

© Sullivan -  
*The Place Where People Come to Die*

**A play by:  
Luke Krueger**

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## Characters:

Eric Sullivan, 29 – Forgotten class member of his high school, war hero, entrepreneur, and returns with a surprise for the town. Because of constant misspelling of his first name (Erich<sup>1</sup>), people call him air-itch.

Brent Nezi, 29 – Unabashed crooked mayor of Sullivan, a blacksmith who supplements his income by running a “sexual surrogate” operation.

Rudolph Gacey, 28 – Undertaker, supposedly asexual, married to Melanie, has an odd shtick with his business. Always carries a rosary and compulsively thumbs through it.

Melanie Gacey, 28 – Confused woman, at one time the most popular girl in school, a former nun, now married to Rudolph but looking for a way out of Sullivan.

Traci Maddox, 29 – Head of the PTA, husband was a semi-professional wrestler who has passed. She works for Brent.

Reve Nezi, 27 – Brent’s wife. Her child disappeared two years previously, and since then she has been catatonic singing only “Last Kiss” or spouting lines from *The Princess Bride*.

Theron Chillingworth, 64 – Melanie’s father, former lawyer, now philanthropist, the wealthiest man in Sullivan. All he wants is a grandchild and a mall.

Time: 2000

Place: Sullivan, a small town of 2,000 people, and the town’s business revolves around mortuary services.

Set: A sign should hang on stage somewhere, “Sullivan: The Place Where People Come to Die (pop. 2000).” After that, the set should be representational; all it must do is merely imply the location. Precision is not the intention.

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<sup>1</sup> Script note: When characters’ lines read *Erich*, pronounce – Air-itch.

© *Sullivan* was first produced at the Lyceum Theatre in Tempe, Arizona in December of 2002. Brian Borowka, director. Bilitiana Iackson, stage manager.

Eric Sullivan: Paul Broccolo  
Brent Nezi: Rob Soper  
Rudolph Gacey: Kevin Carrao  
Theron Chillingworth: Walt Pedano  
Melanie Gacey: Nadia Hussein  
Traci Maddox: Kristen Erber  
Reve Nezi: Christine Klein

In 2005 Blue Rose Productions in New York City produced a developmental reading of the revamped script.

In April of 2010, ©*Sullivan* debuted in Chicago at the Oracle Theatre and was produced by Simple Theatre. Jonathan Thomas, director. Crystal Summers, stage manager.

Eric Sullivan: Aaron Weiner  
Brent Nezi: Dennis Davies  
Rudolph Gacey: Jack Dearborn  
Theron Chillingworth: Chuck Zis  
Melanie Gacey: Alette Noelani Valencia  
Traci Maddox: Jennifer M. Kodros  
Reve Nezi: Audrey Flegel

# © SULLIVAN – THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE COME TO DIE

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

*Music, sounds of dancing are heard offstage. Lights up on Melanie and Rudolph each holding a glass of champagne. They sit at a table covered with nametags and a guest list. Melanie is well dressed, but in muted, subdued colors. Rudolph is dressed well, but in bright, loud colors. Eric Sullivan enters and goes to the table. Melanie and Rudolph wait expectantly, pleasantly smiling. Eric looks at them hoping they'll recognize him. There are a few seconds of awkward silence.*

**MELANIE.** Who are you?

**ERIC.** Eric Sullivan.

**MELANIE.** What are you here for?

**ERIC.** This is the ten-year reunion for Sullivan High Class of '90?

**RUDOLPH.** Yes. Do you have the ice sculpture?

**ERIC.** No. What...? I graduated with you. I'm Eric Sullivan.

**RUDOLPH.** Yes, you told us that. And you graduated with us?

**ERIC.** Yes.

**MELANIE.** You graduated with us in '90?

**ERIC.** It's what my diploma said.

**RUDOLPH.** Really? With us?

**ERIC.** With you, right, '90.

**MELANIE.** No, you didn't.

**ERIC.** Yes, I did.

**MELANIE.** Our class was only 99 people. I'm sure I would've remembered you.

**RUDOLPH.** Melanie, Honey, let's face it there were some people not worth remembering in our grade.

**MELANIE.** Are you in the yearbook?

**ERIC.** Yeah.

**MELANIE.** What was your last name?

**ERIC.** Sullivan. *(Melanie looks through the yearbook.)*

**MELANIE.** I don't see your picture.

**ERIC.** That's because mine didn't get in.

**RUDOLPH.** Not possible. I was the editor of the yearbook and we were very judicious in making sure every senior's picture was in –

**MELANIE.** No, wait, honey, there's a "not pictured" section.

**RUDOLPH.** Well I'll be damned. Let's see. Eight people.

**ERIC.** I'm listed there.

**MELANIE.** What's your last name?

**ERIC.** Sullivan.

**MELANIE.** Right there. "Erich Sullivan."

**ERIC.** Eric. They misspelled my name.

**RUDOLPH.** Who was in charge of the senior section?

**MELANIE.** I was.

**RUDOLPH.** Really?

**ERIC.** Actually, Melanie, I uh, asked you to our senior prom.

**MELANIE.** No, you didn't.

**ERIC.** Yes, I did.

**MELANIE.** You asked me to prom?

**ERIC.** Uh-huh.

**RUDOLPH.** What'd she say?

**ERIC.** Yes.

**MELANIE.** Did I? How was it?

**ERIC.** We never went.

**MELANIE.** Oh. *(Long pause.)*

**RUDOLPH.** How come?

**MELANIE.** How come what?

**RUDOLPH.** How come you didn't go?

**ERIC.** Her aunt died.

**MELANIE.** Both my parents were only children.

**ERIC.** I know.

**RUDOLPH.** I was gonna say, I remember seeing you there.

**MELANIE.** Of course you would, you took me to prom.

**ERIC.** Could I just have/ my nametag so I can go in?

**RUDOLPH.** No, you went with Brent Nezi.

**ERIC.** I see it right there.

**MELANIE.** And I lost my virginity to him on the swings at the elementary school across the street. *(He picks up the nametag.)*

**ERIC.** *(A beat)* I'll cross the "h" off myself. *(Crosses off the h and puts it on. Traci Maddox enters.)*

**RUDOLPH.** Traci! You remember – *(Traci looks at Eric's nametag.)*

**TRACI.** Erich Sullivan! *(Smiling, pleasant, she extends her hand to shake Eric's.)* Absolutely not. I'm Traci Maddox, nice to see you again.

**MELANIE.** Traci's our PTA mom extraordinaire.

**TRACI.** And the town's treasurer.

**ERIC.** Isn't the town broke?

**RUDOLPH.** She's taking a correspondence course in accounting.

**TRACI.** Are you sure you didn't graduate a year after us?

**ERIC.** I graduated in '90. *(Traci looks at the guest list.)*

**TRACI.** And what was your last name?

**ERIC.** Sullivan. Can I please go in? I came for the free booze.

**TRACI.** Here you are. But the "h" is crossed off, Erich.

**ERIC.** *(Pointing towards where the music is coming from)* It – it's that way right?

**TRACI.** We need to have you properly identified. I'll make you a new one. *(She begins making him a new nametag.)*

**RUDOLPH.** I don't remember you walking with us during graduation.

**ERIC.** You sat in the honors section.

**MELANIE.** There was more than one section, hon.

**RUDOLPH.** Well I'll be damned. What others were there?

**ERIC.** Honors, regular diploma, and certificate of attendance.

**MELANIE.** Where did you sit?

**ERIC.** Certificate of attendance.

**RUDOLPH.** I never knew anyone from that group. What was your GPA?

**ERIC.** 3.78.

**TRACI.** Ah, you bombed the state senior proficiency tests. *(Eric hangs his head in shame. She slaps the nametag on Eric. Brent Nezi enters.)*

**BRENT.** Traci, I rescheduled tomorrow because – this the guy with the ice sculpture?

**MELANIE.** Brent, this is Erich. Did you know Erich graduated with us?

**BRENT.** No shit?

**MELANIE.** And he asked me to senior prom.

**BRENT.** The night we...yeah? Boy'o, did you miss out that night.

**ERIC.** I can tell you all got a lot of catching up to do. Probably haven't seen each other in years. I'll be at the bar. *(He starts to exit.)*

**BRENT.** Wait, I remember you. *(Beat. Eric tenses.)* You sat next to me at graduation. *(Eric stops.)* State senior exam no-shows. Heyyyyyyy. *(He hugs Eric.)* What'd ya been up to?

**ERIC.** I'm was the Army, but now – You know I showed up for those exams –

**MELANIE.** You know Rudolph is a mortician.

**ERIC.** There's that honors diploma paying off.

**TRACI.** You can be successful...having...what you had. Brent has gone into business for himself.

**BRENT.** I own my own blacksmith shop.

**ERIC.** How many of those are left?

**BRENT.** Trying to keep that quiet. Anti-trust laws you know. *(Pause.)*

**ERIC.** Aren't you the mayor, Brent?

**BRENT.** For the past six years.

**TRACI.** Rudolph ran against him.

**MELANIE.** He got his ass kicked. Didn't you, Baby? *(“Unskinny Bop” can be heard where the reunion is. Rudolph approaches Eric.)*

**ERIC.** Listen to that: Poison. Really...at the bar. Brent, your honor, Mr. Mayor, I'll probably come talk to you tomorrow. I have some business –

**RUDOLPH.** Speaking of business, Erich –

**ERIC.** Rudolph, I need to – *(He pulls Erich aside and he gets very serious. Brent mulls around with Traci and Melanie, quietly conversing with them.)*

**RUDOLPH.** Erich, I love “Unskinny Bop” as much as the next guy. But this – I – I don’t know how to tell you this –but I mean it. If you ever, ever get killed in the line of duty, don’t let your mortuary needs go unplanned.

**ERIC.** Rudy, thanks no I –

**RUDOLPH.** What if you get killed – you can still get killed in action can’t you? *(Eric nods yes.)* You need to be prepared. It’s the Army motto.

**ERIC.** Boy Scout motto, actually. Thanks, but no. The Army takes care of my funeral arrangements. *(Rudolph hands him a business card.)*

**ERIC.** Interesting name.

**RUDOLPH.** It’s my shtick.

**ERIC.** I didn’t know undertakers had shticks.

**RUDOLPH.** You got to now days. Competition is murder. Tomor-row, you come down to my home. We’ll get you suited up – *(Eric tries to protest.)*

**RUDOLPH.** There’s no obligation to buy, buddy. Try a few out. See what fits you. If the Army screws up sizing you up, you’re the one that’s gotta live with it. Think about that. *(Pause Rudolph thinks about what he just said.)* Can I count on you tomorrow?

**ERIC.** We’ll see. I got a lot to – Fine, I’ll go. Now can I go to the bar?

**RUDOLPH.** I’ll buy you a drink.

**ERIC.** It’s an open bar. *(Brent, Traci, and Melanie rise to leave.)*

**RUDOLPH.** Really? Well I’ll be damned. Hey where’s everyone going?

**BRENT.** I think...we’re going back to my place.

**MELANIE.** Your wife isn’t going to mind is she?

**BRENT.** Ooo, right. Um, no, she shouldn’t. I—I don’t know I mean she was really being a bitch this morning. She might... *(Pause)* Fuck it. If she does I’ll be like, “Huh, huh, shut up Beavis.”

**MELANIE.** Erich, are you coming?

**ERIC.** I don’t wanna be a tagalong.

**MELANIE.** It'll be fun. We have so much to catch up on.

**ERIC.** No...I never liked any of you in the first place. I'll stay here.

**BRENT.** C'mon, man. I got beer back home. Beats paying for it here.

**ERIC.** But it's an open bar.

**BRENT.** At the Nezi's it's always an open bar. Besides if we get Melanie loaded she'll show us her tits. Heyyyyyyy. *(They all exit with Eric in tow. Fade to black.)*

## SCENE 2

*The backyard of Brent's house. Reve sits in a rocking chair, doped up, singing "Last Kiss." She starts repeating the chorus as everyone else enters.<sup>2</sup>*

**BRENT.** Goddamn it. I told you she was being a little bitch today. *(To Reve.)* Shut up. Shut up! I'm not giving you another one. *(Eric enters with Rudolph.)* You broke the other one?

**ERIC.** What the hell? *(Reve stops singing.)*

**REVE.** As you wish?

**BRENT.** No! You broke the other.

**ERIC.** I thought she was dead?

**REVE.** As you wish!

**BRENT.** Fine! *(Brent exits. Reve resumes humming the song.)*

**RUDOLPH.** You didn't hear? Damn shame what she did to their daughter.

**ERIC.** You...you mean she –

**RUDOLPH.** Sold her to gypsies. Happened when they were abroad. Over in Uburoi, I believe.

**ERIC.** You're fucking with me.

**RUDOLPH.** Wish I was.

**ERIC.** There's no such place.

**TRACI.** It's one of those little countries that had an ethnic cleans-ing problem. Reve and Brent were over there to help our sister city,

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<sup>2</sup> If permission cannot be obtained for use of this song, please substitute a traditional folk song, like "Don't Cry in Your Sleep."

Maxwell, clean. They were even thinking about adopting a child there. Instead, the gypsies got'em.

**RUDOLPH.** It's more common than you think.

**MELANIE.** Eight U.S. children are sold to gypsies every year, by parents who are duped while visiting Uburoi.

**ERIC.** Guess someone should put a stop to that.

**RUDOLPH.** It's why I voted for Carter in the last election.

**ERIC.** You mean Clinton. How long have they been married?

**RUDOLPH.** No, it was Carter. So, tell us about the Army, what do you do? Where have you gone? You know I know a little some-thing about the Army myself.

**ERIC.** You in the Army too?

**RUDOLPH.** Not quite.

**ERIC.** National Guard?

**RUDOLPH.** No. I –

**MELANIE.** He's seen *Full Metal Jacket*.

**ERIC.** That's the Marines.

**RUDOLPH.** Same thing. (*Brent enters carrying a balloon, a case of cheap beer, and a bottle of tequila. Reve stops singing, and gets giddy.*)

**REVE.** You mocked me once; never do it again.

**BRENT.** It's the last one in the house don't fuckin' break it. Melanie, for you. (*He gives Reve the balloon. He hands Melanie the tequila, but no shot glass. She makes a motion for one. Brent points offstage.*)

*Melanie exits to retrieve it. Reve cradles the balloon like a baby. She coos with it.* We're on our way. Hey, G.I. Joe, wanna beer? (*He opens a can and gives it to Eric.*) So whaddya think of the place?

**ERIC.** It's nice. How do you afford all this?

**TRACI.** Kickbacks.

**ERIC.** Right.

**BRENT.** It's a little messy right now, but that's 'cause Buttercup over there's catatonic.

**REVE.** "I'm not a witch. I'm you're wife, but after what you just said I'm not even sure I wanna be that anymore."

**BRENT.** All she does is sing and recite lines from the *Princess Bride*.

**REVE.** Yes, yes you're very smart now shut up.

**RUDOLPH.** I bet this house beats living arrangements on the ship.

**ERIC.** I'm in the Army.

**BRENT.** Whaddya do, Snake Eyes? Fighting Cobra's pretty hard work I'd imagine.

**ERIC.** Cobra's a made up enemy for G.I. Joe.

**BRENT.** It's called a joke. You don't think I know *G.I. Joe's* a cartoon. Jesus, guy shows up for the state senior exams and thinks he's fucking Einstein.

**ERIC.** Studies have proven some excellent students are not good at taking standardized tests.

**BRENT.** *(Yells offstage)* You can do another one Melanie. Let's see it babe. *(To Eric)* So really, what'd you do?

**ERIC.** I was a Ranger.

**TRACI.** Those are the guys who kill people, right? *(Reve starts scraping the balloon, which makes an annoying screech.)*

**BRENT.** Hold on a second. *(Brent goes over, opening a small pocketknife and pops the balloon.)*

**REVE.** Get used to disappointment.

**BRENT.** Smartest thing you've said in weeks. *(She begins humming her song.)* We have guests! Show some goddamn respect. *(She continues quietly. Brent goes over and puts his arm around Eric.)* Do you really kill people?

**ERIC.** I could kill you now.

**BRENT.** I love you man.

**ERIC.** Seventeen different ways in this position.

**BRENT.** You believe this guy? Fuckin' great. *(Melanie reenters holding a shot of tequila.)*

**RUDOLPH.** Have you seen any action?

**ERIC.** Some. *(Melanie slams back a shot. She pours another shot.)*

**TRACI.** Ooo, where?

**ERIC.** Somalia.

**BRENT.** Any we'd know about? *(Melanie slams back another shot.)*

**ERIC.** Somalia.

**RUDOLPH.** We were in Somalia?

**MELANIE.** No we weren't.

**ERIC.** I remember getting shot there.

**MELANIE.** No you don't.

**RUDOLPH.** Actually, Honey, I think I remember the Somalia deal. Remember the, feeding the starving kids TV show?

**MELANIE.** That one? My favorite episode was when the heli-copter went down.

**ERIC.** That's when I was killing people.

**MELANIE.** Good, then maybe you could tell me why they canceled it.

**TRACI.** Have you ever earned any medals?

**ERIC.** One or two.

**BRENT.** Any big ones?

**ERIC.** A silver star.

**MELANIE.** Is that good?

**ERIC.** Kind of.

**TRACI.** Erich what's this business you need to discuss?

**ERIC.** I'd rather not discuss it here. It can wait 'till tomorrow.

Congratulations by the way on marrying –

**BRENT.** I like doing business at home.

**ERIC.** It's probably better addressed at your office.

**BRENT.** There is nothing you can tell me that these people can't hear. I've got nothing to hide.

**TRACI.** His nickname is Mayor Daley; we all know he's bent.

**BRENT.** Like a boomerang.

**ERIC.** I'm gonna head back to my hotel.

**MELANIE.** Tell us what it is before you go.

**BRENT.** Hey, Mel, less talkie-talkie, more drinkie-drinkie. *(To Eric)* I'm telling you man, you don't wanna leave quite yet.

**ERIC.** I think I do.

**BRENT.** You haven't finished your beer.

**ERIC.** Yeah, I know.

**REVE.** "Inigo, be careful. Men in masks cannot be trusted."

**MELANIE.** You can't leave until you tell us.

**ERIC.** It's really nothing; just some little thing to do with a library.

**RUDOLPH.** We don't have a library?

**ERIC.** Yeah, who woulda thunk it huh?

**TRACI.** Are you going to rebuild it?

**ERIC.** It's a little thing I should talk to Brent about tomorrow. You all have fun. Don't drink and drive; God forbid something terrible should happen to you.

**RUDOLPH.** When you swing by my office, you mind maybe shooting the breeze a little. It sounds like you're a businessman. I'd like a little input. Exchange pointers. See if you got any recommendations for my operation. Yeah? *(Eric tries to interject.)* We'll still size you up, but you gotta be there. Can I count on you?

**ERIC.** Sure..? *(Eric exits.)*

**REVE.** "Have fun storming the castle."

**RUDOLPH.** I wonder what his proposition is.

**MELANIE.** Hopefully, something other than a mortuary.

**TRACI.** Maybe I'm being selfish but if he's rebuilding the library that's good. I can't keep taking my kids to Nowhere's library. Gas is up to a buck fifty-two. And have you guys tried the Internet yet? It's pretty rockin' awesome.

**REVE.** "Grandpa, you're reading the story wrong."

**BRENT.** Shut up. *(Pause)* I was the class president. I would remember someone from our grade.

**TRACI.** Brent, you said you sat next to him at graduation.

**BRENT.** I was trying to make the guy feel at home so he'd slip up.

**TRACI.** His name was on the list.

**BRENT.** Are you gonna believe me or a list from the school? He's a phony. Mel, you were the prom queen, do you remember him?

**MELANIE.** *(Deep pause, an epiphany?)* Only one thing comes to mind: Queensryche.

**BRENT.** She's right. You don't win prom queen unless you know everybody. And she doesn't know him.

**RUDOLPH.** I'm sold.

**TRACI.** Why would he fake someone's identity?

**BRENT.** To get into our reunion.

**RUDOLPH.** No doubt. He's probably from the class below us.

**MELANIE.** Of course. They were always trying to get into our parties in high school.

**TRACI.** I'm not seeing it.

**BRENT.** When he comes into my office tomorrow I'll nail him. Traci, use that Internet thing, do some research on this guy, Erich... what was his last name? *(Everyone is dumbfounded.)*

**TRACI.** I still have his misspelled nametag. *(She pulls it from her pocket.)* Sullivan.

**MELANIE.** I was just going to say that.

**REVE.** "I have something to tell you..." *(Pause. They look at her.)* "I am not left-handed either."

**BRENT.** How 'bout we go inside now.

**TRACI.** Will she be all right out here?

**BRENT.** I don't see why not. She's slept out here the past three nights. *(Melanie flaps her shirt a little.)*

**MELANIE.** I'm getting a little warm. *(They start to exit.)*

**BRENT.** I think there's a bottle of tequila calling you. *(Falsetto)*

Melanie. Melanie. Drink me. Drink me.

**MELANIE.** Brent, newsflash: I'm not showing you my tits. I'm not like that anymore. Oh shit, I said tits. Damn it I said shit ... Oh Lord!

*(Melanie drops to her knees near the wing of the stage, cros-ses herself, shuts her eyes, and quietly repeats Hail Mary's. The rest exit. Reve remains in her rocking chair. A few beats pass and Eric reenters from the side opposite of where the others exited. Reve begins singing. Eric wanders around front of her. Reve looks at Eric.)*

**ERIC.** I never thought I'd see you again.

**REVE.** "We are men of action. Lies do not become us." *(Eric stares intently at her.)*

**ERIC.** Please, tell me you remember me.

**REVE.** "Why do you wear a mask? Were you burned by acid or something like that?" *(Eric stares at her momentarily then begins to exit, disheartened, his back turned to Mel as he watches Reve leave. Reve exits to where the others left; she sings "Last Kiss." Melanie notices Eric and stands up.)*

**MELANIE.** It's no use. *(Eric spins around.)*

**ERIC.** I – I was – I forgot –

**MELANIE.** You didn't forget anything. I know why you came back, and that's fine. I won't tell. But I'll tell you now it'll never happen. It's been like this for years, and it's not going to change.

**ERIC.** I realize that, and I'm not trying to change any—

**MELANIE.** Not that I wouldn't mind, mind you. I mean it's been awhile since Rudolph and I have fornicated.

**ERIC.** You're mistaken.

**MELANIE.** I am? I am! Rudolph and I have never had a belly to belly.

**ERIC.** Beg your pardon.

**MELANIE.** Nope. Rudolph's got this thing he needs before he can pitch a tent. And I ain't going there. It's tacky.

**ERIC.** I don't want you.

**MELANIE.** You do to. Everyone wanted me. And I've always wanted you.

**ERIC.** An hour ago, you didn't know who I was.

**MELANIE.** Doesn't matter. I know you now, and I remember you in spirit. I can see the man you are. Mm-hm. God, I'd love to get me some of that.

**ERIC.** No, you don't.

**MELANIE.** Oh, yes I do. But my father would kill me. He loves Rudy. *(Pause)* If I ran away with you would you promise to wear your Army uniform when we make love? Oh no, my oath.

**ERIC.** Melanie, you're a beautiful woman, but I'm not –

**MELANIE.** Oh come on, you've had that bulge in your pants all night. *(Eric pulls out a roll of quarters.)*

**ERIC.** Do you know how many tollbooths there are leading into this town?

**MELANIE.** It'll never work. I'm married to the wealthiest man in town, my high school sweetheart.

**ERIC.** Your dad's the wealthiest man in town. And Brent was your high school sweetheart.

**MELANIE.** *(Continued over Eric's previous line)* It's the American Dream minus the 2.5 kids. It would break my father's heart to see that dream fall apart. But I need to get out of this place. "Join the Army see the world," that's what they always say.

**ERIC.** That's the Navy.

**MELANIE.** Take me with you. I'd join but women can't enlist.

**ERIC.** They can too. I did boot camp with dozens of— *(Melanie puts a finger to his lips.)*

**MELANIE.** Shh. Don't speak. Don't tell me 'cause it hurts. *(A beat)*  
We will see each other again. *(She exits. Eric shakes his head, confused, and exits opposite of Melanie. Fade to black.)*

### SCENE 3

*Brent and Theron sit at a desk. Theron wears a tacky jogging suit, likely something comped to him at a casino, a silk cravat is around his neck. Brent is shredding papers.*

**THERON.** So you think he might be bringing a mall?

**BRENT.** I just told you it has something to do with a library. At least that's what he says.

**THERON.** Give the guy a chance. A mall would be a nice change of pace. *(Brent tops shredding.)*

**BRENT.** No, he's after something.

**THERON.** Maybe he means what he says. Frankly, I think it'd be nice to get something else dotting our corners besides funeral homes.

**BRENT.** Hey! I got that BP station here last year.

**THERON.** Because they agreed to the kickbacks. No, I'm talking about a McDonald's or Subway or hell, even a grocery store. I'm tired of driving an hour to Nowhere just to go grocery shopping.

**BRENT.** I got a feeling he's bringing competition for my business.

**THERON.** He wouldn't stand a chance.

**BRENT.** I'd remember this guy, though.

**THERON.** When Traci's back from Nowhere's library I'm sure we'll get some answers. Just relax, and don't worry about what he might be up to.

**BRENT.** No. Theron, I'm bent. I got a second sense for outing con artists because to be the best, you need to sniff out the rest, and this guy doesn't have a pleasant odor.

**THERON.** *(Pause)* I'd like him to bring a mall. Nowhere doesn't have a mall.

**BRENT.** This guy's not bringing a mall! Am I not getting through to you?

**THERON.** He might be. What's his name again?

**BRENT.** Erich Sullivan.

**THERON.** Nope don't remember him.

**BRENT.** No one does.

**THERON.** He might be using us as leverage.

**BRENT.** For what?

**THERON.** He might be negotiating to bring in a mall to Nowhere, but if he gets us on board he can sell it to the highest bidder.

**BRENT.** Something like that, yeah. But he's not from Sullivan. *(Brent resumes shredding. Traci enters with some papers: Xeroxed articles and Internet stories. She looks perplexed. Brent stops shredding.)* And?

**TRACI.** He's from Sullivan. There's his picture. *(She hands them the papers. Theron and Brent read intently.)*

**BRENT.** Well, shit. That's him.

**THERON.** Local boy wins silver star, blah, blah, blah. Ranger... right... eight bullet wounds, thirty-five pieces of shrapnel uh-huh. *(Pause)* Sullivan High alum, class of '90.

**TRACI.** Read the other ones.

**THERON.** I remember this, kid now. He was Jim Sullivan's boy.

**BRENT.** Jim Sullivan? The Irish Bomber?

**THERON.** Yup. Greatest quarterback Sullivan High ever saw. What's the next one say?

**BRENT.** Eric Sullivan, discharged from the Army...entrepre-neur... new venture has landed him a half-billion dollars.

**TRACI.** That one's from *Fortune*.

**THERON.** Jesus.

**TRACI.** The guy's got bank.

**THERON.** Way to sniff'em out Sherlock.

**BRENT.** I disserved that.

**THERON.** When's he due?

**BRENT.** Soon.

**TRACI.** We need to give him the red carpet treatment. Brent do you have champagne? *(Brent looks in the desk drawer.)*

**BRENT.** I have Boone's. *(He pulls out a bottle of Boone's wine and sets it on the desk. No one approves so he hands Traci some ones.)* Run out and buy some bubbly.

**TRACI.** I drove to Nowhere once today to go to the library. I don't have time to drive back and get champagne.

**THERON.** He doesn't need a drink. The city needs to do some-thing in recognition of his winning that medal where he did.

**BRENT.** When?

**THERON.** Tomorrow. Brent, I'll need all the streets shut down, a platform, a key to the city – engraved of course – and the high school band.

**BRENT.** Our high school doesn't have a band. *(Theron looks at Traci and Brent stunned.)*

**TRACI.** They cancelled the program because the band geeks were always locked in their lockers when it was time to rehearse.

**THERON.** Jesus. Then find one to get here tomorrow; get that one band Rudolph always hires out of Nowhere. *(Theron pulls out a cell phone, and dials.)* Alice, you remember that little skirmish we got into in Somalia not too long ago? *(A beat)* Neither do I, but apparently a local boy received some big award for it. I need you to set up a big gala for tomorrow afternoon. Fliers, posters, take out the entire front page of tonight and tomorrow's paper. And find a nice gift...something that'll convey the magnitude of pride this town feels for him. It's gotta be done riverboat style, Alice.

*(He hangs up. Eric enters, unnoticed.)*

**BRENT.** I still stand by what I said. This guy isn't kosher. If he's such a big hero, why'd he get discharged? *(Brent, unaware that Eric is in the room, is startled by his first line. He scrambles to hide the shredder.)*

**ERIC.** When you set off the metal detectors at airports because you're carrying a bunch of shrapnel in you, the Army tends to see you as unfit for service. Sorry for letting myself in. I would've waited, but um, you...don't have a secretary.

**BRENT.** No, I have one.

**TRACI.** That's me.

**ERIC.** I didn't see a desk or an intercom or –

**BRENT.** She draws a paycheck and it's listed as secretary, but most of her work for me is in the (*Genuine, not a meant to be a double entendre*) private sector. (*Theron rises and goes to shake Eric's hand.*)

**THERON.** I'm Theron Chillingworth. I played ball with your dad in high school. Goddamn your daddy must be ashamed at what you became.

**ERIC.** No, he was pretty satisfied.

**THERON.** But you didn't play ball.

**ERIC.** He lost his foot playing ball in college. Broke his leg, cut of all blood flow.

**THERON.** That's bad circulatory genes. Football's got nothing to do with it.

**ERIC.** Do you have somewhere else we can talk, Brent?

**THERON.** Aw, c'mon Jim's Son, stay awhile. (*Theron seats Eric.*)  
How's ol' Jim?

**ERIC.** Dead. (*To Brent*) I thought I saw a conference room when I came in.

**TRACI.** Erich, we don't want you telling your business buddies that we're not hospitable.

**ERIC.** I'd just like to speak with Brent alone.

**THERON.** What's the hurry?

**ERIC.** For one thing, you have a restraining order against me.

**THERON.** I've never had to take out a restraining order on – oh, wait...you're the boy who wouldn't stop calling my house.

**ERIC.** I called your daughter once and asked her to the prom.

**THERON.** That's right. I got it because you kept banging on our front door at the most unreasonable hour.

**ERIC.** It was five-thirty at night.

**THERON.** Dinner time. Who comes banging on the house then?

**ERIC.** I was there to drop off flowers because her aunt died.

**THERON.** That's absurd, both her mother and I were only children.

**ERIC.** Yeah, you told me that after the third volley.

**BRENT.** Guys, I have an appointment at one. Can we move this along?

**THERON.** He kept banging on my door.

**ERIC.** Two knocks is not banging and it certainly doesn't deserve getting – getting a – a shotgun fired at you.

**THERON.** It was a warning shot through the window.

**BRENT.** Guys! Time. Time, guys.

**THERON.** I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Look you're Jim's son, I – I didn't know that then. I'll get the order dropped today.

**ERIC.** Don't bother.

**THERON.** I will.

**TRACI.** Brent, we need to get going.

**ERIC.** It's only eleven.

**TRACI.** I'll need at least an hour to an hour-and-a-half of stretching before today's patient.

**BRENT.** Sorry Erich, it'll have to wait until tomorrow.

**ERIC.** It can't. I'm on a tight schedule. This is very important to Sullivan. Now—

**THERON.** You'll still be here tomorrow.

**ERIC.** I will?

**THERON.** The town's having a big celebration in honor of your winning those medals... *(Theron struggles to remember where.)*

**ERIC.** In Somalia. No, I'm not driving to Nowhere only to have to come back and go through another fifty dollars worth of tolls.

**THERON.** *(To Brent)* Fifty dollars? *(Brent smiles.)* Nice. *(To Eric)* Son, a hero like you shouldn't have to stay at a motel. You'll stay at Brent's house.

**BRENT.** Pardon?

**THERON.** It makes sense. You have the second largest house in town.

**BRENT.** But you have the largest, and you live alone.

**THERON.** He needs youth. Young blood to hang out with not some old fart. Besides, my place has that old-man smell to it.

**BRENT.** *(Pause)* Fair enough. Erich, swing by my house around five today and we'll get you set up.

**TRACI.** Brent, I ruptured my Achilles last time I didn't get to stretch. *(Brent picks up the shredder.)*

**BRENT.** Gotta go man. Can't wait to hear your announcement tomorrow. You'll love the party.

**ERIC.** Brent this can't – *(Brent exits.)* Wait.

**THERON.** I'll have that restraining order dropped soon enough for you to have an affair with my daughter by this evening. God-damn I need a grand kid. Sleep well, and don't let Brent's wife freak you out. She's harmless, especially if she's on the sodium pentathal drip. Noon tomorrow. *(Theron exits. Eric sits in a chair.)*

**ERIC.** What the fuck just happened? *(Lights down on that side of the stage.)*

#### SCENE 4

*Lights up on the opposite side. There is a casket there. Rudolph enters near the casket. He is eating a sandwich and wearing latex gloves. Eric goes over to meet Rudolph.*

**RUDOLPH.** Anything interest you?

**ERIC.** I'm gonna let the Army handle my burial. Rudy, maybe you can explain this, about seven years ago, I read an obit saying Reve and her daughter were dead.

**RUDOLPH.** That? That was a goof. Brent was getting ready for his first run at mayor and he was embarrassed about how Reve was and that she lost the child. He thought she was a political liability. But Sullivan's a pretty accepting town...except when it comes to Episcopalians. *(Leads Eric to the coffin.)*

**ERIC.** So Brent just wheeled her out there like that? After he told everyone she was dead.

**RUDOLPH.** It was the feel good story of the campaign.

**ERIC.** What do you think of your father-in-law?

**RUDOLPH.** Treats me like the son he never had.

**ERIC.** You ever think he wanted Brent to marry Melanie.

**RUDOLPH.** He tells me that about three times a week. Why?

**ERIC.** I think tomorrow, I'm gonna say something's he won't like. It'd be nice to have someone on my side.

**RUDOLPH.** You know I think this interior is going to go well with your eyes. Feel it. Doesn't it just feel like Erich Sullivan?

*(Eric winces.)*

**ERIC.** I'll be dead. No one'll see them. Did you hear me?

**RUDOLPH.** This is the thing though now. I mean this is the town for funerals.

**ERIC.** Maybe, but this isn't my bit.

**RUDOLPH.** Why not?

**ERIC.** Frankly, I don't feel like being dressed as a clown in my casket.

**RUDOLPH.** It's a great shtick, though. Who doesn't like clowns?

**ERIC.** Me. They terrify me.

**RUDOLPH.** Erich, I can cut you a deal on our deluxe package. Your casket gets pulled through town, big parade, I wear a ring-master suit, there's a calliope, and elephants pull your casket.

**ERIC.** You have elephants?

**RUDOLPH.** Clydesdales painted gray with elongated feedbags, actually. I wanted elephants, but some people had issues...god-damn P.E.T.A. But for an extra five hundred, I'll get a real geek to be your pallbearer.

**ERIC.** Wouldn't P.E.T.A. get upset about biting heads off of chickens?

**RUDOLPH.** The chickens are already dead.

**ERIC.** Thanks, but no.

**RUDOLPH.** *(Pause)* What do think of my operation?

**ERIC.** It's a nice gig you got going here.

**RUDOLPH.** Number one in town. I'm thinking of franchising. I—I just need someone to front the capital for me.

**ERIC.** It's good you're ambitious, and from what I saw in your books it's making money hand over fist. But the – the name, uh – the name could use a little work.

**RUDOLPH.** What's wrong with Gacey's Funeral Funhouse?

**ERIC.** You don't know? Remember a guy in Chicago?

**RUDOLPH.** I've never been to Chicago.

**ERIC.** It doesn't matter. It was this guy...dressed like a clown...? John Wayne –

**RUDOLPH.** The Duke dressed as a clown?

**ERIC.** Forget it. It seems morbid that's all.

**RUDOLPH.** Funerals are always morbid. That's why this works so well. People can't help but laugh. Last week I did this suicide, a real mess. If you want to off yourself, do it clean. You want to use a gun, use a twenty-two. Their bullets will rattle around in your head and scramble your brain and that's it. Now, if you use a .38, .44, 9mm, or, like this guy last week, a shotgun, it's really tricky trying to rebuild the face with clay. This guy...we couldn't do it. It's bad enough he put the shotgun in his mouth, but he shot himself three times.

**ERIC.** Use a twenty-two, moral of the story.

**RUDOLPH.** Hold on. This is the genius of Gacey's Funeral Fun-house. The family wanted an open casket. Couldn't do it. I'll be damned. The guy had no head. So we dressed the guy from the waist down as a clown, put these big old clown shoes on him and left the *bottom* half open, and kept the *top* closed but with a rain-bow wig sticking out of the closed half. The geek was there, and his chicken bit was the icing on the cake. People were laughing and crapping their pants.

**ERIC.** That funny huh?

**RUDOLPH.** (*Simultaneous*) No, really crapping their pants. Terr-ible mess trying to get it off the carpet. I'll be damned, human feces don't ever come off the carpet totally. Had to replace all the carpet in this room to meet health standards. But I couldn't be mad; it was the guy's grandmother who did it, but someone told me she does that on a consistent basis.

**ERIC.** (*Simultaneous*) It's not adding up: they're gone, then they come back without a child, Reve's supposedly dead then she's not. Then she's sedated, which makes no sense. How does Brent explain that?

**RUDOLPH.** Incontinence. Comes with old age.

**ERIC.** No! Reve.

**RUDOLPH.** She tried committing suicide in Uburoi. O.D'd on Midol. (*Eric gives Rudolph an incredulous look.*)

**RUDOLPH.** Brent takes care of her now. Keeps her sedated, otherwise I guess she's hysterical. God bless him.

**ERIC.** I guess. So, really... where's their kid?

**RUDOLPH.** If it weren't for him we'd have some whacko running all around town. That's a mayor who cares about his vassals.

**ERIC.** *(Pause)* Yeah, well you got a great operation.

**RUDOLPH.** Something worth investing in?

**ERIC.** Yeah, I mean get a pitch together and find someone who's got money. You're father-in-law might be a good source, if you really think he's the type of guy that would look out for you.

**RUDOLPH.** I know you got some investing you're talking about doing with Sullivan and all, but why bring in more business when there's a gold mine right here in town?

**ERIC.** I'm not really bringing business to town.

**RUDOLPH.** You are looking to invest in the town.

**ERIC.** Funeral homes are not the type of investing I do, but maybe we could come to an agreement for tomorrow.

**RUDOLPH.** Erich, diversify! Don't settle for libraries. Besides, who really reads now days? People always die, you can't go wrong. You could be the next Ray Krock.

**ERIC.** As tempting as it sounds to run the McDonald's of funeral homes

—

**RUDOLPH.** Eric you're a man to be admired, and I wouldn't offer this deal to anyone. I'm giving it to you because we had a bond in high school.

**ERIC.** You don't remember me.

**RUDOLPH.** It doesn't matter. We had a bond.

**ERIC.** Ripping my underwear off in gym class by giving me wedgies is hardly what I call a bond.

**RUDOLPH.** I did that? Huh, well I'll be... *(He checks his watch, reaches into his pocket nervously and pulls out a red, foam clown nose. He fondles it.)* Damn... I'll get a proposal to you. I'd give you one now but I got an appointment at one; physical therapy thing. But I'll get it to you tomorrow at the thing honoring you. I – I really need to go. Think about it: Ray Krock, the next one, you.

*(Rudolph playfully punches Eric in the jaw and then exits quickly.)*

## SCENE 5

*A few chairs are set up, a wreath with a banner that says "Condolences." Brent enters with Reve.*

**BRENT.** Sit down, and don't let your cheeks slide one inch off that chair. *(Reve starts singing. Brent puts his hands on her mouth and head.)* Shut up! How many times do I have to tell you? Jesus this was a bad idea. I don't wanna hear another sound from you.

*(He takes his hands off her mouth. A beat.)*

**REVE.**

"You seem like a decent fellow. I hate to kill you."

**BRENT.** That's it I'm getting your pills. *(He handcuffs her to the chair. Brent exits. Eric enters.)*

**REVE.** "You seem like a decent fellow. I hate to die."

**ERIC.** Please tell me – I just want you to remember me.

**REVE.** "You're trying to trick me into giving away something; t'won't work."

**ERIC.** Why can't you just be normal! Did you – did they tell you I died? Is that why you married that asshole? *(Reve, with her free hand slaps Eric.)* You love him?

**REVE.** "My hand flies on its own. Where I come from there are consequences for when a woman lies."

**ERIC.** *(Pause)* You do love him.

**REVE.** "I never said he was my dearest love."

**ERIC.** Why did you marry that – that fucker?

**REVE.** "Faithfulness madam enduring faithfulness. Now tell me did you marry your prince on the same day or did you wait a week out of respect for the dead?"

**ERIC.** You heard I was dead then.

**REVE.** "I died that day."

**ERIC.** Reve, wake up! I'm not buying this – where's – where's the – what happened to your child?

**REVE.** "I will never love again." *(He grabs her and shakes her.)*

**ERIC.** Where's our child? And don't tell me sold to gypsies.

**REVE.** "Killed by pirates is good."

**ERIC.** Jesus Christ. *(Eric begins to exit.)*

**REVE.** "I know who you are now..." *(Eric stops.)* "Your cruelty reveals it. You're the Dread Pirate Roberts. Admit it." *(Eric shakes his head and exits. Traci and Rudolph enter.)*

**TRACI.** He didn't tell you about his investment?

**RUDOLPH.** Not as such, but I have a feeling he's looking to find something here to invest in.

**TRACI.** Why your funeral home?

**RUDOLPH.** Why not? The only other funeral parlor in town that is even remotely as successful as mine is Rusty Meyer's Nude Cabaret and Stiff Ones. And let's face it that's just tasteless.

**TRACI.** My diploma came in the mail.

**RUDOLPH.** Exactly. There's no other business in town. Aside from Brent.

**TRACI.** Rudy!

**RUDOLPH.** But...we don't need another blacksmith.

**TRACI.** You forgot about the –

**RUDOLPH.** Oh yeah.

**TRACI.** *(A beat)* You left this yesterday. *(She pulls out a red clown nose. They share a flirty moment until Brent and Theron enter.)*

**RUDOLPH.** Thanks. *(Rudolph grabs it and quickly hides it in his pocket.)*

**THERON.** We got a nice turnout today. Where's our guest of honor.

**BRENT.** He didn't stay at my place last night. Probably skipped town. Told you the guy's a fake.

**TRACI.** No, he's over there.

**RUDOLPH.** Kicking the hell out of a trashcan.

**BRENT.** If we had a police force, I'd have him arrested. I mean, I'm sure he's breaking some law. *(Pause)* Looks – Looks like... yep, Mel's got him. *(Eric enters with Melanie.)*

**MELANIE.** It's okay, Erich.

**THERON.** He all right? Brent said he went missing last night.

**MELANIE.** He was hurting the trashcan and saying, “She’s married. She’s married.” I think he was talking about me. He asked me to prom you know.

**THERON.** Where’d you run off to, Sullivan?

**ERIC.** Back to Nowhere. I needed to change clothes. Let’s just get this over with, I’ve gotta plane to catch in – *(Checks watch.)*

**ERIC.** Jesus, tomorrow. If we –

**THERON.** ...Could all take our seats. *(Everyone on stage, except Eric sits; there are no chairs for him to sit down. He checks to see if he’s right that there are not enough chairs. To the audience)* Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for all coming out today. *(To Eric)* Sullivan, take your seat. My friends, with me today is some-one you probably don’t remember. But we’re here to honor some-one you might, his father. Sullivan, what’s your problem? Sit down.

**ERIC.** What are you doing?

**THERON.** Trying to honor the Irish Bomber. Now sit down. You trying to embarrass me or something?

**ERIC.** There’s no one out there!

**RUDOLPH.** We’ll have some latecomers.

**ERIC.** Everyone works in Nowhere.

**MELANIE.** Excuse me?

**ERIC.** Unless they’re undertakers. Let me get what I have to say –

**THERON.** What kind of a son are you to not allow us to pay homage to your father?

**ERIC.** What happened to honoring me?

**THERON.** We were, until you told me Jim died. I couldn’t let his memory pass.

**MELANIE.** I’m sure your turn will come soon.

**ERIC.** I don’t care about my turn unless it’s to speak. Here’s the deal –

**THERON.** What were your father’s last words?

**ERIC.** I was in an Army field hospital when he passed away. I bought –

**TRACI.** So you weren’t there for his funeral?

**THERON.** How’d he die?

**TRACI.** Carbon monoxide poisoning. *(Pause)* I read his obit yesterday.

**THERON.** Asleep in bed, never knew what was approaching.

**ERIC.** No, it was in his car. I bought Sul—

**RUDOLPH.** That’s even better than a .22. I bet his mortician was a happy camper.

**ERIC.** I bought Sullivan! *(Long pause.)*

**REVE.** Inconceivable!

**BRENT.** One more time... you bought what?

**ERIC.** I copyrighted the name Sullivan.

**THERON.** You can’t copyright a name.

**MELANIE.** It’s not yours to begin with.

**ERIC.** Yes it is.

**BRENT.** So you own it. It’s not like we owe you anything.

**ERIC.** Actually, you do. I go to each town named Sullivan, and I check it out. Based on what I see I calculate their royalty fees. There are some really neat towns, and I don’t charge them.

**MELANIE.** And how do we rate?

**ERIC.** You guys are gonna find out – the hard way – that I keep my latex gloves in the freezer.

**REVE.** “Rodents of unusual sizes? I don’t think they exist.”

**BRENT.** Honey, shut up. *(He smacks her on the back of the head, her mouth opens and he pops a pill into her mouth. Reve smiles.)*

**TRACI.** Isn’t it more like a trademark? I don’t think a town is something you can copyright.

**THERON.** Doesn’t matter. He’s bluffing. The courts wouldn’t uphold it.

**ERIC.** They already did. A Republican bench appreciates entrepreneurialism.

**TRACI.** Who the hell do you think you are?

**REVE.** “I’m no one to be trifled with; that is all you ever need know.”

**BRENT.** Damn it! Mel, put her in the car would you, babe? *(Melanie helps Reve up, and they begin to exit. Reve drags the chair to which she is still handcuffed. Reve trips over Eric. He catches her.)*

**ERIC.** Be careful.

**REVE.** “As you wish.” *(Melanie and Reve exit.)*

**BRENT.** *(To Melanie)* And make sure to leave a window cracked for her!

**THERON.** So what are your terms?

**ERIC.** I want the high school library rebuilt.

**THERON.** There was a library?

**TRACI.** It burned down four years ago. The PTA tried having some fundraisers, but we couldn't raise anything.

**RUDOLPH.** The topless carwash, I remember that.

**TRACI.** People were pissed because topless meant washing all of the car except the top unless they donated.

**BRENT.** We can't do it. The city's broke.

**ERIC.** I don't want the city to pay. I want Chillingworth to pay.

**THERON.** Absolutely not. I'm an important man with money. I have more valuable services to render with my capital than rebuild a school library.

**ERIC.** And that is?

**THERON.** I'm a philanthropist.

**ERIC.** And you do...?

**THERON.** I philanthrop.

**ERIC.** Where does your money go?

**THERON.** The bells.

**ERIC.** The bells?

**THERON.** The bells.

**ERIC.** The bells?

**THERON.** Keeping time, time, time / In a sort of Runic rhyme / To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells / From the bells, bells, bells, bells / Bells, bells, bells-

**BRENT.** Right, okay, I'm lost.

**THERON.** I donate money to needy colleges across the country, so they are able to build bell towers.

**TRACI.** Bell towers?

**THERON.** Not just bell towers. There's a modest, bronze bust of my likeness in each one. During Christmas time the tower plays "Silver Bells" every fifteen minutes.

**ERIC.** That's where your money goes?

**THERON.** Not all of it. You see, after my alma mater changed its mascot from the Red Injuns to something like the Fighting Storm

Clouds, I cut off all donations to them and instead earmarked that money in support of preserving college mascots representing indi-genous people.

**ERIC.** Rudy, you wanna help me out on this?

**RUDOLPH.** *(A beat)* Very worthy cause, Theron.

**THERON.** We need to preserve tradition, Americana.

**ERIC.** Touching, but Chief Wahoo'll have to take a pay cut. I want the library rebuilt.

**THERON.** *(Pause)* Fine. I'll give \$250,000. That should be enough to rebuild, restock, and –

**ERIC.** I didn't finish. You'll rebuild the library, but it's gonna be state of the art: computers, video library, special collections, a full-time archivist, and a well-educated staff. I expect no less than ten million dollars from you, Theron. Maybe more, but we'll have to see what the bills come to.

**TRACI.** Can't we just pay you royalties? What would they amount to?

**ERIC.** I don't want royalties. I want the library as ordered, and it is to be named in honor of Heidi Sullivan.

**THERON.** Absolutely not. I see no reason to spend money on a library no one uses anymore.

**ERIC.** Because it was incinerated!

**THERON.** You say potato I say potato *(no difference in pronunciation)*.

**TRACI.** There's gotta be another route so we can keep Sullivan. What else would you want?

**ERIC.** You have my – *(Melanie enters.)*

**THERON.** My daughter. I'll let you marry my daughter. You've always wanted Melanie. I bet it would be hard to resist that. Let us keep Sullivan and you get to keep her. Sorry Rudy, you understand.

**RUDOLPH.** Not really, but –

**ERIC.** I asked her to prom...once. I don't want her. I want the Heidi Sullivan Memorial Library.

**BRENT.** Guys, look, we're getting a little hot. I'm sure the sun is getting to, Erich.

**ERIC.** It's overcast.

**BRENT.** U.V. rays can still make it through the clouds my friend. How about we all meet at my home tonight for a dinner? Sound good?

**ERIC.** I'll show up, but I expect an answer. Not negotiations.

**BRENT.** Eight o'clock it is. Now let's get back to this little memorial for Jim Sullivan.

**ERIC.** No one is here.

**RUDOLPH.** Wait a minute, Erich...

**ERIC.** Brent's uncle doesn't count. He passed out there last night, right after he puked all over me. Eight o'clock, I expect an answer.

*(Eric exits.)*

**MELANIE.** Dad, am I really gonna marry Erich? *(Theron nods yes.)*

**MELANIE.** I'm gonna be the next Mrs. Erich...um...

**ERIC.** *(off)* Sullivan!

**THERON.** I can't believe that little S.O.B. Trying to extort me.

**MELANIE.** Daddy? I can't marry him. If I did, I'd have to get a divorce and the church doesn't condone divorces and –

**THERON.** Don't get worked up over this honey. *(He hugs her.)* I don't want it to come to that. I like Rudy, and we'll do everything we can to keep you two happy kids together. But if it comes down to it...we'll get an annulment for you.

**MELANIE.** Could you really grease the wheels like that for me, Daddy?

**THERON.** It's how I got away from your mother. *(Melanie is giddy. Melanie kisses her father, and runs off.)* God, I remember being in love. Right before I met her mom.

**BRENT.** There's only one way to solve this.

**RUDOLPH.** Clearly.

**THERON.** I agree.

**THERON/BRENT.** Kill'em.

**RUDOLPH.** Sorry, I think I missed that.

**BRENT.** It's business, Rudy. Theron and I take care of it a lot this way.

**THERON.** We nearly killed you during the campaign, but Traci came up with the notion of telling everyone we're buying the election, and it seemed a moot point after that.

**TRACI.** We did.

**RUDOLPH.** Thanks Traci. I appreciate you looking out for me.

**TRACI.** No problem. But there is one problem with this.

**BRENT.** That is?

**TRACI.** Same one we had when we wanted to whack Rudy: who'll do it?

**THERON.** Let Rudolph do it. He works with dead people all the time.

**RUDOLPH.** Theron, I only deal with them after death. I don't kill them.

**BRENT.** Hey! We're giving you business here. Show a little fucking gratitude.

**RUDOLPH.** Sorry. It's just that I don't – this really isn't my line of work.

**THERON.** Look at it as multi-tasking. Everyone's doing it nowa-days. Avoid the middleman you're getting the corpse factory direct.

**TRACI.** Couldn't we find someone outside of Sullivan? I heard there's a guy we can get out of Nowhere.

**BRENT.** No it's gotta be an in-house job. Someone who's got a sense of pride and doesn't want to see this town lose its identity.

**TRACI.** Why can't we just change the name?

**THERON.** Then what would we be? Springfield: The place where people come to die? It doesn't sound right.

**TRACI.** Rudy isn't capable of killing someone.

**BRENT.** Anyone's capable of anything – especially when they're trying to steal your wife.

**TRACI.** I meant he's not able. Rudy was an offensive lineman for a reason.

**BRENT.** Damn right. And I was proud to have my hands wedged under his ass in high school.

**TRACI.** He's about celebrating life through death.

**RUDOLPH.** With clowns.

**TRACI.** With clowns. Killing is contrary to the mortician's creed.

**RUDOLPH.** We have a creed?

**TRACI.** *(Through her teeth)* You sure do.

**BRENT.** Rudy, you do this, buddy, and I'll make you part-time chief-of-police.

**RUDOLPH.** Really?

**BRENT.** Three years without a force is long enough.

**RUDOLPH.** But if I get that job and kill Erich, I'll have to investigate myself.

**BRENT.** Of course. But I think after a thorough investigation, you'll be able to exonerate yourself.

**TRACI.** I say we change the name.

**THERON.** And take the easy way out?

**TRACI.** Then build the library.

**THERON.** This guy comes in, and tries blackmailing us –

**TRACI.** It is his legal right to earn royalties from his property.

**THERON.** Who's the lawyer here? I say it's blackmail; it's blackmail.

**TRACI.** So change the spelling of Sullivan to, S-U-L-L-I-V-E-N. Or drop an "l" –

**BRENT.** Jesus, Trace, that's like taking the "V" outta alphabet soup!

**THERON.** Negotiation is out of the question. This is our name - who we are. We cannot allow someone to walk in and take away our tradition. It's not his to begin with.

**TRACI.** It is.

**THERON.** No, it's not.

**TRACI.** No, it really is. His great-great-great grandfather founded this town. I read it yesterday.

**RUDOLPH.** Well I'll be damned.

**THERON.** It's ours, and this matter is settled. Rudolph, kill Sullivan tonight. And don't be sloppy. Don't leave any evidence by which you can indict yourself. Keep it clean. Remember you're the one that has to dress up the body. See you all tonight. *(Theron exits. There is a long awkward silence. Rudolph thumbs his rosary more incessantly.)*

**TRACI.** Rudolph you can't do this.

**RUDOLPH.** I'm warming up to the idea more and more. Chief-of-police...

**TRACI.** Think about your family.

**RUDOLPH.** The guy's trying to steal my wife!

**TRACI.** I don't want to raise a child whose father is a murderer.

**RUDOLPH.** Traci...you're –

**TRACI.** With child.

**BRENT.** Aw, shit! You're knocked up! *(Pause.)*

**RUDOLPH.** How?

**TRACI.** You want me to draw you a diagram?

**RUDOLPH.** We always use a condom.

**TRACI.** Remember when it broke six weeks ago?

**BRENT.** Jesus Christ, Rudolph, you used the silly string didn't you?  
*(Rudolph lowers his head.)* I told you that stuff eats through latex.

**RUDOLPH.** But she's on the pill too, how'd that fall through?

*(Pause.)* So you're kind of pregnant, huh?

**TRACI.** Kind of?

**RUDOLPH.** Aw, jeez, I'm gonna burn. I'm gonna burn. I really will be damned.

**BRENT.** Have you thought about a procedure?

**RUDOLPH.** No! No procedure! What do I care I'm already gonna burn – but I don't wanna burn more!

**TRACI.** I'm not having a procedure done. But this kid isn't gonna be a bastard. You're claiming him.

**RUDOLPH.** Which means I'll have to tell Melanie. I'm gonna burn. I am gonna burn.

**TRACI.** What's with the "I'm gonna burn?" You were never like this growing up.

**RUDOLPH.** Melanie! She made me convert to Catholicism when we got married. Do you know what that's like? They scare the hell outta you.

**TRACI.** You're telling Melanie.

**RUDOLPH.** I'm gonna burn. That's the long and the short of it.

**TRACI.** You're more the short of it. *(He begins hyperventilating.)*

**BRENT.** Rudy, breath, man. You'll just go to confession. It's all taken care of. *(Rudolph immediately calms down. Smiles.)*

**RUDOLPH.** Right – Right, all taken care of.

**BRENT.** Keep thumbing the rosary. That's it buddy. Traci relax about Rudy he'll tell her. I don't know how, but we'll figure this out. You'll have the baby with Rudy, trust me. *(Traci glares disgustingly at Rudolph then Brent and exits.)* She's not having that baby.

**RUDOLPH.** I don't know how you're gonna stop that.

**BRENT.** I'm not. You are.

**RUDOLPH.** Absolutely not.

**BRENT.** You were the dumbass who used the silly string.

**RUDOLPH.** What about the birth control you are supposed to provide her?

**BRENT.** She got it! Kind of...budget cuts forced me to use tic-tacs instead.

**RUDOLPH.** Really?

**BRENT.** I upheld my end of the bargain. Jesus, I swear, you and your silly string fetish.

**RUDOLPH.** She's your employee. I think you share the responsibility solving this dilemma.

**BRENT.** You specifically violated the rules of our contract for services rendered by the sexual surrogate. Now, I'm gonna have to give her maternity leave.

**RUDOLPH.** About our contract. You guaranteed that your pro-gram would rid me of my, um, hang up shall we say, in a year or my money back.

**BRENT.** Has it been a year?

**RUDOLPH.** Three.

**BRENT.** Time is relative.

**RUDOLPH.** But it's been three years.

**BRENT.** It might be ten years, but during one of those years, you'll feel comfortable with your duties in bed, and you'll no longer believe you're falling short.

**RUDOLPH.** Hey.

**BRENT.** You're losing focus. You have a death to prepare tonight. Get excited.

**RUDOLPH.** No Traci?

**BRENT.** No, you still have that to do.

**RUDOLPH.** No. I'm not hurting Traci, and I can't kill someone I don't know.

**BRENT.** Kill sounds dirty. Try assassinate, whack, cap, hit, knock-off. Rudy, you are going to be this town's first hero. You are going to give us back our name. You will be a patriot. Thomas Jefferson had to whack

some red coats. So did Ben Franklin. And I know George Washington killed a few fascists in his day.

**RUDOLPH.** Yeah? Yeah.

**BRENT.** And when it came time for Douglas MacArthur to execute Benedict Arnold, his hand didn't tremble. Dugout Doug looked that traitor straight in the eye and said... "Remember the Maine."

**RUDOLPH.** I thought it was "Remember the Alamo."

**BRENT.** That too. Now tonight, you go and be the next Mata Hari.  
*(Brent gives Rudolph a "good hustle" swat on his butt. And starts to exit.)*

**RUDOLPH.** I will. I'll be the next Mata Hari.

**BRENT.** I'm gonna head home and get Reve doped up for the guests. So relax, get some rest, and take care of that Traci thing.

**RUDOLPH.** Wait, Brent I – nevermind. *(He exits. Rudolph stands alone. A few brief seconds pass. He fiddles with his rosary. Looks at the sky. Melanie enters.)*

**MELANIE.** What are you doing, honey?

**RUDOLPH.** Nothing.

**MELANIE.** Can I do nothing with you?

**RUDOLPH.** If you want to.

**MELANIE.** Why are you looking at the sky?

**RUDOLPH.** I have a lot on my mind.

**MELANIE.** Sure.

**RUDOLPH.** I don't think you'd understand.

**MELANIE.** Okay. *(Pause)* I love this time of day. I just love – I love looking at the stars.

**RUDOLPH.** Mel, it's, um, the afternoon.

**MELANIE.** I didn't say I could see them. I like looking at them, and not needing to see it to believe it. I know they're there.

**RUDOLPH.** I'm gonna burn.

**MELANIE.** Excuse me?

**RUDOLPH.** I think I can see one.

**MELANIE.** That's the sun.

**RUDOLPH.** It's a star. *(Pause.)* Melanie, I'm – forget it.

**MELANIE.** Okay.

**RUDOLPH.** I don't think you'd believe me.

**MELANIE.** Fair enough.

**RUDOLPH.** But you'd believe me right?

**MELANIE.** Love, honor, cherish, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do us part. I don't remember a believing you in there. But you can try me.

**RUDOLPH.** It's one of those things you're not sure how to react because you almost can't believe it, but it's there. Mel...jeez.

**MELANIE.** It's okay, dear, just start from the most important part. Just jump into it.

**RUDOLPH.** I'm going to be a father. *(Pause. Melanie is taken aback, unsure of how to process it.)*

**MELANIE.** That's impossible. We've never had sex.

**RUDOLPH.** It has nothing to do with us.

**MELANIE.** I'm sure it doesn't.

**RUDOLPH.** Believe me, I'm as shocked as you are.

**MELANIE.** Somehow I doubt that.

**RUDOLPH.** This was so unexpected, and honey –

**MELANIE.** Stop...stop. Tell me you're not lying.

**RUDOLPH.** I wish I was!

**MELANIE.** Shh. It's okay, dear. I promise it's okay. How do you feel?

**RUDOLPH.** I don't know. Uncertain.

**MELANIE.** Betrayed?

**RUDOLPH.** No. Shouldn't that be you?

**MELANIE.** Of course not. You said you found out you're going to be a father.

**RUDOLPH.** Yes. *(Melanie gets giddy.)*

**MELANIE.** Than I couldn't be happier!

**RUDOLPH.** This isn't good.

**MELANIE.** You're going to be a father. I'm going to be a mother.

**RUDOLPH.** Uh...yeah, I – I guess you could see it that way. You want to keep it?

**MELANIE.** Keep it? There's no question here. We have to keep it.

**RUDOLPH.** I'm going to burn.

**MELANIE.** You know what this means?

**RUDOLPH.** Airing dirty laundry.

**MELANIE.** We'll get disposable diapers then. We're going to be parents! God has blessed me with a virgin birth. *(She kisses Rudolph and starts to exit.)*

**RUDOLPH.** Honey, wait. *(She stops.)*

**MELANIE.** I need to get home. Gabriel has obviously contacted you. I need to wait to get the word too. Should come soon. Do they do it by fax nowadays? *(She lets out a squeal.)* A virgin birth! *(She exits. Rudolph thumbs his rosary. Lights fade to black.)*

**RUDOLPH.** I'm gonna burn. I'm gonna burn. *(Blackout.)*

### INTERMISSION

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