

PLAYS IN PROCESS

FLINT AND ROSES

by Jim Peck

Volume Seven Number Three

Theatre Communications Group • New York

PRODUCTION HISTORY

MATERIALS

Flint and Roses was nominated for Plays in Process by Kent Stephens, associate director of Alliance Theatre Company in Atlanta. It was presented there from January 4 through February 9, 1986.

"Old Shep"
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Used by po

Skip Foster directed. The set was designed by Victor Becker, costumes by Susan Mickey and lighting by Paulie Jenkins. The cast was as follows:

Jack Decker.	EARL HINDMAN
Howard Prater.	TOM McKEON
Junior Mitchell.	EDMOND GENEST
Ruthie Prater.	DIANE TARLETON
Lucille Decker	LISA EMERY
Frankie Decker	MICHAEL BRUCE BOELKE
Leonard Stovall.	PETER THOMASSON
Sheriff Walter Moss.	AL HAMACHER

Flint and Roses was produced by the Academy Theatre, Atlanta, as a work-in-process in 1985.

MATERIALS FOR THE PLAY

"Old Shep": words and music by Clyde (Red) Foley.

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CHARACTERS

JACK DECKER: 47. Imposing physical presence.

HOWARD PRATER: Around 50. Has "black lung" disease. Plays the guitar well, sings well.

JUNIOR MITCHELL: Mid to late 30s.

RUTHIE PRATER: Howard's wife. Around 45.

LUCILLE DECKER: Jack's wife. Early 40s.

FRANKIE DECKER: Jack and Lucille's son. Around 9.

LEONARD STOVALL: Mid to late 20s. Average-to-large build, but not muscular.

SHERIFF MOSS: Around 50.

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But you n
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And

TIME

Early June of 1940.

...When i

And notic

PLACE

A small Lower Midwest mining town in the U.S.A.

He

For like a mole I journey in the dark,
A-travelling along the underground
From my Pillared Halls and broad Suburban Park,
To come the daily dull official round;
And home again at night with my pipe all alight,
A-scheming how to count ten bob a pound.

And it's often very cold and very wet,
And my missis stitches towels for a hunks;
And the Pillared Halls is half of it to let--
Three rooms about the size of travelling trunks,
And we cough, my wife and I, to dislocate a sigh,
When the noisy little kids are in their bunks.

But you never hear her do a growl or whine.
For she's made of flint and roses, very odd,
And I've got to cut my meaning rather fine,
Or I'd blubber, for I'm made of greens and sod:
So p'r'aps we are in Hell for all that I can tell,
And lost and damned and served up hot to God.

...When it doesn't make you drink, by Heaven! it
makes you think,
And notice curious items about life.

John Davidson (1857-1909)
from "Thirty Bob a Week"

He saved others; himself he cannot save.

Matthew 27:42

ACT IScene 1

In the blackout, as in scene transitions later in the play, we hear the rhythmic sounds of the picking, digging, shoveling and transportation of bituminous coal, blended with the sounds of miners breathing, straining and coughing, and occasional segments of the Fibber McGee and Molly radio program. When appropriate, the sound of a coal mine loading car will evolve into the clicking, steaming and whistling of a passenger train, drawing nearer or disappearing into the distance.

The lights come up on the kitchen in the home of JACK and LUCILLE DECKER. The room is tidy and attractive, appointed with an icebox, a wood-burning cookstove, a potbellied stove, a central table, various cabinets and a countertop sink without plumbing. A door leads to the bedroom, the front hallway and the rest of the house, while a screen door leads out to the back yard. Several hats hang on nails near the screen door; a coal bin and coal shovel are visible in the yard outside it. A side window affords a partial view of the street in front of the house.

JACK DECKER, shirtless and shoeless, and HOWARD PRATER, dressed for work, sit in silence at the kitchen table. JACK is drinking coffee and shuffling through a stack of homemade flash cards. HOWARD is reading a leaflet. JACK begins to hum indistinctly.

JACK (Starting to sing): "Ol' Shep, he has gone where the good doggies go...." Jump in when you get a chance there, Howard. "Ol' Shep, he has gone where the..." It's good, Howard, but just on the quiet side. "Ol' Shep, he has gone..." See, Howard, you're tendin' to come in a little late with your part.

HOWARD: Too early in the mornin', Jack.

JACK: Ain't nobody here to wake up.

HOWARD: Me. There's me to wake up.

JACK: "Ol' Shep..."

JACK and HOWARD (Singing):

...he has gone where the good doggies go,
And no more will he wander and roam;

1-1-2

But if dogs have a heaven, there's one thing I know:
Ol' Shep has a wonderful home.

the house
doorway,

JACK: You awake now?

JUNIOR: Put all

HOWARD: 'Bout half.

HOWARD: Come on

JACK: Well, that beats hell outta your usual condition.

JUNIOR: I got t
the sheriff al

HOWARD: I was up wheezin' mosta the night.

HOWARD: Well, c

JACK: That was a mistake. You shoulda been sleepin'.

JUNIOR (Entering
Sheriff says h

HOWARD: Funny fella. Singin' "Ol' Shep" and playin' like
you're Jack Benny instead of Jack Decker. I'd say your wife
and kid might be comin' home.

HOWARD: Moss he.

JACK: The hell. They come home they come home, that's all.

JUNIOR: No, from
Sheriff says o
nowadays. For,

HOWARD: Uh-huh. --Now, on this shutdown business, I got the
word from the boys.

HOWARD: He's in

JACK: Petey and Holland?

HOWARD: That's right.

JUNIOR: This pl
weeks.

JACK: Lemme get my shoes on.

HOWARD: Jack and
see he can man

HOWARD: Hold on, now. I wanna talk some union business
before your buddy Junior Mitchell stumbles in here.

JUNIOR: It don't
place oughta lo

JACK: And I wanna put on my shoes, maybe a shirt.

HOWARD: What els

HOWARD: We don't stop this layoff, that's all you'll end up
with. A pair of shoes. Maybe a shirt.

JUNIOR: Else? A
Greencastle dow
confidential in

JACK: That's okay by me, Howard. Long as I got a pair of
shoes, I can walk away from this place. And if I got a
shirt to boot, I can walk away dressed up.

HOWARD: It is?

HOWARD: Walk away to where?

JUNIOR: Goddam p
hell strikin' a

JACK shrugs and exits to the bedroom. HOWARD follows
to the door.

HOWARD (Handing t
what he says in

Walk away to where? Away from the mines? You figure to
make a livin' somewhere else, Jack?

JUNIOR: When'd t

HOWARD begins to cough, returns to the table and
rereads the leaflet. Presently, JUNIOR MITCHELL
appears at the screen door and begins to open it
quietly. HE then sees the coal shovel leaning against

HOWARD: Last nig

JUNIOR: Moss tol

the house, hoists it like a shotgun and steps into the doorway, unseen by HOWARD.

JUNIOR: Put all your dough on the table and stick 'em up.

HOWARD: Come on in, Junior, and leave that thing out there.

JUNIOR: I got the latest word, Howard. Been out ridin' with the sheriff all night. Ain't been to bed yet.

HOWARD: Well, come inside.

JUNIOR (Entering the room): They're gonna shut it down. Sheriff says he heard it from the top.

HOWARD: Moss heard it from the top? From old man Laney?

JUNIOR: No, from the college boy. From Stovall, the pissant. Sheriff says old man Laney'll do whatever the pissant says nowadays. Forget Laney. Jack ain't here?

HOWARD: He's in there. Puttin' on his shoes, maybe a shirt.

JUNIOR: This place don't look like no woman's been gone two weeks.

HOWARD: Jack and me scrubbed it last night. Wants Lucille to see he can manage.

JUNIOR: It don't look right. Man's been batchin' it the place oughta look a mess. Like it did yesterday.

HOWARD: What else did Sheriff Moss spill?

JUNIOR: Else? Ain't that enough? Says they'll shut Greencastle down for a year if they have to. That's confidential information.

HOWARD: It is?

JUNIOR: Goddam pissant Leonard Stovall says the men'll play hell strikin' a mine that's shut down.

HOWARD (Handing the leaflet to JUNIOR): Uh-huh. That's about what he says in here.

JUNIOR: When'd these come out?

HOWARD: Last night sometime. They're all over town.

JUNIOR: Moss told me this was confidential information.

HOWARD: What'd you tell him?

JUNIOR: Not a damn thing. He was pumpin' me though.

HOWARD: You didn't say nothin' union?

JUNIOR: Naw, hell, he ain't gonna get the time a day outta me. Goddam Stovall. A college boy runnin' a coal mine. Pissant's still green behind the ears and runnin' a coal mine. And drivin' that fancy-ass car. But let that car break down, which it will, and he'll take it to a workin' man. Won't he? You want some more coffee? See, Howard, I hate that. Be damned if I'd fix his car for him. No pie around? Stovall. Even if I could fix cars, I'd not fix his. "No thank you, Mr. Stovall, fix your own damn car." And he's gonna shut down the mine for a nickel an hour? See, now, old man Laney wouldn't do that. Laney'd give us two-and-a-half cents and go right on. But, Stovall? Shit. No nickel, no two-and-a-half, no nothin'. See, now, if I was the union, if I was Petey and Holland, I'd take the two-and-a-half. I wouldn't hold out for the nickel. Then there'd be no layoff. It's not that much difference between two-and-a-half cents and a nickel. Damned if I ain't hungry. You know what it works out on a year the difference between two-and-a-half cents and a nickel?

JACK (Entering): It works out half one way and double the other.

JUNIOR: I mean in dollars and cents. --You got anything here to eat?

JACK (Searching for some food and setting it out for JUNIOR): It works out twelve hours a day, six days a week, let's say fifty weeks a year, that's one hundred and eighty bucks a year at the nickel and ninety bucks at the two-and-a-half cents. That's for the miner. For the coal mine that'd be times a hundred and thirty men, uh, twenty-three thousand four hundred bucks to pay out at the nickel and half of that'd be exactly eleven thousand seven hundred American dollars. All that's not countin' Uncle Sam's take.

JUNIOR: That's 'bout how I figure it. --Thanks.

HOWARD: Figure it this way, Junior. Any raise you get'll go directly to a whore or a bartender anyhow, so it's all the same to you.

JUNIOR: Ha. I don't need whore money no more. That's right. I got old Mardelle from over on Water Street livin' in. She quit work.

JACK: You bet
That babe'll

JUNIOR: Marde

HOWARD: She b
need to get

JUNIOR: A wom
day.

HOWARD: That's
Stovall gets

JUNIOR: Piss (

HOWARD: That's
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JACK: Old man
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HOWARD: Jack,
mine no more.

JUNIOR: Laney'
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HOWARD: Stoval
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JACK: Petey an

HOWARD: They w

JACK: They did

HOWARD: They n

JACK: They do?
number three (

HOWARD: They kr

JACK: They plar

HOWARD: Sure.

JACK: You better hold out for a dime-an-hour raise, then.
That babe'll cost you more'n she'll save you.

JUNIOR: Mardelle's got a lotta good qualities.

HOWARD: She better have if they shut down the mine. She'd
need to get back to work and put in some overtime to boot.

JUNIOR: A woman supportin' me? On her back? That'd be the
day.

HOWARD: That'd be the day? It's right around the corner if
Stovall gets his way.

JUNIOR: Piss on Stovall. And his car.

HOWARD: That's right, piss on Stovall. But, Stovall's gonna
piss on us all if someone don't stop him.

JACK: Old man Laney'll stop him. Laney knows the miners
couldn't make it through a long shutdown.

HOWARD: Jack, where you been? Laney ain't runnin' his own
mine no more. Stovall's makin' all the decisions.

JUNIOR: Laney'll do whatever Stovall tells him, accordin' to
the sheriff. I been pumpin' Moss, Jack. For confidential
information.

HOWARD: Stovall is out to break the miners' backs. And the
boys think somethin's got to be done.

JACK: Petey and Holland?

HOWARD: They wanted me to talk to you.

JACK: They did?

HOWARD: They need some action from you.

JACK: They do? I need some action from them, too. That
number three chamber is about to choke everyone in there.
It's over the gas level. Way over.

HOWARD: They know that.

JACK: They plan to go to the company about it?

HOWARD: Sure. But, that's not what they're talkin' about.

JACK: No, that's not what they're talkin' about because they ain't worked in number three lately, neither one of 'em. What are they talkin' about? (No answer) Man's gonna eathe, he needs some goddam air, ain't that plain?

JUNIOR: It is to me.

JACK: All the miners can count on from the company and the boys is goddam neglect. Well, what are they talkin' about?

HOWARD: Action. --I don't know if I oughta talk in front a Junior.

JUNIOR: What?

JACK: Junior's all right. You all right, Junior?

JUNIOR: When'd somebody have to ask if I'm all right?

JACK: Junior's all right.

JUNIOR: Goddammit, Howard, that is an insult.

HOWARD: I'm bound to be careful about this thing.

JACK: What kinda action we talkin' about?

HOWARD: The boys think Stovall oughta get hurt.

JACK: Stomped? In public?

HOWARD: No. That's no good. That won't work.

JACK: I'm here to tell you that won't work.

HOWARD: Well, now, that other fella was a strikebreaker, not a mine operator.

JUNIOR: He was a goddam prizefighter is what he was.

JACK: And I got the prize. Thirty days, thank you, Sheriff Moss.

JUNIOR: Yeah, but you made a mess outta that Polack.

HOWARD: The boys think Stovall oughta get hurt more than that Polack. And not in public.

JACK: That Polack come close to gettin' killed. (Pause) I better fix my dinner bucket.

HOWARD: Jack, it ain't me askin'. It's Petey and Holland.

JACK: You ever bee

JUNIOR: Me? Naw,

JACK: Me neither.

JUNIOR: What'd I b

JACK: Gettin' a sun
take pictures. Y
spread out all ov

HOWARD: I ain't ev
on the word.

JACK: A man change
subject changed!

HOWARD: Don't get :

JACK: Who am I sup

HOWARD: Hell, get :

JACK: Junior, this
me to kill a man.

JUNIOR: He does?

HOWARD: Eat, Junior
even Petey and Hol
us against them.
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JACK: And then ther
to rough up one ma

HOWARD: I recall yo
time. And the one
make it.

JACK: That got outt
outta me.

HOWARD: Yes, he did

JUNIOR: And you kno

JACK: You ever been to Florida, Junior?

JUNIOR: Me? Naw, hell.

JACK: Me neither.

JUNIOR: What'd I be doin' down there with the rich bitches?

JACK: Gettin' a suntan. That's what they do down there. And take pictures. You watch. Lucille, she'll have pictures spread out all over this place tonight.

HOWARD: I ain't even sure I favor it, Jack. I'm just passin' on the word.

JACK: A man changes the subject, Howard, he wants the goddam subject changed!

HOWARD: Don't get sore at me.

JACK: Who am I supposed to get sore at?

HOWARD: Hell, get sore at Stovall.

JACK: Junior, this friend of mine, here, Howard Prater, wants me to kill a man.

JUNIOR: He does?

HOWARD: Eat, Junior. Jack, it ain't me. It's us. It ain't even Petey and Holland. It's us. It's all of us, and it's us against them. Now, Petey and Holland come to me this mornin', right after the woman took off to pick up your wife and boy, and they said they looked around, thought about everybody, see. There was some that would but couldn't and some that could but wouldn't.

JACK: And then there was me? (HOWARD nods) Because I agreed to rough up one man before.

HOWARD: I recall you've roughed up more than one in your time. And the one you're talkin' about just about didn't make it.

JACK: That got outta hand. That sonofabitch knocked the wind outta me.

HOWARD: Yes, he did. And...

JUNIOR: And you knocked the shit outta him.

HOWARD: And what about Stovall? He's tryin' to knock the wind outta all of us.

CK: Us. All of us. Us. That us-tune is gettin' real old, Howard.

HOWARD: That's right. It's an old tune. I can remember your daddy joinin' in on it a few times.

JACK (Grabbing HOWARD): Keep my daddy outta this, you...

(Releasing HOWARD) Now, let me tell you somethin' about Leonard Stovall. I never met the man and I'm sure he's a sonofabitch, but he's just like that other sonofabitch, the Polack you're talkin' about. That man stepped over the line that I, myself, scratched on the ground with a coal shovel. See what I mean, Howard? I took a coal shovel and made a line in the dirt and said, "Now you bunch of scabs are okay by me, and I want you all to stay healthy." Remember that, Junior?

JUNIOR: Like it was yesterday.

JACK: And I went on to point out that the line I made was meant to protect their health.

JUNIOR: And over come the Polack.

CK: And he ended up pretty sick. Now, this Stovall fella could take ill, too. But, if I have anything to do with it, it'll be when he crosses the line that I draw.

HOWARD: Where you think you'll draw that line?

JACK: Damned if I know, Howard. Maybe a little closer to my own door. I swear to God you know how to make a mornin' turn sour. I got people comin' home. Don't you know that?

HOWARD: The hell. They come home they come home, that's all.

JACK: Straighten up your clothes. You look like a moron.

HOWARD: Well, I feel like one, tryin' to talk sense to you. You're the only man in the world with people to think about? Use your head for something outside of arithmetic, Jack. I mean, it's one thing to figure all them numbers in your head like lightnin', the two-and-a-half cents and the nickel and all, and it's something else to work out how it's gonna be enough for any of us to live on.

JACK: Gettin' rid of Stovall ain't gonna change that puzzle, old buddy.

HOWARD: Maybe not come up with. I do. We ain't w and then the nex

JACK: Next thing

HOWARD: That tune

JACK: I mean let' How about it, Ju

JUNIOR: I'm goin' eye this mornin'

HOWARD: I gotta wantin' to see y

JACK: I say clean and Frankie thin

HOWARD: Jack, wha

JACK: Tell 'em Ja

HOWARD: His daddy

JUNIOR: "Jack Dec

HOWARD: No, moron

JUNIOR: Oh.

HOWARD: You headi

JUNIOR: Hell, no. Mardelle there. sheriff's porch

HOWARD: Well, you I mean?

JUNIOR: You can c

HOWARD: You know, about right.

JUNIOR: Damn right

HOWARD: He's the

HOWARD: Maybe not, but it's the only thing the boys could come up with. It's hard. It's hard to figure out what to do. We ain't wizards, so we just gotta try the next thing and then the next thing.

JACK: Next thing might be to get the hell away from here.

HOWARD: That tune's startin' to sound a little old itself.

JACK: I mean let's go to work. Coal won't come up by itself. How about it, Junior?

JUNIOR: I'm goin' in on the late shift. Gotta get some shut-eye this mornin'.

HOWARD: I gotta meet Petey and Holland first. They'll be wantin' to see you tonight, 'round eight. Whattaya say?

JACK: I say clean up after yourselves. I don't want Lucille and Frankie thinkin' I can't manage a little housework.

HOWARD: Jack, what do I tell the boys?

JACK: Tell 'em Jack Decker's thinkin'. (Exits to yard)

HOWARD: His daddy used to say that every mornin'.

JUNIOR: "Jack Decker's thinkin'?"

HOWARD: No, moron, "Coal won't come up by itself."

JUNIOR: Oh.

HOWARD: You headin' home?

JUNIOR: Hell, no. I can't do no daytime sleepin' with Mardelle there. She'd be all over me. I'll go lay on the sheriff's porch swing a few hours.

HOWARD: Well, you keep your ears open over there? Know what I mean?

JUNIOR: You can count on me. Don't worry.

HOWARD: You know, Junior, I think you got that Stovall pegged about right.

JUNIOR: Damn right I do. How you figure?

HOWARD: He's the real moron around here.

1-1-10

JUNIOR: Like I been sayin'. And a goddam pissant on top a that.

HOWARD: Believe if I was in his place I'd visit some of these women.

JUNIOR: Mardelle says he's been visitin' one of 'em pretty regular.

HOWARD: I mean the miners' wives. Talk to 'em, get 'em thinkin' about a long layoff, get 'em to trust the company better. Wives, see, they got influence.

JUNIOR: Wives got influence? Bull.

HOWARD: Well, maybe not. Anyway, Stovall'd never hit on that. idea. And you don't mention it to Moss, neither. He's nothin' but a straight pipeline to the company.

JUNIOR: Bull, again. The sheriff is for the miners.

HOWARD: Maybe yes and maybe no, but you just forget what I said. Treat it like you'd treat confidential information.

JUNIOR: I done forgot it. (HE pulls a pint bottle from his pocket and takes a drink)

HOWARD: Little early in the day for that, ain't it?

JUNIOR: I had breakfast.

JUNIOR leaves. HOWARD begins to straighten things as the lights fade.

Scene 2

Midmorning of the same day. RUTHIE PRATER sits at the table unwrapping a gift. It is a carved coconut.

RUTHIE: Oh, my lord! That's the ugliest thing I ever seen. (Calls to the bedroom) Jack's gonna have a fit you spendin' this kinda money, Lucille. I'll hafta hang this up on the front porch. Scare off the bill collectors. (Picks up smaller package) What's this for Howard?

LUCILLE (Off): the side.

RUTHIE: That alligators

LUCILLE (Enter): housedress. daylights o River and They say th chances.

RUTHIE: Ugh. your yard?

LUCILLE: Wel carve 'em place. Sai orange tree

RUTHIE: Lord

LUCILLE: Now talk you ir warm pee. that I ever

FRANKIE (Enter)

LUCILLE: Fra went down t ever taste

FRANKIE: I d

LUCILLE: Wel want to hea that?

FRANKIE: Naw

RUTHIE: I sh in two week

FRANKIE: I d

LUCILLE: "I there and c

FRAN

LUCILLE (Offstage): It's a pocketknife with an alligator on the side.

RUTHIE: That's nice. He'll love that. You see any real alligators down there?

LUCILLE (Entering): Whew, it's good to get back into a housedress. --My God, Ruthie, those alligators scared the daylight outta me. You could stand on the side of New River and see just their eyes floatin' across the water. They say they won't mess with you but I wouldn't take my chances. They get to be eight foot long and more.

RUTHIE: Ugh. --And these things grow right on the trees in your yard?

LUCILLE: Well not like that, crazy. The Seminole Indians carve 'em up that way. But, yes, coconut trees all over the place. Sarah and Donald had three in their yard plus two orange trees and what they call a kumquat tree.

RUTHIE: Lord.

LUCILLE: Now fresh coconut is delicious, but don't let anyone talk you into drinking coconut milk. It's no more milk than warm pee. In fact that's about what it tastes like, not that I ever tasted warm pee.

FRANKIE (Entering from yard with suitcase): I tasted warm pee.

LUCILLE: Frankie, don't you talk nasty. Ruthie'll think you went down to Fort Lauderdale and turned bad. When did you ever taste warm pee?

FRANKIE: I don't know.

LUCILLE: Well, you never tasted warm pee and I don't ever want to hear you say you did. You want me to help with that?

FRANKIE: Naw, I can get it.

RUTHIE: I should say he can. Looks like he grew two inches in two weeks. How'd you like that train ride, Frankie?

FRANKIE: I don't know.

LUCILLE: "I don't know." Is that all you can say? Get in there and change your clothes.

FRANKIE goes.

1-2-12

RUTHIE: I believe he's gonna be bigger and stronger than Jack.

LUCILLE: He's a good boy. You shoulda seen him down there, Ruthie, barefoot day and night. And I'd tell him, I'd say, "Now, go wash your feet before you get into that bed," and he'd say, "But, Mama, they're clean," and, by God, he'd be right. It's so clean down there. I told Donald, I said, "Even the dirt down here is clean, Donald." And he'd say, "Well, Mama Decker, it's a long ways from Greencastle."

RUTHIE: A long ways from Greencastle. --Let me see that baby.

LUCILLE (Taking pictures from purse): Well, most of 'em aren't developed yet. Donald's gonna send 'em in the mail. But, here. That's little Joanna, one week and a day.

RUTHIE: Oh, she's adorable. That is an adorable baby.

LUCILLE: Don't you see Sarah in her?

RUTHIE: Sarah all over again.

LUCILLE: There they are together. Sarah actin' the fool as usual. Here, this one's better. She's settled down some.

RUTHIE: She is a pretty mama. But, those eyes. I'd almost forgot.

LUCILLE: What's wrong with her eyes?

RUTHIE: I didn't say there was somethin' wrong.

LUCILLE: Nothin's wrong with Sarah's eyes.

RUTHIE: And I didn't say there was. Lord. --That their dog?

LUCILLE: Huh? No, that's their neighbor's dog. Awfullest thing you ever saw. A French poodle.

RUTHIE: A dog tied up with bow-ribbons.

LUCILLE: Belongs to a man named Al that live's right next door. Sarah says he's on the snooty side, but he was very nice to me. Forever workin' in his yard. Plays tennis.

RUTHIE: La-de-da.

LUCILLE: Ruthie, I want to go back.

RUTHIE: To Florida?

LUCILLE: Uh-huh.

RUTHIE: Well, don't just as soon as Do

LUCILLE: I mean per

RUTHIE: Oh.

LUCILLE: By God, Ru go? Or not pack u

RUTHIE: Hah!

LUCILLE: I'm serious place is just plain Sunshine State! T kinds of blue. Th

RUTHIE: Clean dirt.

LUCILLE: ...there's year. My God, the to the Atlantic Oc that. Beautiful b rivers, people fis up on the docks and short pants, grown pictures snapped. the boats float by. you can go and pay prettiest yards wit on the grass, and f landcrabs runnin' s and not an overcoat nor a coal bin, nor around. Ruthie, I

RUTHIE: Well, then,

LUCILLE: I mean it.

RUTHIE: I know you n up Frankie, and we' the boys.

LUCILLE: Well, you c studyin' this matte and I don't plan to

RUTHIE: Old age. Yo

LUCILLE: Uh-huh.

RUTHIE: Well, don't worry, hon, you'll be back down there just as soon as Donald can get up another train fare.

LUCILLE: I mean permanent.

RUTHIE: Oh.

LUCILLE: By God, Ruthie, why couldn't we all just pack up and go? Or not pack up. Just go. Us and you and Howard.

RUTHIE: Hah!

LUCILLE: I'm serious. If you forget the alligators, that place is just plain paradise. My God, they call it the Sunshine State! The houses are white, and pink and all kinds of blue. The dirt is clean, the people are tan...

RUTHIE: Clean dirt.

LUCILLE: ...there's fruit layin' on the ground most of the year. My God, the kids ride their bikes to the ocean, ride to the Atlantic Ocean beach on their bicycles! Think about that. Beautiful boats all up and down the canals and rivers, people fishin' everywhere you look, swordfish hangin' up on the docks and people standin' there barefoot and in short pants, grown people in short pants, gettin' their pictures snapped. And, oh, drawbridges they crank up to let the boats float by, and the Seminole Indian Village where you can go and pay to look at real Seminole Indians, and the prettiest yards with statues of pink flamingo birds standin' on the grass, and funny lookin' little crabs, that's right, landcrabs runnin' sideways down the road to make you laugh, and not an overcoat nor a lump of coal, nor a coal shovel, nor a coal bin, nor a coal bucket, nor a coal mine anywhere around. Ruthie, I want to go back permanent.

RUTHIE: Well, then, let's go.

LUCILLE: I mean it.

RUTHIE: I know you mean it. I'll go crank the Ford, you load up Frankie, and we'll ride over to Greencastle and honk for the boys.

LUCILLE: Well, you can have your joke, Ruth Prater, but I was studyin' this matter on the train back. I'm a grandmother and I don't plan to spend my old age dirty and cold.

RUTHIE: Old age. You're not forty-two years old yet.

1-2-14

LUCILLE: Oh, yes, I am.

RUTHIE: Then you are forty-two. With one foot in the grave.

LUCILLE: I don't care if I'm twenty-two, or eighty-two, or two hundred and two. I got sand in my shoes.

RUTHIE: You do?

LUCILLE: Well, that's what they say. Once you get Florida sand in your shoes, you'll go back.

RUTHIE: You'll go back. And I just might take up the invitation and go along. Bet I could save up a train fare by this time next year.

LUCILLE: Donald says there's all kinds of work down there. Jack and Howard, smart as they are, could get work down there inside a day. Donald says there'll be a big building boom down there soon.

RUTHIE: Jack could do whatever he set his mind to, but Howard is stuck in the mine and stuck on the union. He's a plain coal miner. Got coal dust in his shoes. Ha!

LUCILLE: Where Donald works, see, is Dudley's Dry Dock and Yacht Basin. They build boats. He says if we get into the war with Hitler, that place will switch over to a Navy contract. It's in the works already. They're gonna build submarine chasers or what you call 'em. Then after we skunk Hitler, Donald says, and he says he gets this from the big shots at Dudley's, then the construction business will take off like sixty. Jack could get a foot in that. Jack and Howard. Donald'd see to it. Donald says they got real good owners down there. (Knock at offstage front door) Frankie, see who's at the door and tell 'em we don't want any. --Looks like Jack did all right by himself.

RUTHIE: Ha! Don't worry. Howard and him cleaned up like the dickens last night. Don't let him fool you. He's as messy as any man.

LUCILLE: Looks real good. That Al that lives next to Sarah keeps his place tidy as any woman would.

RUTHIE: He wear bow-ribbons like his dog?

LUCILLE: Stop it. He was very nice to me.

FRANKIE (Entering): It's Mr. Stovall.

LUCILLE: What's he sellin'?

RUTHIE: Stoval

FRANKIE: He wa

RUTHIE: Stoval

FRANKIE: I dor

LUCILLE: Jack'

RUTHIE: Not li

LUCILLE: Well,

RUTHIE: You be

FRANKIE: Can I

LUCILLE: Yes, shot.

RUTHIE: Then y

LUCILLE: And m

RUTHIE: Remembe

RUTHIE
room, ch
FRANKIE
RUTHIE re

Get out there

RUTHIE
After a m
who carri

LUCILLE: This i
coffee?

STOVALL: No, th

LUCILLE: Excuse
a trip.

STOVALL: Oh?

LUCILLE: Uh-huh
dress. I just

RUTHIE: Stovall?

FRANKIE: He wants to come in.

RUTHIE: Stovall from the mine?

FRANKIE: I don't know.

LUCILLE: Jack's been hurt.

RUTHIE: Not likely. Leonard Stovall ain't no newsboy.

LUCILLE: Well, what's he want?

RUTHIE: You better go see.

FRANKIE: Can I go look at his car?

LUCILLE: Yes, but don't touch it. --I can't talk to no big shot.

RUTHIE: Then you'll learn in a big hurry.

LUCILLE: And me in my housedress.

RUTHIE: Remember everything.

RUTHIE and FRANKIE exit to yard. LUCILLE surveys the room, checks her appearance and exits to the front door. FRANKIE reappears outside the screen door to eavesdrop. RUTHIE reappears and shoves him away.

Get out there and look at that car, you little snoop.

RUTHIE remains outside the screen door to eavesdrop. After a moment, LUCILLE reenters with LEONARD STOVALL, who carries a briefcase.

LUCILLE: This is where we set. May I offer you a cup of coffee?

STOVALL: No, thank you, Mrs. Decker.

LUCILLE: Excuse the looks of the place. I just got back from a trip.

STOVALL: Oh?

LUCILLE: Uh-huh. Florida, the Sunshine State. Excuse this dress. I just wear it around the house.

1-2-16

STOVALL: Comfort is the important thing. Did you get down to Key West?

LUCILLE: Huh? No, I didn't go down that far. Fort Lauderdale.

STOVALL: Ah, Fort Lauderdale. Finest beach on the East Coast. And, you were smart to go in the off-season.

LUCILLE: My daughter, Sarah, had a baby, Joanna, and I went down to help Donald, that's her husband. He paid my way. Insisted. I was just there for two weeks. He works at Dudley's Dry Dock and Yacht Basin. They make boats.

STOVALL: I'll say. Beautiful cabin cruisers.

LUCILLE: Me and Frankie, who you met, went down on the train. He's my boy. He wanted to look at your car, but he won't touch it. I took him outta school but it was just two weeks and I figured he wouldn't miss too much. He'll be in the fifth grade. What did you want? Uh, won't you sit down?

STOVALL (Sitting): You don't mind if I smoke a cigarette, do you?

LUCILLE: God, no. Let me get you a saucer. I don't know where our ashtrays got to. Jack's been batchin' it, no telling where he put our good ashtrays.

STOVALL: I hope you don't mind my dropping in.

LUCILLE: God, no. Glad to have the company, but I've not had the time to bake a pie. I could warm up some beans.

STOVALL: Thank you just the same. Mrs. Decker, I don't want to take too much of your time. I just wanted to chat for a minute and maybe enlist your help.

LUCILLE: My help?

STOVALL: That's right. --Did you get over to the Seminole Indian Village?

LUCILLE: Oh, yes. Well, we drove by there, but I wouldn't let Donald spend the money. Nobody else pays for anything when Donald's around. He's my son-in-law. It looked like a very educational place.

STOVALL: Some of the Oceolas still live there.

LUCILLE: Is that right? I didn't know that.

STOVALL: And a real legend

LUCILLE: I hear

STOVALL: Quite

LUCILLE: Donald help?

STOVALL (Pause) around the G

LUCILLE: Jack

STOVALL: I've carries a lot him.

LUCILLE: I would

STOVALL: I'm s

LUCILLE: Jack meetin's.

STOVALL: But, for it.

LUCILLE: He'll prizefighter, fights anymor

STOVALL: I hear the past. I Jack broke th

LUCILLE: Well,

STOVALL: All i at Greencastl the men and t this thing.

LUCILLE: Why d

STOVALL: Oh, w regular basis have differen

LUCILLE: You g

STOVALL: And an old drunken Indian called Shirttail Charley, a real legendary character, runs around in that area.

LUCILLE: I heard of him.

STOVALL: Quite a character.

LUCILLE: Donald mentioned him. He's my....How was it I could help?

STOVALL (Pause): You know, Jack is a very influential man around the Greencastle Mine.

LUCILLE: Jack Decker is?

STOVALL: I've never met Jack, formally, but Mr. Laney says he carries a lot of weight with the men. They pay attention to him.

LUCILLE: I wouldn't know.

STOVALL: I'm surprised he isn't a union officer.

LUCILLE: Jack pays his dues, but he don't go in much for meetin's.

STOVALL: But, he serves in other ways and the men respect him for it.

LUCILLE: He'll do his share. --Now, what he did to that prizefighter, Mr. Stovall, is in the past. Jack don't pick fights anymore.

STOVALL: I heard about that. Well, let's leave the past in the past. I guess I was still in college when that happened. Jack broke that gentleman's back, I heard.

LUCILLE: Well, he recovered. He was a scab.

STOVALL: All in the past. --We're in an economic bind over at Greencastle, Mrs. Decker. I'm just checking with some of the men and their families to see if we can work together on this thing.

LUCILLE: Why don't you talk direct to the union officers?

STOVALL: Oh, we do. We do. We get together with them on a regular basis. But, sometimes the rank-and-file members have different ideas and we want to hear everybody's side.

LUCILLE: You gonna talk to Jack?

1-2-18

STOVALL: As soon as I can. I was just wondering, though.
Maybe Jack would talk more freely with you.

LUCILLE: About work?

STOVALL: In other words, maybe you could have some influence
on him and then he could speak to his friends.

LUCILLE: They're dead set for the nickel an hour.

STOVALL: You know, I think I can get Mr. Laney to agree to
that. Eventually.

LUCILLE: You favor the nickel?

STOVALL: Oh, sure. As soon as the circumstances are right.
It's just that right now the margin is shaky. Five cents an
hour doesn't sound like much, but it adds up. We're talking
about a hundred and thirty men, twelve hours a day, six
days...well it adds up to a healthy amount. The thing is,
we can't invest in modern machinery and safety measures if
we don't make a profit. The profit margin is a delicate
matter. Well, you know all this, I'm sure. (Handing her a
leaflet from his briefcase) See, from our side, as I
pointed out to Mr. Laney, we could shut down for a year and
hold our own. What grieves me is...

LUCILLE: Shut down?

STOVALL: What grieves me is the hardship it would mean for
our families. A two-week or even a six-week strike is one
thing, but a year of unemployment, even with union benefits,
would be tragic.

LUCILLE: Shut down a year?

STOVALL: It wouldn't be easy on anybody. You keep house,
Mrs. Decker....It's Lucille, isn't it? Do you mind if I
call you Lucille?

LUCILLE: Mrs. Decker'll do.

STOVALL: You keep house. Running even a modest household
calls for steady income. And, I have it on sound authority
that prices are going to skyrocket in 1941. Just go right
through the ceiling.

LUCILLE: Shut down. Mr. Stovall, nobody can take a year's
layoff, nor half a year.

STOVALL: Well, it would definitely cut down on Florida
vacations, wouldn't it?

LUCILLE: What's
this nor anytl
know that Jack
anything anyho
the others are
at the mine, a
cars and usta
by the mules,
fire, suffocat
scratched a no
dinner bucket
out before he
care of your r
laid up with a
died two years
to pay her bil
delicate margi
for extra expe
not for a vaca
come out of th
fare and woulc
did buy some p
juice bar a fe
down to Key We
although my so
front of Donal
comin' around
silly of my hu
little bit to
college diplom
thumb than you
a lot and if y
weasel when I
do, mister, be
the bitter end
next week and
(Tearing up th
who can be the
Hell, we ain't
not one goddam
door) Oh, my

RUTHIE (Leaning
You better nev

LUCILLE: Oh, my
faint. Did you

RUTHIE: I'm afra

LUCILLE: What'd

LUCILLE: What's that mean? See, I don't understand any of this nor anything about margins. And you might just as well know that Jack Decker don't listen to a thing I say about anything anyhow. But, him and Howard Prater, next door, and the others are the ones that go down underground over there at the mine, and they run the cuttin' machines and load the cars and usta drive the mules and get kicked clear to Sunday by the mules, and his daddy, Jack's, died in a coal-mine fire, suffocated to death down under the ground and scratched a note on the mine wall with the corner of his dinner bucket "To my darling son..." and so on, and passed out before he could finish it but said in there "take good care of your mommy, my boy," and his mother, Jack's, was laid up with a stroke across town with her sister till she died two years ago, Jack's mama, and Jack did all he could to pay her bills and to keep this house running on a very delicate margin and he was able to scrape up fifty dollars for extra expenses for me and Frankie to go down to Florida not for a vacation, Mr. Stovall, but to help my daughter come out of the hospital, and Donald paid the whole train fare and wouldn't let me spend a red cent down there but I did buy some presents to bring home plus take Frankie to the juice bar a few times on my own, and, no, I didn't get on down to Key West nor visit the Seminole Indian Village although my son nearly cried to go but he wouldn't ask in front of Donald and I think you're a goddam sneak to be comin' around here in the daytime because you are scared silly of my husband, Jack, who would not be pleased even a little bit to hear you were in his house with your goddam college diploma when he's got more brains in his left thumb than you got pimples on your butt which is most likely a lot and if you think I'm some kinda moron and can't spot a weasel when I see one then you've got some more thinkin' to do, mister, because we're in this coal-mine fight down to the bitter end and we want our nickel-an-hour raise startin' next week and not week after next and you can shut us down (Tearing up the leaflet) for ten years but we'll just see who can be the most stubborn, Mr. Leonard dumb-name Stovall! Hell, we ain't movin' to Florida! Now, don't say a word, not one goddam word. Just git. (STOVALL leaves for front door) Oh, my God.

RUTHIE (Leaning in through screen door): Oh, my God is right. You better never let Jack know he was here.

LUCILLE: Oh, my God, Ruthie, you better hold me before I faint. Did you hear what I said to that man?

RUTHIE: I'm afraid I did.

LUCILLE: What'd I say?

RUTHIE: You just forget he ever come. You hear me? (LUCILLE nods. Pause) You told him he had a bunch of pimples on his butt.

RUTHIE begins to giggle softly as the lights fade.

Scene 3

Evening of the same day. Supper is over, the table cleared, the dishes washed. The Florida photographs are spread out on the table. As the lights come up, JACK and FRANKIE are singing and LUCILLE is cutting two freshly baked pies.

JACK and FRANKIE (Singing):

Ol' Dan Tucker he got drunk,
Fell in the fire and kicked up a chunk,
Combed his hair with a wagon wheel,
Died with a toothache in his heel.

Get out the way for Ol' Dan Tucker,
He's too late to eat his supper,

Supper's over, dishes warshed,
Nothin' left but a piece of squarsh.

JACK: Not bad. Not too bad.

FRANKIE: "Old Shep"!

JACK: Naw, I don't like to do "Old Shep" without Howard.

LUCILLE: Ruthie wanted to know if we'd play some Rook with her and Howard tonight.

JACK: No.

LUCILLE: This bein' my first night home and all.

JACK: Can't.

LUCILLE: Kinda like a party.

JACK: I gotta go out.

FRANKIE: What about Fibber McGee?

LUCILLE: What for?

JACK: None a your
FRANKIE) You li

LUCILLE: Couldn't

JACK: It don't co
concern you.

FRANKIE: I could

LUCILLE: It would
got rhubarb. Wh

JACK: Both.

FRANKIE: Both.

LUCILLE: You know
pie.

JACK: Sounds awfu

FRANKIE: I hated t

LUCILLE: You did i
It's smooth and i
many nice things

JACK: Outdoors, hu

LUCILLE: Ha! That
hobo.

JACK (Pushing the p
out.

LUCILLE: What abou

FRANKIE: Yeah, the

JACK: Well, a coup

FRANKIE: Seven hun

JACK: A-plus for F
Quick.

FRANKIE: Uh, sixty

JACK: Flunk. Too

FRANKIE: Three hun

JACK: None a your business what for. Union business. (To FRANKIE) You listen to Fibber McGee for the both of us.

LUCILLE: Couldn't be a meetin' or Howard'd be...

JACK: It don't concern Howard, and it sure as hell don't concern you.

FRANKIE: I could set in for Daddy.

LUCILLE: It wouldn't be the same, Frankie. I got apple and I got rhubarb. Who wants what?

JACK: Both.

FRANKIE: Both.

LUCILLE: You know what they eat down there, Jack? Key lime pie.

JACK: Sounds awful.

FRANKIE: I hated that key lime pie.

LUCILLE: You did not. You loved it. And it's not awful. It's smooth and rich. You eat it outdoors on the patio. So many nice things in Florida.

JACK: Outdoors, huh? Sounds like a buncha hobos down there.

LUCILLE: Ha! That's somethin' you'd never see in Florida, a hobo.

JACK (Pushing the pie away): Save this for me. I better head out.

LUCILLE: What about the numbers?

FRANKIE: Yeah, the numbers.

JACK: Well, a couple a quick ones. Thirty-five times twenty.

FRANKIE: Seven hundred.

JACK: A-plus for Franklin D. Eighty-two take away seventeen. Quick.

FRANKIE: Uh, sixty-five.

JACK: Flunk. Too slow.

FRANKIE: Three hundred and fourteen times fifty.

1-3-22

JACK: You know the answer?

FRANKIE: Huh-uh.

JACK: Then you can't toss up the problem. But, I know.

FRANKIE: What?

JACK: Fifteen thousand, seven hundred.

LUCILLE: I'll never know how you do that if I live till I die. Either one of you.

JACK: That's right. You won't. Look, you know five times three hundred is fifteen hundred. And you know five times fourteen is seventy...

LUCILLE: I don't know any such of a thing.

JACK: And you just work in your ciphers. Ain't it plain?

FRANKIE: It's easy.

LUCILLE: Easy as pie. I don't know what's wrong with me.

JACK: What's wrong with you is you're a woman. Women have no knack for arithmetic.

LUCILLE: Some of 'em might.

JACK: Three times three.

LUCILLE: Nine.

JACK: Well, I'm surprised.

FRANKIE: A-plus, Mama.

LUCILLE: Ain't no dunce cap on me.

JACK: Watch after your mama, son. I'll be back before long.

LUCILLE: Jack, don't you think Joanna looks like Sarah?

JACK: No, she don't look like Sarah. She looks like a bald-headed monkey.

LUCILLE: Jack! You know, I thought there'd be monkeys runnin' around in the trees down there, but there wasn't. You can learn a lot down...

JACK (Reviewing picture): A bald-headed Republican monkey.

LUCILLE (To FRANKIE):
that.

JACK: No. She

LUCILLE: What a

JACK: The baby

LUCILLE: What's
like yours.

FRANKIE: What k

JACK: One red a
(Crosses his e

FRANKIE: Huh-uh

JACK: Hell, How
(Sings) "Old

JACK and FRANKIE
No more will h
But, if dogs h

JACK, FRANKIE an
Old Shep has a

JACK: Hell, who

LUCILLE: Run an
a present.

JACK: Why in he
me?

LUCILLE: It was

JACK: How much

FRANKIE

LUCILLE: Open i
Donald said th
Dudley's.

JACK: He did?
save the strin

LUCILLE: You do

LUCILLE (To FRANKIE): He's teasin' and don't you ever repeat that.

JACK: No. She ain't got Sarah's eyes.

LUCILLE: What about Sarah's eyes?

JACK: The baby ain't got 'em.

LUCILLE: What's so special about Sarah's eyes? They're just like yours.

FRANKIE: What kinda eyes are mine?

JACK: One red and one green, and crossed, just like this.
(Crosses his eyes)

FRANKIE: Huh-uh. "Ol' Shep"!

JACK: Hell, Howard or no, let's try just the last part.
(Sings) "Old Shep, he has gone where the good doggies go..."

JACK and FRANKIE (Singing):
No more will he wander and roam;
But, if dogs have a heaven, there's one thing I know:

JACK, FRANKIE and LUCILLE (Singing):
Old Shep has a wonderful home.

JACK: Hell, who needs Howard?

LUCILLE: Run and get it, Frankie. (FRANKIE goes) We got you a present.

JACK: Why in hell did you think you needed to spend money on me?

LUCILLE: It wasn't much. I just wanted to.

JACK: How much money'd you bring back?

FRANKIE returns with a package.

LUCILLE: Open it. (JACK does) They're carpenter books.
Donald said they're real good. He checked with a man at Dudley's.

JACK: He did? (Hands paper to FRANKIE) Fold this up and save the string. What'd these cost?

LUCILLE: You don't ask the price of a present.

1-3-24

JACK: I do. When it's my money. How much?

LUCILLE: My God. Seven dollars and a little.

JACK: I'll be a sonofabitch. --They look like real dandy books and I'm gonna read 'em. I don't know what a coal miner's doin' with carpenter books, but I'm gonna read 'em. (Thumbing through one) Uh-huh, these are just jim-dandy.

LUCILLE: You don't think it's a silly present?

JACK: Silliest present I ever saw or heard of.

FRANKIE: You know what present I wanna get you, Daddy?

JACK: You get rich down in Florida, too?

FRANKIE: A big car like that man had.

JACK: What man is that?

FRANKIE: The one that come by here today.

JACK: What man was here today?

FRANKIE: I don't know.

JACK: Another one a your sweethearts?

LUCILLE: Jack!

JACK: Who was it? Somebody sellin' somethin' else nobody needs?

LUCILLE: Uh-huh.

JACK: You send him marchin'?

LUCILLE: Uh-huh. Jack, why don't you learn a page by heart for us?

FRANKIE: Yeah. Then Fibber McGee and Molly.

JACK: Naw, I ain't got the time for neither.

FRANKIE: Ah.

JACK: Don't whine.

LUCILLE: Maybe just part of a page.

JACK: If he don't whine. You gonna whine?

FRANKIE: Naw.

JACK: I don't like a page.

FRANKIE is who scans it who follows

"Chapter 42. Road of this chapter: One on 'How to Use' invaluable to... carpenter in room in Chapter 7, with Hence a knowledge in this chapter to preclude fully for a complete to

FRANKIE: Page number

JACK: Nine hundred

LUCILLE: Jack!

FRANKIE: A-plus.

JACK: Naw, I stumb warm up the radio you'll miss where falls on him.

LUCILLE: "Tain't f

FRANKIE go

JACK: You run his

LUCILLE: Every sin knows his nineteen

JACK: Did you learn

LUCILLE: Me? Lord you made out.

JACK: What's fifty

* Audell's Carpenter

FRANKIE: Naw.

JACK: I don't like whinin'. (Hands book to FRANKIE) Find me a page.

FRANKIE indicates a page and hands the book to JACK, who scans it for a moment then returns it to FRANKIE, who follows along as JACK recites.

"Chapter 42. Roof framing. As a preliminary to the study of this chapter the reader should review Chapter 4 in Volume One on 'How to Use the Steel Square.' This tool is invaluable to...this tool which is invaluable to the carpenter in roof framing has been explained at great length in Chapter 7, with numerous examples in rafter cutting. Hence a knowledge of how to use the square will be assumed in this chapter to avoid repetition, otherwise it would preclude fully presenting other important matter necessary for a complete treatment of the subject." * Enough?

FRANKIE: Page number?

JACK: Nine hundred and thirty-three, you little fart.

LUCILLE: Jack!

FRANKIE: A-plus.

JACK: Naw, I stumbled. Just make it an A. --You better go warm up the radio for Fibber McGee and Molly. Go on or you'll miss where he opens the hall closet and all the junk falls on him.

LUCILLE: "Tain't funny, McGee!" I can't do it.

FRANKIE goes.

JACK: You run his numbers with him down there?

LUCILLE: Every single day and on the train both ways. He knows his nineteen timeses as good as you.

JACK: Did you learn anything?

LUCILLE: Me? Lord, no. I just checked him with the cards you made out.

JACK: What's fifty take away seven and a little?

* Audell's Carpenters and Builders Guide, Vol. 3, p. 933.

1-3-26

LUCILLE: I don't know. Forty some.

JACK: Forty-two and a little. You bring back forty-two and a little?

LUCILLE: Please don't start on that.

JACK: Don't tell me what to start on and not start on. How much money did you bring back?

LUCILLE: I don't know.

JACK: You don't?

LUCILLE: Not to the penny. About thirteen dollars I guess.

JACK: Well, I'm a sonofabitch. (Throws a piece of pie on the floor)

LUCILLE: Jack!

JACK: That's all right, though. I'm made outta money so it don't hurt to throw it away.

LUCILLE (Cleaning up the pie): I had expenses.

JACK: You mean emergencies? The boy got sick and you took him to the hospital?

LUCILLE: No.

JACK: Well, I hope he had to go to the hospital, because that's what that money was for.

LUCILLE: I couldn't let Donald buy everything.

JACK: Why not? I don't know why not. Goddam Republicans got money to burn. Money to move down to some ritzy place, then money to send back home for a nursemaid.

LUCILLE: A nursemaid? Sarah wanted her mama by her when she had her baby.

JACK: She'da had her mama by her if she'da stayed where she was suppose to.

LUCILLE: Her and Donald moved to Florida to better themselves. What's wrong with that?

JACK: You send for anybody when you had your babies?

LUCILLE: I was right here. I had people.

JACK: That's right
Not down there.

LUCILLE: You don't

JACK: Yes, by God,
mine twelve hours
things I'd just
want my kids to

LUCILLE: Then what
kids to do better

JACK: Well, just
You hit a pretty
fight for a raise
strike with nothi
dirty work here a
the next bunch al

LUCILLE: I know th

JACK: Then if you
me and not tell m
sake of my family

LUCILLE: I didn't

JACK: No, you didn
you were part of
You can spend sev
carpenter books a
books to a man th
years old and wil

LUCILLE: My God, J
coal mine. My Go
without tryin'.
out in the sun, th
earn in the mine.
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on the weekends.

JACK: You sayin' yo
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LUCILLE: No, I want
you to think about

JACK: Thirteen godd

JACK: That's right. Right here is where you have people.
Not down there.

LUCILLE: You don't want your children to do better?

JACK: Yes, by God, I do. And that's why I go down in the mine twelve hours a day and that's why I do a few other things I'd just as soon not. Now don't tell me I don't want my kids to do better or I'll break your goddam arm.

LUCILLE: Then what are we fightin' about? We both want our kids to do better.

JACK: Well, just don't tell me I don't want 'em to do better. You hit a pretty sore spot there, Miss Florida. Coal miners fight for a raise here and a raise there, and set through a strike with nothin' but beans on the table, and do a little dirty work here and there all for one reason and that's so the next bunch along can have it better.

LUCILLE: I know that.

JACK: Then if you know that you oughta keep your mouth offa me and not tell me I ain't doin' what I have to do for the sake of my family, goddammit!

LUCILLE: I didn't say that.

JACK: No, you didn't say that, but you can spend money like you were part of the owners and not part of the workers. You can spend seven dollars and a little on books that are carpenter books and then turn right around and give those books to a man that's been a coal miner since he was twelve years old and will die bein' a coal miner.

LUCILLE: My God, Jack, those books could get you out of the coal mine. My God, you already learned a half a page of 'em without tryin'. These books right here could get you workin' out in the sun, that's right, and earnin' twice what you earn in the mine. My God, Jack, who do you think builds them fancy houses down there in Florida? Not the rich people, but workers, but while they're workin' they get to breathe some clean air and they get to go soak in the ocean on the weekends. And visit the Indian Village.

JACK: You sayin' you don't want me to be a coal miner anymore and doin' union business?

LUCILLE: No, I want you to be what you want to be but I want you to think about them books and think about stayin' clean.

JACK: Thirteen goddam dollars left outta fifty.

1-3-28

LUCILLE: I'll get back on at the overall factory this summer and make it up.

JACK: Now that's the best idea you've had in a long time. You go back to the overall factory and let people know I can't take care of my family. Goddam if you can't be dumb.

LUCILLE: Well, what the hell do you want?

JACK: Don't raise your voice to me. By God, I'll break your arm. (HE twists LUCILLE's arm behind her back)

LUCILLE: Go ahead and break it, Jack.

JACK: What'd you spend that money for?

LUCILLE: Just things. Little things.

JACK: What little things?

LUCILLE: Treats! Some souvenirs. Just some treats! Donald was buying' all the treats. (FRANKIE appears at the door) Why couldn't I buy some treats? At the juice bar. It's good for you. (Sees FRANKIE) You get back in there and listen to the radio! (FRANKIE goes) Jack it hurts. Not home a day and him seein' you show yourself. You gonna let go?

JACK: You gonna raise your voice to me?

LUCILLE: No.

JACK: Never again?

LUCILLE: No. (JACK releases her) Not unless you got it comin'.

JACK: Don't get smart.

LUCILLE: Fat chance of that. (Pause) I sure wish you'd go down to Florida sometime.

JACK: Uh-huh. I could head down there and lay in the sun. Eat some of that key lime pie. Looks like I might get about a year's vacation.

LUCILLE: Oh, they ain't gonna shut Greencastle down.

JACK: They get word of that down in Florida?

LUCILLE: No, but Ruthie said somethin'.

JACK: She did? Wha

LUCILLE: Oh, nothin

JACK: Howard's been

LUCILLE: I don't know
lotta threats to

JACK: It does, huh

LUCILLE: I think you

JACK: Oh, hell, I

LUCILLE: It hurts.

JACK: Well, maybe
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LUCILLE: Mike some

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LUCILLE: Well, he

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LUCILLE: You ain't

JACK: Naw, hell, I
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JACK: She did? What'd she say?

LUCILLE: Oh, nothin' much.

JACK: Howard's been talkin' union business with her?

LUCILLE: I don't know. Musta been. It just sounds like a lotta threats to me.

JACK: It does, huh?

LUCILLE: I think you sprained my arm.

JACK: Oh, hell, I barely touched it.

LUCILLE: It hurts. Maybe you done more than you meant.

JACK: Well, maybe I did. Come here and I'll rub it. If you don't whine. --You remember the name of that Polack I got in a scrape with?

LUCILLE: Mike somethin'. I don't know.

JACK: Some long Polack name. I come close to killin' that man. Think I did a little more than I meant.

LUCILLE: Well, he knew crossin' the line'd get him in trouble.

JACK: Petey and Holland, see, they'd told me, "You take out the big one and the others'll back off." Worked out that way, too. That big bastard stepped across the line and I just roundhouse pisted him in the face, broke his nose and about shook the brains outta his head. Then he tackled me and got me down and crawled on top. Musta weighed a ton. I thought he was gonna smother me. Needed some goddam air. Bad. And it was right then the rules changed and I laid there a minute and calculated how to kill him. I grabbed him by his privates, which you don't do in a fair fight, and got him off of me. Then I went after him. I went after him fair-be-damned. (Pause) That's the closest I ever come to killin' a man outta more fights than I can remember. But the rest of the scabs backed off, just like Petey and Holland figured. You wanna go listen to the radio?

LUCILLE: You ain't goin' out?

JACK: Naw, hell, I ain't goin' out. --Well, you noticed what I got for my trouble. A bunch of handshakes, thirty days, and higher prices all over town. That's right. I walked outta the clink back into the mine and it was just like nothin' ever happened. The old caboose was movin' faster, see, but she was still at the end of the train.

1-3-30

LUCILLE: Let's don't listen to the radio.

JUNIOR (Appearing at the screen door): Put all your dough on the table and stick 'em up.

LUCILLE: Junior Mitchell, what are you doin' here?

JUNIOR: Holdin' up the neighborhood.

JACK: Been out drinkin'. I thought you planned to do the night shift.

JUNIOR: That was the plan. But, then I run into Moss. Been helpin' him some.

JACK: How you been helpin' the sheriff?

JUNIOR: Well, he's on duty and he ain't supposed to drink while he's drivin'. So, I done the drinkin' for him.
(Laughs) Had him drop me off down the street.

LUCILLE: I don't want him here like that.

JACK: Oh, Junior's a good egg. Leave him be.

LUCILLE: More like a rotten egg if you ask me.

JACK: But, the boys might not be too happy you ridin' with Moss all the time, Junior.

JUNIOR: Mightn't they not? They oughta pin a medal on me for it. I been pumpin' him for all he's worth.

LUCILLE: Ain't you ashamed comin' here like that?

JUNIOR: Don't worry, Lucy. I'm headin' home to Mardelle in a minute. She's got a lot a good qualities, Lucy. But, Lucy, that college boy, Stovall, is a snake in the grass. Welcome home.

LUCILLE: Jack.

JUNIOR: He been over here yet?

JACK: Who?

JUNIOR: Stovall.

JACK: What'd he be doin' over here?

JUNIOR: Oh, Moss says he's been gettin' around. Been visitin' the ladies.

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JACK: Eat

LUCILLE: I'm gonna go listen to the radio till you get this drunk outta here.

JACK: Stay put. Set down, Junior, before you fall down.
(JUNIOR sits) Well?

JUNIOR: You ever hear anything that stupid? Tryin' to butter up the miners' wives to get his way.

JACK: Moss told you this?

JUNIOR: And he says Laney's gonna shit, excuse me, gonna shit when he gets wind of it.

LUCILLE: Jack, if he's gonna talk like that...

JACK: Stay put. Where all's he been?

JUNIOR: Where he thinks it'd do the most good, I guess. I don't know.

JACK: Stovall come over here today? Well, did he?

LUCILLE: I chased him out. You can ask Ruthie.

JACK: I'm a sonofabitch.

JUNIOR: You got any extra pie, Lucy?

JACK: He come inside my house?

LUCILLE: I didn't know what he wanted. I thought maybe you'd been hurt, and...

JACK: That goddam goddamsonofabitch!

JUNIOR: I didn't eat yet today.

JACK: What'd he say?

LUCILLE: He said Greencastle was in a bind. That's all.

JACK: He was talking union business with you? (HE throws a piece of pie on the floor)

LUCILLE: Just don't get beside yourself, Jack.

JUNIOR: Was that rhubarb there?

JACK: Eat some goddam pie, Junior. Where else did he go?

JUNIOR: I don't know. Moss didn't know where all. See, Stovall and Moss were talkin' over breakfast at the cafe, and Stovall somehow come up with this idea how he'd put a new slant on negotiations by butterin' up the miners' wives. Like a coal miner is gonna listen to some dumb-ass woman. Excuse me.

JACK (To LUCILLE): Well?

LUCILLE: I called him a weasel and kicked him out. So, let's just forget about it.

JACK: You don't tell me what to forget about and not forget about.

JUNIOR: Might as well forget about it. It's stupid.

JACK: You don't stop 'em outdoors, they crawl right into your own house. --Ruthie was here, too?

LUCILLE: She was standin' outside the door the whole time.

JACK: Walked into my house, behind my back, in front of my neighbors! And figured he'd get away with it. Go get her over here.

LUCILLE: She don't want to get mixed up in nothin'.

JACK: Get her. And get Howard, too. Tell 'em to come on over and play some Rook. And don't say nothin' else.
(LUCILLE goes) Wonder where Stovall might be this evenin'.

JUNIOR: You asked the right man.

JACK: Where is he? Home?

JUNIOR: Moss says he's been foolin' with that little dago slut on Water Street. The real young one, her daddy's up at the sanitarium with TB, Berto, Maria Berto.

LUCILLE reenters with RUTHIE and HOWARD.

RUTHIE: We was about to turn in but we're always up for Rook.

JACK: You and me against the bitches, Howard.

JUNIOR: If it ain't Ruthie Prater.

RUTHIE: If it ain't Junior Mitchell!

JACK: Junior's gonna set in my place till I get back. (Checks the view from the window)

LUCILLE: What?

JACK: Right he

LUCILLE: Jack.

JACK: Why don't
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JUNIOR: It do

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FRANKIE: Cards

LUCILLE: Jack!

JACK: Out. No

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LUCILLE: What?

JACK: Right here, Junior. (Seats JUNIOR)

LUCILLE: Jack.

JACK: Why don't you wear my hat, Junior? For good luck.
(Puts hat on JUNIOR)

JUNIOR: It don't fit.

JACK: It fits good enough.

JUNIOR: I can't play Rook.

JACK: Why the hell not?

JUNIOR: I can't play Rook.

JACK: 'Christamighty. (Calling off) Franklin D.!

HOWARD: You goin' to meet the boys?

FRANKIE enters.

JACK: Don't ask me questions, Howard. I'm not in the mood.
I'm more in the mood for some action. (To FRANKIE) Son,
you teach this fella how to play cards. You'll be sorta
settin' in for me for awhile.

JACK begins to leave. LUCILLE follows.

RUTHIE: I would dearly like to know what is goin' on.

FRANKIE: Cards. Ain't it plain?

LUCILLE: Jack! (JACK stops) My God, Jack, where you goin'?

JACK: Out. None a your business. I need some goddam air.

JACK leaves as the lights come down.

END OF ACT I

ACT IIScene 1

The next morning. JACK is shaving and reading a book propped up beside the mirror. FRANKIE stands at the doorway miming his father's actions. Presently JACK notices him in the mirror.

JACK: What you doin' up, Franklin D.?

FRANKIE: I don't know.

JACK: Don't you wake up your mother. She's tired out after that trip. You oughta be.

FRANKIE: Okay.

JACK: You had fun down in Florida?

FRANKIE: Uh-huh.

JACK: Now, what's so special down there?

FRANKIE: I don't know. Sarah shaved her legs.

JACK: She did. How come?

FRANKIE: I don't know. They made her. Donald said there's nothin' wrong with it. But, his rumble seat closed on me. Someone at the factory was sleepin' on the job. Donald told Sarah. When I was standin' outside their door. But she said don't never let that happen again and no need to tell Mama. Who'd make somebody shave their legs? What'd be the use?

JACK: Come here and give me a squeeze. (FRANKIE does) Whoa, you're liable to squeeze somethin' outta me.

FRANKIE: Can we play some numbers?

JACK: Nope. I got up early to read my carpenter books.

FRANKIE: You gonna be a carpenter?

JACK: Naw, I'm a coal miner. I just get a kick outta the problems. Look at this. (Indicates picture in book) This is a framing square. You can figure out all kinds of things with one of these. I'll show you how to do that, angles and geometry, and maybe you'll be the carpenter.

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FRANK: Uh-huh

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MOSS: Uh-huh.

JACK: Goddam f
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MOSS: You got :

JACK: Naw, hel

FRANKIE (Puts on miner's cap): I'm gonna be a coal miner.

JACK: The hell you say so. You ever go near a mine shaft I'll whip your behind. (Takes cap) Don't you think you could go back to sleep?

FRANK: Uh-huh.

JACK: You look like it. They tell me you played some high-powered Rook last night.

FRANKIE: We were ahead when I got sleepy.

JACK: Well, we were behind when I got home. That rumble seat closin', did it scare you? (No answer. Pause) Run on, now. And be still in there.

FRANKIE goes. JACK pours a cup of coffee and sits down to read. HE lights a cigarette and reads with visible absorption, now memorizing, now puzzling over the material, now affirming his understanding. SHERIFF MOSS appears at the screen door and knocks.

Moss. What you doin' up this time of day?

MOSS: Mind if I step in a minute, Jack?

JACK: Make yourself at home. Coffee's hot, pour some.

MOSS: That's a deal. Little early for you, too, ain't it?

JACK: It's the only time of day the bitch ain't throwin' somethin' at me, Walt.

MOSS: Sounds like my house.

JACK: Listen to this. "Square and Bevel Problems. By the application of a large bevel to the framing square, it becomes a calculating machine, and by its means, mathematical processes are greatly simplified."

MOSS: Uh-huh.

JACK: Goddam framing square'll do just about anything but fry bacon. This man says it's a calculating machine if you know your way around it.

MOSS: You got a notion to get outta the coal mine?

JACK: Naw, hell. I just get a kick outta these things.

2-1-36

MOSS: I guess you and me got different ideas about havin' a good time.

JACK: Well, what brings you over this way?

MOSS: Little investigation. Leonard Stovall got himself killed sometime last night.

JACK: The hell. What happened?

MOSS: Someone jumped him over on Water Street. Beat him and robbed him and left him dead.

JACK (Pause): You ain't lookin' in my direction for tears, are you, Moss?

MOSS: Shit, I'd have to look pretty far and wide for tears in this county. You don't see me wellin' up, do you?

JACK: So, what can I do for you?

MOSS: I don't know. Nothin' probably. I just gotta chase some things down.

JACK: Like what?

MOSS: Stovall had a slip of paper in his pocket with your name on it. You got any idea how come?

JACK: Not the first. Just my name?

MOSS: Few others, too. I figure it had to do with some visits he was makin' around town. See, he told me at the cafe that he was gonna handle some problems by talkin' to a few miners' women. Damn crazy idea if you ask me.

JACK: Laney shoulda never brought that dumb sonofabitch into Greencastle.

MOSS: Laney thought he'd get modern on things, get some college snot that learned all about labor management.

JACK: I don't know about modern and old fashioned, Sheriff, but it looks like to me the way to run a coal mine is to be fair to the men.

MOSS: And I told Stovall he wouldn't accomplish nothin' but to get the miners hot. I said, "These people are union, wives and children and dogs included." He said, "We'll see." --He drop by here yesterday?

JACK: Yes, I heard he did.

MOSS: What'd

JACK: Lucille door.

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JACK: Junior?

MOSS: I guess

JACK: Junior's

MOSS: Probably

MOSS: What'd the wife have to say? What's her name?

JACK: Lucille. Said she heard him out then showed him the door.

MOSS: I guess you got pretty burned about that.

JACK: Naw, hell. I take a sucker like that in stride.

MOSS: That ain't the Jack Decker I know. (Laughs) You know, I was about half scared to arrest you back then.

JACK: I got nothin' against you.

MOSS: You looked like you had somethin' against the whole damn world. --You stay in last night?

JACK: Yeah. Me and Howard Prater and the wives played cards all evenin'. Up to bedtime, past bedtime.

MOSS: Well, that squares with what I seen.

JACK: What was that?

MOSS: I was by here last night and glanced in the side window.

JACK: How come?

MOSS: Oh, I was lookin' for Junior Mitchell. He was on a drunk and had me drop him off in the neighborhood, then later I thought he might get into trouble, so I started lookin' for him. He come over here?

JACK: He came in drunk and cussin' for a minute. Lucy chased him on.

MOSS: That musta been him goin' down the alley about eight o'clock. I couldn't get to him for the trash, so I just gave up. Looked bigger than Junior, though.

JACK: Junior gets bigger when he's drinkin'.

MOSS: You don't think he'da gone after Stovall, do you?

JACK: Junior? Hell, no, he's harmless.

MOSS: I guess so.

JACK: Junior's a good egg.

MOSS: Probably passed out right there in the alley.

2-1-38

JACK: Laney closin' the mine down today?

MOSS: What? In honor of the departed? Hell, no. He'd just as soon keep the whole thing quiet. Said he'd not want me to lose a lotta sleep over it. Considerate man.

JACK: Stovall was robbed?

MOSS: His billfold was missin'. He usually had thirty or forty dollars on him to flash.

JACK: Junior said he'd been messin' with that Berto girl.

MOSS: That's where he'd been. She said he took off about nine. Stovall's wife like to shit over that piece a news.

JACK: When'd you find him?

MOSS: Little after midnight. Not me. That's when I got there. --I'll tell you one thing, Jack, it's gonna turn things around here.

JACK: It is?

MOSS: That's right. Laney told me this mornin' there's gonna be no shutdown and he figures he can come up with the nickel. Hell, I think Laney's scared for his own skin. Whoever robbed Stovall put some money in the miners' pockets too.

JACK: He's givin' us the nickel?

MOSS: Shh. He ain't gonna say that till next week. At least till we ship Stovall's carcass off and get his family outta town. --You know, I don't think Junior's strong enough to crack a man's neck, do you?

JACK: Any man that's been down in the mine more'n a week is strong enough. I figure it ain't a matter of muscle.

MOSS: What do you figure it's a matter of?

JACK: I don't know. A mean streak I guess.

MOSS: Well, that ain't Junior.

JACK: He can be a little slow, but he ain't mean.

MOSS: Junior's a good egg. So, the way you figure it, I'm lookin' for someone with a pretty fair mean streak.

JACK: Of course, that could be a lot of people. Down-and-out

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people don't care much anymore, not got much to lose one way or the other. You can bring out a man's mean streak, or a woman's.

MOSS: It'd take a good-size woman to wreck a man the way Stovall was wrecked.

JACK: I'm just sayin' anyone can have a mean streak. A good man or a good woman, you hold 'em down and push 'em down and keep 'em down, and hold 'em back, and set on 'em, and just hold 'em back from where they got a notion to go, and...well you can bring out a mean streak.

MOSS: Maybe Junior's got a mean streak we don't know about.

JACK: If he does, the look of it's not on him yet. I don't think you know my daughter, Sarah, she lives down in Florida now, married, got a new baby. Here a few years back she was horsin' around with my boy, Frankie in there, and he got on top of her on the bed with a blanket and sat on her, got her pinned in a certain way, and she couldn't get up and she couldn't make any noise to speak of, and that blanket, a quilt, was all over her face. Well, finally she pinched him real good and he rolled off and then me and Lucy heard the commotion and run in there and she was just this side of killin' her little brother that she loved with all her heart. It took Lucille and me both to pull her off and she huffed and puffed and screamed at him and swung at us and bit my arm to where I thought I was gonna end up with rabies. And her eyes were just crazy wild. And we got her calmed down and quiet and she hugged and cuddled Frankie who was scared outta his wits, and everything was okay. But, what happened was she kinda kept that crazy wild look in her eyes on a regular basis. And the people around her tend to think twice before pushin' her too far. That husband of hers, Donald, a Republican, is henpecked as bad as I ever saw, and I trace it all back to that bed and that blanket.

MOSS: Just one big mean streak, huh?

JACK: No. She's sweet as can be most of the time. But it's somethin' you just look at her and know.

MOSS: That got anything to do with Stovall?

JACK: Most likely not. Hell, he was probably hurt for the money. Lotta poor people around, if you didn't notice.

JUNIOR (Backing in through the screen door): I swear, Howard, that kid's got more card sense than most men his age.

2-1-40

HOWARD (Following JUNIOR in): You know a lot of men Frankie's age?

JUNIOR: You know what I mean. (Sees MOSS) Moss. You here?

MOSS: Looks like it, Junior.

JUNIOR: Where's your car?

MOSS: End of the alley. --Howard. --What kid, Junior?

JUNIOR: Frankie, Jack's boy. I was over here a week or two ago. Two weeks, it was. Watchin'. --Stovall got killed, Jack.

JACK: That's what the sheriff says.

HOWARD: Suppose we better get on over to Greencastle and scratch it.

MOSS: What kinda cards does the kid play, Junior?

JUNIOR: Rook.

MOSS: You play Rook?

JUNIOR: Yes. No. I'm learnin'. I don't play good. We're out to be late punchin' in.

MOSS: I'll drive you boys over to the mine. I gotta go right by there. Then I'm headin' home for some shut-eye.

JUNIOR: You drive us we'll have time to stop by the cafe for pie and coffee. My treat.

MOSS: When'd you get rich?

JUNIOR: I been savin'.

FRANKIE (Stepping in from bedroom): My daddy is the best Rook player in this town. You showed 'em last night, didn't you, Dad?

JACK: Yes, I did, son. I showed 'em, all right.

JACK, HOWARD, JUNIOR and MOSS exit through the screen door. FRANKIE sits at the table and opens the book as the lights go down.

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JACK: Look here
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LUCILLE: Nothin's

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LUCILLE: My God,
broke.

JACK: A man goes
for it. Too man

LUCILLE: The man
that and I know

JACK: If we both
ever stepped for

LUCILLE: No. Huh
just like Ruthie
You went out say
just play cards,
ask no questions

Scene 2

Later the same day. LUCILLE sits at the table, waiting and staring. SHE is wearing her good dress. Her handbag is nearby and a suitcase is standing by the interior door. JACK enters through the screen door carrying an old framing square.

JACK: Look here what I got. Didn't cost no seven dollars and a little either. Old man Sonntag gave it to me for fifty cents. --What's for supper?

LUCILLE: Nothin's for supper.

JACK: Nothin's for supper. Expect I won't make a hog outta myself on that. How come you got on your good clothes?

LUCILLE: I hafta talk to you.

JACK: You can't do that in a housedress? Over supper?

LUCILLE: I didn't feel like fixin' supper.

JACK: I see. Wonder if I'll feel like goin' down in the mine tomorrow. Since when did you hafta feel like fixin' supper?

LUCILLE: Since this morning when I heard about Stovall.

JACK: People all over town heard about Stovall, and they're eatin' supper right now.

LUCILLE: My God, Jack, he was beat to death and his neck broke.

JACK: A man goes around showin' a wad of money he's askin' for it. Too many people down-and-out for that.

LUCILLE: The man wasn't killed for his billfold and you know that and I know that.

JACK: If we both know that then we both knew that before I ever stepped foot outta here last night.

LUCILLE: No. Huh-uh. No. You knew about it and I had to be just like Ruthie and Howard: just shut up and play cards. You went out sayin' that and you came home sayin' that: just play cards, just fix supper, just keep quiet and don't ask no questions, just go to bed and don't bother me.

JACK: What the hell do you want? You want me to set up a loudspeaker and tell everyone in town my business?

LUCILLE: I ain't everyone in town.

JACK: Well, I'd sooner tell everyone in town, dumbbell, because if you had a solitary brain in your head you'd know bein' ignorant of a few things is for your own good. If you know, see, then you're a part of it. You think you can get that much into your skull?

LUCILLE: If I know, then I'm part of it?

JACK: That's the way it works.

LUCILLE: Then go ahead.

JACK: Go ahead what?

LUCILLE: Let me in. I am just goddam tired of bein' in the dark. And I have got my good dress on, and my suitcase packed, and my pocketbook with thirteen goddam dollars in it right here beside me, and no goddam supper in sight, and I am gonna be in or I am gonna be out.

JACK: What's got into you?

LUCILLE: Nothin'. I'm sick of doin' my part and not gettin' to be a member.

JACK: Where's Frankie?

LUCILLE: Out playin'.

JACK (Pause): The boys figured...the boys, the boys, the boys, the boys...Petey and Holland, and Howard, too...the boys figured there was no way around Stovall. No way. He was determined to shut our water off.

LUCILLE: Uh-huh.

JACK: So you gotta go through him. Over him.- It's a simple matter. Maybe there's somethin' smarter to do, see, but we're not on the smart side. They got the smart fellas, the legal fellas, the college fellas, the brain boys.

LUCILLE: Ha! Stovall couldn't even do plain arithmetic in his head when he was here.

JACK: Uh-huh. Anyhow, we got the boys that work with their hands, so that's what we use. Our hands. And we don't spend all day worryin' about what might be some smarter way.

So the boys,
the sonofabi

LUCILLE: It's
gumption.

JACK: I don't
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LUCILLE: Uh-hu

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LUCILLE: Nobod

So the boys, and Howard, too, figured I was the one to get the sonofabitch outta the way. Don't ask me why.

LUCILLE: It's plain why. You're the only one around with the gumption.

JACK: I don't know. But when they say "You're the one to do it," you figure nobody else is most likely gonna do it and it's gotta be done. I didn't hafta do nothin'. I coulda said no, and about did. But, then their smart boy played the wrong card.

LUCILLE: And you trumped him.

JACK: He was parked halfway down the block from that dago girl's house on Water Street.

LUCILLE: Maria Berto.

JACK: That's the one. I waited there in a bush for fifteen or twenty minutes, then I grabbed him just when he was about to open up his car.

LUCILLE: That show-off car he had over here?

JACK: I suppose. I pulled him back to me and put my hand over his goddam face and pounded him four or five times in the back to knock the wind out of his goddam goddam body; then I turned him around and kneed him in the gut and got hold of his coat and held him up while I busted his ribs and his goddam nose, and all the while he can't say nothin', see, but I'm whisperin' to him, "You gonna shut down the mine now, smart-ass? You gonna visit the women some more?"

LUCILLE: The smart-ass.

JACK: And he's tryin' to grunt out somethin' or other and he's tryin' to suck in some air so's he can yell and I keep whisperin' the same things to him when I whip him around and slip my arm under his chin and let everything get quiet.

LUCILLE: Uh-huh.

JACK: Then I just jammed his chin up and over and then back the other way, quick, like you snap a stick off a tree. And he collapsed against me, so I held him around the chest for a minute and bear-squeezed him till all the air was out. All of it. Then he hit the ground. --Now, you feel like you're a part of it?

LUCILLE: Nobody saw you?

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JACK: Naw.

LUCILLE: You sure?

JACK: I was bein' careful.

LUCILLE: Well, we had to stop 'em somewhere, didn't we?

JACK (Pause): Where did you think you were headin' dressed up like that?

LUCILLE: I was walkin' out. I don't know where to. Maybe Florida.

JACK: On thirteen bucks?

LUCILLE: Maybe by thumb. I don't know.

JACK: Thought they didn't take in hobos down there.

LUCILLE: They'd hafta take in some. They'd take in us. Jack, soon as we skunk Hitler, there's gonna be a big building boom down there.

JACK: Who's gonna skunk Hitler?

LUCILLE: Us and some others. The big shots down there know all about it, Donald says. They're gonna build war boats for awhile, then switch right over to houses.

JACK: Is that a fact?

LUCILLE: They build pretty houses down there, all different colors. And the people stay so clean. Well, you seen the pictures.

JACK: Maybe we oughta scoot down there one a these days and get in on all that.

LUCILLE: Huh?

JACK: When some of this blows over.

LUCILLE: Move?

JACK: Maybe. --What are we supposed to do about supper?

LUCILLE: I'll bum supper off Ruthie and Howard. They'll have plenty. --You mean permanent?

JACK: You don't think I could learn how to build houses?

LUCILLE: Oh, G

JACK: You thin somethin' I c

LUCILLE: Are y

JACK: I'll kno squirt could

LUCILLE: What

JACK: There's unions.

LUCILLE: Oh, m

JACK: You don't

LUCILLE: Hell,

JACK: They can sure I can get hands dirty for said on that w if it said "ta Ain't I done e me. That's ri I come outta t

LUCILLE: Jack, there? Moss w

JACK: He was?

LUCILLE: Wanted did. I told h

JACK: Good.

LUCILLE: He sai

JACK: Goddam Jun pockets.

LUCILLE: I didn rob anybody.

JACK: Well. Jus

LUCILLE: That Ju

LUCILLE: Oh, God.

JACK: You think some Republican like Donald's gonna learn somethin' I couldn't learn?

LUCILLE: Are you tryin' to tease me?

JACK: I'll know more by breakfast time tomorrow than that squirt could learn in a year.

LUCILLE: What about the mine, and union business?

JACK: There's unions everywhere. There's different kinds of unions.

LUCILLE: Oh, my God.

JACK: You don't want to go?

LUCILLE: Hell, I'm packed and dressed.

JACK: They can get along without me here. And I'm damned sure I can get along without them. I mean it. I've got my hands dirty for the boys for the last time. I mean, all it said on that wall was "take care of your mama." Be damned if it said "take care of everybody in the world." No. Ain't I done enough takin' care of? Hell, yes, if you ask me. That's right. I ain't stickin' my neck out again. If I come outta this clean.

LUCILLE: Jack, there ain't no way they could catch you, is there? Moss was by here this afternoon.

JACK: He was? Again?

LUCILLE: Wanted to know if I remembered things the way you did. I told him we played cards all evenin'.

JACK: Good.

LUCILLE: He said Stovall was robbed, too.

JACK: Goddam Junior musta gone by there and picked the man's pockets.

LUCILLE: I didn't know what to think. I knew you wouldn't rob anybody.

JACK: Well. Just set tight.

LUCILLE: That Junior can't be trusted.

2-2-46

JACK: Just set tight. Junior's a good egg.

LUCILLE: He's a no-good drunk. --You tell him and Howard all you told me?

JACK: Naw. They know all they need to know. And nobody needs to be hearin' any Florida talk either.

LUCILLE: I can't tell Ruthie?

JACK: No.

LUCILLE: How come?

JACK: None a your....Let's just keep it between you and me.

LUCILLE: You wouldn't be teasin' me on the subject of Florida, would you?

JACK: You think I'd pass up some of that key lime pie just for the sake of the boys?

LUCILLE: Let's go bum some supper.

JACK: I'll go find Frankie.

LUCILLE: Uh, maybe I better change clothes first. (Exits to the bedroom)

JACK: You shaved your legs, didn't you?

LUCILLE (Offstage): Nothin' wrong with that.

JACK: Believe I'll change my shirt first, too. (Follows LUCILLE to the bedroom)

Lights out.

Scene 3

Two hours later. FRANKIE and HOWARD enter through the screen door. HOWARD carries his guitar.

HOWARD: ...and then that mule kicked me, and up till then I never had the first sign of a bellybutton.

FRANKIE: Huh-

HOWARD: It's a bellybutton if you didn't

FRANKIE: You'd

HOWARD: Now you knee. (Starts

JACK (Entering Kershaw. He's something to

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JACK: Yessir. stopped yelli

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FRANKIE: Mr. K

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HOWARD: Uh-huh

JACK: I don't twenty-four for You know what You divide the

HOWARD: What in

FRANKIE: Huh-uh.

HOWARD: It's the God's truth. That's how your daddy got his bellybutton too. Coal mine mules'd kick you a bellybutton if you didn't already have one.

FRANKIE: You're tellin' fibs, Uncle Howard.

HOWARD: Now you done it. Believe I'll just turn you over my knee. (Starts to chase FRANKIE)

JACK (Entering from yard): "Get out the way for old man Kershaw. He's too late to I don't know what...." Got something to show you, buddy.

HOWARD: He stop yellin' yet?

JACK: Yessir. I asked him polite to stop yellin' and he stopped yellin'. Couldn't hear myself sing.

HOWARD: That old sonofabitch never did appreciate good music.

JACK: The bitches clangin' dishes together was bad enough.

FRANKIE: Mr. Kershaw's an old crank.

JACK: He's an ugly old crank.

FRANKIE: He's an ugly old dirty crank.

JACK: He's an ugly old dirty stinky crank.

FRANKIE: He's an ugly old dirty stinky farty crank.

JACK: Franklin D.

HOWARD: The boy is right. Any man that'd keep another man back from singin' is nothin' but an old fart.

JACK: Believe you're both right. --Look at this, Howard. It's a calculatin' machine.

HOWARD: Uh-huh. Looks more like a square to me.

JACK: I don't doubt it, you old fart. Now, a building twenty-four foot wide has a roof with a rise of eight foot. You know what the pitch of the roof is? It's one-third. You divide the rise by the span, see.

HOWARD: What in hell are you talkin' about?

JACK: This framing square, moron. I got it off old man
Sonntag after work.

HOWARD: I wondered where you disappeared to. I didn't know
he was still alive.

JACK: Well, he is. I might do some work with him on the
side.

HOWARD: What for?

JACK: For the hell of it, that's what for. You can work out
just about any problem on earth with this thing. I swear
it's better'n any toy I ever seen.

HOWARD: Some plaything. --Frankie, ain't nothin' on the
radio you'd wanna listen to?

FRANKIE: Huh-uh.

HOWARD: They're playin' kick-the-can down the street. You
don't wanna get in on that?

FRANKIE: Huh-uh. I wanna run my numbers.

JACK: Why don't you sing a song with us, then run out and get
in that game? We'll do the numbers later.

FRANKIE: "Old Shep"?

JACK: If Howard's up to it.

HOWARD: "Old Shep"? I don't know. I ain't sure if Old Shep's
down in there tonight. (Calls into the guitar) Shep! Here,
Shep! Yo, Shep, old fella! (Whistles) I don't know.
Sometimes he gets way down deep in there. (Looks into the
hole) Whew, darker'n hell. (Barks into the guitar. The
guitar barks back faintly) Yep, he's down there. Trapped
way down in there. You hear him?

FRANKIE: That was you.

HOWARD: Jack, was that me or was that Old Shep?

JACK: Sounded like Shep to me.

HOWARD: You better bark to him, son.

FRANKIE: Uncle Howard, I ain't no moron.

HOWARD: Coulda fooled me. --Hold on down there fella! We'll
get you out and on your way. (Strums) Come on, boy. Come

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Come on. (

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on, old fella. Come on, Shep. Yo, Shep. Come on, boy.
Come on. Come on.

HOWARD is strumming faster, whistling, barking, calling. At some point, JACK begins to tap out the rhythm with his steel square as FRANKIE pats his foot on the floor and slaps his knees.

Atta boy, Shep! Can't keep a good dog down! Let's bring him around the bend!

THEY ALL stop abruptly. HOWARD plays the introductory chords to "Old Shep," which THEY proceed to sing. In the middle of the song FRANKIE stops singing and listens to the two men.

HOWARD, JACK and FRANKIE (Singing):

When I was a lad and old Shep was a pup,
Through fields and meadows we'd play;
Just a boy and his dog, we were both full of fun,
And we grew up together that way.

I remember the time at the old swimmin' hole,
When I would have drowned beyond doubt;
But old Shep he was there, to the rescue he came,
He jumped in and helped pull me out.

The years slipped away and old Shep he grew old,
His eyesight was fast growing dim;
One day the doctor looked at me and he said,
"I can't do no more for him, Jim."

With hands that were trembling, I picked up my gun,
And aimed it at Shep's faithful head;
But I just couldn't do it, I wanted to run,
And I wished that they'd shoot me instead.

Refrain:

Now old Shep he has gone where the good doggies go,
And no more will he wander and roam;
But if dogs have a heaven, there's one thing I know:
Old Shep has a wonderful home.

FRANKIE: I'm gonna go play kick-the-can. (HE leaves quickly)

HOWARD: I believe that sissy was about to cry.

JACK: He's no sissy. He's just tenderhearted like anyone else.

HOWARD: Hell, I know that. I was teasin'. --You know what Junior went and did? He went over there last night and robbed Stovall. Told me about it after work.

JACK: I figured. He told just you?

HOWARD: So far, yes. He'd oughta been left outta this whole thing. You know Junior when he's had a few.

JACK: I'll have a talk with him.

HOWARD: You better have a serious talk with him.

JACK: I wasn't plannin' to tell him a bunch a jokes.

HOWARD: He needs a serious talkin' to.

JACK: That's what I'll give him, then, Howard, a serious talkin' to.

HOWARD: Talk don't do a damn bit a good with Junior.

JACK: It don't?

HOWARD: He'll listen and say "I'm all right, you can count on me, don't worry," but it won't mean a thing.

JACK: You want me to have a talk with Junior or what?

HOWARD: I think you'd oughta talk to him the way you talk best.

JACK: What the hell you gettin' at?

HOWARD: Look here. This whole business ain't easy. Their side loses some and our side loses some.

JACK: Who is our side gonna lose?

HOWARD: Junior. Hell, we lost Junior already. He's gonna blab to Moss sure as hell. He'll get about a pint in him and blow the lid off. Junior ain't union no more.

JACK: Christ almighty.

HOWARD: Now, Junior's got no one, no people. Hell, I like him as much as you do, but he's got no one that's gonna get upset.

JACK: I gotta tell you, Howard, you are one hardhearted sonofabitch. Singin' like an angel one minute, and then this.

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JACK: How'd

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JACK: I never

HOWARD: I did
down.

HOWARD: He picked the man's pockets, he's flashin' money, and he's gonna spill the beans. Listen, it was Junior that set up this Stovall thing. He's the one that got Stovall over here.

JACK: How'd Junior manage that?

HOWARD: Easy. He put the bug in Moss's ear and Moss put it in Stovall's.

JACK: I ain't with you.

HOWARD: Junior figured you wouldn't do a damn thing, see. So he put the idea over to Moss that Stovall might do himself some good by visitin' Lucy. Course, he knew that once Stovall set foot in your house he was a goner. See? That's Junior for you.

JACK: Junior told you all this?

HOWARD: In a way. He was ramblin' on about it after you took off yesterday mornin'. Then he headed straight for Moss.

JACK: Junior's smarter than I gave him credit for.

HOWARD: Maybe so. The point is everything goes straight from Junior to Moss. Everything.

JACK: So, Junior's the one that got Stovall to step over the line. Smart fella. Well, what's done is done.

HOWARD: What's done is done? Nothin's done as long as Junior's mouth is movin'. The man's a danger.

JACK: The man's a danger. Junior wouldn't kick a dog that was bitin' his leg off. Shakes like a leaf. You ever stand next to Junior goin' down on the cage? Shakes like a leaf. Now, Junior's dumb as coal and he's a bad drunk, but I got feelin's for a man that shakes like a leaf on the mine cage.

HOWARD: Everybody shakes a little ridin' down.

JACK: They do? Then maybe that's what the union is, men shakin', and Junior's in it. Junior shakes on the cage. You ain't got feelin's for that?

HOWARD: Your daddy always hummed ridin' down.

JACK: I never rode down with him.

HOWARD: I did. No tune. Just hummed. Hummed all the way down.

JACK: Well. Junior shakes. Like a leaf. And you're tellin' me Junior ain't union no more.

WARD: Hank Ebersoll. Lanky Hank. He used to put his big arm around you. They'd hit the cage lever and his old arm'd go right around whoever was next to him. Not tight. Just firm. Funniest damn thing, him bendin' his knees to get his arm around you good. Your daddy, though, he'd hum.

JACK: And Junior shakes. See, Howard, maybe right there's the union. It's a bunch a dumb sonsabitches doin' somethin' or other in the dark. I don't know. Junior's union.

HOWARD: Junior's union. Yeah, he's union. One helluva union, ain't it? --Look, Jack, I put Junior up to that. I'm the one got him on that Stovall idea.

JACK: I figured.

HOWARD: I know you figured. I hadn't the least idea it'd work anyhow. Damned if Stovall didn't take the bait. You upset at me?

JACK: Naw, hell, I ain't upset. It's over and done with.

HOWARD: What about Junior?

CK: Howard, you don't want me to shut Junior's mouth.

HOWARD: I suppose not. --Goddammit to hell! You don't think he'll spill everything?

JACK: He might. Probably will.

HOWARD: What are you gonna do?

JACK: Get caught sure as hell.

HOWARD: You know what we got? Nothin'. We got nothin'. Nothin' to show for the years gone by and nothin' to expect from the years to come. Just more of the same. We cook up a scheme and here we set waitin' for some blabbermouth moron to show how damn dumb we are.

JACK: We're alive and Stovall ain't.

HOWARD: That's about it. Now that's about the size of it. One asshole is dead.

JACK: And two ain't. Howard, let's take off. Let's load Frankie and the women in your car and light outta here.

HOWARD: That's a

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HOWARD: That's a good-un.

JACK: We ain't got a goddam thing worth keepin' that we couldn't throw in your trunk. That guitar and my square and books. A change of clothes. Throw it all in the Ford and thumb our noses at this place.

HOWARD: Take off to where?

JACK: Maybe south. The Sunshine State. Whattaya say?

HOWARD: I say you're a very funny fella. What am I gonna do in the Sunshine State? Retire on my riches?

JACK: We can get work. We're workers.

HOWARD: We're coal miners. They got coal mines down there in the Sunshine State?

JACK: They got all kinds of work.

HOWARD: You don't get it, do you? See, I'm a coal miner. I cut coal and load coal. That's what I do. That's what I know.

JACK: You gonna be worse off doin' somethin' else? You could learn how to work on top of the ground.

HOWARD: And just leave everyone else to fight the owners, huh?

JACK: Hell, let 'em all cut loose. There's no chains on 'em.

HOWARD: Easy as pie, ain't it? Everybody jump a train for the Sunshine State.

JACK: I ain't concerned about everybody. To hell with everybody. Everybody can go jump in the lake or jump down a mine shaft or jump a train or just jump up and down like they're doin' now.

HOWARD: I heard you had feelin's for everybody, for all them sonsabitches.

JACK: I mean, I'm ready to try somethin' else, anything. Christ, Howard, I'm no coal miner. You know what a coal miner is? A coal miner is someone that dies bein' a coal miner. My daddy was a coal miner, died bein' one. But, as long as a man ain't died bein' a coal miner, he's still got a chance to be somethin' else. Where's it say anywhere Jack Decker is a coal miner, period, that's all, forget about it?

HOWARD: You're no coal miner, huh?

2-3-54

JACK: No. Never was.

HOWARD: What you been doin' these thirty years?

JACK: Somethin' I wasn't supposed to, Howard. Somethin' my daddy scratched on a mine wall with the corner of his dinner bucket, damn him. That's it. That's what put me in the mine. You think you can remember what that was?

HOWARD: I think I can.

JACK: Well, good, because that's the only place it says anywhere Jack Decker is a coal miner. "Take care of your mama." How's any boy around here gonna take care of his mama without goin' down in the goddam scary coal mine? You like goin' down into the gas and the dust and the dark, Howard? You like bringin' a chest-load of that dust home every day? I don't believe you do.

HOWARD: I never said I was fond of it.

JACK: Then why in hell don't you do somethin' you are fond of? That never crossed your mind? I swear it's like somebody cast a hocus-pocus over a whole bunch a men and their sons and their sons and their sons sayin' "Go down there and dig us up some money and die for it you dumb sonsabitches! March right back into the same hole where your daddy died of neglect, young fella. And wait day after day for it to catch fire again or cave in on you." Never mind that maybe some young fella mighta preferred to set in a schoolhouse on top of the ground and learned how to make numbers come out right and not go on that goddam mine cage in the first place. Shit. Ridin' down into a dark hole in a cage. Men and boys squeezed up together and little boys gigglin' on the mine cage 'cause they're scared but dare not cry or whine. Gigglin' like silly people. And wishin' they could smash somebody but can't even get their arms free to do that. Now there's a note for you, can't even get their arms free to smash somebody, let alone free to write on the blackboard the wonderful times tables. That's what I said. The times tables is a wonderful thing, Howard. Eight times forty-two. Three hundred and thirty-six! You never took the times tables that far, did you, Howard? Well, I did. And farther. And yet, here's me, scared every day I went down for thirty years and spendin' my time cuttin' coal and tryin' to kill scabs and college boys. Jesus Christ. "Take care of your mama."

Pause.

HOWARD (Strums a few random chords): You figure they're done doin' the dishes yet?

JACK: Ough

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LUCILLE: Sup

JACK: None a

JACK: Oughta be.

HOWARD: Let's round 'em up and go. (Chord)

JACK: Go where?

HOWARD: Maybe south. (Chord)

JACK: The hell. All of us?

HOWARD: No. You, me, Frankie and the women. (Chord) That's all. (Chord)

JACK: I got the slightest idea you mean it. When?

HOWARD: Tomorrow, next week, as soon as it looks right.

JACK: You don't think Moss'd take off after us?

HOWARD: Naw. Moss'll do his job, but he won't do more'n his job. He'll kick it all under the rug. (Chord) You been scared goin' down there for thirty years?

JACK: I guess. 'Bout every day.

HOWARD: What do you do ridin' down? You don't shake nor whistle or nothin'.

JACK: You cough.

HOWARD: What about you?

JACK: Run my numbers.

HOWARD plays another chord.

LUCILLE and RUTHIE (Offstage): "Supper's over, dishes warshed, Nothin' left but a piece of squarsh."

JACK: You mean this business?

HOWARD: I believe I do.

JACK: I'll round up Frankie. Don't say a word.

LUCILLE and RUTHIE enter from yard, RUTHIE carrying a pie.

LUCILLE: Supper's over, dishes warshed. --Where you headed?

JACK: None a your business. (Exits to yard)

2-3-56

RUTHIE: Where's he off to?

HOWARD: He's gone after the boy. Down the street.

LUCILLE: Most likely wants to run numbers with him before bedtime.

HOWARD: Most likely.

RUTHIE: He looked frisky.

HOWARD: Nothin' wrong with lookin' frisky.

LUCILLE: It's the numbers.

HOWARD: Most likely.

RUTHIE: How come you're lookin' frisky, too?

HOWARD: There a law against lookin' frisky these days?

RUTHIE: No. But it's embarrassin'. In front of Lucille.
--Somethin's up, ain't it? You and Jack got somethin' cookin'.

HOWARD: Who said so?

LUCILLE: Is it union? Tell me. I'm in.

RUTHIE: In what?

LUCILLE: The union.

HOWARD: How'd that happen?

LUCILLE: Jack put me in.

HOWARD: That's a helluva note. He just pulled me out.

RUTHIE: Out of what?

HOWARD: The union.

RUTHIE: You're in the union and you're out? I think I better go out and come back in again. My head's swimmin'.

HOWARD: That ain't all that's gonna be swimmin'.

LUCILLE: What's that mean?

HOWARD: It means... (Chord) it means... (Chord) it means

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MOSS: When yc

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HOWARD: What'

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I can't say what it means till Jack gets back. (Chord)
With Franklin D.

JUNIOR (Looking in through the side window): Put all your
dough on the table and stick 'em up. (HE moves past the
window)

RUTHIE: Good God.

MOSS (Passing window): Anybody home?

RUTHIE: And look what the cat drug with him.

JUNIOR (At screen door): We welcome, or what?

LUCILLE: Not if you been drinkin' again, Junior Mitchell.

JUNIOR: Then we ain't welcome worth shit, Sheriff.

LUCILLE: Sheriff Moss, you get him and his filthy mouth away
from here.

MOSS: I guess maybe you better let us in, Mrs. Decker. It's
business.

LUCILLE: Howard, do I have to let them in here?

MOSS: Jack's not home?

HOWARD: What's the business, Moss?

MOSS: Stovall business.

HOWARD: Step inside. What can we do for you?

MOSS and JUNIOR enter the room.

MOSS: When you expect Jack home?

LUCILLE: I don't know. Any minute. He's out with Frankie.
Practicin' arithmetic.

JUNIOR: Raisin pie. Suppose there's gonna be extra slices?
(No answer. HE helps himself)

HOWARD: What's the Stovall business?

JUNIOR: Stovall. Leonard Stovall. Mr. Leonard Stovall.
Mr. Leonard Pissant Stovall. Ha! I took a leak on that no-
good pissant.

2-3-58

LUCILLE: Howard.

HOWARD (To MOSS): Why don't you let me haul him on home?
I'll crank up the Ford.

MOSS: He'll be all right.

JUNIOR: Well, I did. Pssssss. All over him.

RUTHIE: Junior!

HOWARD: I'm gonna bust you, Junior.

MOSS: Hold on, now. It's true. That's how we found the man.
We thought he musta fouled himself in the struggle. But now
Junior's sayin' he went by there and, uh, what he said.

HOWARD: Junior's drunk out of his head.

MOSS: There was urine on the victim. And our friend, here,
has been buyin' rounds over at Arnie's. Settin' 'em up
pretty good.

JUNIOR: A man can't buy a few rounds?

MOSS: So, I been doin' some arithmetic myself. Two and two
comes out four.

HOWARD: What's this got to do with us?

MOSS: He was by here last night. I was just wonderin'...

JUNIOR: He's tryin' to make me out a robber, Howard. Tell
him. Tell him I wouldn't do no such thing. I peed on
Stovall but I never took his fifty-two bucks.

LUCILLE: I want him outta here.

RUTHIE: Take him on home, Howard.

MOSS: Now, look here. I don't care squat about Stovall or
his dough. But, I'm bound to finish my job on this. I
figure Junior bein' over here some last evenin' you folks
could help me out on what happened when.

LUCILLE: Only thing happened here was cards.

JUNIOR: Rook. We was playin' Rook.

HOWARD: We was playin' Rook. She kicked Junior out when his
mouth started actin' up.

MOSS: Wonder

HOWARD: We ne

MOSS: But, Ja

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MOSS: I see.
Junior.

JUNIOR: What

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RUTHIE: Junior

JUNIOR: I'll do
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the rest.

RUTHIE: Testify

MOSS: Wonder about what time that was.

HOWARD: We never kept track. You know how it is.

MOSS: But, Jack was here the whole time?

LUCILLE: Settin' right in that chair.

MOSS: I see. Well, it looks like I'm gonna hafta take you in, Junior.

JUNIOR: What for? Pissin' on a dead man?

MOSS: Mainly for bein' the only one around to know how much Stovall had on him. Fifty-two dollars, you said?

JUNIOR: Well, wadn't that how much?

MOSS: I don't know. Nobody ever said but you.

HOWARD: You cooked yourself now, Junior. They can make a case on him for that?

MOSS: They can make a decent case on that.

JUNIOR: A case of what?

MOSS: Theft by takin'. And homicide.

RUTHIE: Now, wait a minute.

JUNIOR: No dice, huh-uh.

MOSS: They can test that urine right over at the hospital.

JUNIOR: Huh-uh. Is he sayin' I cracked the man's neck?

MOSS: A jury could get that idea.

JUNIOR: Hell fire, I couldn't crack nobody's neck!

RUTHIE: Junior wouldn't do that.

JUNIOR: I'll do my time for pissin' out in public and for takin' some dough off a dead man, but Christamighty!

MOSS: They'll want all of you to testify he said fifty-two dollars and, uh, that he defiled a corpse. They'll add up the rest.

RUTHIE: Testify against Junior? Us?

2-3-60

MOSS: You'd be under oath to God.

RUTHIE: You think that means somethin' to us?

HOWARD: Ruthie.

MOSS: I hate it, but the law's the law.

RUTHIE: The law's a lotta dog hockey if you ask me.

HOWARD: Ruthie.

RUTHIE: We're suppose to stand around and let the law get Junior for somethin' he never done?

MOSS: Looks like he done it.

JUNIOR: I never!

RUTHIE: He couldn'ta!

HOWARD: Ruthie, shut your mouth!

JUNIOR: I was right here all evenin' playin' Rook! Ask 'em! Well, ask 'em!

MOSS: You never went by there at all?

JUNIOR: Later on. After I played Rook all evenin'.

HOWARD: Junior, you're talkin' drunk.

JUNIOR: Howard, tell him. Later on I went by and leaked on him. I just found him there beside his high-toned car. Tell him Ruthie! I was settin' right there all night with Jack's hat on! Frankie could tell you. He was coachin' me how to play. Where's Frankie? Everybody knows it was Jack that done it!

HOWARD: I'm gonna bust you bad, Junior.

* HOWARD goes for JUNIOR. MOSS restrains him.

MOSS: Hold it, now, dammit, hold it!

LUCILLE: That's right, dammit, now hold it! (THEY ALL settle down) Jack ain't gonna let nothin' happen to Junior. You know that, Howard. You and Jack won't let nothin' happen to Junior. Now, dammit, we're union! Don't you worry, Junior. You got people.

JUNIOR: I been drinkin'. I didn't say nothin'. I been

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drinkin' some. I done it all, Moss. See, I went over there and I pissed on Stovall, see, and then I beat him to a pulp and took his dough, and I done it all. See?

MOSS (To LUCILLE): You got somethin' to say?

LUCILLE: Jack didn't like that man comin' in our house. Long as we pay rent it's our property, ain't it? He had no right comin' in here behind the men's backs. The man was a weasel. And he tried to rape me.

MOSS: Did what?

RUTHIE: That's right. I was right outside that door. Settin' on the stoop. Heard it all. It was awful.

MOSS: Well, I don't know if a jury would believe that, but you can say it. It might help. We could try that. It shoulda been reported to the law, though. I guess I could say you reported it, but, by God, then I'm right in the middle of it. Huh-uh, no.

RUTHIE: Ain't nothin' wrong with doin' what's right, Sheriff.

JACK bursts in, FRANKIE following.

JACK: Fire! Fire in the goddam coal mine!

HOWARD: Greencastle?

JACK: Bunch a night-shifters trapped in number three.

RUTHIE: Oh, my God.

JACK: Goddam gas. It's just goddam neglect, Howard.

MOSS: Jack, I'm gonna need to talk to you.

JACK: You'll need your cap, Howard. (To MOSS) What about?

MOSS: Stovall.

JACK: Stovall? Stovall's a dead man, Moss. Get your goddam car cranked up. You're takin' us over there. You're gonna need your cap, Howard.

HOWARD: Junior, get my cap outta my kitchen. Get one for yourself, too.

JUNIOR exits to yard.

2-3-62

JACK: Goddammit, Moss, move!

MOSS goes. JACK gets his cap and lamp.

Better get some eats started.

LUCILLE: I know that.

JACK: I know. Well. All right, then. Let's go, Howard.

HOWARD: Hold it, Jack. We could take off tonight. Go over there and get lost in the crowd, then come back here and take off.

JACK: Take off to where?

HOWARD: Junior just spilled everything. Moss'll take you in if we hang around.

LUCILLE: Take off to where?

JACK: Nowhere. (Hugging FRANKIE) There's a bunch of our boys dyin' over at Greencastle. Let's go.

FRANKIE: I'm goin', too.

JACK (To LUCILLE): Grab him and hang onto him. (To FRANKIE) You stay here and take care of your mama.

JACK exits with HOWARD.

LUCILLE: We better start cookin' some eats.

LUCILLE goes to the cupboard. RUTHIE stands frozen in terror.

FRANKIE: Goddammit, Aunt Ruthie, move!

Lights out.

Scene 4

The next morning before sunrise. LUCILLE is washing the last few pots and pans. FRANKIE is asleep, his head resting uncomfortably on the table. RUTHIE is picking at the guitar.

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RUTHIE: You know who else usta get my goat? What's-her-name with the high heels.

LUCILLE: Florence Brotherton. God, she ain't crossed my mind in twenty years.

RUTHIE: Florence Brotherton. Wore high heels to work in the overall factory every day.

LUCILLE: And enough make-up to sink a ship. Spent every penny she made on clothes.

RUTHIE: Forever sayin' her machine was broke down just to get old bug-eyes over there to fix it and try and look up her dress. "My bobbin's stuck!" That's the one she used half the time. "My bobbin's stuck!"

LUCILLE: Sound just like her. "My bobbin's stuck." I can't do it.

RUTHIE: "My bobbin's stuck!"

LUCILLE: Shh. --She used too much rouge. She'da been very attractive with not so much rouge on her cheeks.

RUTHIE: A fire in a coal mine is the worst thing that can happen on earth. Or under it. Howard says it kills everybody, even the ones that come out alive.

LUCILLE: Well.

RUTHIE: It ain't the flames. It's the smoke cloud. The men get trapped in the smoke, then the smoke gets trapped in the men. One way or other they carry the smoke cloud out with 'em.

LUCILLE: I usta watch 'em out my window when I was little. All quiet in the mornin', and a bunch a lamps all marchin' in the same direction. That's all you could see in the dark of the mornin'. Lamps floatin' down the road. Like lightnin' bugs, but sad.

RUTHIE: Howard'll wake up coughin' and he'll a been dreamin' and he'll go out on the porch and breathe and cry. You wouldn't think it, would you?

LUCILLE: Howard cryin'? I heard him a few times.

RUTHIE: Don't you ever tell him you did.

LUCILLE: Jack says, "He'll get over it. Go back to sleep."
--You know what we oughta do? There's a dimestore over to

2-4-64

Fairburn where a man comes once a month to make records. I don't know how he does it, but he can take down singin' and talkin' and all and send you a record of it in the mail. We'd oughta take Howard over there and let him sing. It'd be just like havin' him on the radio.

RUTHIE: We could make a picnic out of it. He'd go if Jack'd go sing with him.

LUCILLE: Then we could save up and get a record player. Sarah and Donald's got a Philco.

FRANKIE (Suddenly wide awake): Daddy?

LUCILLE: He ain't home yet, Franklin D. Go in there to bed and lay down. (FRANKIE goes back to sleep at the table) He won't go to bed. I couldn't whip him to bed this mornin'. --It's a Philco combination. Walnut finish.

RUTHIE: Did I doze off there for a while?

LUCILLE: About ten minutes, I expect. Right after them Boy Scouts come by for the food. Didn't they look like regular little soldiers? (Pause. RUTHIE emits a spurt of involuntary laughter) What's that about? Did I say somethin' funny? (RUTHIE laughs again) Did you go crazy or somethin'? Shh. (RUTHIE starts laughing again, waking FRANKIE, who is confounded) Now look what you done.

RUTHIE (In control): I'm sorry. Go back to sleep, Frankie. I don't know what hit me so fun-- (Convulsive laughter)

LUCILLE: Your Aunt Ruthie's gone nuts. What in the world is it?

RUTHIE: Whew! It ain't nothin'. I guess I'm silly from settin' up all night. Never mind. "Regular little soldiers." (More laughter, wilder and more uncontrollable)

LUCILLE: I never seen the likes. Stop it. You'd think she was listenin' to Fibber McGee. (RUTHIE goes on laughing) And Molly says, "Don't open that closet door, McGee!" But, he opens it anyhow. (SHE begins to laugh) And the closet's full from top to bottom. And it all falls out on top of 'em. And she says, "T'ain't funny, McGee!" (SHE laughs, then giggles, then guffaws, provoking more laughter from RUTHIE and finally from FRANKIE) Morons...we're three idiot morons....

The laughter continues. THEY make faces at each other and tickle each other. SHERIFF MOSS enters unnoticed. HE pours himself a cup of coffee, then

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bangs the coffee pot down on the stove. The laughter stops abruptly. ALL THREE stare at MOSS.

RUTHIE: Where's Howard?

MOSS: He'll be along in a while. He's restin' and havin' coffee. Seventeen of 'em died. It'll take another day or two for the fire to burn out. (LUCILLE and FRANKIE are riveted on him) Hell, he didn't make it. He pulled out a bunch, but it overcome him. Junior brung him out about thirty minutes ago. --Your daddy pulled out a whole bunch a miners. --I brung his cap, I don't know why.

FRANKIE grabs the cap and runs out of the house.

RUTHIE: Frankie!

MOSS: I'd leave him be.

LUCILLE picks up a remaining piece of raisin pie and hurls it to the floor.

Them other things, there's no need of any word of it goin' around. I'll have a little straight talk with Junior. Junior's the one that drug Jack out.

LUCILLE: Junior's a good egg.

FRANKIE reenters, his face smeared with coal, wearing the miner's cap.

You get that filthy thing off of your head and clean up. (FRANKIE remains rigid, a wild look in his eye) Sheriff, he didn't write nothin' on the walls, did he?

MOSS: Well, it'd take days to...

LUCILLE: He didn't! You looked and seen he didn't write a thing! Ain't that right, Sheriff?

MOSS: He didn't write nothin'.

LUCILLE: I gotta start packin'. (SHE gets the framing square and the carpentry books, finds the wrapping paper, sits at the table and fumbles with it all. To FRANKIE) You gonna take that off or not?

The lights fade.

END OF PLAY