

AT THE BEACH HOUSE

A Play

Aram Saroyan

CHARACTERS

Christopher Lakewood---twenties

Angela Bennett---thirties

Wanda Harrow---sixties

Clyde Harrow---sixties/seventies

Seth---thirties

Nick Bennett---thirties/forties

Brian---fifties

Olga Brophman---late seventies

Mark Sansom---forties/fifties

Stevie Harrow---twenties

ACT ONE

The scene of the play is the part of the house that fronts on the beach. It is a well-appointed Southern California beach house of the kind inhabited by movie stars on this strip of beach. In the stage front patio area there are wrought iron chairs and a table with a glass top. Inside the house--a sliding glass door threshold separates the inside and outside--there is a sofa and a television stage left, and a bar kitchenette area stage right. As the lights come up it is mid-morning of a beautiful Los Angeles day. An attractive woman in her mid-thirties wearing a robe, Angela, comes out into the patio area. She is smoking a cigarette and seems bemused at the prospect of the day. She stands for a moment, squinting out at the horizon, shrugs and then drops into a patio chair and inhales deeply on the cigarette, then exhales. A good-looking young man, Chris, runs up and pauses, jogging in place.

Chris: Hi. Remember me? You're not gonna believe this.

Angela: Hello. I saw you the other day, I seem to recall, playing volley-ball? (Not very curious) What?

Chris: I'm glad you remember. You're not gonna believe who I just saw.

Angela: Who?

Chris: (noticing her) You're a little blase.

Angela: Me? Blase?

Chris: Very. I saw--well, never mind...

Angela: Whataya mean? Who?

Chris: Huge...

Angela: Huge--what?

Chris: Star. Movie star. Who are you, by the way?

Angela: Who wants to know?

Chris: You related to Clyde Harrow?

Angela: What if I am?

Chris: Great, great performer. Probably my favorite, all time performer because...for one thing, naturalness...Know what I mean?

Angela: Sure do. Yes indeedo.

Chris: You wanna make fun of me, fine, okay? I'm honored to meet you. Chris, by the way.

Angela: Angela...

He stops jogging, goes over to her and puts out his hand. She looks at his hand for a moment as if she is uncertain what it is. He puts it a little further forward to help her get the point. They shake hands. He goes back to jogging.

Chris: (talking to himself) I'm hitting singles and doubles these days--not flying out.

Angela: You a baseball player?

Chris: In a way.

Angela: Well...la di da...

Chris: "Annie Hall"--probably her best work...

Angela: I'm not crazy about Woody Allen.

Chris: Understandable.

Angela: I'm having a little trouble being alert here. I may need some grass...

Chris: Thanks, but no thanks...

Angela: Do you have any drugs?

Chris: Do I have any drugs?

Angela: Got it!

Chris: (stopping jogging) Am I missing something?

Angela: (preoccupied) For some reason I can't sleep. Normally I would be asleep. I like to sleep and I'm generally a very good sleeper.

Chris: (mildly confused, but not worried) Uh-hunh. I know I need my seven or eight hours or I'm...

Angela: A little out of it. And here it is a beautiful day.

Chris: So. Nice to meet you. (He crosses to her again and extends a hand; she looks at it again.) Shake it, okay?

Angela: If I'm not mistaken, we just did this.

They shake hands.

Chris (an afterthought, as he's leaving): Listen, let me ask you something. I mean...

Angela: Um-hmmm.

Chris: It's possible that while we're chatting here, Mr. Harrow could just come down and, like, pour himself a cup of coffee...

Angela: (a new day, a new voice: vigorous) Coffee! God, how come I didn't think of that!

Chris: You could use a cup...

Angela: Yes, but it's also an attitude. People fuel up and hit the freeway. Then they go to work...It's...traditional.

Chris: Working? I used to work in real estate. Before I did the Forum.

Angela: The Forum?

Chris: I should go, probably.

Angela: Fine. I'm going to make coffee.

Chris: You know, I haven't had a cup of coffee in six months, since before I quit Sands Realty.

Angela: ...and hit the beach?

Chris: A bunch of us pooled our resources. I'm committed to a world of physical health through exercise...

Angela: No kidding.

Chris: (nodding) That's who I am.

Angela: What?

Chris: I stand for that possibility.

Angela: Coffee...(she gets out of chair, stretches, and makes her way into the house and the kitchenette area) A lot of people don't realize the inherent danger in moving too far off the mainstream. It's like Bob Dylan says.

Chris: You dig Dylan?

Angela: Dylan has done fine work in the past, in the recent past too, and I expect more of it in the future.

Chris: It's like, a Rolling Stone review...

Angela: (fixing coffee) Not at all.

Chris: I guess I better go.

Angela: You keep saying that. That doesn't sound like a direction. You seem to be a little rudderless, not exactly on schedule. A little off the beltway. Now, I'm going to give you something to think about, because I have something to do and you may want to go or you may want to sit down and fuel up with some java, some fine Peruvian beans. This isn't exactly Folgers and it's not exactly Starbucks. But this stuff is integrating. It puts you on your own assembly line and the next thing you know...

Chris: What? You've got a Jones for coffee?

Angela: It's in your hands now. You don't have to have even a sip...It may be that you prefer to stay where you are, figuratively and literally. But, as I mentioned, I have an errand to run, and in the interest of politeness, so we don't have a problem here, I want you to know that your favorite actor is married to a woman who may be around shortly...

Chris: This is your Mom?

Angela: Could be. And she is usually about by now. She's an interesting person in her own right. Legendary, in certain quarters. Just mention that we've been chatting. Keep a nice even tone, which by the way you have a flair for...

Chris: Thanks.

Angela: My pleasure. If you stay around, you might run into me again, and I won't have changed in any fundamental way.

Chris: Right...

Angela: So, we'll talk again, most likely.

She brings a cup of coffee to him and goes into the back of the house. Chris takes the coffee, huddles over it and sits down in a patio chair. Then gets up, goes to the open threshold of the household and has a moment contemplating whether or not he should walk in. Finally decides yes, and walks decisively to the kitchenette area, where he finds a sugar and milk and returns to the patio. He adds both to the coffee and then looks at it for a moment. Then he takes a sip. A cellular phone on the patio table rings and he almost spills the coffee.

Chris: Jesus.

The phone continues to ring as Chris recovers and now weighs picking up the receiver. He takes a sip of coffee, puts the cup down on the table, reaches his hand out and finally grabs the receiver.

Chris: Uh...Harrow household.

My name? Chris. How about you?

Your sister? Brunette? Maybe thirty? Yeah, she's around. But she had an errand or something. I'm a neighbor. I just stopped by... Hey, man, mind your language, okay?

Phone clicks; Chris holds it in his hand, bewildered and then replaces the receiver.

Chris: "Shooting up in the guest bedroom?" Alright.

A well-preserved woman of perhaps seventy wanders on stage, and regards Chris. This is Angela's mother, Wanda.

Wanda: (coming out to the patio) Oh, it's so beautiful. I'm never going back to the Palisades.

Chris: (pleased, smiling, honored) Yes, a beautiful day.

Wanda: Wanda Harrow. [she extends a hand]

Chris: Christopher Lakewood.

Wanda: Christopher Lakewood. What a beautiful name. An eastern seaboard name...That's the name of a young Eastern aristocrat. Are you a young Eastern aristocrat?

Chris: No, 'mam, I don't think I so.

Wanda: Are you sure?

Chris: Well, I guess so, I'm sorry to say. I'm from California.

Wanda: You don't have to tell anyone. Do you know that? There are many boys born out here with Eastern seaboard sensibilities and their souls are crushed by this--silly place. Boys who deserve to be in places like New York and Washington, who are born in Inglewood and that's the last you ever hear of them. They don't go to the kind of prep school that trains them for leadership positions. A Putney or a Saint Paul's. At best they go to Harvard or Viewpoint, where we sent our Stevie--imagine calling a prep school Harvard, who are they trying to kid? And all that fine, poetic, incisive intelligence is

squandered in summer jobs at places like Mr. Hot Dog, dressed as a hotdog. These boys are deprived of their dignity, they're trivialized, and finally driven mad.

Chris: [During her speech Chris has moved from being puzzled into a tentative identification with the sort of boy she is describing and then into an encroaching depression. He answers in a slower voice than before] I know one thing. High school wasn't that great.

Wanda: Where did you go, if you don't mind my asking?

Chris: Not at all. Thousand Oaks High School.

Wanda: Ah, Thousand Oaks...Actually, it's quite beautiful there. The Widmarks have a ranch...And Sly...

Chris: [excited] Sly?

Wanda: Oh, yes, but he's so silly to sell himself short that way...those comic book movies...Sly...[she pauses, searching herself]...think about it before you say anything...Sly could do...I know it sounds like a stretch but just think about it for a minute...Lear...King Lear.

Chris: I haven't seen it.

Wanda: That's what I mean about this place. If he pointed himself in that direction, he could. But they have him becoming a grotesque and he's a very dear man.

Chris: Well, what I was going to tell you...

Angela wanders back out to the patio again. There is a change in her, not marked but evident. She's slower and infused with an interior pulse that keeps her at a kind of remove from what is going on. She's speedballing.

Angela: Oh, hi. (she kisses her mother on the cheek)

Wanda: Hello, dear. I was just talking to this nice young man from Thousand Oaks.

Angela: Yes, Chris. We met earlier.

Chris: I think your brother called.

Angela: He did. Nick did? What did he say?

Chris: Not too much, actually. He hung up on me.

Angela: Don't take it personally, right Mommy?

Wanda: That's right, dear. Nick is difficult. He's been difficult all his life. Literally since birth. He's never gotten the hang of making people comfortable, which is a terribly important skill in today's world. But apparently his wife, Laurie, doesn't mind, which frankly puzzles me. Does it puzzle you, dear?

Angela: Does it puzzle me? I don't think about it, but if I did, it would probably puzzle me. It puzzles me that anyone in the world would put up with Nick for more than a day and a half. And Laurie has exceeded that. Come to think of it, so have I. By about an hour and a half.

Wanda: Dear, have you offered our guest some food?

Chris: (getting up) Oh, thanks. The coffee was great. You know, it's time for me to shove off. Thanks again.

He does a couple of bending exercises, preliminary to jogging.

Wanda: (to Angela) How did you sleep, my darling.

Angela: Good, Mommy. Very good. I love my bed in my Mommy's home.

Wanda: It's your home, darling. You know that. As long as I'm alive.

Angela: Right, but if Mr. Wonderful happens to outlive you, I might not be welcome, depending on how things parse with Clyde at the moment.

Wanda: You needn't think of things that way. He's been extraordinarily kind to you, to me, to all of us.

Angela: Kind?

Chris has now begun to jog again and takes off down the sand.

Wanda: Well, what a refreshing young man.

Angela: Really? He seemed very routine to me. Great pecs and rocks in his head.

Wanda: You see, you don't know what could follow from a real love affair.

Angela: Right, a kind of alchemy that transforms two formerly mediocre people into sparkling social firecrackers.

Wanda: Love is an alchemy, Angela. If I've learned anything at all in my life. Love is a kind of internal-combustion. It's true, darling.

Angela: Right, right, right. I'm so bored with your commitment to--being the love doctor or something.

Wanda: Don't be jealous, darling. I'm seventy. I'm old. I'm arthritic. I don't have but one or two years left and I'm determined to enjoy them, that's all. You and Nick really seem to resent the idea that I might have even a moment of happiness.

Angela: Oh, God. Your happiness. (switching channels; hustling her) But you know, of course you're right and always have been. You're the only person I've ever known who happens to be right about everything all the time. It's remarkable, Mommy.

Wanda: (knows the hustle, but prefers it) Thank you, my darling.

Clyde Harrow moves into the back of the stage area, holding a newspaper which he swings back and forth like a fly swatter without aiming at anything in particular.

Clyde: Tell him to go fuck himself.

Wanda: What, darling?

Clyde: I said tell her to go fuck herself.

Wanda: Who, darling?

Clyde: Anybody. I'm a goddam movie star. If they give you any trouble, just tell them to go fuck themselves.

Wanda: Alright, darling.

Clyde: Especially my fucking agent, or the goddam bookie. These people think they rule the world. CAA has a god complex.

Wanda: It's not a complex, darling.

Clyde: (Laughs silently, appreciatively) Right, but Orville Reed is no smarter than my brother, but he has that insane self-confidence, which is badly damaging everything I don't stand for anymore.

Angela: Clyde, take five. You haven't spoken one word of sense since you came in and I need a break.

Clyde: Why, hello, sweetheart.

Angela: Hi, Clyde-ee-poo.

Clyde: Whataya need, sweetheart. A thousand, two thousand--you got it. How's everything? Got a buzz on?

Angela: Not bad. Maybe a little.

Clyde: How did I know that?

Wanda: I'm concerned about her.

Clyde: I am too, but I need a little recreation, a little relaxation, a way to leave this world for an alternative universe, and I don't do grass and I don't have the Internet.

Wanda: We could certainly get it.

Clyde: I'm not interested, and that's a big problem. Life is interest, if it's anything at all. We're interested in one another, for some reason. To men it's obvious that women are interesting; and to women, vice

versa. This is how the universe has really helped us out. And...of course, weather like this. Just fine.

Wanda: Stevie called. He wants to know if you'll go with him to the Tennis Club today.

Clyde: The Beverly Hills Tennis Club? Sure I will.

Wanda: Good, sweetheart.

Clyde: But right now, ladies, I have a television appointment.

The television is placed so that Clyde can be seen watching. He puts on earphones, and periodically reacts to the game in progress.

Wanda: You know, it's not right.

Angela: What, Mommy?

Wanda: Oh God, Angela, can't you stop that?

Angela: Stop what, Mommy?

Wanda: The baby voice, the heroin, the cocaine. For God's sake, Angela, when do you grow up?

Angela: You're not really going to start that, are you? Did you talk to Nick?

Wanda: Listen, Nick doesn't talk to me, or if he does, it's just for a minute or two. He's tired of me now because he has a little money, I guess.

Angela: Nick has money? Really.

Wanda: He got some sort of teaching job in the Valley. He's become an expert in his field, I guess.

Angela: What field is that, again?

Wanda: Is it the sixties, the fifties...something, sometime, in there.

Angela: Abbie Hoffman?

Wanda: God knows. Well, that's nice. Good for him. He needs to make a living with those kids.

Angela: It's so out of date. He fries his brains on acid and then becomes an expert on the sixties. How expedient.

Wanda: Now stop, Angela. He didn't fry his brains and telling people that he did hurts him in this town. We both know he's not a very considerate person, not like our Stevie, but...

Angela: Stevie? Stevie needs social skills 101, but then he doesn't have much of an incentive.

Wanda: Why not?

Angela: Because you and Clyde have him mortgaged up to his ear lobes. He has the terribly deluded idea that everyone is jealous of him, or did, before Tammy left him.

Wanda: That little witch. Who does she think she is?

Angela: Actually, I was quite proud of her. She metamorphosed from a little industrious airhead, into someone who was actually figuring out the truth of a situation for herself.

Wanda: Like what, exactly?

Angela: Oh, like maybe Stevie wasn't the greatest catch in the world, in spite of driving his black Lexus before he even moves out of his parent's house. You and Clyde really ought to be shot for what you've done to him.

Wanda: (Lying beautifully) Stevie makes his own money. You know that.

Angela: Right, and he bought that ghetto franchise?

Wanda: Chicken Shack?

Angela: Chicken Shit...Have you ever eaten there?

Wanda: Darling, it's a different style of cookery.

Angela: Right. The Culinary Thrombosis school.

Wanda: God, what's wrong with you?

Angela: Wrong? Nothing. I haven't felt this good since I don't know when.

Wanda: Yes, and we all know why. It's so silly for you to throw away your life this way when you have a perfectly good voice-over career in New York.

Angela: (sober for a moment) Everyone in New York loathes me. I've burned my bridges.

Wanda: Just like your father. Except Jackson at least worked all the time.

Angela: Another goddam immigrant, an obsessive compulsive, rage-aholic, diseased gambler.

Clyde: (suddenly erupts in agony over a play on the screen): Oh, you stupid motherfucker. You low-life scum-sucking motherfucking son-of-a-bitch.

Angela: Jesus, could you do something about Cary Grant?

Wanda: It's really rather serious, unfortunately. He could give himself a coronary at any moment with that kind of reaction.

Angela: Once, many years ago, maybe. Not any more. Not after eating baby food for ten years and taking a daily 3 mile walk, and never going to work for less three million a picture. He's going to outlive all of us.

Wanda: Well, you've got that wrong too, but I'm not going to argue with you.

Angela: Well, good. It's good to see you pull back a little, Mommy. You're learning from Clyde.

Wanda: I'm just getting old. Remember, every so often, when you have no reason to expect it and you certainly didn't think of it or wish for it,

suddenly one of your nostrils clears and you're really breathing for the first time in a long time?

Angela: I guess so.

Wanda: I don't remember when that last happened to me.

Angela: Breathing?

Wanda: Yes, just enjoying the world. I've forgotten how to do that, and I plan to learn again before I die. One thing I have learned from Clyde is that it's not necessary to be miserable, not all the time.

Angela: Although Clyde generally seems to be.

Wanda: No, I don't think so. That's a front he puts up because he's guilty about being happy.

Angela: Ah-ha. Well...

Wanda: Are you going to be here for a while, darling. We're meeting Mark and Dolly tonight. Do you want to come?

Angela: Tonight? I'm not sure. I think Seth may come by.

Wanda: Are you out of your mind? I don't believe this. Absolutely not. He's lucky we didn't file charges and have him arrested when he beat you up. You aren't thinking clearly, Angela.

Angela: Mother, Seth is clean. He's been clean for four months, and he's trying to get me to clean up, except that, search my soul, I can't think of one good reason to.

Wanda: You know, you don't really understand something that's so important, darling. Life has nothing whatsoever to do with reasons. It's like I was saying, breathing clearly. It's a gift, and drugs just muck it up so that you don't know if you received it or not.

Angela: Right. You're this little monarch with your pension plan and your real estate and everything you've got tucked away here and there,

and you're telling me to be here now. Meanwhile, you can't even leave and go somewhere you might enjoy. It's immigrants, goddam immigrants, hording their little knapsacks that now include major holdings around the globe, as they sit around the camp fire, keeping focused. Look at him.

She turns to Clyde watching television.

Wanda: Whereas you've discovered heroin, an evolutionary leap.

Angela: No, not a leap. Maybe a step backward, even. But something physical, something in the moment, pleasure, actual pleasure.

Wanda: I know what pleasure is, Angela. Real pleasure.

Angela: The fuck you do.

Wanda: Fine. I'm going to get dressed.

Angela: Alright, Mommy. See you later this week?

Wanda: Very funny. And keep that slime bucket out of here. God, where did you get your taste in men? Not from me, that's for sure.

Angela: From Daddy, maybe?

Wanda: Your father would never have slept with a man even if he wanted to. He was much too conventional.

Angela: Okay, so he just wanted to.

Wanda: I didn't say that. What Jackson always wanted was for everybody in the world to love him. He felt a tremendous need of affirmation.

Angela: Which you, of course, withheld.

Wanda: Not at all. I loved your father more than any human being should ever love another human being.

Angela: First love. Everybody goes through that. Except you seem to have been dining out on it ever since.

Wanda: Not true. I did happen to make a terrible mistake, that's all. It's one thing to fall for the wrong guy. Mostly people do on their first time. The problem was that he was rich and famous, and I admit I got confused by that.

Angela: Not confused at all. Clarified. Directed. Infused with purpose.

Wanda: You're absolutely wrong about that.

Angela: Anyway, it's the same goddam syndrome. Let's assimilate, as quickly as possible. Fame and money. Voila.

Wanda: God, you're glib. Is that what heroin does.

Angela: No, that's the cocaine. Heroin is more dreamy, strictly speaking.

Intercom: (the maid's voice) Mrs. Harrow?

Wanda: Yes, angel?

Intercom: Seth is here.

Seth, a good-looking man in his thirties with biker boots and jacket, appears in the living room.

Seth: Alright! Let's get Mommy up to speed on drugs.

Angela: Mother is upset that you're here.

Wanda: I'm not upset at all. I want you out of here. And I'm a little puzzled that it doesn't occur to you that you're not welcome here. You don't physically attack people where I come from and then show up in their house as a guest.

Seth: Listen, Wanda, I know this isn't going to mean much but I truly regret what happened, and I honestly want to make it up to Angela.

Wanda: Just how do you propose to do that.

Seth: Well, I don't know that I should say it, right out, in front of your

daughter, who is my dearest friend.

Angela: "My dearest friend..." Who's been giving you lessons?

Seth: Angela, give me a break.

Wanda: You don't feel comfortable saying what in front of Angela?

Angela: It's an intervention, like when you threw me into that rehab in the Valley, and I met all my favorite stars.

Wanda: An intervention?

Seth: No, because as Angela knows, we can't just grab her anymore. We have to goddam convince her, and I've been trying to remember, Mrs. Harrow, if I've actually ever won an argument, even one argument, with your daughter--and, by the way, that particular stubbornness she's got, could help us get into it, a point of entry, psychically.

Angela: Fuck off, Seth. Stop trying to hustle her. Did you bring me anything?

Seth: Just enough, my ladyship. Listen, I brought along my friend Brian, who's helped me a lot and, if Wanda doesn't mind, and you'll go with me a few steps, a few little baby steps, Angie, on faith, I'll invite him in. You'll like him. He's a former Jesuit, and a former heroin addict.

Clyde has seen Seth and taken off his earphones and listened.

Clyde: (from the TV area) Did you say Jesuit? Terrific mental acuity. How many angels can dance on the head of a pin? Who cares, if it's Astaire. That's the way I always looked at it.

Seth: Clyde, my man, how are you, dude, numero uno, etc. etc.

Clyde: Hello, there, Sethy-Wethy, what the fuck are you doing in my house?

Do I have to call the police? Wanda, Angela, is this bogus rogue

warrior under control?

Wanda: Well, Angela seems to think so, Clyde, but frankly I'm concerned. Don't we have a restraining order?

Clyde: Jesus, do you realize with three strikes, we could put this pain in the ass out of circulation in Chino for the rest of his days on earth, getting butt fucked by a bunch of animals that can't think straight, no pun intended. Jesus, it's a beautiful day. I hate the Sports Channel. It eats my life for breakfast.

Seth: It's good to see you again, Clyde. How are you?

Clyde: I'm excellent, or was before you showed up. Now I'm going to see my son, who can't relax. Ever since his wife left him he's been so deep in anxiety, I feel sorry for the kid.

Seth: Has Stevie ever done acid?

Angela: Not acid, Seth. He needs, like, peyote I think, or maybe ecstasy.

Seth: You think?

Clyde: Whoops. Did I ask the wrong people? I was thinking maybe he could do a sport, flying or something--whatta they call it?

Angela: Hang-gliding.

Clyde: Yeah. Hang-gliding. What the fuck is this Tar-an-tino type doing on my patio?

Seth: I hope I don't threaten you, Clyde.

Clyde: No, Seth, you don't threaten me. You appall me.

Seth: Because I think you're one of the greatest guys of all time. I'm talking about your step-daughter here, Clyde. She needs an intervention.

Clyde: Never could teach Angela a damn thing. Knew everything. Smart as a whip. And oddly stupid--in the worldly dimension.

Seth: Drug addicts have the worst luck in the fucking world. That's why they're always uptight with their connections. They try to get them on their cell-phones but their luck is so bad, they'll be missing them by two or three seconds all day long. And that's just the beginning.

Wanda: She's always needed an interest, a hobby, a job, something to occupy that fine brain of hers.

Angela: Hello? Am I here? Why do people keep acting like I'm not here or unconscious or something.

Seth: Because the crux of it is that you aren't. You opted out when you dosed a few minutes, or a half an hour, or an hour ago--you defected. It's the stinky, slimey side of being a drug addict. I'll fix me up and you can all eat shit and die. It's not nice. It's insulting to the people who love you...

Angela: I know this must play really well at your meeting, Seth, but could you stop now or get the fuck out of here. Who the hell do you think you are?

Seth: Angela, baby, I want you to meet my friend Brian. What would you like to do?

Angela: Don't you have anything better to do with your life? I'm doing fine here. What seems to be the problem.

Seth: The problem is I'm in the program, and you're not. That means our relationship is on a steep downward curve from which it probably isn't going to recover.

Angela: So what?

Seth: The very answer I had in mind before I got into the program.

Angela: For the what--seventeenth time or something?

Seth: Yeah, sure. But that doesn't mean anything. You get credit for every meeting you attend. Relapse is considered a part of recovery.

Angela: God, you're actually gonna spout these little homilies from the Big Book.

Seth: One of the things I'm getting to is that maybe we have a chance. You're--a possibility, for me, sweetheart, if you decided to be a part of the loop. Everytime you...

Nick, Angela's brother, a man between 35 and 45, comes into the living room. He's dressed casually toward the conservative side, and has a more contained bearing than Seth.

Nick: There's a goddam narc sitting in Seth's car. [to Seth] What're you, under arrest or something?

Seth: Hey, Nick. No, that guy's from detox. I brought him for a house call. Shall I invite him in?

Nick: [kisses Wanda, his mother, on the cheek] Hey, Mom, the gang's all here.

Wanda: Howaryou, darling. How's Laurie?

Nick: She's fine. She's working on a hot new screenwriter's house. The kid is 25 years old and has a hot script and is making a million dollars a week. I guess it's humiliating.

Wanda: Not for you, darling.

Nick: Don't start, okay? I'm sorry I said that. Good morning, Clyde? Que paso?

Clyde: Nothin' much, old buddy. I better clear out and take a walk. Anybody up for it?

Seth: I'll take a rain check, Clyde. I've got something I wanna talk with you about, but...

Clyde: Not you, for Chrise sake, Seth. [to Wanda] Darling, let's get out of here before it's too late.

Wanda: Alright, sweetheart. Let me get my sneakers. Oh, but it's not too

hot yet. I'll just go barefoot.

Clyde: Atta girl.

Angela: Nick, I heard you had called.

Nick: Yeah, who's the geek answering the phone?

Angela: I guess this guy who stopped by on a jog, a Clyde groupie or something.

Seth: Nick, talk to her, will you? I'm going to get Brian.

Nick: For what?

Angela: They're going to intervene. Nick, stop them.

Nick sits down in a patio chair; Seth goes into the back of the house.

Why didn't you try to stop him? I don't need this shit.

Nick: Hi, Angela. How's it going?

Angela: A lot of Seth. His growth. His concern. His capacity to...

Nick: Listen, don't riff, okay? I talked to Seth. We've got a little problem here. Maybe you should solve it. How long has this been going on?

Angela: It depends on what you mean. I don't really have a habit. I did have one. But that was only for three months two years ago. I keep trying to tell people...

Nick: Angela, I don't have any reason to trust you so don't do this thing of like, I'll convince Nick and get him on my side, play to all his insecurities, make him stand up to these shits who are trying to take advantage of his baby sister. We don't have that kind of relationship and I'm not that kind of guy.

Angela: Got it! What kind of guy are you, Nick?

Nick: Maybe when we were in the sixth grade I would

have stepped up to the plate for that question and taken a couple of healthy cuts. You know, when I remember our relationship, there's not one--well, actually, there's one...

Angela: When I told you you were uncomfortable living in the house with Mom and Clyde. You were so fucking completely out of touch with reality that I had to provide you with that extremely basic piece of information.

Nick: I don't deny it.

Angela: Okay.

Nick: As a woman, I guess, you were more in touch with it than I was, or maybe it was just going to that shrink, Bob.

Angela: I'm sure he helped.

Nick: (He gets up out of his chair and walks around.) I'm trying to analyze what it is about this place that I find so hideous. There seems to be something literally life-threatening in Mom's way with a house.

Angela: Can't argue you with you there, bro.

Nick: But you know, Angela, we're getting older.

Seth appears at the perimeter of this scene and waits to be noticed, meanwhile eavesdropping.

Angela: Meaning?

Nick: Mom and Clyde...How much longer do you think they have? They're even talking about it, which means something, because for years they didn't.

Angela: There's a point to this.

Nick: I think we need to kind of make peace, Angela. Grow up. Be there for them on a limited basis, or any basis they can accept. They're incredibly proud people who are also at least 50% crazy.

Angela: Nice analysis.

Seth: Hey!

Nick: Hey yourself!

Seth: I hate to break this up. We're obviously breaking some important ground here, but like I say I've got this friend I thought it would be good for Angela to talk with...

Angela: Oh, great, Seth.

Seth: Brian, say something, will you?

Brian is a middle-aged man with a slightly effeminate manner who is both social and authoritative. He joins Seth at the perimeter.

Brian: Hello, Angela. I'm Brian.

Angela: Hi.

Brian: Hello, Nick.

Nick: Hello, Brian.

Seth and Brian walk into the living room.

Brian: So, Seth tells me we've been speed balling, hon.

Angela doesn't react.

Listen, I'm an addict myself. But you've really got to get it that cocaine isn't meant to be injected, under any circumstances, into the cardiovascular system, because what it does--are you listening?

Angela: Fuck you.

Brian: Right. We'll get to that in a minute. But to finish my thought. What it does, sweetness, is it burns your arteries from the inside out. It's going to kill you, sis, can you dig it?

Angela: I think I'm a better judge of that than you. Just off hand.

Brian: (laughs) I love addicts. That's why I'm in this business. If you didn't exist, sweetheart, I'd be doing myself up right now most likely. But I get to look in the mirror at you every day and it makes my life really glorious. (Hardball, but light in manner) You're an arrogant little twit without a clue--and you're adorable, right? I mean someone really, really, really special. Forget movie stars.

Angela: (Angela notices him with annoyance) What's your point?

Brian goes into hysterics, cracks up and slowly recovers.

Brian: God, you're wonderful. Is she like this all the time?

Nick: Am I supposed to be sitting in here?

Brian: (to Nick) Absolutely. I need you. Because she's just top of the line. She's got all the money she needs--where does she get it by the way? 'Cause I'm pretty sure she doesn't have a steady job.

Nick: Probably our mother, although I can't say for sure.

Brian: Right, Moms, who's also probably an addict. It runs in families, you know. I'm going to try to leverage this situation but it's going to be tough. She...

Angela: What the fuck is this about? Seth, how dare you do this.

Seth: Angela, I brought Brian here because it's a sure thing I can't do a thing for you. And I didn't want to just say goodbye. I owe you this.

Angela: (mocking) Gosh, Seth.

Nick: Fuck you, Angela. Every time anybody tries to do anything for you, you push them away. You've been fucking busy for our entire lives. Do you know that? Only it's been some stupid number like star fucking or shooting up. Same thing, I guess.

Angela: Another extraordinary insight from Nick "X-Ray Vision" Bennet.

(She chalks one up on the air).

Brian: Okay, kids, settle down. We're gonna have to figure this out. But, well, let's be honest. Really, there's not a damn thing you can do with an addict who doesn't have a jail sentence hanging over them or a death sentence. Not unless they want to clean up even if it's just to get a better high--and she seems to be sitting pretty. So (looking at Seth), do you want to give me a call in a couple of weeks. It's amazing the amount of damage that can be done in two weeks of speedballing.

Nick: Angela...what's the deal?

Angela: Why are you asking, Nick.

Nick: Well, see, you don't have kids or anything. You're still sitting on top of the same goddam pivot you've been on your whole life. You haven't moved off square one and it's half over. No wonder you can't see Wanda and Clyde in any kind of perspective.

Angela: Plenty of perspective. I'm out of here, gang. Thanks for a delightful morning. (She gets up and goes to the back of the house; a door slams).

Seth: Now what?

Brian: Nothing. There's nothing to do. You've got to get her fresh from a near death experience, or an attempted murder, or at the very least a felony. But you've got my number. Just give me a call. She's having a great time...Seth, I gotta get back to Hollywood, friend.

Seth: Sure, sure. Gimme a minute, though. Nick, she loves you, man. She loves her brother. Won't let anyone say anything bad about you. Not that I ever wanted to...

Nick: Sure, she's made it a personal crusade to tell everyone in the world that I fried my brains on acid. I took ten acid trips from 1975 to 1976, and then I took it again on election night in 1980 in Bolinas. I walked down from the mesa to Scowley's and as Reagan was being elected it came to me that everyone was right.

Brian: Alright! I fasted in front of the Nixon White House to stop the bombing of Cambodia and Mr. Kissinger came out after my thirty-fourth day and asked me to please eat something. I always had a soft spot for Henry after that. He was quite concerned, which impressed me rather deeply in the state I was in.

Nick: No kidding? I saw Nixon walking in New York once. He was like a small mobile building.

Brian: Really? What drugs do you take?

Nick: My wife wouldn't allow it. My drug of choice was marijuana, actually, and I developed enough of a Jones there to sit a lot of the competition out, as the decades rolled by.

Brian: Lucky you. Bye.

Nick: Bye.

Seth: Thanks, Nick. Love you, mean it.

They leave. Nick sits for a moment. Then stands up and walks out to the patio, breathes deeply, looking at the horizon. He picks up the cellular phone on the glass topped table and dials a number.

Nick: Hi. They just bombed out--for now. She stomped off to the guest room to do herself up again, I guess. Anyway, she's not cooperating. I always feel so off my game when I get to this place. I remember one time I went to the Broad Beach Road market and almost killed someone backing the car out cause I couldn't get my foot off the accelerator until the last minute. It had something to do with being in my mother's house...Probably just drive home. Unless you want to cruise by...Sure. Bye.

He sits down at the table. There are noises off the beach: the dull roar of the waves; a seagull or two. Gradually a woman's voice in distress emerges from down the beach grows more and more discernible. Nick gets out of his chair and walks out on the far edge of the patio, looking down the beach.

Nick: (yelling) Mom?

Black.