

START

MARTIN: You're—her husband?

EDDIE: No. She's my sister. [*He and THE OLD MAN look at each other then he turns back to MARTIN.*] My half-sister.

[*Pause. EDDIE and OLD MAN drink.*]

MARTIN: Your sister?

EDDIE: Yeah.

MARTIN: Oh. So—you knew each other even before High School then, huh?

EDDIE: No, see, I never even knew I had a sister until it was too late.

MARTIN: How do you mean?

EDDIE: Well, by the time I found out we'd already—you know—fooled around.

[*OLD MAN shakes his head, drinks. Long pause. MARTIN just stares at EDDIE.*]

EDDIE: [*grins*] Whatsa' matter, Martin?

MARTIN: You fooled around?

EDDIE: Yeah.

MARTIN: Well—um—that's illegal, isn't it?

EDDIE: I suppose so.

THE OLD MAN: [*to EDDIE*] Who is this guy?

MARTIN: I mean—is that true? She's really your sister?

EDDIE: Half. Only half.

MARTIN: Which half?

EDDIE: Top half. In horses we call that the "topside".

THE OLD MAN: Yeah, and the mare's what? The mare's uh—"distaff", isn't it? Isn't that the bottom half? "Distaff." Funny I should remember that.

MARTIN: And you fooled around in High School together?

EDDIE: Yeah. Sure. Everybody fooled around in High School. Didn't you?

MARTIN: No. I never did.

EDDIE: Maybe you should have, Martin.

MARTIN: Well, not with my sister.

EDDIE: No, I wouldn't recommend that.

MARTIN: How could that happen? I mean—

EDDIE: Well, see—[*pause, he stares at OLD MAN*]—our Daddy fell in love twice. That's basically how it happened. Once with my mother and once with her mother.

THE OLD MAN: It was the same love. Just got split in two, that's all.

MARTIN: Well, how come you didn't know each other until High School, then?

EDDIE: He had two separate lives. That's how come. Two completely separate lives. He'd live with me and my mother for a while and then he'd disappear and go live with her and her mother for a while.

THE OLD MAN: Now don't be too hard on me, boy. It can happen to the best of us.

MARTIN: And you never knew what was going on?

EDDIE: Nope. Neither did my mother.

THE OLD MAN: She knew.

EDDIE: [*to MARTIN*] She never knew.

MARTIN: She must've suspected something was going on.

EDDIE: Well, if she did she never let on to me. Maybe she was afraid of finding out. Or maybe she just loved him. I don't know. He'd disappear for months at a

time and she never once asked him where he went. She was always glad to see him when he came back. The two of us used to go running out of the house to meet him as soon as we saw the Studebaker coming across the field.

THE OLD MAN: [to EDDIE] That was no Studebaker, that was a Plymouth. I never owned a goddamn Studebaker.

EDDIE: This went on for years. He kept disappearing and reappearing. For years that went on. Then, suddenly, one day it stopped. He stayed home for a while. Just stayed in the house. Never went outside. Just sat in his chair. Staring. Then he started going on these long walks. He'd walk all day. Then he'd walk all night. He'd walk out across the fields. In the dark. I used to watch him from my bedroom window. He'd disappear in the dark with his overcoat on.

MARTIN: Where was he going?

EDDIE: Just walking.

THE OLD MAN: I was making a decision.

[EDDIE gets MARTIN to his feet and takes him on a walk around the entire stage as he tells the story. MARTIN is reluctant but EDDIE keeps pulling him along.]

EDDIE: But one night I asked him if I could go with him. And he took me. We walked straight out across the fields together. In the dark. And I remember it was just plowed and our feet sank down in the powder and the dirt came up over the tops of my shoes and weighed me down. I wanted to stop and empty my shoes out but he wouldn't stop. He kept walking straight ahead and I was afraid of losing him in the dark so I just kept up as best I could. And we were completely silent the whole time. Never said a word to each other. We could barely see a foot in front of us, it was so dark. And these white owls kept swooping down out of nowhere, hunting for jackrabbits. Diving right past our heads, then disappearing. And we just kept walking silent like that for miles until we got to town. I could see the drive-in movie way off in the distance. That was the first thing I saw. Just square patches of color shifting. Then vague faces began to appear. And, as we got closer, I could recognize one of the faces. It was Spencer Tracy. Spencer Tracy moving his mouth. Speaking without words. Speaking to a woman in a red dress. Then we stopped at a liquor store and he made me wait outside in the parking lot while he bought a bottle. And there were all these Mexican migrant workers standing around a pick-up truck with red mud all over the tires. They were drinking beer and laughing and I remember being jealous of them and I didn't know why. And I remember seeing the old man through the glass door of the liquor store as he paid for the bottle. And I remember feeling sorry for him and I didn't know why. Then he came outside with the bottle wrapped in a brown paper sack and as soon as he came out, all the Mexican men stopped laughing. They just stared at us as we walked away.

[During the course of the story the lights shift down very slowly into blues and greens — moonlight.]

EDDIE: And we walked right through town. Past the donut shop, past the miniature golf course, past the Chevron station. And he opened the bottle up and offered it to me. Before he even took a drink, he offered it to me first. And I took it and drank it and handed it back to him. And we just kept passing it back and forth like that as we walked until we drank the whole thing dry. And we never said a word the whole time. Then, finally, we reached this little white house with a

red awning, on the far side of town. I'll never forget the red awning because it flapped in the night breeze and the porch light made it glow. It was a hot, desert breeze and the air smelled like new cut alfalfa. We walked right up to the front porch and he rang the bell and I remember getting real nervous because I wasn't expecting to visit anybody. I thought we were just out for a walk. And then this woman comes to the door. This real pretty woman with red hair. And she throws herself into his arms. And he starts crying. He just breaks down right there in front of me. And she's kissing him all over the face and holding him real tight and he's just crying like a baby. And then through the doorway, behind them both, I see this girl. [*The bathroom door very slowly and silently swings open revealing MAY, standing in the door frame back-lit with yellow light in her red dress. She just watches EDDIE as he keeps telling story. He and MARTIN are unaware of her presence.*] She just appears. She's just standing there, staring at me and I'm staring back at her and we can't take our eyes off each other. It was like we knew each other from somewhere but we couldn't place where. But the second we saw each other, that very second, we knew we'd never stop being in love.

[*MAY slams bathroom door behind her. Door booms. Lights bang back up to their previous setting.*]

MAY: [*to EDDIE*] Boy, you really are incredible! You're unbelievable! Martin comes over here. He doesn't know you from Adam and you start telling him a story like that. Are you crazy? None of it's true, Martin. He's had this weird, sick idea for years now and it's totally made up. He's nuts. I don't know where he got it from. He's completely nuts.

EDDIE: [*to MARTIN*] She's kinda embarrassed about the whole deal, see. You can't blame her really.

MARTIN: I didn't even know you could hear us out here, May. I—

MAY: I heard every word. I followed it very carefully. He's told me that story a thousand times and it always changes.

EDDIE: I never repeat myself.

MAY: You do nothing but repeat yourself. That's all you do. You just go in a big circle.

MARTIN: [*standing*] Well, maybe I should leave.

EDDIE: NO! You sit down.

[*Silence. MARTIN slowly sits again.*]

EDDIE: [*quietly to MARTIN, leaning toward him*] Did you think that was a story, Martin? Did you think I made that whole thing up?

MARTIN: No. I mean, at the time you were telling it, it seemed real.

EDDIE: But now you're doubting it because she says it's a lie?

MARTIN: Well—

EDDIE: She suggests it's a lie to you and all of a sudden you change your mind? Is that it? You go from true to false like that, in a second?

MARTIN: I don't know.

MAY: Let's go to the movies, Martin.

[*MARTIN stands again.*]

EDDIE: Sit down!

[*MARTIN sits back down. Long pause.*]

MAY: Eddie—

[Pause]

EDDIE: What?

MAY: We want to go to the movies. [Pause. EDDIE just stares at her.] I want to go to the movies with Martin. Right now.

EDDIE: Nobody's going to the movies. There's not a movie in this town that can match the story I'm gonna tell. I'm gonna finish this story.

MAY: Eddie—

EDDIE: You wanna' hear the rest of the story, don't ya', Martin?

MARTIN: [Pause. He looks at MAY then back to EDDIE] Sure.

MAY: Martin, let's go. Please.

MARTIN: I—

[Long pause. EDDIE and MARTIN stare at each other.]

EDDIE: You what?

MARTIN: I don't mind hearing the rest of it if you want to tell the rest of it.

THE OLD MAN: [to himself] I'm dyin' to hear it myself.

[EDDIE leans back in his chair. Grins.]

MAY: [to EDDIE] What do you think this is going to do? Do you think this is going to change something?

EDDIE: No.

MAY: Then what's the point?

EDDIE: It's absolutely pointless.

MAY: Then why put everybody through this? Martin doesn't want to hear this bullshit. I don't want to hear it.

EDDIE: I know you don't wanna' hear it.

MAY: Don't try to pass it off on me! You got it all turned around, Eddie. You got it all turned around. You don't even know which end is up anymore. Okay. Okay. I don't need either of you. I don't need any of it because I already know the rest of the story. I know the whole rest of the story, see. [She speaks directly to EDDIE, who remains sitting.] I know it just exactly the way it happened. Without any little tricks added on to it.

[THE OLD MAN leans over to EDDIE, confidentially.]

THE OLD MAN: What does she know?

EDDIE: [to OLD MAN] She's lying.

[Lights begin to shift down again in the course of MAY's story. She moves very slowly downstage then crosses toward OLD MAN as she tells it.]

MAY: You want me to finish the story for you, Eddie? Huh? You want me to finish this story? [Pause as MARTIN sits again] See, my mother—the pretty red-haired woman in the little white house with the red awning, was desperately in love with the old man. Wasn't she, Eddie? You could tell that right away. You could see it in her eyes. She was obsessed with him to the point where she couldn't stand being without him for even a second. She kept hunting for him from town to town. Following little clues that he left behind, like a postcard maybe, or a motel on the back of a matchbook. [To MARTIN] He never left her a phone number or an address or anything as simple as that because my mother was his secret, see. She hounded him for years and he kept trying to keep her at a distance because the closer these two separate lives drew together, these two separate women, these two separate kids, the more nervous he got. The more filled with terror that the two lives would find out about each other and devour

him whole. That his secret would take him by the throat. But finally she caught up with him. Just by a process of elimination she dogged him down. I remember the day we discovered the town. She was on fire. "This is it!" she kept saying; "this is the place!" Her whole body was trembling as we walked through the streets, looking for the house where he lived. She kept squeezing my hand to the point where I thought she'd crush the bones in my fingers. She was terrified she'd come across him by accident on the street because she knew she was trespassing. She knew she was crossing this forbidden zone but she couldn't help herself. We walked all day through that stupid hick town. All day long. We went through every neighborhood, peering through every open window, looking in at every dumb family, until finally we found him.

[*Rest*]

It was just exactly supper time and they were all sitting down at the table and they were having fried chicken. That's how close we were to the window. We could see what they were eating. We could hear their voices but we couldn't make out what they were saying. Eddie and his mother were talking but the old man never said a word. Did he, Eddie? Just sat there eating his chicken in silence.

THE OLD MAN: [*to EDDIE*] Boy, is she ever off the wall with this one. You gotta' do somethin' about this.

MAY: The funny thing was, that almost as soon as we'd found him — he disappeared. She was only with him about two weeks before he just vanished. Nobody saw him after that. Ever. And my mother — just turned herself inside out. I never could understand that. I kept watching her grieve, as though somebody'd died. She'd pull herself up into a ball and just stare at the floor. And I couldn't understand that because I was feeling the exact opposite feeling. I was in love, see. I'd come home after school, after being with Eddie, and I was filled with this joy and there she'd be — standing in the middle of the kitchen staring at the sink. Her eyes looked like a funeral. And I didn't know what to say. I didn't even feel sorry for her. All I could think of was him.

THE OLD MAN: [*to EDDIE*] She's gettin' way outa' line, here.

MAY: And all he could think of was me. Isn't that right, Eddie? We couldn't take a breath without thinking of each other. We couldn't eat if we weren't together. We couldn't sleep. We got sick at night when we were apart. Violently sick. And my mother even took me to see a doctor. And Eddie's mother took him to see the same doctor but the doctor had no idea what was wrong with us. He thought it was the flu or something. And Eddie's mother had no idea what was wrong with him. But my mother — my mother knew exactly what was wrong. She knew it clear down to her bones. She recognized every symptom. And she begged me not to see him but I wouldn't listen. Then she begged Eddie not to see me but he wouldn't listen. Then she went to Eddie's mother and begged her. And Eddie's mother — [*Pause. She looks straight at EDDIE*] — Eddie's mother blew her brains out. Didn't she, Eddie? Blew her brains right out.

THE OLD MAN: [*standing, he moves from the platform onto the stage, between EDDIE and MAY*] Now, wait a second! Wait a second. Just a goddamn second here. This story doesn't hold water. [*To EDDIE who stays seated.*] You're not gonna' let her off the hook with that one are ya'? That's the dumbest version I ever heard in my whole life. She never blew her brains out. Nobody ever told me

that. Where the hell did that come from? [To EDDIE who remains seated] Stand up! Get on yer feet now goddamn it! I wanna' hear the male side a' this thing. You gotta' represent me now. Speak on my behalf. There's no one to speak for me now! Stand up!

[EDDIE stands slowly. Stares at OLD MAN.]

Now tell her. Tell her the way it happened. We've got a pact. Don't forget that.

EDDIE: [calmly to OLD MAN] It was your shotgun. Same one we used to duck hunt with. Browning. She never fired a gun before in her life. That was her first time.

THE OLD MAN: Nobody told me any a' that. I was left completely in the dark.

EDDIE: You were gone.

THE OLD MAN: Somebody could've found me! Somebody could've hunted me down. I wasn't that impossible to find.

EDDIE: You were gone.

THE OLD MAN: That's right, I was gone! I was gone! You're right. But I wasn't disconnected. There was nothing cut off in me. Everything went on just the same as though I'd never left. [to MAY] But your mother—your mother wouldn't give it up, would she?

[THE OLD MAN moves toward MAY and speaks directly to her. MAY keeps her eyes on EDDIE who very slowly turns toward her in the course of THE OLD MAN'S speech. Once their eyes meet they never leave each other's gaze.]

THE OLD MAN: [to MAY] She drew me to her. She went out of her way to draw me in. She was a force. I told her I'd never come across for her. I told her that right from the very start. But she opened up to me. She wouldn't listen. She kept opening up her heart to me. How could I turn her down when she loved me like that? How could I turn away from her? We were completely whole.

[EDDIE and MAY just stand there staring at each other. THE OLD MAN moves back to EDDIE. Speaks to him directly.]

THE OLD MAN: [to EDDIE] What're you doin'? Speak to her. Bring her around to our side. You gotta' make her see this thing in a clear light.

[Very slowly EDDIE and MAY move toward each other.]

THE OLD MAN: [to EDDIE] Stay away from her! What the hell are you doin'! Keep away from her! You two can't come together! You gotta hold up my end a' this deal. I got nobody now! Nobody! You can't betray me! You gotta' represent me now! You're my son!

[EDDIE and MAY come together center stage. They embrace. They kiss each other tenderly. Headlights suddenly arc across stage again from upright, cutting across the stage through window then disappearing off left. Sound of loud collision, shattering glass, an explosion. Bright orange and blue light of a gasoline fire suddenly illuminates upstage window. Then sounds of horses screaming wildly, hooves galloping on pavement, fading, then total silence. Light of gas fire continues now to end of play. EDDIE and MAY never stop holding each other through all this. Long pause. No one moves. Then MARTIN stands and moves upstage to window, peers out through Venetian blinds. Pause.]

MARTIN: [upstage at window, looking out into flames] Is that your truck with the horse trailer out there?

EDDIE: [*stays with MAY*] Yeah.

MARTIN: It's on fire.

EDDIE: Yeah.

MARTIN: All the horses are loose.

EDDIE: [*steps back away from MAY*] Yeah, I figured.

MAY: Eddie—

EDDIE: [*to MAY*] I'm just gonna' go out and take a look. I gotta' at least take a look, don't I?

MAY: What difference does it make?

EDDIE: Well, I can't just let her get away with that. What am I supposed to do? [*moves toward stage left door*] I'll just be a second.

MAY: Eddie—

EDDIE: I'm only gonna' be a second. I'll just take a look at it and I'll come right back. Okay?

[*EDDIE exits stage left door. MAY stares at door, stays where she is. MARTIN stays upstage. MARTIN turns slowly from window upstage and looks at MAY. Pause. MAY moves to bed, pulls suitcase out from underneath, throws it on bed and opens it. She goes into bathroom and comes out with clothes. She packs the clothes in suitcase. MARTIN watches her for a while then moves slowly downstage to her as she continues.*]

MARTIN: May—

[*MAY goes back into bathroom and comes back out with more clothes. She packs them.*]

MARTIN: Do you need some help or anything? I got a car. I could drive you somewhere if you want. [*Pause. MAY just keeps packing her clothes.*] Are you going to go with him?

[*She stops. Straightens up. Stares at MARTIN. Pause.*]

MAY: He's gone.

MARTIN: He said he'd be back in a second.

MAY: [*Pause*] He's gone.

[*MAY exits with suitcase out stage left door. She leaves the door open behind her. MARTIN just stands there staring at open door for a while. THE OLD MAN looks stage left at his rocking chair then a little above it, in blank space. Pause. OLD MAN starts moving slowly back to the platform.*]

THE OLD MAN: [*pointing into space, stage left*] Ya' see that picture over there? Ya' see that? Ya' know who that is? That's the woman of my dreams. That's who that is. And she's mine. She's all mine. Forever.

[*He reaches rocking chair, sits, but keeps staring at imaginary picture. He begins to rock very slowly in the chair. After OLD MAN sits in rocker, Merle Haggard's "I'm the One who Loves You" starts playing as lights begin a very slow fade. MARTIN moves slowly upstage to window and stops. He stares out with his back to audience. The fire glows through window as stage lights fade. OLD MAN keeps rocking slowly. Stage lights keep fading slowly to black. Fire glows for a while in the dark then cuts to black. Song continues in dark and swells in volume.*]

END