

(STANLEY comes out of bathroom, crosses to window stage R., then crosses into bedroom.)

NORA. I don't know. It doesn't seem very important now.

JACK. I've never seen you cry over something that wasn't important. I know I'm not your father. It's not my place to make decisions for you. But I can offer advice. Advice is free. If it doesn't fit, you can always return it.

NORA. . . . Can we walk down the block?

JACK. Sure. We'll take a look at the ocean. My father always used to say, "Throw your problems out to sea and the answers will wash back up on the shore."

NORA. Did they?

JACK. Not in Brighton Beach. Orange peels and watermelon pits washed up. That's why it's good to take someone who knows how to give advice.

(She gets up and they walk off towards the beach.

STANLEY is lying on his bed, hands under his head, deep in thought. EUGENE sits on his bed, banging a baseball into his glove.)

STAN. Will you stop that? I'm trying to think.

EUGENE. I'm glad I don't have your problems.

STAN. How'd you like an official American League baseball in your mouth?

EUGENE. I've got to talk to you, Stanley. I mean a really, serious, important talk.

STAN. Everybody in this house has to have a talk with somebody. Take a number off the wall and wait your turn.

EUGENE. I had a dream last night. It was about this

girl. I can't tell you her name but she's gorgeous. We were really kissing hard and rubbing up against each other and I felt this tremendous buildup coming like at the end of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. And suddenly there was an explosion. Like a dam broke and everything rushed and flowed out to sea. It was the greatest feeling I ever had in my life . . . and when I woke up, I was — I was —

STAN. All wet.

EUGENE. (surprised) Yeah! How'd you know?

STAN. (unimpressed) It was a wet dream. You had a wet dream. I have them all the time.

EUGENE. You do? You mean there's nothing wrong with you if it happens?

STAN. You never had one before?

EUGENE. Yeah, but I slept through it.

STAN. Didn't you ever try to do it by yourself?

EUGENE. What do you mean?

STAN. Didn't you ever diddle with yourself?

EUGENE. No. Never.

STAN. Baloney. I've heard you. You diddle three, four times a week.

EUGENE. You're crazy! What do you mean, diddle?

STAN. Whack off. Masturbate.

EUGENE. Will you be quiet! Laurie might hear you.

STAN. There's nothing wrong with it. Everybody does it. Especially at our age. It's natural.

EUGENE. What do you mean, everybody? You know guys who do it?

STAN. Every guy I know does it. Except Haskell Fleischman, the fat kid. He does it to the other guys.

EUGENE. I can't believe I'm having this conversation.

STAN. You can't grow up without doing it. Your voice won't change.

EUGENE. Where do you get this stuff from? Is it in a medical book or something?

STAN. It's puberty.

EUGENE. It's what?

STAN. Puberty. You never heard that word before? You don't read books?

EUGENE. Yeah. *The Citadel* by A.J. Cronin. He never mentioned puberty.

STAN. Even Pop did it.

EUGENE. Pop? *Our* pop? You know what, Stanley? I think you're full of shit.

STAN. (*sits up*) Hey! Don't you use that language. Who do you think you are? You're just a kid. Never let me hear you say that word again.

EUGENE. I don't get you. You mean it's okay for you to say "puberty" but I can't say "shit"?

STAN. Puberty is a scientific word. Shit is for those guys who hang around the beach.

EUGENE. What do you expect me to say when you tell me that Pop whacks off?

STAN. I don't mean he still does it because he's married now. But when he was a kid. Fourteen or fifteen. The whole world whacks off.

EUGENE. . . . President Roosevelt too?

STAN. Rich kids are the worst. They whack off from morning till night. In college, they sit around in their dorms drinking beer and whacking off.

EUGENE. Stanley, this is the most useful information you ever taught me . . . What about girls?

STAN. Five times as much as boys.

EUGENE. Five times as much? Is that an actual figure? Where do you know all this from?

STAN. You pick it up. You learn it. It's handed down from generation to generation. That's how our culture spreads.

EUGENE. Five times as much as boys? Some of them don't even say "hello" to you and they're home all night whacking off.

STAN. They're human just like we are. They have the same needs and desires.

EUGENE. Then why is it so hard to touch their boobs?

STAN. If you were a girl, would you like some guy jumping at you and grabbing your boobs?

EUGENE. If I had boobs, I would love to touch them, wouldn't you?

STAN. I've got my own problems to think about.

EUGENE. How do girls do it?

STAN. I can't explain it.

EUGENE. Please, Stanley. I'll be your slave for a month. Tell me how they do it.

STAN. I need a pencil and paper. I'll do it later.

EUGENE. (*quickly hands him his notebook and a pencil*) Do you want crayons? Maybe you should do it in color?

STAN. Hey, Eugene. I have a major problem in my life. I haven't got time to draw girls masturbating for you.

EUGENE. I'll bet Nora doesn't do it.

STAN. Boy, could I win money from you. You think she's in the bathroom seven times a day just taking showers?

EUGENE. She does it in the bathroom?

STAN. I knew two girls who used to do it in English class. I saw a girl do it during a final exam and got a ninety-eight on her paper. Is she the one you were thinking about last night?

EUGENE. No. It was somebody else. One of the beach girls.

STAN. It was Nora. I see what's going on. I knew why

you dropped your napkin twelve times at dinner tonight.

EUGENE. She drives me crazy. I think I'm in love with her.

STAN. Yeah? Well, forget it. She's your cousin.

EUGENE. What's wrong with being in love with your cousin?

STAN. Because it's against the laws of nature. If she was your step-sister, it would be dirty, but it would be okay. But you can't love your own cousin. Let me give you a piece of advice. When you're going through puberty, don't start with anyone in your own house.

EUGENE. Who made up those rules? Franklin Roosevelt married his cousin.

STAN. Maybe she was his second or third cousin. But you can't marry your first cousin. You get babies with nine heads. I wish Pop would get back. I got to talk to him tonight.

EUGENE. I still would love to see her naked. Just once. There's nothing wrong with that, is there?

STAN. No. I do it all the time.

EUGENE. *You've seen Nora naked?*

STAN. Lots of times. I fixed the lock on the bathroom door then open it pretending I didn't know anyone was in there.

EUGENE. I can't believe it. What a pig! . . . What did she look like?

STAN. All I can tell you is I was pretty miserable she was my first cousin. (*STANLEY lies back on his bed. EUGENE turns and looks out at the audience.*)

EUGENE. . . . That was the night I discovered lust and guilt were very closely related. I have to wash up.

STAN. Have a good time.

EUGENE. I don't do that.

(*BLANCHE and KATE come out of the kitchen. They each have a cup of tea. They sit at dining table.*)

KATE. . . . I'm sorry. I forgot it was this Tuesday. I'll change my doctor appointment.

BLANCHE. You don't have to change anything. The girls will be with me.

KATE. Have I ever missed a year going to the grave? Dave was my favorite in the whole family, you know that.

BLANCHE. You realize it'll be six years? Sometimes I forget his birthday, but the day he died I never forget.

KATE. There wasn't another one like him.

BLANCHE. Laurie asks me questions about him all the time. Was he funny? What was the funniest thing he ever said, she asked me. I couldn't remember. Isn't that awful, Kate?

KATE. Sometimes you talk like your life is over. You're still a young woman. You're still beautiful, if you'd ever stop squinting so much.

BLANCHE. I went with him for two years before we were married. What was I waiting for? That's two married years I didn't have with him.

KATE. Listen. Jack's company is having their annual affair in New York next Wednesday. At the Commodore Hotel. You should see how some of those women get dressed up. Jack wants you to come with us. He told me to ask you.

BLANCHE. Me? Who do I know in Jack's company?

KATE. You'll be with *us*. You'll meet people. Max Green'll be at our table. He's the one whose wife died last year from (*whispers*) "tuberculosis" . . . He's their number one salesman. He lives in a hotel on the Grand Concourse. He's a riot. You'll like him. Maybe you'll

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