

EGOS & COCKTAILS

"Good 'N Plenty"
(Pilot)

by Luke Yankee

Draft
June 1, 2015

Registered WGAW

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TEASER

EXT. ISSAC NEWTON MIDDLE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

CHYRON: NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK. 1969.

A fun, upbeat, SIXTIES TUNE (something like "Good Morning, Starshine") plays. BRIAN MCKINLEY (11), social outcast and "drama geek", is thrilled and surprised to be the center of attention for once. Hanging out by the jungle gym, he plays it cool with his classmates, LUCY (12), JAMIE (11) and BUDDY (12).

BUDDY

They didn't really take you to see it, did they?

Brian proudly holds up a PLAYBILL.

JAMIE

Your parents took you to see "Hair"? On Broadway?

Brian NODS.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

That is so boss! My big brother said it was like the grooviest show ever.

LUCY

(intensely quiet)
So...did you see them?

Brian looks confused.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You know. Them.

BUDDY

She means the boobies and wieners.

The kids all LAUGH except Brian.

BRIAN

Are you referring to the act one dénouement where everyone removes their clothing?

JAMIE

Holy crap! Really?

BRIAN

Yes. There's a brief nude scene.
But it's not gratuitous.

Jamie, Lucy and Buddy stare blankly at Brian.

LUCY

Did you see naked people or didn't
you?

BRIAN

Yes, but that wasn't the point of
the scene.

BUDDY

Who cares what the point was! You
saw naked people on a Broadway
stage!

BRIAN

My sister loved it, but my parents
were disappointed. They said, "It
was only about fucking and the
flag."

LUCY

Brian McKinley! Do you kiss your
mother with that mouth!

BRIAN

She's the one who taught me how to
say it.

LUCY

(as if)

Yeah. Like a mom says the "F" word.

JAMIE

Brian's mom does. I've heard her.

Brian hands the program to Lucy. The other kids gather
around.

BUDDY

(excited)

Are there pictures?

BRIAN

The best part was the opening. They
did this really great song called
"The Age of Aquarius".

LUCY

I heard that on the radio, but I
can't remember how it goes.

Brian starts performing "The Age of Aquarius", complete with
choreography, on the jungle gym.

BRIAN

*"When the Moon is in the Seventh
House,
And Jupiter aligns with Mars
Then peace will guide the planet
And love steer the stars.
This is the dawning of the age of
Aquarius..."*

CUT TO:

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

FUZZY (13), BILLY (12) and DONNIE (13), the school bullies,
hear Brian singing.

FUZZY

What the hell is that?

BILLY

That fairy McKinley is singing
again.

DONNIE

Let's go.

They run to the jungle gym and watch Brian for a moment.
Realizing he has a larger audience, Brian starts singing
LOUDER. Mid high-note, Fuzzy DRAGS him off the monkey bars.
Slammed to the dirt, Donnie and Billy hold him down as Fuzzy
PUMMELS him.

LUCY

Leave him alone!

JAMIE

I'll get Mrs. Ross.

Jamie runs off. As Lucy watches in horror, Buddy throws in
one good KICK of his own. Offscreen, a WHISTLE blows. Stern
and humorless MRS. ROSS (50's) enters.

MRS. ROSS

Okay my little princes, that's
enough Judo chops for today. What
have you got to say for yourselves?

BLOOD pours out of Brian's nose. She hands him a handkerchief.

BRIAN

I was telling them about the show I saw last night.

Mrs. Ross sees the torn program on the ground.

MRS. ROSS

Your parents took you to see "Hair"?! That's appalling!

BRIAN

Actually, Mrs. Ross, my sister found it transcendent.

FUZZY

You big "Mo"!

Fuzzy HURLS Brian to the ground and starts PUNCHING him again. Donnie and Billy quickly join in. Mrs. Ross tears them apart.

MRS. ROSS

That's enough! I think we'd better sort this out in the principal's office, boys.

Mrs. Ross marches off with Brian and the bullies in tow. Out of earshot, Fuzzy turns to Brian.

FUZZY

I'm not done with you, McKinley. And your singing bites!

BRIAN

(to himself)
Everybody's a critic.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Brian sits in the office of MR. HAAS (40's), the put-upon principal.

MR. HAAS

So, Mr. McKinley, I think that's enough play-acting on the jungle gym, wouldn't you agree?

BRIAN

Yes, Mr. Haas.

FRANCES (O.C.)

Play-acting?! My son does not "play act". He's an artist.

FRANCES BARROW MCKINLEY (48), a larger-than-life actress, sweeps in to the room. She wears a full length mink coat and dark glasses.

She doesn't walk into a room. She makes an entrance.

BRIAN

It's okay, Mom.

FRANCES

It's not okay, darling. Mr. Haas needs to be reminded that you are special.

The star-struck Mr. Haas shakes her hand a little too long.

MR. HAAS

Hello, Miss Barrow. It's always such a pleasure.

FRANCES

Why, thank you. And in here, it's Mrs. McKinley.

MR. HAAS

My wife and I certainly appreciated those tickets you arranged for your last play.

FRANCES

You've been so considerate to Brian, house seats were the least I could do.

MR. HAAS

She said it was the best thing she'd seen since "My Fair Lady".

FRANCES

How quaint. Now Brian, would you please explain to me why you are taking up poor Mr. Haas' time?

MR. HAAS

Apparently, he was telling some on the playground about the show he saw last night. With all due respect Mrs. McKinley, do you think "Hair" is suitable for an eleven year old?

FRANCES

Don't be so bourgeois, Mr. Haas. What exactly were your little friends objecting to, darling?

BRIAN

Well, I was performing "Aquarius" on the jungle gym and --

FRANCES

(appalled)

You were what?!

Brian looks at the floor.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Aquarius is a ballad! That's completely the wrong number for a lunchtime crowd! And who chose that venue? The swings, maybe, the slide, perhaps, but the jungle gym?!

MR. HAAS

I think you are missing the point, Mrs. McKinley--

FRANCES

No, you're missing the point. Mr. Haas. If I've taught my son anything, it's to know his audience.

Frances sizes up the room.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

This is actually a better place for that number. Yes, I can see the whole thing. And you can help us, Mr. Haas. Now, pretend you're a flower child with a stringy hair down to your waist, tripping on Spanish Fly.

MR. HAAS

Excuse me?

FRANCES

Here. This will help.

She reaches onto a bookshelf and hands him a SPIDER PLANT.

MR. HAAS

What am I supposed to do with this?

FRANCES

Think outside the box! It's your hair!

The principal dutifully holds the plant on top of his head.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Now, stand on top of the desk.

With the help of Frances, Mr. Haas awkwardly climbs on top of his desk, still holding the plant on his head.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Now, swing those dreads, Daddy!

Mr. Haas swings his head from side to side as Frances puts Brian in his rolling chair and spins him about the floor.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Now sing, darling!

Brian starts singing "Aquarius" again, timidly at first, then growing in confidence at Frances' prompting. She shows him how to move his hands like a middle Eastern dancer.

BRIAN

*"When the Moon is in the Seventh
House,
And Jupiter aligns with Mars
Then peace will guide the planet
And love steer the stars.*

Mr. Haas starts singing full voice and swinging his plant hair frantically.

MR. HAAS

*This is the dawning of the age of
Aquarius..."*

FRANCES, BRIAN & MR. HAAS

"The Age of Aquarius... Aquarius!"

They are all imitating Brian's hand movements and singing joyously as MRS. WILLIAMSON (60's), the principal's career secretary, enters. They all stop abruptly.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

Your one o'clock is here.

MR. HAAS

(embarrassed)

Thank you, Mrs. Williamson.

MRS. WILLIAMSON

And there's Miracle Grow on your
Hush Puppies.

She exits.

FRANCES

Well, thank God we got to the
bottom of that. I'm sure you can
see the boys never would have
slugged Brian if he'd had the
proper venue.

Brian waits by the door as Frances helps Mr. Haas down off the desk.

MR. HAAS

You know, Mrs. McKinley, the boy
playing the lead in the seventh
grade play just broke his
collarbone.

BRIAN

(quietly to Frances)

Yeah. The kids on the playground
creamed him.

MR. HAAS

I know Brian's only in sixth grade,
but I wonder if he might be
interested in stepping into the
role of George Bailey in "It's A
Wonderful Life"?

BRIAN
 (elated - to Frances)
 Can I? Please?!

FRANCES
 As long as you can offer him
 protection on the playground, we
 will accept your generous offer.

MR. HAAS
 That's wonderful. I'll let Miss
 Perry know. Congratulations, Brian.

BRIAN
 Thank you, sir.

Brian starts for the door. Frances crosses to Dr. Haas and
 puts her arms around his neck.

FRANCES
 (seductively)
 You had such strength when you were
 singing that song. I think you
 missed your true calling.

MR. HAAS
 Really?!

FRANCES
 (almost purring)
 Mmmm hmmm.

She blows him a kiss and heads to the door. As he replaces
 the plant, she turns to Brian.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
 Civilians. They'll believe
 anything.

She grabs Brian by the hand and whisks him out the door.

INT. BROADWAY THEATRE - DAY

The following week, TONY (40's), the "seen-it-all" stage
 manager and GEORGE (20's), his eager assistant, are arranging
 chairs in a circle.

GEORGE
 But you've worked with her before,
 haven't you?

TONY
 Four shows.

GEORGE

Didn't she throw a chair at you in a rehearsal in Boston?

TONY

Actually, I threw it at her. But I intentionally missed.

GEORGE

Is she that temperamental?

TONY

She's a pain-in the-ass diva who happens to be brilliant. But when she keeps you employed, you put up with a lot.

FRANCES (O.S.)

You'd better fuckin' believe it!

Frances enters with several large SHOPPING BAGS.

TONY

(hiding his eyes)

I can't look back or I'll turn into a pillar of shit!

FRANCES

(affectionately)

You're about as funny as a plantar's wart, you old homo! Now, come help me with these bags.

Tony crosses to her. They share a warm hug and a kiss on both cheeks. George watches with admiration and envy.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Darling, you look awful. Aren't you getting laid?

TONY

(shakes his head)

He got deported back to Guatemala.

FRANCES

(earnestly)

If only once you could fall in love with someone who wasn't from a country where homosexuality is punishable by firing squad.

She reaches into a bag and pulls out a beautiful, hand-knitted SCARF.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I know he was about to have his first winter in New York, so I knitted this for him.

TONY

How sweet. This is George. My new assistant.

GEORGE

(gushing)

How do you do, Miss Barrow? I've seen everything you've ever done.

FRANCES

(scratching him behind the ears)

Well, of course you have! Aren't you a darling little puppy dog?

Tony struggles with her bags.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Be careful with that one! It's got my mineral water.

Frances grabs the bag from Tony.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

No one touches my mineral water, George. It's imported from Sweden.

TONY

(aside to George)

That "mineral water" is 120 proof. It'll eat a hole right through your Levi's.

FRANCES

Is Alva here yet?

GEORGE

Who?

TONY

Her dresser. Always comes to help set up the dressing room.

FRANCES

She's been with me since --

TONY
 (bitchy)
 "Our American Cousin" at Ford's
 Theater?

Pause. Frances stares at him icily.

FRANCES
 I don't care how many show's we've
 done together, you tired, old
 faggot. If you want to keep your
 job, lay off the age jokes!

TONY
 Frannie, I --

She snatches the bag out of his hands and gives it to George.
 She strides past Tony and exits. George follows.

TONY (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 What the fuck...?

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - EVENING

JAKE MCKINLEY (45), Frances' husband, sits at a cocktail
 table with the newspaper. There are two HIGHBALLS in front of
 him. Frances enters. Part of the nightly ritual, he hands one
 to her.

JAKE
 Boy, we're sure in a mess in
 Viet Nam.

FRANCES
 How can you read that crap? It's
 all Nixon's propaganda. We never
 belonged there in the first place.

She kisses him on the cheek.

JAKE
 How was the read-thru?

FRANCES
 Speaking of war zones?

JAKE
 It couldn't have been that bad.

FRANCES
 I'm too old for this part! She's
 supposed to be in her mid thirties.
 (MORE)

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Everyone's tiptoeing around it,
which make it even worse. You'd
think I was Grandma fucking Moses.

JAKE
(kissing her playfully)
Hey grandma, I'll trade you that
painting for a sack of cocktail
onions.

LEAH (15), their pretty, typically rebellious teenage
daughter, enters wearing blue jeans, a low-cut peasant blouse
and too much makeup.

LEAH
What time is dinner?

FRANCES
Seven. And a gracious good evening
to you, too.

LEAH
Can I borrow the car on Saturday
night?

JAKE
You don't have a license.

LEAH
I have a learner's permit.

FRANCES
Which is not a license!

JAKE
Leah, tell me you didn't wear that
outfit to school today.

LEAH
I didn't go to school. We hung out
at the Indian reservation.

Jake GROANS.

FRANCES
Dare I ask how many boys were
inside that blouse today?

LEAH
Sebastian wanted to try it on. He's
just coming out, so I--

FRANCES

You know what I mean! You're turning into a human trampoline!

LEAH

(grossed out)
Motherrrrrrrrrrrr!

JAKE

(trying to stay calm)
So, all this cutting classes and sleeping around. Just what exactly do you think it's going to prepare you for?

LEAH

(pointedly, to Frances)
I dunno. Maybe a life in the theater.

She exits. Frances downs her highball as Brian enters.

FRANCES

Oh, good. You're just in time to freshen mommy's drink. At least one of my children loves me.

Brian takes the glass and heads to the bar.

BRIAN

Can I stay up and watch the Smothers Brothers tonight?

FRANCES

How are you coming on your lines for the play?

BRIAN

I got Robin to cue me during study hall today.

FRANCES

You're not still pushing in the second act?

BRIAN

Miss Perry says it's getting better.

FRANCES

Darling, you can't exactly rely on Miss Perry for inspiration unless she's diagramming "To Kill a Mockingbird." If you need someone to help you with your acting, you come to me.

Missing the glass, Brian drops ICE CUBES on the floor.

JAKE

Have we got anything to snack on?
I feel like a Camembert cheese.

BRIAN

(smiling, handing her the
highball)
Funny, you don't look like one.

Jake groans playfully.

FRANCES

(sharply)
Hey! If you're going to resort to cheap, Borscht belt humor, you can go to bed without supper!

Pause. Jake and Brian wait for the joke. She's serious.

BRIAN

Sorry.

FRANCES

(to Jake)
I spoke to Morty D'Acosta today.

BRIAN

Uncle Morty?

JAKE

He looks about as much like your uncle as Sammy Davis, Jr.

FRANCES

(to Brian)
Guess who he's bringing to the party as his "plus one"? Ethel Merman!

BRIAN

(over the moon)
Ethel Merman is coming to our Christmas party?!

FRANCES

I thought you'd be pleased.

Brian jumps up and sings "There's No Business Like Show Business" a la Merman.

BRIAN

"Let's go on with the show"

FRANCES & BRIAN

"Let's go on with the show".

They laugh and hug each other.

BRIAN

Wait till I tell the kids at school!

JAKE

Hold on a minute, bucko. This may not exactly be the hottest news on the playground. We don't need a repeat of the "Hair" incident.

BRIAN

I won't sing this time.

JAKE

(gently)

Some of them might not have heard of Ethel Merman.

Pause. Brian bursts out LAUGHING.

BRIAN

(incredulous)

Dad, everybody's heard of Ethel Merman!

JAKE

Who's Sandy Koufax?

BRIAN

You mean Sandy Dennis?

Jake and Frances share a look.

FRANCES

Your father may have a point, darling.

BRIAN

Okay. But I have to call Jamie right now.

Brian happily skips out of the room, humming "There's No Business Like Show Business."

FRANCES

(Calling after him)

We're going to do some work after dinner. I want to make sure you're not hamming it up in the dance scene with Mary!

JAKE

Aren't you being a little intense on the acting coaching?

FRANCES

He's playing the lead!

JAKE

In the seventh grade play.

FRANCES

I don't want him to look like an ass up there.

JAKE

For him...or for you?

FRANCES

What's that supposed to mean? If I'd had someone to push me when I was his age, I'd be bigger than Elizabeth Taylor.

JAKE

You've been so uptight lately. Is anything wrong?

FRANCES

(incredulous)

How can you even ask that? The new play, the holidays, Brian's acting, Leah's elevator legs...

JAKE

Do you want to talk to someone?

FRANCES

You mean a head shrinker? The tabloids would have a field day with that one.

JAKE

It doesn't have the stigma it used to.

FRANCES

Maybe not for normal people. If
you're in the public eye, they
think you're nuts.

JAKE

You know that's not true. (Pause.)
Will you think about it?

FRANCES

I've thought about it.

She downs another highball.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MCKINLEY DEN - EVENING

A few days later, Brian is doing his homework while watching TV and eating GOOD N' PLENTY out of the box. Leah enters.

LEAH
What's that crap?

BRIAN
Good N' Plenty. Want some?

Brian holds out a handful of the pink and white candies.

LEAH
Looks like a handful of ludes.

BRIAN
Of what?

LEAH
Skip it. Got any money?

Brian shakes his head "No".

LEAH (CONT'D)
Is Michael Jeffreys coming to the Christmas party this year?

BRIAN
Why wouldn't he? You know who else is coming?

LEAH
Ethel Merman. You told me seventeen times. I just want one thing out of that party.

BRIAN
What?

LEAH
Some time alone with Michael Jeffreys.

BRIAN
(laughing)
How can you have time alone with him at a party?

Leah smiles seductively and exits.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

Frances and the other actors are milling about onstage as Tony calls to them.

TONY

And that's lunch everyone. Back at 1:30, please.

BRENDA, a ditzy wardrobe supervisor, approaches Frances.

BRENDA

Miss Barrow! Would you mind if I just double checked one of two measurements before you go to lunch?

FRANCES

No problem, Brenda.

She gets out a tape measure.

BRENDA

How do you do it? You never seem to gain an ounce.

FRANCES

(laughing)
Probably the stress.

BRENDA

Do you want a full apron or a half?

FRANCES

I don't wear an apron.

BRENDA

(confused)
But it says in scene two...

Brenda flips through the script.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Here it is. Mrs. Mallory enters from the kitchen wearing an apron.

FRANCES

(stone faced)
I'm not playing the mother. I'm playing the grown daughter.

BRENDA

But I thought--

FRANCES

The mother is supposed to be sixty!
Just how old do you think I look?

BRENDA

I'm so sorry, Miss Barrow.

FRANCES

(sweetly)
Don't give it another thought,
Brenda. We all make mistakes.

She pats Brenda on the shoulder and crosses to Tony.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I want her fired.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Brian is onstage with MIMI (12) rehearsing a scene from "It's A Wonderful Life." They are both doing a credible job for high school kids. MISS PERRY, the slightly mannish high school teacher, stands in the front of the auditorium.

BRIAN

(as George)
*I'll throw a rock at the old
Granville house.*

MIMI

(as Mary)
*Oh, no, don't. I love that old
house.*

BRIAN

(as George)
*No. You see, you make a wish and
then try and break some glass.
You've got to be a pretty good shot
nowadays, too.*

Miss Perry smiles. They are developing some real chemistry. Brian mimes hurling a rock towards the audience.

The rear auditorium doors BURST open. Frances enters in dark glasses, a black mink hat and coat. She sits in the back of the theatre. She and Miss Perry NOD to each other. Miss Perry watches Brian with genuine concern as he tenses up.

MIMI

(as Mary)
What'd you wish, George?

Frances noisily digs in her purse for a pen and paper. The best she can come up with is an eyebrow pencil and the back of an envelope.

She feverishly takes notes on Brian's performance. She wears an expensive-looking GOLD CHARM BRACELET. As she writes, it JINGLES like the bell on an ice cream truck. No one hears it except Brian. To him, the sound is deafening. His line readings become flat and mechanical.

BRIAN
 (as George)
*Well, not just one wish. A whole
 hatful, Mary.*

Frances SIGHS heavily. From Brian's POV, it sounds like a huge GUST OF WIND. Frances takes out a CIGARETTE and LIGHTER and takes a long drag. Miss Perry crosses to her.

MISS PERRY
 Mrs. McKinley.

She points to a prominent NO SMOKING SIGN in the back of the room. Frances gives her a pained smile as she tosses the lit cigarette onto the floor.

BRIAN
 (as George - faltering)
*I know what I'm going to do
 tomorrow and the next day...
 and...and the next year and the
 year after that.*

Frances writes again, her bracelet still tinkling, as she gets on a COUGHING JAG. It is an ugly, SMOKER'S COUGH. POV Brian as the sounds are amplified in his head like a series of EARTHQUAKES and AFTERSHOCKS, while the tinkling bell of the "ice cream truck" bracelet continues.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
 Miss Perry. I have to go to the
 bathroom.

MISS PERRY
 Take ten, you two.

Brian and Mimi exit. Miss Perry crosses back towards Frances.

MISS PERRY (CONT'D)
 (brightly)
 How's your new play coming along,
 Mrs. McKinley?

FRANCES

Better than this one, Miss Perry.
Can't you get Brian to butch it up
a little?

MISS PERRY

I don't think it's my place to--

FRANCES

You're his director! He's got to be
forceful if he's going to carry
this show. He needs to be manly.
Like you.

MISS PERRY

I'll talk to him.

FRANCES

I can see I'm going to have to
start doing more work with Brian at
home. Clearly, you have too much on
your plate to give him the help he
needs. Good afternoon, Miss Perry.

Miss Perry watches her depart as noisily as she entered.
Spotting Frances' smouldering cigarette on the floor, she
picks it up and takes a drag.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

The next day, Frances is on a break with BOB MARTIN (40's), a
distinguished looking character actor.

BOB

And then she said, "Listen here
you, I was big star for twenty
years before you ever dragged your
fat ass over that mountain!"

Bob waits for the laugh. Nothing.

BOB (CONT'D)

Frannie?

FRANCES

I'm sorry, Bob. I just can't stop
thinking about that new scene in
act two. Are you comfortable with
it?

BOB

Well, I was.

FRANCES

It's just not landing right for me.
Do you think we could do a bit of
work on our own tonight after the
preview?

BOB

Sure. I'll let Phyllis know I'll be
late.

FRANCES

You're an angel. Since I'll miss
the 11:07, I'll tell Jake I'm
getting a room at The Sherry.

INT. SHERRY NETHERLAND HOTEL LOBBY - EVENING

Frances, wearing heavy stage makeup and false eyelashes,
approaches the officious DESK CLERK at the upscale, boutique
hotel. Bob stands at a distance.

DESK CLERK

How may I help you, madam?

FRANCES

Honey, we have to rehearse a scene.
We need a quiet room on an upper
floor.

He SLAMS down a key.

DESK CLERK

(flatly)
202.

FRANCES

Is that the best you can do?

DESK CLERK

Take it or leave it.

Not happy, Frances hands him a credit card and picks up the
key. She and Bob head to the elevator as a FEMALE CLERK
approaches the desk.

FEMALE CLERK

Why were you so rude to her?

DESK CLERK

Did you see the way she was made
up? Some old whore just going to
turn a trick. "Rehearse a scene?"
That's a hot one.

FEMALE CLERK

That was Frances Barrow! She's a regular client. She just finished a preview of her new play, you idiot!

The panicked Desk Clerk races for the elevator.

DESK CLERK

Miss Barrow! Miss Barrow!

But it's too late. The doors close in his face.

FEMALE CLERK

Hope you liked working here.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

An hour later, Frances and Bob are finishing work on the new scene. They are charged, intense and have the easy rhythm of two old pros.

BOB

(in character)

I can't go on like this, Marjorie!

FRANCES

(in character)

Neither can I. I've only got three months to live.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Oh my God, that's great, Bob! I can't wait to show this to Michael.

BOB

Frannie, the subtext you're finding is extraordinary.

FRANCES

(pleased)

You really think so?

BOB

I know it. This is going to be some of your best work ever. Who gives a damn what Clive Barnes says?

FRANCES

(puzzled)

What about Clive Barnes?

BOB
 (alarmed)
 You didn't see his column in *The Post* yesterday?

FRANCES
 No. What did he say?

BOB
 It's stupid. It doesn't matter.
 I think this new scene is--

FRANCES
 Bob, what did he say?

BOB
 I need to get home. Phyllis will--

FRANCES
 Do you still have it?

Bob doesn't move. Frances snatches his BRIEFCASE and dumps the contents onto the floor, including a copy of *The New York Post*.

BOB
 Frannie, don't do this.

FRANCES
 (reading)
 "As excited as I was to learn that *To the Moon and Back* will star Broadway legend Frances Barrow, I did a double take when I learned that she's playing a thirtyish divorceé. Barrow's haggard appearance at last year's Tony Awards tells me she hasn't seen thirty in nearly two decades."

There is a long pause as Frances takes this in.

BOB
 (quietly)
 Frannie, no one pays attention to that crap. Who even reads it?

FRANCES
 It's *The New York Post*, Bob!
Everyone reads it.

She meticulously replaces the contents of Bob's briefcase.

BOB

When he sees how extraordinary you
are in this role, he'll eat those
words.

Frances snaps the briefcase shut. She holds it out to Bob.
Before he takes it, she lets out a guttural ANIMAL CRY and
HURLS it at the mirrored bar area. Glasses SHATTER.

BOB (CONT'D)

Frannie, take it easy!

FRANCES

I look haggard?! That cocksucker!

Fire in her eyes, Frances TRASHES the room. She grabs a
FRAMED PAINTING off the wall and SMASHES it. As Bob tries to
restrain her, she BITES HIS HAND. Frances knocks over a
coffee table, tosses CHAIRS to the floor and tries to yank
the DRAPES off the window. Tangled in one of them, she sinks
to the floor and CRIES like a lost child.

Bob gets down on the floor and holds her.

BOB

It's okay, Frannie. Want me to call
Jake?

FRANCES

Don't leave me!

She clutches Bob desperately, staring at his bleeding hand.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Frances KISSES it maternally, then passionately. Bob pulls
his hand away. She grabs it. Frances sucks on his fingers.

BOB

I've got to go.

FRANCES

(child-like)

Please?!

Reluctantly, Bob kisses her gently. And again. Frances holds
his head roughly as she devours his tongue.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM -DAY

Jake escorts a POLICEMAN to the door. Frances sits in a clump on the sofa in her dark glasses and mink coat.

JAKE

Thank you for your help, officer.

Frances sits with her head back, unable to look at him.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Do you want Annie to make you some coffee? Breakfast?

Frances shakes her head.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(flatly)

Was the sex any good?

FRANCES

Jesus, Jake.

JAKE

(barely controlling himself)

What do you want me to say?! I thought you had more class than to fuck your leading man. Isn't that a too obvious for the great Frances Barrow?

FRANCES

Are you done?

JAKE

I'm still in shock they didn't press charges. How much was the bill?

FRANCES

I haven't looked at it.

Jake grabs Frances' PURSE from her lap. He takes out a thick ENVELOPE and studies the contents.

JAKE

Seven thousand dollars?! You trashed a suite in one of the best hotels in New York and you didn't even get a good lay out of it?

FRANCES

What do you want me to say? Bob told me about the article and I got carried away.

JAKE

This is not "carried away", Frances. "Carried away" is dumping your dinner plate on the floor when the rump roast is overcooked. "Carried away" is throwing a lamp at me when I ask you for a crossword answer while you're studying your lines. "Carried away" is kicking the dog when he pisses on your new angora sweater. This is off-the-charts psychotic.

FRANCES

(quietly)

I never kicked the dog.

Pause.

JAKE

You've got an appointment at noon with a psychiatrist.

FRANCES

I have rehearsal.

JAKE

I've already called Tony. I told him you're having an emergency root canal and won't be in until 2:30.

Frances stands and faces him defiantly.

FRANCES

What if I won't go?

JAKE

I'll waltz out that door and straight to my lawyer's office. I'll sue you for custody and you'll never see me or the kids again.

The impact of this hits Frances like a ton of bricks. Jake exits into the bedroom.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Frances sits on a sofa, chain smoking. Across from her is DR. KEPPLER (30's). Hip, blue jeans, shoulder length hair.

DR. KEPPLER
So, tell me about your mom.

FRANCES
Are you fucking kidding me?!

DR. KEPPLER
What was she like?

FRANCES
Listen, asshole, I don't like you and I'm only here because my husband made me come.

DR. KEPPLER
When are you gonna drop the act, Frances? We both know you're scared shitless.

FRANCES
You don't know the first thing about me.

She starts for the door.

DR. KEPPLER
(the laundry list)
You're petrified of growing old, you're afraid your career is over, your son may be queer, your daughter's the town pump and if you don't stop behaving like a stark-raving bitch, your husband's going to leave you. Did I miss anything?

Frances stops.

FRANCES
(defensive)
So, you spoke to Jake. What does that prove?

DR. KEPPLER
The fact he didn't just take a hike proves that he loves you very much.

Frances MUMBLES something.

DR. KEPPLER (CONT'D)
Excuse me?

FRANCES
(over-articulating)
I said, "That's not possible."

DR. KEPPLER
How can you say that?

FRANCES
Because I'm completely unlovable.

Pause. Dr. Keppler motions towards the sofa.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Jake stands in a furnished, unrented studio apartment with PHOEBE BLAIR (50), a curvy, totally feminine realtor.

PHOEBE
You'll notice the kitchen has a
toaster oven and garbage disposal.

JAKE
Nice.

PHOEBE
When are you looking to move?

JAKE
Not sure yet.

PHOEBE
What did she do this time?

JAKE
It's out of control, Phoebe. I
can't take it anymore.

PHOEBE
I'm here, baby.

She wraps her arms around Jake. He plants a big, passionate kiss on her.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Thirty minutes later, the ashtray is filled with Frances' lipstick smeared cigarette butts.

DR. KEPPLER
How old were you when you were
molested?

FRANCES
Nine.

She turns to him.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
How did you know that?

DR. KEPPLER
I didn't.

FRANCES
(shrugs)
Well, what do you expect when you
grow up next to an army base?

DR. KEPPLER
That someone will protect you.
Where was your mother?

She looks away and lights a new cigarette off the old one.

FRANCES
Passed out on the sofa. Took the
grocery money and bought two fifths
of Wild Turkey.

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM -DAY

Leah is watching television while reading a book for school.
Brian enters, agitated.

BRIAN
Will you cue me on my lines?

LEAH
I'm studying for a book report.

BRIAN
(pleading)
Please? I've got to be better!

LEAH
Why?

BRIAN
That's why mom and dad are
fighting. She's mad because I'm not
good enough in the play!

LEAH
 Brian, I don't think that's--

BRIAN
 (desperate)
 It is! I know it is! You have to
 help me!

Seeing the look of panic in his eyes, Leah puts down her book and switches off the TV. He hands her the script.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Keppler sits across from Frances.

FRANCES
 Bi what?

DR. KEPPLER
 Bipolar. It's a new diagnosis. It's
 a form of manic depression, but --

FRANCES
 I'm not crazy!

DR. KEPPLER
 No one is saying that, Frances.
 It's a chemical imbalance in the
 brain. We don't know much about it
 yet. With your permission, I'd like
 to try some new medication for --

FRANCES
 I'm not your fucking lab rat!

DR. KEPPLER
 (gently)
 What was the cost of the damage to
 the hotel room?

Frances stares at him, tight-lipped.

DR. KEPPLER (CONT'D)
 Left untreated, this will get
 worse. There could be more
 incidents.

He writes a prescription.

DR. KEPPLER (CONT'D)
 Now, I'd like to start you on a
 mild dose of Lithium.

FRANCES

Lithium?! That's what they give the people in the padded rooms before they bleed them with leeches!

DR. KEPPLER

You have a very antiquated view of mental illness.

FRANCES

(sharply)

Don't use that phrase with me. Ever.

DR. KEPPLER

It's nothing to--

FRANCES

I have temperament. Call me an actress with an ego as big as Red China, but don't you dare call me crazy!

DR. KEPPLER

Fair enough.

He hands her the prescription.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Brian sits on a bench at recess studying his script. Fuzzy, one of the bullies from the opening scene, comes up behind him and YANKS the script out of his hand.

FUZZY

Whatcha doin' McKinley?

BRIAN

Hi Fuzzy. I was just going over my lines for the play.

FUZZY

Homo.

Brian doesn't respond. Fuzzy tauntingly tosses the script into the air and catches it.

FUZZY (CONT'D)

This play gonna be any good?

BRIAN

I think so.

FUZZY

It better be. My parents are coming. My old man says it's his favorite movie or some shit like that.

BRIAN

(trying to engage him)
It's a great movie. It was made in 1947 with James Stewart and --

FUZZY

(in his face)
If he doesn't like it, I'm gonna beat the living crap out of you.

Fuzzy throws the script in the air again. As Brian tries to catch it, Fuzzy SHOVES him out of the way. Both Brian and the script land in a MUD PUDDLE. Brian looks up at Fuzzy angrily.

FUZZY (CONT'D)

Fairy.

As Fuzzy exits, Brian shakes the water off his script and tends to it like a wounded animal.

INT. MCKINLEY DINING ROOM - DAY

Frances and Brian are setting elaborately decorated tables crammed into the smallish dining room. Brian lays out silverware as Frances makes napkin crowns. Jake stands nearby stringing colored lights around the sideboard.

BRIAN

How does this sound? "Miss Merman, it's such an honor to meet you. I think you're the greatest musical comedy star alive."

Frances shakes her head.

FRANCES

Darling, you mustn't gush over Miss Merman. Big stars don't like that.

BRIAN

You do.

Jake stifles a LAUGH. Frances shoots him a withering look.

FRANCES

You may tell her it's a pleasure to meet her and you are a great admirer of her work. And that's it.

BRIAN

But--

FRANCES

(firmly)

And that's it.

BRIAN

Is Uncle Morty renting a limo for her?

FRANCES

She has a recording session. They'll arrive separately.

JAKE

Is Sophia Loren coming this year?

FRANCES

Not invited.

JAKE

(crushed)

Why not?

FRANCES

Because last year, you groped her.

JAKE

I did not grope her! An ice cube fell out of her drink and went down her cleavage.

FRANCES

She's Italian! She's doesn't use ice!

The phone rings.

BRIAN

I'll get it!

He runs into the kitchen.

JAKE

So, how's it going with the medication?

FRANCES

Awful. It make me so light-headed. I feel totally out of control.

JAKE

Well you're seeming much better.

FRANCES
 (forcing a smile)
 Then I guess that's all that
 matters, isn't it?

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Frances' celebrity Christmas party is in full swing. The house is elaborately decorated. Frances wears a flowing gown.

Brian passes a large, silver tray of paté. EDNA MAE SCHOONER (55), a blowsy, character actress, cuts a generous portion.

EDNA
 Brian honey, if you need any help
 with your acting, you call me. God
 knows there's no one with any
 talent in this house!

Frances laughs so hard, she almost snarfs her scotch. MORTY D'ACOSTA, a borscht belt comic, notices.

MORTY
 Careful, Frannie. You almost did a
 spit take!

BRIAN
 (full of wonder)
 What's a spit take, Uncle Morty?

MORTY
 Jesus, Frannie, don't you teach
 this kid anything useful? Give me
 that tray. You should never pass
 anything bigger than your head.

Taking the tray from Brian, he picks up a GLASS OF WATER.

MORTY (CONT'D)
 Now, Danny Thomas made it famous.
 What the son-of-a-bitch never told
 anyone was that he stole it from
me. Now, observe --

FRANCES
 (sternly)
 Morty D'Acosta, if you do a spit
 take in this living room, I'll rip
 your balls off and sell 'em to the
 Commies! I just had that sofa
 reupholstered.

MORTY
C'mon, kid. Let's take this
outside.

EXT. MCKINLEY DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Morty and Brian stand outside, each holding a glass of water.

MORTY
Okay, so here's the gag. We're
husband and wife. I've just come
home from the office and you tell
me you're pregnant.

BRIAN
Got it.

MORTY
"So how was your day, dear?"

BRIAN
(in a feminine voice)
"Well dear, I went to the doctor
today..."

MORTY
(taking a mouthful of
water)
"Mmmm hmmm...?"

BRIAN
"And he told me I'm pregnant!"

Morty does a brilliant spit take, spraying water all over the
driveway. Brian GIGGLES joyfully.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Let me try!

MORTY
Be sure you face out and not at the
other person.

BRIAN
"So how was your day, dear?"

Brian takes a big gulp of water.

MORTY
"Well sweetums, I cleaned the bird
cage, trimmed the rhododendrons and
then I went to see mother and she
gave me her new recipe for
goulash."

Brian stares at him anxiously.

MORTY (CONT'D)

Wait for it, kid. "Then I went to the doctor for that pain in my side. You know how I thought it was bursitis?"

Brian can barely contain himself.

MORTY (CONT'D)

"Well, sweetheart, the doctor said it's not bursitis. It could be lumbago, but more likely it's a baby!"

And finally, Brian SPITS his mouthful of water...all over the approaching ETHEL MERMAN.

BRIAN

(Shocked)

Miss Merman!

As an outraged Ethel Merman shoots daggers at Brian, Morty doubles over in convulsive laughter.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Brian is fawning over Ethel Merman as she wipes her face with a TOWEL. Morty stands nearby, still trying not to laugh.

BRIAN
Miss Merman, I'm so sorry!

MERMAN
Geez, kid. I've been upstaged in my time, but a spit take on my entrance?!

BRIAN
Here, let me take your coat.

Brian grabs her MINK COAT and manages to drop the sleeve into a waiting bowl of ONION DIP. Merman grabs the coat gruffly.

MERMAN
(tight lipped)
You're two for two, kid. Better cut your losses.

She exits towards the bathroom. Mortified, Brian runs out of the room.

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Morty and Ethel Merman approach Frances.

FRANCES
Ethel, I'm so pleased you could come. My son Brian is beside himself.

MERMAN
You mean Calamity Joe?

Frances look confused. Morty intercedes.

MORTY
Merm, he's your biggest fan.

FRANCES
It's all he could talk about for weeks. He's so nervous and excited.

MERMAN
You don't say?

FRANCES

If you could spend even two minutes
with him, it would be the biggest
thrill of his life.

She shoots Morty a look.

MERMAN

(to Frances)

I'd love to meet him.

INT. CORNER OF THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

While everyone is having a wonderful time, Brian hides in the
corner, embarrassed beyond belief. Frances and Merman
approach him. Morty follows close behind.

FRANCES

Brian. Look who's here?

Brian looks up, a scared rabbit.

MERMAN

Nice to meet you, Brian.

She extends her hand and WINKS at him. He is speechless.

FRANCES

What do you say, darling?

BRIAN

How...how do you do?

FRANCES

Why don't you fix Miss Merman a
drink?

MERMAN

Thanks, kid. I'll have a dry
martini.

BRIAN

I'm only eleven. I don't know how
to make a martini.

MERMAN

C'mon. I'll show you!

Merman takes Brian by the hand and leads him to the bar.
Frances watches them go with tears in her eyes.

FRANCES

My son is having his first "Auntie
Mame" moment.

MORTY
 (reverently)
 Today, he's a man.

INT. LEAH'S GARAGE APARTMENT - LATER THAT EVENING

Leah is smoking a JOINT with MICHAEL JEFFREYS (46), Frances' Bohemian, free-spirited director. Leah is hurling her sexuality at him with the force of a tsunami.

LEAH
 You really don't think my mom's too old for this part?

MICHAEL
 She's a great actress. She can play anything.

LEAH
 You two used to be lovers, didn't you?

MICHAEL
 Back before the dawn of time. We were starving kids in the village. Long before she met your dad.

LEAH
 People say I look like her then.

MICHAEL
 You do.

Leah loosens her blouse and sidles closer to Michael.

LEAH
 Ever get nostalgic for the old days?

MICHAEL
 (uncomfortable)
 Um. Yeah. But your mom would rip my dick off.

Leah holds the joint up to his mouth.

LEAH
 (seductively)
 Who's going to tell her?

MICHAEL
 You would. Just to piss her off.

LEAH
 (whispering)
 No way. It could be our little
 secret.

Leah runs her hand up his leg. He stops her.

MICHAEL
 Leah, I'm flattered. But I've known
 you since before you were born and
 it's not going to happen.

LEAH
 I could tell her it happened
 anyway.

MICHAEL
 You could. But you won't. Believe
 it or not, your mother loves you
 very much.

LEAH
 Bullshit. She only loves her
 career.

MICHAEL
 You know that's not true. And I've
 got a news flash for you. The
 reason you won't tell her is that
 you love her, too.

Michael exits. Leah stubs out the rest of the joint.

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Six guests remain, all in various stages of exhaustion,
 inebriation or both. Frances tosses back another scotch as
 Morty consults a TRAIN SCHEDULE.

MORTY
 We missed the 9:07. The next one is
 10:15.

EDNA
 Frannie, we can wait at the station
 if you're --

FRANCES
 Don't be stupid. It's only ten
 minutes away. Besides, you'd freeze
 your asses off on the platform.

She hands her glass to Brian. He hesitates.

BRIAN

Are you sure?

FRANCES

I worked my ass off for this party
and I want another fucking drink!

MORTY

Where's Jake?

FRANCES

He went to bed a half hour ago. My
husband never could hold his
liquor. Well? I'm not drinking
alone.

MORTY

I'll have a glass of seltzer.

FRANCES

Seltzer?! Jesus Morty, you're such
a fucking Jew!

Morty stiffens.

EDNA

Leah looked so pretty tonight.
She's becoming quite a young lady.

FRANCES

What she's becoming is the whore of
Babylon! She's probably banging one
of the kitchen staff as we speak!
Thank God she's on the pill. (to
Michael) I saw her putting the
moves on you.

MICHAEL

(rising)
Frannie, maybe we'd better go.

FRANCES

(deadly quiet)
You'll go when I tell you!

Michael sits. The tension is palpable.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

You know how many people would give
their left butt cheek for an
invitation this party? And just
because you've been here for years
doesn't mean any one of you
couldn't be knocked off the list.

Edna crosses to Frances and gently takes her arm.

EDNA
(maternally)
Darling, why don't I help you to
bed...?

FRANCES
Take your hands off me, you
two-bit, summer stock has-been!

As Frances PUSHES her away, Edna FALLS to the floor. She
crashes into a CHAIR, which overturns.

MORTY
Edna!

Morty goes to her and helps her up. Frances is horrified.

FRANCES
Oh my God!

EDNA
(rubbing her shin)
It's okay. I'm alright.

MICHAEL
We'll wait at the station.

FRANCES
Edna, I'm so sorry!

EDNA
It's alright, honey.

Brian practically carries Frances towards her bedroom.

MORTY
Need some help there, slugger?

BRIAN
No thanks, Uncle Morty.

FRANCES
He's an old hand at this.

Morty stares at Brian with painful understanding.

MICHAEL
It was a swell party.

FRANCES
Yeah, if you like a hostess who's a
drunken asshole.

Frances leans on Brian's shoulder.

BRIAN

(quietly)

Mama, did you take your pills
today?

FRANCES

We don't talk about that in front
of people!

She turns back as the guests are putting on their coats.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

(brightly)

Nighty Night! Merry Christmas!

The guests offer forced smiles as they head out the door as
quickly as possible.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. MCKINLEY BEDROOM - DAY

The next morning, the RINGING ALARM CLOCK wakes Frances with a start. She sits up in bed, her head throbbing. It all comes back to her. She downs two ASPIRIN. Disgusted with herself, she reaches into the night table for her bottle of Lithium. She takes two and swallows them.

INT. FRANCES' DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

That night, Frances comes offstage and enters her dressing room, very upset. Part of the nightly ritual, ALVA (50's), her dresser since the dawn of time, starts pulling out the bobby pins in her wig. Frances pushes her away.

FRANCES

Leave me alone!

ALVA

What'd I do now?

Frances YANKS the wig off her head and hurls it onto the floor. Alva scrambles for the flying bobby pins.

ALVA (CONT'D)

Mr. Shubert's not gonna like you treating his five hundred dollar wig like that.

Standing in her wig cap, Frances rips off her eyelashes.

FRANCES

Fuck Mr. Shubert! Fuck all of 'em!

ALVA

(calmly, used to it)
Bad house tonight?

There is a KNOCK at the door. Michael Jeffreys enters. Frances motions to Alva, who exits.

FRANCES

I know. You don't have to tell me.
It was as flat as Twiggy's tits.

MICHAEL

Where was the edge? The danger? All the colors I saw in rehearsal?

FRANCES

It'll be back tomorrow. (Pause.)
Were there any critics here
tonight?

MICHAEL

Only a few second stringers.

FRANCES

Fuck.

MICHAEL

The big ones don't start coming
until next Thursday.

FRANCES

Thanks for telling me that.

She sits at her dressing table and removes her makeup.
Michael massages her shoulders.

MICHAEL

Do you want to talk about it?
We could go to Joe Allen's.

FRANCES

I have to catch the 11:07.

MICHAEL

You could crash at my place.

FRANCES

Jesus, was it that bad?! You
haven't offered me a mercy fuck in
seventeen years!

MICHAEL

(smiling)
And I haven't given you one in
twenty.

Michael pats her on the shoulder and exits. As soon as the
door closes, Frances picks up the bottle of Lithium and POURS
it down the sink. She then hurls the bottle to the floor and
SMASHES it violently under her heel as Alva re-enters.

ALVA

Roaches again? I'll call the
exterminator first thing in the
morning.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Frances tiptoes into Brian's bedroom. He has kicked off the covers and he holds his SCRIPT in one hand and his box of GOOD 'N PLENTY in the other. Frances watches him sleep for a moment, then lovingly adjusts the blankets around him. She places the script on the night table and pops a piece of the candy into her mouth. Not bad.

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brian sits with his script open as Frances enters quickly.

FRANCES

I haven't got much time. Let's get moving.

BRIAN

What did you want to work on today?

FRANCES

Your strength.

BRIAN

(confused)
My "strength"?

Frances picks up a large TREE BRANCH, like a walking stick.

FRANCES

(no-nonsense)
Hold this. Plant your feet firmly on the ground. You're playing George Bailey, not Peter Pan.

Brian takes the stick. She pushes his shoulders back gruffly.

BRIAN

(incredulous)
You want me to play the love scene holding this big stick?

FRANCES

For now. Yes.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

(as Mary)
What'd you wish, George?

Brian awkwardly holds the stick on in one hand and his script in the other.

BRIAN

*Well, not just one wish. A whole
hatful, Mary.*

FRANCES

Shoulders back, for Chrissake!

She pushes his shoulders back. Brian struggles to concentrate.

BRIAN

*I know what I'm going to do
tomorrow and the next day and the
next year and the year after that.*

FRANCES

Chest out! Forceful!

Frances SLAPS Brian on the chest. His face is flushed. He turns away.

BRIAN

*I'm shaking the dust of this crummy
little town off my feet--*

FRANCES

What am I, out the window?! Look at
me when you talk to me!

BRIAN

(his lip quivering)
*And...and I'm going to see the
world.*

FRANCES

Use the stick! Strong! Manly!

Brian starts to CRY.

BRIAN

*Italy, Greece, the Parthenon, the
Colosseum.*

FRANCES

(exploding)
Say those names like you mean them!
They're the wonders of the world,
not a fucking laundry list!

Brian drops the stick, crying in frustration. Realizing what she's done, Frances puts her arms around him gently.

BRIAN

I'm sorry, Mommy. I want to be good for you. Really, I do.

FRANCES

(stroking his hair)

It's not for me, darling. I'm only doing this for you.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Set building day. Friendly chaos ensues. Fathers with hammers, mothers measuring kids for costumes, kids painting flats. Miss Perry supervises with a WHISTLE on a chain.

Frances enters with AL and ROXANNA (60's), an imposing, older couple. Brian puts down his paint brush and watches.

MISS PERRY

Hello, Mrs. McKinley. I'm afraid I can't talk right now.

FRANCES

Of course you can't, Miss Perry. I'm here to help.

MISS PERRY

(thrown)

Well, thank you. Do you want to paint or hammer?

FRANCES

Aren't you cute? This is Al Matillo, head of United Scenic Artists and his wife, Roxanna, owner of Matillo Costumes. With your permission, I've hired them to help. On me, of course.

MISS PERRY

That's very generous of you, Mrs. McKinley, but--.

Frances motions for her whistle, which she hands to Al. As he BLOWS it, an army of BROADWAY STAGEHANDS and DRESSERS enter carrying professional set pieces, costumes, props, etc. Miss Perry and the parents are speechless.

FRANCES

I rented the sets and costumes from the national tour. It'll be so much nicer, don't you think?

As everyone gets to work, Brian crosses to Frances in amazement.

BRIAN

Mom, what are you doing?

Frances touches the boy's face tenderly.

FRANCES

You don't get a role like this every day. It's much harder to focus on your craft if you don't have the proper technical support. I want you to be the best.

Overjoyed, Brian hugs his mother tightly.

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jake enters the living room and sees Frances surrounded by sixty or seventy pieces of SILVER - ashtrays, vases, bowls, etc., She is polishing each one manically.

JAKE

What are you doing?

FRANCES

Silver's got to be done for the opening night party.

JAKE

That's not until next week.

FRANCES

Can't put everything off until the last minute.

JAKE

(suspiciously)

Where's Annie?

FRANCES

I sent her to Gristede's. We're going to need a lot of chicken divan to feed this crowd.

JAKE

What happened to the caterers?

FRANCES

I cancelled them. I'm doing the cooking.

JAKE
You're cooking supper for seventy
people? On your opening night?

FRANCES
That's why I'm starting now.

She rubs a silver teapot ferociously.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
This fucking thing won't come
clean!

She rubs it with such force, it goes flying out of her hands
and bounces across the floor. Jake picks up the teapot and
puts it on the counter.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
I'm not does with that. Give it
here!

Frances SNAPS her fingers at Jake like a headwaiter.
He studies her.

JAKE
Are you taking your meds?

Frances opens her purse, pulls out a bottle of pills and pops
one into her mouth before returning to the silver.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Let me see your tongue.

FRANCES
I've got to get this finished
before --

JAKE
(firmly)
Stick out your tongue.

She turns away.

FRANCES
Darling, please!

Jake grabs her head and holds her nose until she opens her
mouth. Her tongue is black.

JAKE
That's not Lithium. It's licorice!
You're eating Brian's "Good 'N
Plenty!"

FRANCES
 (faux tears)
 How dare you treat me this way!

JAKE
 Goddammit, Frannie, why did you stop taking them?

FRANCES
 Because I can't act when I take them! My performance goes down the crapper! I need that sense of urgency.

JAKE
 It's going to kill you!

FRANCES
 You don't know! You're not up on that stage!

JAKE
 (quietly seething)
 No. I'm here at home. And I need a wife and mother who isn't out of her fucking mind!

Jake gets his coat and starts to exit.

FRANCES
 Where are you going?

JAKE
 I'm not staying around to watch you self-destruct.

FRANCES
 My show's about to open! I need you!

JAKE
 Then take your fucking pills!

FRANCES
 I can't work that way!

JAKE
 (quietly)
 Well, you'd better make a choice.

He exits. Frances starts to cry then THROWS the silver all over the room. Brian enters and holds her. She cries in his arms.

BRIAN
It's okay, Mommy. It'll be okay.

He cradles and rocks her gently.

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - DAY

The following afternoon, Leah comes home from school. Brian is putting all the silver from the previous scene back in its proper place.

LEAH
Where's Mom?

BRIAN
Still asleep.

LEAH
All day?

Brian nods.

BRIAN
You think dad will come back?

LEAH
(shrugs)
He always has before.

BRIAN
But it's never been this bad.

Leah starts helping Brian put away the silver.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Where do you think he stayed last night?

LEAH
With Phoebe Blair.

BRIAN
(shocked)
Seriously?

LEAH
Where do you think he goes every time they have a fight?

BRIAN
Where have you been?

LEAH
The doctor.

BRIAN

You okay?

LEAH

I'm pregnant. Gotta ask dad for the money for an abortion.

BRIAN

(tentatively)

Do you think you could wait until Monday to ask him?

LEAH

Why?

BRIAN

Well, my play is this weekend--

LEAH

(angry)

Jesus, you and your fucking play! You're as bad as mom!

BRIAN

(desperate)

Please? I'm afraid he'll tell her.

FRANCES (O.S.)

Tell her what?

Frances enters, smartly dressed and ready for action.

BRIAN

Mom! You're up!

FRANCES

Of course I'm up. I have a five show weekend.

BRIAN

The pharmacy delivered this.

He hands her a paper bag.

FRANCES

Thank you. I renewed my Lithium prescription. I'll take it after the performance. (Pause.) Brian, didn't you go to school today?

BRIAN

(shaking his head)

I was afraid you weren't ever going to get up again.

FRANCES

(sweetly)

How could I not get up? I have to go see someone as George Bailey in "It's A Wonderful Life" on Sunday night. You'll go with me won't you, Leah?

LEAH

Actually, I was going to go with dad on Saturday night.

FRANCES

Of course you are. I'm sure Brian wants you there on opening night. Haven't you got your final dress rehearsal tonight?

BRIAN

Yes...but the principal won't let you rehearse if you haven't been to school that day.

FRANCES

(indignantly)

The hell he won't! Get your coat!

Leah exits. As Frances turns to go, her pharmacy bag falls to the floor. Two large BOTTLES OF PILLS spill out...and two boxes of GOOD N PLENTY. With a look of great disappointment, Brian picks them up and hands them to Frances.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Thank you darling. You know me - Gazelle McClumsy.

Brian just stares at his mother.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I bought one of these for you. I know how much you like them. And I've developed quite a taste for them myself...

She holds one of the candy boxes out to Brian. He doesn't take it.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

It's okay, you can have them both.

She hold both boxes out to Brian. He still doesn't move.

BRIAN

I think you need them more than I do.

FRANCES

You won't tell, will you?

BRIAN

I'll get my coat.

Brian slowly exits.

INT. PHOEBE BLAIR'S APARTMENT - THAT EVENING

Jake sits in his slippers as Phoebe enters from the bedroom.

JAKE

I thought I'd go down to Martinelli's and get us some linguine with clam sauce.

PHOEBE

No, thanks.

JAKE

You want the eggplant instead?

PHOEBE

Only if it's "to go".

She holds out his shoes. He doesn't take them.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

You know the rules. Never more than one night. And never when Frances is home. I've already broken one.

JAKE

I can't go back this time, Phoebe.

PHOEBE

We both know you can't live without her. Now, you get that linguine and have it waiting for her when she comes home tonight. She's always starving after a show.

He takes the shoes from her with deep gratitude.

INT. FRANCES' DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Frances is cutting her Lithium pills in half with a pair of SCISSORS. Alva enters.

ALVA
Those are my good sewing scissors!

FRANCES
(happily)
Fuck your scissors.

ALVA
Just wait until the next time you
rip a hem at five minutes before
places.

FRANCES
I'll buy you a new pair.

Frances measures out the half pills into an elaborate PILL BOX for every day of the week. Unseen by Alva, she inserts Good N Plenty into every other compartment.

INT. BACKSTAGE - SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Frances and Jake are backstage after Brian's performance. Excited kids and parents everywhere. A gushing MOTHER (30's) comes up to her.

MOTHER
Miss Barrow, I saw one of the
previews of your new play! May
I have your autograph, please?

Frances smiles and signs the program. Brian sees her and is afraid to approach. Jake runs up to him.

JAKE
Hey kiddo! You were even better
than last night!

BRIAN
Did you really think so?

JAKE
Absolutely. I'm so proud of you. I
loved the moment when you--

But Brian isn't listening. He is zeroing in on Frances, who is now talking to Mimi, his leading lady.

FRANCES
Mimi, the subtleties you found in
your character were just marvelous.
Congratulations.

MIMI
 (on cloud nine)
 Thank you, Mrs. McKinley!

FRANCES
 (to Brian)
 Well darling, you sure looked good
 up there.

BRIAN
 You really thought so?

FRANCES
 Absolutely. It was totally worth
 the four grand it cost to rent
 those sets and costumes. (laughs)
 I just hope it's paid off by the
 time your graduate college. Now,
 I'm sure there are a lot of people
 who want to talk to you, so we'll
 see you at home. Mimi's mother will
 give you a ride.

Crestfallen, Brian watches his parents leave.

INT. MCKINLEY LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Leah enters as Jake is watching the evening news.

LEAH
 Can I get a ride to school
 tomorrow?

JAKE
 Sure. Everything okay?

LEAH
 Time for a father-daughter talk.

JAKE
 How about now?

Brian enters still wearing his stage makeup. He looks alarmed
 as he sees Leah.

LEAH
 That's okay. This is Brian's night.

Leah exits. Frances enters from the kitchen.

FRANCES
 (to Brian)
 You must be hungry. I heated up
 some linguine.

BRIAN

Thanks.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brian switches on the light in his room. There are BOUQUETS OF ROSES everywhere. It looks like a florist's shop. He stares at them in awe as Frances and Jake enter.

FRANCES

Tonight, you became an actor. I am so proud of you.

Tears in her eyes, Frances opens her arms. They embrace tightly. As Jake watches the tender scene, he spots something on the floor. Picking up an empty box of Good 'N Plenty, he throws it into the trash can. Leah enters and hovers in the background.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END