom. It's a test.

(She looks at TOM, confused.)

SAM (grabs her)

Come on.

(TOM pulls ANGEL away from him.)

TOM

No!

SAM

Now what did I just explain to you, Tom. It just wouldn't work. I want to protect you from what would most certainly be a tragic mistake. You and Angel . . . really..

What's going on? Tom?

ANGEL

(He turns away..)

I'm leaving.

TOM

No! Not without me.

ANGEL

(She catches him and takes his arm.)

Angel, I . . .

TOM

What did he say to you? What happened?

ANGEL

I just gave Tom a lesson in--in how to deal with the truth.

SAM

A lot you know about that! Tom?

ANGEL

I shouldn't have come here; I don't even know why I did.

TOM

You came for me.

ANGEL

I don't know. It could have been for Sam; I could have come for Sam. I don't know anymore. I'm . . . sorry.

TOM

You came to find out why we hurt you, why Sam hurt you, and why I did. That's why you came.

ANGEL

For whatever reason it was, it was a mistake. I shouldn't have come.

TOM

(He starts to leave.)

SAM  
Don't go away mad, Tom. Or hungry. Roast will be ready in time now.

ANGEL (to SAM)

What did you say to him?

SAM  
Like I said. Just showed him the truth, baby. A simple fact of life about the facts of life.

ANGEL  
About me?

SAM  
And himself. Huh, Tom?

ANGEL  
What truth?

SAM  
That no man can sit idly by while another man is banging his woman.

TOM  
Shut up!

SAM (heading for barf)  
Have it your way.

ANGEL  
Tom, somehow we could make it.

SAM  
A little play on words there, Tom. Purely unintentional on Angel's part, I'm sure.

(They ignore him.)

ANGEL  
Give it a chance, Tom.

TOM  
Shit, Angel. What chance has it got?

ANGEL  
I don't know--one in ten? A hundred, a thousand? I don't know, but anything is better than this.

TOM (thinks, then)  
Your baby? What about your baby?

ANGEL (woodenly)  
There isn't a baby.

SAM  
Her name is Betsy.

ANGEL  
She's dead.

SAM  
She's three now, nearly four.

ANGEL  
She would have been.

SAM  
Angel gives her dolls and clothes, pretty dresses.

ANGEL  
I don't even cry anymore.

SAM  
But the baby does. Listen! I think I hear her crying now.

ANGEL (frightened)  
No!

SAM  
Yes, she's crying. I'm sure. Don't you hear her?

ANGEL  
No, no. I don't. She not crying!

SAM  
Yes. Yes, she is. Listen. It's getting louder; she's screaming.

No! No! She's dead. Betsy is dead!

ANGEL

(ANGEL suddenly lunges at SAM and begins hitting him. TOM pulls her away. SAM stumbles to the bar, hurt, rests for a moment then pours himself a shot of scotch. TOM shakes ANGEL hard then pulls her against him where she nearly collapses.)

TOM (To SAM)  
You lousy bastard! I should have let her kill you. (Now to ANGEL.) It's okay. It's okay, all over. Go on and cry, cry all you want. Don't talk.

ANGEL  
I have to tell you now. I want to finish.

TOM  
Not now.

ANGEL  
Yes, I want to tell you.

TOM  
Later. Just let me hold you.

ANGEL  
No, now. I have to tell you **now**. (She takes a moment to regain her composure.) I--I did have a baby, a beautiful baby.

SAM  
It was retarded.

ANGEL  
That's not true; she was a lovely baby a beautiful baby with pretty eyes and skin and hair. And she was a good baby, such a good baby.

SAM  
It cried; it screamed all the time.

ANGEL

No, no. She never cried with me, only him because--because she knew.

SAM

Knew what?

ANGEL

Knew that you represented all the evil and base and vile things in the world. She never cried with me; she was a good baby, a beautiful, innocent baby, my only child. She . . .

(She begins to break.)

TOM

That's enough, Angel.

ANGEL

No, let me finish. You have to know what happened to my baby.

SAM

**Our** baby.

ANGEL

**My** baby. You hated her.

SAM

It always cried; it never stopped screaming.

TOM

What happened?

ANGEL

She died. My baby died.

TOM

Good God.

(He pulls ANGEL close to him.)

ANGEL (woodenly)

There was nothing wrong with her; she just died, and then she was dead.

SAM

Tell him when it died. What **day**. He'll love that.

ANGEL

My baby died on the day that Saigon fell. Do you understand?

SAM

Crib death.

ANGEL

No, she just died. There was no logical reason for her death, no disease, nobody benefited from it. It didn't mean anything; it didn't do any good. She just died, that's all.

TOM

I'm sorry.

ANGEL

It wasn't your fault; it wasn't anybody's fault. She . . . just . . . died. For no reason.

TOM

I'm sorry, baby; I'm so sorry.

SAM

It's gone, Tom, but it's still alive in her head. She says it's dead, but she knows it's not, not for her. It never will be. She sings to it, talks to it, buys things for it. It's one of those little things you have to learn to live with.

TOM

Angel, I could learn. I could try. (No response.) Do you hear what I'm saying, Angel? I'll try, give it a chance, like you said. I'm willing to do that, willing to go with you, take you with me.

SAM

Isn't this touching: I'm all choked up. A tender moment in the annals of humankind. I've got it! Maybe you two could have another baby, one of your own. Oh, sorry, you couldn't, I forgot. I could recommend a good stud service then, and you could be part of the postwar baby boom after all. I know a good diaper service too.

TOM

You're all heart, Sam. (To ANGEL.) You all right?

ANGEL

I think so. You?

TOM

Frightened. Frightened half to death.

ANGEL

How did things get so screwed up?

TOM

How? It started a long time ago, and we didn't even have that much to do with it. It was that goddamn "manifest destiny" thing again. Save the world for American democracy--and sources of revenue.

ANGEL

And then it happened all at once. Suddenly I was married to the wrong man for the wrong reason. There was a war. My baby died. You were mutilated for no reason at all, and Sam came home a hero. Oh, goddammit, I hate it. I just hate it. Such idiocy. Such waste.

TOM

You should have seen it.

ANGEL

I did. And I see it now, in all of us, even him.

SAM (toasting)

To the happy couple. Your future. May your sons never have to defend the motherland.

TOM

You're sick. If my body was a casualty of the war then so was your mind. And mutilated or not I can live with my body; I couldn't live with your mind.

SAM

Not a bad mind, Tom. Knows how to make a buck.

ANGEL

Don't pay any attention to him.

SAM (toasting them)

Your future.

ANGEL

Tom?

TOM

Angel, maybe we don't have any more of a future than we do a past. The memories are all dead, relics of some unobtainable dream.

ANGEL

Tom, don't. What we have is right now, an entire lifetime of present moments. Don't turn them into regrets too, not before we've even had a chance to live some of them.

TOM

I couldn't stand losing you again; I don't think I want to take the chance. Why don't you just leave me alone?

ANGEL

You've been alone too long.

TOM

And I've been . . .

ANGEL

What? Happy?

TOM

As happy as you.

ANGEL

Then you've been in hell.

TOM

I know that! But I existed; I functioned. There was no pain.

ANGEL

Simply existing isn't **living**. You need human contact. I know that because I need it too.

TOM

I didn't need it before.

ANGEL

Then you weren't living.

TOM

I don't want all this pain!

ANGEL  
What do you want?

TOM  
To be **whole**! I want to be a man again.

ANGEL  
Oh, dammit, dammit, Tom. What can I do?

SAM (drunkenly)  
Maybe you could get him one of those dildos.

ANGEL  
Don't make me live again, Angel. Leave me alone.

ANGEL  
It's too late for that. You see, I need you as much as you need me.

SAM  
She has needs all right, Tom.

ANGEL  
Take me with you.

TOM  
I can't.

ANGEL  
Can't accept my love?

TOM  
Can't return it.

ANGEL  
If that's true, I'll leave you. (A beat.) I know you love me, and that you love me as a human being, not an object. Not like he does. If we're to start over, that's where we have to start--with fundamental human feelings.

TOM  
I can't **not** love you, Angel. I tried to stop loving you, but I couldn't do it.

ANGEL  
I'll pack a few things then. We'll go . . . all right?

All right . . . Jesus!

TOM (nods)

(ANGEL goes upstairs and begins packing a small suitcase. After a moment SAM starts up after her.)

Leave her alone, Sam.

TOM

Get out! Get out of my house!

SAM (viciously)

Not without her.

TOM

SAM  
I'll file suit, Tom. I'll sue your ass good--alienation of affection. There's a precedent. I'll take everything you've got.

TOM  
Then you'd better you stock up on cat food, ole buddy because one cat is all I've got, and it's a Siamese.

Shit!

SAM

TOM  
Right, kitty litter too. You'll be needing some of that. And face it, Sam: There hasn't been any affection between you and Angel for years.

SAM  
I still won't let her go; it's a matter of principle.

TOM  
What are you going to do? Ground her! She can do as she pleases. You can't stop her.

SAM  
By god we'll see about that!

(SAM lunges at TOM who dodges him and easily throws him to the floor. SAM stays

there for a moment hurt, breathless, then he looks up. He seems close to weeping.)

SAM

Goddamn you! Let me go, Tom. I'm drunk, and she is my wife. Let me talk to her; that's all I want, just a few minutes alone with her to talk this thing out. Don't I have that right as her husband?

TOM

It's too late for talk.

SAM (pleading)

Tom, please! Just give me a chance. I'll admit that things haven't gone well for a long time, but--but we had some good years. There was some love--and the baby. She wouldn't have make it through that on her own.

TOM

You expect me to believe that?

SAM

Tom, for chrissake, give me a chance. I love her in my own way. I do!

TOM

She hates you, Sam.

SAM

Almost nine years. You can't just wipe that out without a word whether there's any love left or not. Good or bad, we've been a part of each other's lives for a long time. I've got to see her, to talk to her. Please!

TOM

Shit! (A beat.) Go on.

(SAM hurries upstairs. Tom goes to the bar, sits, then wearily rests his head on his arms, exhausted. Upstairs, SAM enters the bedroom where ANGEL is packing.)

SAM

Put that away!

ANGEL

Get out, Sam. Get out of my room and get out of my life.

SAM

You're not leaving, not with him. He's not even a man.

ANGEL

He's a human being, Sam, a decent human being. That's more than you are, more than you've ever been.

SAM

He's a loser, a born loser. He lost everything.

ANGEL

Not me. He didn't lose me.

SAM

No?

ANGEL

Not for good. It just took us a while to get back together.

SAM

He never had you. Never!

ANGEL

He always had me, and he's going to have me now--for good.

SAM

Over my dead body!

ANGEL

Don't get dramatic, Sam.

SAM (more calmly now)

So, Tom is going to take you away. Sweep you away on a white stallion.

ANGEL

I think I'm actually taking him away.

SAM

Doesn't matter. (A beat.) And where is Tom going to keep you?

ANGEL

He won't have to keep me; I can take care of myself.

And poor Tom?  
If I have to.  
You're not going.  
Why? Why not? You don't love me.  
But I want you.  
"I want you." You sound like a recruiting poster.  
You mean so much to me.  
You're such a liar. The only thing that will suffer if I leave is your vanity. You don't have any other real feelings. (SAM goes to the bed and starts throwing her things out of the bag.) Stop it!  
You're not going!  
The hell I'm not! I'll walk out of this house naked if I have to. There's **nothing** in this house, in this life, that I want.  
Yes there is, and you know right where it is.  
Bastard!  
What's he got? (No response.) Huh? Nothing. Nothing! That's what. And you're going to miss it baby. You're going to miss it because you can't live without it. We didn't have much, but we did have sex, sheer animal desire, lust.

SAM

ANGEL

SAM

ANGEL

SAM

ANGEL

SAM

ANGEL

SAM

ANGEL

SAM

ANGEL

SAM



SAM (viciously)  
What's that? Is that love? You feel that love?

ANGEL (struggling)  
Stop it! You son of a bitch. Let me go.

SAM  
You shut up!

(He slaps her and tears open her robe. She falls on the bed with him standing over her.)

SAM  
Now I'm going to show you the only kind of love you know anything about. And if you make a sound I'll kill you and him too.

ANGEL  
No. No.

(SAM drops down on top of her, forcing her into submission. The lights begin to fade slowly.)

SAM  
Feel that. Feel that love inside you. You can't get that from him. You love it now baby, Admit it. You love it. Love it! **Love it!**

ANGEL (weakly)  
No, no, I don't. No . . .

(The SCENE fades into darkness momentarily as the light come all the way down. There is a moment of silence and blackness before the lights begin to come back up. MUSIC can be used here to cover a short time lapse. When the lights come up ANGEL is crumpled up on the bedroom floor, crying. SAM is stretched out on the bed, smoking, quietly, confidently. Downstairs, TOM enters from the kitchen and goes to the stairs.)

TOM  
Angel. Angel! I took the roast out; it's burned . . . Angel? You all right?

SAM  
That's your **man** calling.

TOM  
Angel!

SAM  
She's all right, Tom. Angel is just fine.

TOM  
Angel!

ANGEL  
I'm . . . coming, Tom.

(She rises, closes her robe the best she can and moves to the stairs painfully. After a moment she goes down, crying and trying not to cry.)

TOM  
What. . . ?

ANGEL  
I--I'm sorry, Tom. But I--I can't go with you.

TOM (reaching for her)  
What? Why? What did he do to you?

ANGEL  
Don't.

TOM  
He raped you!

ANGEL  
You'd better go.

TOM  
What?! No!

ANGEL

Please, leave! Leave me alone. Go on.

TOM

Not without you.

ANGEL

I'm not going now. I can't.

TOM

I won't leave you here, not after this.

ANGEL

God, this is absurd. A moment ago you wouldn't have me.

TOM

And you wouldn't leave without me.

ANGEL

Sweet irony.

TOM

Irony, bullshit. Get your things.

ANGEL

Tom, you don't understand. I can't go with you now. Sam was right; he made me see myself for what I really am.

TOM

I don't care what you are. You'll be something different with me than you are with him anyway. Now get your bag, Angel.

ANGEL

Tom, I 'm not the sweet angel you fell in love with anymore. I might destroy you; you said so yourself. I don't know that there isn't some kind of an unmitigated lust for . . . something that I can't quite identify deep within my being. I don't know if it's for sex or power or control, but beneath this veneer of "respectability" some deep craving is aching to be satisfied.

TOM

I want you out of here anyway. You don't even have to stay with me, but I want you out. I won't leave you here for him to destroy like--

ANGEL (probing)

Like he destroyed you?

TOM (reflects, then)

I know why I came here now. (A beat.) It was for you, but not because I wanted you anymore; at least I didn't know that when I came. I came to take you from him. He took you from me when I was helpless. I wanted to take you back. And I am, but it's still a poor trade because my loss was so much greater than his. I **loved** you. He doesn't, probably never has. He just wanted to get at me anyway he could.

ANGEL

Get back at you for what?

TOM

Come with me, Angel. Not because I give a damn about Sam now; I don't. But because I want and need you to. Stay, he'll destroy you.

ANGEL

What about you? Aren't you capable of being destroyed?

TOM

I've already been destroyed. I need you to help me pick up the pieces.

ANGEL

I'll come then, because you need me. But I'll leave you before I'll hurt you.

TOM

That would hurt most of all.

ANGEL

They I'll stay, for as long as you need me.

(They embrace. Then she pushes away.)

ANGEL

God, I feel so--dirty.

(TOM leads her to the table. There he wets a napkin in a water glass and wipes her face and upper torso.)

Better?

TOM

(She nods and attempts a smile.)

Better.

ANGEL

(SAM enters from the stairs now. He is pulling up his pants and buckling his belt.)

You filthy bastard!

TOM

SAM

Just showed her how much she needs a **man**, Tom. You just won't be able to--fill the gap.

You raped her!

TOM

SAM

She's my wife, Tom. Man can't rape his wife. The law.

She leaving anyway. Now. With me.

TOM

SAM

Try to take her and I'll kill you both.

TOM (explodes)

What with, Sam? A weapon? (He rushes to the gun cabinet.) One of these? But you're afraid of guns, Sam! Remember? They make you shake, make you cry!

SAM (viciously, frightened)

Shut up! You shut up!

TOM

What is it, Sam? You hear those rounds going off? Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Hear that? All around you--VC firing out of the jungle. You can't see them. Bang! Bang! Hear it!? Remember? See the rockets red glare? The bombs bursting in air? See them! Remember?

SAM (shaken)

All right. All right! Take her. I don't give a goddamn about the slut. Just take her and shut up.

ANGEL

What is it, Tom? What are you talking about?

SAM (desperately)

Nothing! Lies! Nothing but lies!

ANGEL

Tom, what happened? What happened over there?

SAM

Nothing! **Nothing** happened! Now get the hell out. Go on!

ANGEL

No! I want to know!

(TOM and SAM stare at one another; SAM is incredibly anxious. Suddenly he breaks for the gun cabinet and grabs the revolver he had hidden earlier. He comes at TOM. ANGEL jumps between them.)

ANGEL

Sam, no!

SAM

Get away from him Angel!

(TOM pushes her away and SAM grabs her with his free arm.)

SAM

You keep your mouth shut. Don't you say another word you prickless bastard. Just get out before I kill you.

TOM

Angel too?

SAM

No! Angel stays. You get out.

(TOM starts for the door cautiously.)

SAM

I'm doing you a favor, Tom, a big favor for an old war buddy. You're just not equipped to keep this little woman satisfied. If you--

(ANGEL elbows him hard in the abdomen, doubling him over. TOM jumps him and they struggle until the gun goes off harmlessly into the ceiling. Upon hearing the shot SAM crumples onto the floor, frightened. TOM grabs the revolver.)

TOM

Now, one more game, Sam. I'm going to direct this time. Sam. **Sam?**

SAM

What. What!?

TOM

Another game! You asked for it, you bastard. Time for, Sam in the bunker. You'll know how to play this one; the script is already written; you know all the lines, don't you? **Don't you?**

SAM

Yeah, yeah, I know. But don't--don't make me play. Please don't make me play, Tom. Take Angel and go; I won't bother you. Go on. Please.

ANGEL

No!

TOM

No, by god, we're going to play this time. Angel's going to find out just what kind of a hero you really are.

SAM

Tom, I was afraid. Jesus! Pity me. Please!

TOM

I don't have any pity left, not for you. That's what your kind does to people-- turns them into pitiless creatures that claw and scratch and bite and hate until they destroy anything and everything. You killed what pity I had for you when you raped Angel. You made me hate again, hate you and hate myself for hating. So we're going to finish this game now. You started it; it's got to end. (Point to plants.) Get in that bunker--over there in the jungle.

SAM

Tom. Please!

TOM

Move it! Bang! Bang! Goddammit, **move!** Incoming! Hit the deck! Hit it!

(They both dive to the floor, SAM near the plants, TOM closer to the couch. ANGEL stands back and watches, frightened and fascinated.)

TOM

More incoming! Dig it, Sam! Dig it!

(SAM is confused, truly frightened and angry.)

TOM

Get down, Sam. Get down in the bunker. I'm here in the ditch, remember? Angel, here's the situation, and a sorry one it is too. We're taking mortar and automatic weapons fire from a tree line south of us. Sam is pinned down in a bunker, me, here in a ditch. Between us the VC have planted some boobytraps-- mines, staked pits, snares all kinds of bad shit that I don't even want to remember. We get orders to pull back, and start, everybody but Sam in his hole. Okay, Sam, you take it from here.

(Silence.)

TOM

Bang! Bang! Bang! Dig it, grunt! Dig it!

SAM

Please stop, Tom. Please! I can't stand it.

TOM

Bang! Bang! You start talking and I'll stop. Now go!

SAM

Tom. Tom! Goddammit, I'm hit!

TOM

How bad?

SAM

Bad! Real bad! I can't move my legs; my legs won't move. Help me!

TOM

Shit, hang on . . . Corpsman! Corpsman!

SAM (trembling now, reliving it.)

Tom! Don't leave me. Don't leave me here!

TOM

Hang on dammit! (A beat.) Christ! All right, I'm coming over; put some heat in that tree line.

(TOM waits, fires himself, then runs to a position closer to SAM and hits the deck.)

TOM

Goddamn! I said to fire into that tree line. I nearly got my ass shot off!

SAM (hunkering down)

I can't. My weapon's jammed; it won't fire.

TOM

Christ Almighty!

(Again TOM fires into the imaginary tree line. Then he darts around the room dodging furniture and finally dives into SAM'S bunker.)

TOM

Son of a bitch. They're trying to kill me, and I don't even believe in this fucking war. Damn you! (Turns to SAM.) Where did you get--what the fuck? **You're not hit!** You lousy bastard!

SAM

Tom! Jesus, I'm scared; my legs won't work. I thought I was hit; I swear. I thought I was hit. Help me! Goddammit, help me!

TOM

You think I'm not scared? You think I want to die in this fucking hole. Get up!

I can't.

SAM

TOM  
Can't my ass. Now move! Or you can stay here and take this opportunity to give your life for your country.

SAM  
This isn't **my** country!

TOM  
It's not mine either, and while I don't have anything against it personally, I sure as hell don't plan on dying for it. Let's go!

SAM  
I'm telling you, I can't.

TOM  
Give me that! (Tom grabs SAM'S weapon.) I'll pin them down while you make a run for it; otherwise you're gonna die in this hole. (Fires.) It's not jammed!.

SAM (begging)  
Tom, I can't move. I'm afraid.

TOM  
You dirty yellow bastard!

SAM  
That--that field you crossed. It's booby trapped; Franklin got blown away.

TOM  
You know that and you called me over here?

SAM  
I'm hit! I need help.

TOM  
Liar! You're yellow. Now move!

SAM  
I can't! Franklin--he was there--and then he wasn't. I--I can't do it. Help me!

TOM  
Fuck it. I'm leaving. You can stay if you want.

SAM  
No, Tom, don't leave me. Please! I beg of you.

TOM (thinks, then:)  
Shit! . . . If I get you out I may kill you myself.

SAM  
Just get me out.

(TOM fires into the tree line.)

TOM  
Get on.

(SAM struggles to his feet and climbs on TOM'S back piggyback style. TOM fires again then starts across the booby trapped area. Halfway across the room, he drops the revolver, freezes, and yells.)

TOM  
Mine field!

(He makes the noise of an explosion, yells, and falls, clutching his crotch. SAM falls too, but he is not seriously wounded. TOM'S body sheltered him.)

SAM  
I'm hit! I'm hit!

TOM (getting up)  
You just took some shrapnel in the ass; you weren't hurt. You **left** me!

SAM  
No, no. I went for the Corpsman, Tom. I--I didn't leave you; I swear it. And--and I fought off the VC. They withdrew, fell back, ran away.

TOM  
They disappeared into the jungle because of an air strike. And the Corpsman that found me was from Brave Company. You ran and left me to die.

SAM

No, no! I--I sent for them, called in the air strike, fought off the VC. I have medals; I'm a hero. My country gave me medals.

TOM

Crawl. Crawl you worm, crawl back into your hole.

(SAM starts crawling; then he collapses in a heap, whimpering and shaking.)

ANGEL

That's enough, Tom.

TOM

He left me to die after . . .

ANGEL

I know. I know . . . I thought he was a hero; I almost even respected him for that.

TOM

None of us were heroes, just soldiers of misfortune, fighting the wrong war at the wrong time for the wrong reasons.

ANGEL

He thought he was a hero; he told the story so often that he began to believe it himself.

TOM

He thought he was right; they all thought they were right. (A beat.) Get your things. We're going.

(ANGEL starts for the stairs. As she does SAM picks up the revolver, jumps up and rushes TOM. ANGEL then moves behind SAM to the gun cabinet.)

SAM

You son of a bitch. I'm going to kill you for that!

TOM

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Stop it! Goddammit it, stop!

SAM

Bang! Bang! Incoming! Incoming!

TOM

(SAM manages to squeeze off a round that catches TOM in the shoulder. TOM falls then struggles to his knees. SAM is terribly frightened of TOM, of the gun, but he still has it pointing at TOM'S head. ANGEL removes a rifle from the cabinet.)

You shouldn't have done that.

SAM

Go on Sam, shoot me! But you won't kill it! You can't. You can't kill it because it's not in me Sam, it's in you! The poison is in you and your kind.

TOM

I don't give a goddamn!

SAM

(SAM is trembling, trying to fire when ANGEL fires a shot into the ceiling. SAM cringes then falls to the floor, crying.)

I had to destroy it: I had to destroy it before it destroyed what little good is left in us.

ANGEL

I know. I know.

TOM

Now we can be whatever it was they we started out to be so many years ago. (A beat.) We can be that, Tom, can't we?

ANGEL

If we can remember what that was.

TOM (nods)

I can . . . I remember now.

ANGEL (hopefully)

(ANGEL goes to TOM. Still on his knees  
he holds her and she him as the lights  
come down slowly.)

CURTAIN