

JACK & STAN

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BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS

KATE. Let her go, Blanche. You'll only make it worse.
BLANCHE. It seems no matter *what* I do, I only make it worse. *(She turns, starts up stairs. NORA has slammed the door of her room. STANLEY hears it and opens his door and starts down.)*

JACK. *(to KATE)* What could I tell her? What could I say?

KATE. *(shrugs)* You inherit a family, you inherit their problems.

EUGENE. *(comes out of kitchen)* Well, goodnight.

KATE. Put the cookie on the table.

EUGENE. What cookie?

KATE. The oatmeal cookie in your pocket. Put it on the table.

EUGENE. You can smell an oatmeal cookie from ten feet away?

KATE. I heard the jar moving in the kitchen. Suddenly everybody's doing what they want in this house. Your father's upset, Aunt Blanche is upset, *put the cookie on that table!* *(EUGENE puts the cookie on the table and starts up the stairs to his room. He passes STANLEY.)*

STAN. *(to EUGENE)* I heard a lot of yelling. What happened?

EUGENE. I don't know, but it's my fault. *(He goes on up and into the bathroom. NORA is on her bed, crying. LAURIE sits on her bed and watches her.)*

LAURIE. What are you going to do? *(NORA shakes her head, indicating she doesn't know.)* Do you want me to speak to Mom? I could tell her I was getting flutters in my heart again.

NORA. *(turns, angrily)* Don't you ever say that! Don't you pretend to be sick to get favors from anyone.

LAURIE. I'm not pretending. They're just not big flutters.

(STANLEY has been sitting at the top of the stairs try-

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ing to work up courage to talk to his father. JACK is sitting in the living room, disconsolate. KATE is puffing up pillows.)

JACK. Stop puffing up pillows. The house could be burning down and you'd run back in to puff the pillows.

KATE. Let's go to bed. You're tired.

JACK. When does it get easier, Kate? When does our life get easier?

KATE. At night. When you get seven good hours of sleep. That's the easiest it ever gets. *(NORA has put on her robe, left her room and opens the bathroom door. We hear a scream from EUGENE.)*

EUGENE. CLOSE THE DOOR!!!

NORA. Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't know anyone was in there. *(She rushes out, back to her room. STANLEY moves into the living room.)*

STAN. Dad? Do you think I could talk to you now? It'll just take five minutes.

KATE. He's tired, Stanley. He's practically asleep.

STAN. Two minutes. I'll tell it as fast as I can.

JACK. Go on, Kate. Go to bed. The boy wants to tell me something.

KATE. Turn out the lights when you're through. *(She kisses JACK's head.)* Don't worry about things. We've always made them work out. *(She leaves the room just as EUGENE darts out of the bathroom, rushes into his own room and slams the door.)*

EUGENE. She saw me on the crapper! Nora saw me on the crapper! *(He falls on his bed.)* I might as well be dead.

STAN. I have a problem, Pop.

JACK. If you didn't, you wouldn't live in this house.

STAN. It must be tough being a father. Everybody

comes to you with their problems. You have to have all the answers. I don't know if I could handle it.

JACK. Stop trying to win me over. Just tell me the problem.

STAN. I got fired today!

JACK. *WHAT???*

STAN. Don't get excited! Don't get crazy! Let me explain what happened.

JACK. What did you do? You came in late? You were fresh to somebody? Were you fresh to somebody?

STAN. I'm not fired yet. I can still get my job back. I just need you to help me make a decision.

JACK. Take the job back. I don't care what it is. This is *not* the time for anybody to be out of work in this family.

STAN. When I was twelve years old you gave me a talk about principles. Remember?

JACK. All night you waited to tell me this news?

STAN. This is about principles, Pop.

JACK. How long were you going to go without telling me?

STAN. Will you at least hear my principles?

JACK. Alright, I'll hear your principles. Then you'll hear mine.

STAN. Just sit back and let me tell you what happened. Okay? Well it was on account of Andrew the colored guy who sweeps up.

(*JACK sits back and listens. STANLEY sits with his back to the audience. He is talking to the father but we can't hear him. Our attention goes to EUGENE up in his room.*)

EUGENE. . . . So Stanley began his sad story. Pop never said a word. He just sat there and listened. Stanley

was terrific. It was like that movie, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*. Stanley was not only defending his principles, he was defending democracy and the United States of America. Pop must have been bleary eyed because not only did he have to deal with Stanley's principles, Nora's career, the loss of his noisemaker business, how to get Aunt Blanche married off and Laurie's fluttering heart, but at any minute there could be a knock on the door with 37 relatives from Poland showing up looking for a place to live . . . Finally, Stanley finished his story.

STAN. . . . So—either I bring in a letter of apology in the morning or I don't bother coming in . . . I know it's late. I know you're tired. But I didn't want to do anything without asking you first. (*JACK sits in silence a few moments.*)

JACK. . . . Ohh, Stanley, Stanley, Stanley!

STAN. I'm sorry, Pop.

JACK. You shouldn't have swept the dirt on his shoes.

STAN. I know.

JACK. Especially in front of other people.

STAN. I know.

JACK. He's your boss. He pays your salary. His money helps put food on our dining table.

STAN. I know, Pop.

JACK. And we don't have money to waste. Believe me when I tell you that.

STAN. I believe you, Pop.

JACK. You were sick three days last year and he only docked you a day and a half's pay, remember that?

STAN. I know. I can see what you're getting at. I'll write the letter. I'll do it tonight.

JACK. On the other hand, you did a courageous thing. You defended a fellow worker. Nobody else stood up for him, did they?

STAN. I was the only one.

JACK. That's something to be proud of. It was what you believed in. That's standing up for your principles. STAN. That's why I didn't want to write the letter. I knew you'd understand.

JACK. The question is, can this family afford principles right now?

STAN. It would make it hard, I know.

JACK. Not just on you and me. But on your mother. On Aunt Blanche, Nora, Laurie.

STAN. Eugene.

JACK. Eugene. Eugene would have to get a part time job. Time he should be using studying books to get himself somewhere.

STAN. He wants to be a writer. He wants to go to college.

JACK. I wish I could have sent *you*. I've always been sick about that, Stanley.

STAN. I like working, Pop. I really do . . . Listen, I made up my mind. I'm going to write the letter.

JACK. I'm not saying you should.

STAN. I know. It's *my* decision. I really want to write the letter.

JACK. And how will your principles feel in the morning?

STAN. My principles feel better already. You told me you were proud of what I did. That's all I really cared about.

JACK. You know something, Stanley. I don't think there's much in college they could teach you that you don't already know.

STAN. Guess who I learned it from? . . . Thanks for talking to me, Pop. See you in the morning . . . You coming to bed?

JACK. I think I'll sit here for a while. It's the only time of day I have a few minutes to myself.

(STANLEY nods, then bounds up the stairs to his room. JACK sits back in his chair and closes his eyes. STANLEY enters his room. EUGENE is writing in his book of Memoirs.)

EUGENE. How'd it go? Do you have to write the letter?

STAN. Yeah. (*He gets out pad and fountain pen.*)

EUGENE. I knew that's what he'd make you do.

STAN. He didn't make me do it . . . Be quiet, will ya! I have to concentrate.

EUGENE. What are you going to say?

STAN. I don't know . . . You want to help me? You're good at those things.

EUGENE. People used to get paid for that in the old days. Professional letter writers.

STAN. (*indignant*) I'm not going to pay you money.

EUGENE. I don't want money.

STAN. Then what *do* you want?

EUGENE. Tell me what Nora looked like naked.

STAN. How horny can you get?

EUGENE. I don't know. What's the highest score?

STAN. . . . Alright. When we finish the letter.

EUGENE. I don't trust you. I want to get paid first.

STAN. You know, you're a real shit!

EUGENE. Don't talk like that in front of me, I'm just a kid.

STAN. What do you want to know?

EUGENE. Everything. From the time you opened the door.

STAN. It happened so fast.

EUGENE. That's okay. Tell it slow.

STAN. Jesus! . . . Alright . . . I heard the shower running. I waited for it to stop. I gave a few seconds for the water to run off her body, then I knew she'd be stepping

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