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Trailer Hitched: A One Act Play

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TRAILER HITCHED: A ONE ACT PLAY

by
Shelby Grady

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

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ABSTRACT
SHELBY GRADY: Trailer Hitched: A One Act Play
(Under the direction of Michael Barnett)

This thesis investigates the creative process of writing and developing a written piece of theatre. It delves into the methods of preparing to write a play (plot outlines, character descriptions, writing exercises), the maturation of the story throughout the writing process (enhanced by workshops, journal writing, and the reading of published plays), as well as the progression of the project through varying stages of revision (aided by readings of the work, feedback from peers and advisors, and consideration of criticism). The thesis is a culmination of the aforementioned exploration, resulting in a complete one act play as well as an introduction detailing the course of action taken to reach the finished product.
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The following thesis is a creative project, conceptualized, written, and revised over the span of one year. It explores the preparation necessary to build a solid foundation for theatrical creation, the challenges one faces throughout the writing and editing process, and the final product: an original one-act play. At its core, it is an exercise in the process of clearly expressing one’s thoughts, a study of human dynamics, and a reflection of the fact that theatrical work is constantly in flux.

About a year ago, my mother and grandmother told me a story. It was a story of family dynamics, of wedding disasters, of zany characters and questioning sexuality. It was a rich story, full of plot twists and moments that had me laughing aloud. It was the story of Tucker’s wedding. It was true. This story was soon to become my thesis.

I came into this process feeling largely unprepared for what I was about to take on. After being completely overwhelmed and simultaneously underwhelmed by the idea of delving into a research thesis, I changed directions and came to the conclusion I would write a play. I excelled in my creative writing classes throughout my time in high school and college, and I strive to be an actor of many facets. As such, writing a play seemed to be the logical solution to my tendency toward the creative process. I have never taken a playwriting course nor written a scene as an acting exercise. What you are about to read has largely been born out of a trial by error scenario, and is the fruit of a condensed thesis writing process as I have progressed on my journey towards graduating a year in advance.
My first meeting with my advisor, Mr. Barnett, was an incredible wake-up call. He began asking me questions that I had considered but hadn’t fully fleshed out. Looking back over my journal from the first meeting, I said, “I feel like a child taking on an adult’s project.” All of a sudden this enormous creative undertaking sat before me, and I had absolutely no idea where to begin. Rather than diving in immediately, Mr. Barnett instead gave me an exercise. He asked me to write a scene about Yo Gabba Gabba, a popular children’s television show, as if the actors were talking before a taping. This project served as a warm-up, a foray into what my brain would be grappling with in the ensuing months. It was my first lesson in what continues to be my most challenging aspect of character creation: attempting to express a voice for each person on the page as I heard it in my head. As an actor, I have done extensive voice work, but I quickly discovered the gaps in articulating a voice aloud versus writing one down. Putting pen to paper and expressing it linguistically has proven to be an immensely tangled knot that I’m still trying to unravel. In hopes of more clearly defining how I might go about articulating character through dialogue, I began my ongoing research element: reading plays.

Mr. Barnett encouraged me to read as many plays as I could, pinpoint aspects of the writing and style I identified with or felt alienated from, and use that information as a foundation for what might be the best way to approach my own process. I began sifting through many different styles, genres, and playwrights in order to get as wide a sampling as possible. The plays spanned vastly different decades, genres, and content: One night I’d read Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the next John Patrick Shanley’s *Doubt*, John Logan’s
Red, Samuel Beckett’s Come and Go, or Caryl Churchill’s A Number. I explored plays with varying sized casts, dynamic characters, and distinct styles. I wanted to explore effective techniques before I attempted to develop my own.

Several works stood out in particular to me, one of which was Sam Shepard’s Fool For Love, a critically acclaimed drama. Surprisingly, this was by far my least favorite of the works I read, but it provided some of the best fodder for zeroing in on what my play should not be. After reading it, I wrote:

I didn’t relate to any of the characters. In fact, I got incredibly frustrated with the erratic way they were behaving, and I just wanted them to make a concrete decision and stick with it. I didn’t emotionally invest in them at all, I didn’t even feel particularly sorry for them until the very end when I heard their backstories. Which was yet another problem--I had no idea why these people’s stories were getting told or what the audience was supposed to take away from the play.

The issues I had with Fool For Love encompassed many I felt myself facing with the story I was preparing to tell: lots of unusual characters behaving in seemingly unrealistic ways, potential for disconnect from the audience, and lack of emotional investment in their progression. The clear identification of how ineffective those combined elements could be made me consider how I might combat those issues. Additionally, I found that while I did not personally appreciate the characters or their stories, their voices were potent in a way that inspired me. I felt Shepard used dialect and word choice to effectively further the development of the character. For example:

“EDDIE’S VOICE: Where’s the damn glasses?

MAY: In the medicine cabinet!
EDDIE’S VOICE: What the hell’re they doin’ in the medicine cabinet!

MAY: There’s no germs in the medicine cabinet!

EDDIE’S VOICE: Germs.

MAY: Eddie, did you hear me?

MAY: Did you hear what I said, Eddie?

EDDIE: About what?

MAY: About the man who’s coming over here.

EDDIE: What man?

MAY: Oh, brother.

(Shepard, 31)

The people Shepard created in this piece had very specific language and speaking styles: their sentence structure reflected their backgrounds, educations, and upbringings, and their verbiage created nuances in their character. Eddie’s clipped lines and short sentences influenced the development of Tucker’s voice, and the “he said, she said” concept of this particular scene worked its way into the confusion and element of surprise included in the falling action of my own work.

Consequently, a work I found very evocative was Christopher Durang’s “The Nature and Purpose of the Universe.” Durang, a successful comedic playwright who excels in creating situations and characters that are extreme, dynamic, and often bizarre, exhibited more similarities to the realm of playwriting I was aiming towards. After concluding the play, I wrote:

It explored themes of chaos and helplessness, how one feels when it seems the entire world is ganging up on them. It delved into family dynamics and people
who would be considered the outcasts of society. The thing I appreciate with Durang is that his plays often seem out of control, but the overall messages and concepts are made very clear to his audience. That, I think, was the quality I was lacking in Shepard’s *Fool For Love*. He paints a very clear and specific image of the family featured, with each character fulfilling a very specific “type.” Applying this technique to my play could be very valuable; each of these characters had a very clear voice and mannerisms, which is what I feel I’m struggling the most with capturing in my one act.

Because I found Durang’s work influential, I read several more of his one-acts and plays, including “Death Comes To Us All, Mary Agnes,” perhaps the piece I connected with the most. It was a brilliant example of how to take many different characters and manage to allow the audience to keep up with each of them and their storylines, which was very beneficial in the consideration of my own work. His characters were vibrant and fascinating, and although it was clearly a comedy, each person was clearly studied and had a variety of emotional levels, which I appreciated. The dialogue between characters was calculated and witty, which I found fascinating. For example:

“HERBERT: I didn’t know Martin had a niece.

MARGOT: Father, I want you to go right up to her and tell her you hate her.

HERBERT: Who? His niece?

MARGOT: No. My mother. Tell her just so she knows.

HERBERT: She knows already.

MARGOT: Then why are you afraid to tell her?
HERBERT: Margot, you are spoiling my evening. I can’t read, the boy scouts are here, and we’re plagued with epileptics. Why can’t we be civilized?

MARGOT: She’s the one who’s not civilized! This is the woman who’s maimed me. I’m psychologically maimed.

HERBERT: You seem fine to me, dear.

MARGOT: Well, you don’t see very well, do you?”

(Durang, 55)

His stylized and inventive dialogue was incredibly inspiring to me, and the aspects of farce woven into his work felt increasingly close to the work I was wanting to produce. As I began my process, I found both plays sticking with me. I strove to weave Durang’s quick pace, clear characters, and the expression of their specific wants throughout my own writing. Influences of his absurdism manifested itself in the cutting of Pop-tarts in the opening scene, Faylene trying to sweep with a dry mop, and Devine’s tantrum over an enchilada. I found myself returning to his material throughout the process when I needed a bit of creative inspiration; if Durang could make such bizarreness accessible, so could I.

Even after consuming and considering many plays and taking my first stab at writing, I felt nervous about the large number of characters throughout my show’s narrative. To ease this burgeoning tension, I wrote character sketches for each person who would appear amidst the action. Reflecting on them now, they seem to be an incredibly telling aspect of the progression and evolution of the characters, as each person took on a life of his or her own. While this first step provided a sounding board for my initial work, it now seems to have painted each character incorrectly. The essences of the characters remain, but crucial details have organically evolved and developed complexity
to form the world of the play as it presently exists. The document itself is a preservation of the two-dimensional, lifeless characters I imagined at the onset of the process. For instance, lengthy descriptions of two characters that no longer appear in the play make up the bulk of the writing. Before I began my first draft, I believed my tale would center on Casey and Carol, imaginative reinventions of my mother and grandmother, the original storytellers. Interestingly, these two characters are incredibly flat, despite my efforts to make them more rounded and captivating. For instance, samplings of my description of Carol:

_Carl Jennings Wight_

_Age: 56_

_Physical Description:_ Very put-together. She is neither matronly nor fashion-forward, her style is very tasteful. Tall, statuesque, thin, was very beautiful in her day. Short, styled, dark brown hair. Light blue eyes. Some wrinkles are beginning to form on her kind-looking face. Loves to smile. Always wears lipstick perfectly matched to her immaculate outfits.

_Charecters Traits:_ Firmly believes in not pressuring her children to be any sort of “way,” but hopes Casey will get married soon. She hopes going to Tucker and Maytha’s wedding will make her realize how wonderful marriage can be and move past her breakup in order to find someone who treats her well. Mary has been married for two years, and Cameron has a serious girlfriend, so the one Carol worries most about (in that regard) is Casey. She wishes Casey didn’t live so far away, that she could be more involved in her life.
While these descriptions are entirely valid and quite applicable to character development, their mundane natures strongly contrast the majority of the characters they interact with, so much so that they practically seemed like women from a different world. However, this realization would not occur until much later in the process. As it was, I proceeded with their character development and involvement in the story of the play.

After completing the character sketches, it was imperative that I establish how each character spoke. These people needed to be fleshed out further, and while descriptions of them could help me understand the bullet point facts about each, I still had very little sense of the kinds of sentence structure, diction, and syntax that would make them each unique individuals. As an exercise, I wrote a monologue for each character, cataloging their thoughts right before the wedding was to begin. It is interesting to consider them now, as many of the monologues served as fodder for future scenes and distinct patterns of speech for each character. Dave’s monologue that occurs before the wedding was born from this exercise, as well as the initial back and forth between Jilda and her bridesmaids. While other monologues didn’t make it into the script as-is, aspects of each became extremely prevalent in the ensuing months of writing. Tucker’s is by far the shortest speech, now reflecting his overall unease throughout the play and general lack of solidified words for his thoughts. His monologue ultimately provided the impetus for one of the more serious scenes in the show: his exchange with Jamie immediately before the ceremony. He says:

Tucker:
Wow...this is really it. I’m...getting married. Married. Whoda thunk. Out of everyone in the family…I can do this, right? I mean, it’s Jilda. And Devine. And Cooper…I’ll be happy.

It’s interesting to note that the three bridesmaids (Charity, Gracelyn, and Faylene) were not included in this exercise. At the onset of my process, I was quite certain they were not going to be speaking characters, much less progress the plot in any way. Originally, they were to serve as continued examples of absurdism in the wedding, merely a device to make the audience laugh. They weren’t supposed to have opinions, personalities, or individuality. As I began writing the wedding scene, I realized how much they had to say and how necessary they were to the progression of the plot. Additionally, I realize now that I never ended up writing a monologue for Jamie. This is another interesting fact, seeing as he has been the character whose voice and personality have been the most unclear to me throughout the process. In my earlier drafts, I felt myself forcing to include Jamie in scenes, not wanting to write in his voice or allow him to grow. In fact, his identity and cadences were not fully realized until recently, when I zeroed in on his education as setting him apart from the rest of the characters’ speech patterns and habits. His word choices and sentence structures are significantly more complex, and he often uses more words than others in attempt to carefully articulate his thoughts. With the more concrete knowledge of his identity, it would now be significantly easier to go back and write a monologue for Jamie, as he currently stands on his own two feet as a human being. In hindsight, I wish I had written and prepared more for Jamie’s character, who is much richer, rather than worrying so much about Carol and Casey’s voices.
As I fleshed out each character’s vocal qualities, it became very clear that I needed a solid understanding of these people’s relationships (or lack thereof) before I could begin allowing them to actually interact. This resulted in a complex relationship chart, connecting the characters I considered most important with every single other character in hopes of more fully realizing how they might converse, their comfort around each other, and potential tensions that may arise. For instance, the relationship between Tucker and Jilda:

Tucker to Jilda: Tucker and Jilda are getting married. Jilda is drawn to his simplicity and quiet way, Tucker’s drawn to her different way of seeing the world and unconventional lifestyle. They don’t know each other incredibly well, but they met at a bar on a single’s night and managed to carry on quite the conversation. Whenever there was a lull, Tucker would ask an off-the-wall question and Jilda would be back on track, talking a mile a minute about whatever came to mind. He liked that he didn’t have to contribute a whole lot to the conversation; he was happy to just listen to her talk. This blossomed into a relationship: going on dates to the BBQ restaurant and sitting outside playing with Devine. They’d only dated for about two months when Tucker proposed. He felt like he wasn’t going to find anyone better than Jilda, and felt that their marriage would be low maintenance. He liked her company. Jilda said yes because he was stable economically and he never interrupted her or got upset. Their relationship is fairly even-keeled and easy.”

As the process continued, some details of their relationship changed (for instance, the fact that Cooper introduced them rather than them meeting at a bar), but the essence of how
they interact stayed the same. The detail that Jilda accepted Tucker’s proposal based on his monetary stability blossomed into the entire ending of the play and ultimately provided a key character quality for Jilda. Similarly, the varying opinions of characters on Devine became an important factor and juxtaposition throughout the play:

Casey to Devine: Casey thinks Devine is the most horrible, bizarre child she has ever encountered in her life. She thinks she’s an out of control, horrid girl and that she hasn’t been raised with any sort of boundaries, rules, or limitations. She’s confounded by the behavior she sees Devine display and wonders how she could’ve gotten so out of control so quickly. It makes her weary of Jilda as a result. Devine thinks nothing of Casey.

Tucker to Devine: Tucker loves Devine; he thinks she hung the moon. This is a problem because it makes him want to spoil her. She loves him for a lot of similar reasons to her mom: most importantly he never quiets her and usually doesn’t raise his voice. He’s definitely not what one would call a strong authority figure. She’s also incredibly excited about being in the wedding; when Jilda came up with it, Tucker couldn’t say no.

Through the development of Devine’s character, it started becoming unrealistic that no one could tell her no, and was a detail that stood out negatively in the play. This resulted in the modification that Tucker serves as the only figure in her life that can attempt to keep her wild-child antics under control. A lot of the description above still applied, but Jilda became the bigger pushover in her daughter’s life. In turn, this added an interesting layer to Tucker, and I became interested in how he might parent. He is not harsh or firm, but he introduces the concept of consequences and respecting one’s elders into Devine’s
life, ultimately reflecting some of Jamie’s parenting styles as well. The relationship charts only reinforced and establish complexity within the world of the play and provided yet another piece of the puzzle.

Finally, I was in a position to create a basic plot outline, or scene breakdown. This was surprisingly the most general of all the documents and allowed for the most room to explore how I would go about creating a complete story arc. It is also the document that looks the most different from the finished product; it revolves around Casey and Carol’s storyline and thoughts, as they were my original protagonists. The outline reads as follows:

Scene 1:

- Casey and Carol. Serves as an exposition for the entire play and will feature Carol and Casey packing and preparing to depart for the wedding. Casey is essentially being dragged there. The scene is expositional and informs the audience of what the play will be about, establishes relationships between Casey and Carol, as well as introducing the audience to the two most central characters.

Scene 2:

- Casey and Carol arrive in Jamie’s home in Dallas and meet the bride, groom, and Devine, probably over dinner. The scene introduces the audience to several of the wedding characters, allows them to get a sense of their quirky character traits, as well as, once again, establishing the relationships between the more prominent characters. Additionally, the audience (as well as Casey/Carol) will begin to get the backstory of Tucker and Jilda’s bizarre wedding plans. The dinner will most
likely end in a fight of some sort, with everyone storming off to their respective rooms or cars.

Scene 3:

- Casey and Carol getting ready for the wedding. The scene should serve as reinforcement of Casey and Carol’s dynamics, as well as delving a little further into Casey’s breakup and explain why she’s so annoyed to be there. Also serves as an interlude between the dinner and the wedding so as not to confuse the audience.

Scene 4:

- The Wedding. This features all of the above characters (Casey, Carol, Tucker, Jilda, Cooper, Devine, Dave, Jamie) plus the three bridesmaids and a handful of wedding guests. (My tentative vision for this scene is to have it done with Carol and Casey’s backs of pews facing the audience, with several gossipy ladies sitting in a pew in front of them, speaking loudly enough about what’s going on for the audience to hear. They will provide additional humorous tidbits about the couple and the situation.) The scene serves as the pivotal moment of bizarre hilarity, the crux of what each of these characters is all about. It’s what everything’s been building up towards.

Scene 5:

- The reception. Again, most likely everyone who was at the wedding will be at the reception. The scene will focus on Casey and Carol as they try to take care of the catering company that didn’t send a crew as well as trying to keep the party
under control. The scene serves as somewhat of a realization for Casey that she doesn’t need to have a wedding to be happy, that it’s almost more chaos than anything. It should be falling action; both the wedding and the play are wrapping up.

Scene 6:
-Some sort of conclusion. I’m honestly not sure what exactly this is going to entail right this moment, but I’m working on it, thinking of ideas.”

My notes and ideas for these scenes were expressed very informally and served as a rough guideline for no one but myself as I prepared to actually begin writing. It was reassuring to me to be able to see on paper the number of scenes I was aiming for and the general content and idea of each. As one can see, I had absolutely no idea of how the play would end, which proved to be an immense challenge as I began to get closer to writing the conclusion. I did not have any vague sense of what I would like to occur in the ending, and it was not until I was preparing to turn in a first draft that I decided I’d like to have Tucker and Cooper run off together, a choice that ultimately led me to solidify Jilda’s motivation throughout.

After dabbling in each character’s background, voices, relationships, and actions, I was actually able to begin writing the show. I looked at the weeks in the semester and planned to complete about a scene a week. What I came to realize was that this project was almost as much a practice in self-monitoring as it was a creative project. When a large undertaking has a due date that is many months away, it can become increasingly easy to put off working on it. I had to find my motivation and drive to work each time I
sat down at my computer. In fact, “sitting down at my computer” to work on something creative was an incredibly foreign concept to me. Acting itself is highly physical, and exploration tends to involve copious amounts of stretching, movement, and energy. When memorizing monologues or lines, I have always been a restless actor, needing motion and action to aid in the process of remembering. The concept of sitting down with my laptop every single day and allowing the creative juices to flow was an incredibly alien idea to me. As someone who is not inherently a playwright, it was also a challenge to write anything without judging it or wanting to erase it and start over. It was an exercise in patience to allow anything and everything to appear on the page without feeling concerned about someone reading it or thinking it was inadequate. My lack of experience made me incredibly self-conscious, and I had to constantly remind myself that the project was in flux, that it did not need to be perfect immediately.

After all the preparation I had grappled with, I was surprised at how easily the opening scene flowed out of me. Once I had actually begun, the project seemed less daunting, and having a beginning certainly helped ease my nerves. I read somewhere once that to write well you must write what you know; as I am not customarily a writer, I am not sure if that is universally applicable. However, in my case, it was incredibly helpful to pull from my own life and interactions throughout the beginning of the project, and the first scene ended up being largely a conglomeration of conversations and arguments with my own mother. Ultimately the scene was cut, but is included for reference in Appendix A.

The ensuing weeks were spent writing and attempting not to allow myself to rewrite. The process got hardest once I started getting close to the end. As I have
mentioned, I had no concept of how I wanted the project to conclude and was very intimidated by having to create logical wrap-ups for each character. At this point, the plot arc I had concocted had departed enough from the real story that I knew it would be impossible to create an ending that mirrored the real life events. Interestingly, this resulted in a phone conversation with my father, during which I expressed my frustration with tying loose ends up for certain characters and the incongruences in various ending possibilities. We ran the gamut of what each ending could mean for the rest of the story, and ultimately our discussion led to my conceptualization of the conclusion featured in the play. I ended up with a draft that felt incredibly rough (see Appendix A), but I was pleased I had managed to put my ideas on the page coherently enough for another person to read I and felt confident that the revision process would be less daunting.

In the midst of my writing process, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in a playwriting workshop with professional playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins. The theatre department brought Jacobs-Jenkins to the University as part of their new works initiative, and he came to table-read a draft of his newest work as well as conduct the two day workshop. Jacobs-Jenkins conducted us through a series of writing exercises that would aid in getting our inspiration flowing and allowing him to give detailed feedback on each writer’s dialogue and style. For me, the short reprieve in working on the play was much needed, and I not only greatly enjoyed concentrating on smaller scenes, but also found Jacob-Jenkins’ advice to be incredibly beneficial. Additionally, it was crucial for me to hear other playwright’s styles and voices in order to more completely solidify my own. Through hearing work aloud, I was able to more distinctly sift through and recognize choices I appreciated as well as choices that sounded
clear in the writer’s head but convoluted when spoken aloud. I ended up working on scenes and characters that were much more serious than those in my play; however, my favorite exercise was one in which he put two minutes on the clock and told us to begin writing a scene. Every few seconds, he would say a random word or object, and we had to attempt to incorporate them logically into our scenes. It was fast-paced, intense, whimsical, and fun—many things my playwriting process had not been. As a result, I began to try to infuse the air of whimsy and farce I had discovered throughout the workshop into my ensuing sessions of writing. What follows is the first draft of the play.
Lights up on Carol's bedroom in Charleston, South Carolina. The room should be basic, a mere suggestion of a bedroom using nondescript items. Casey, 22, lays across a large bed, reading a book or magazine. Her mother Carol hurries about, taking clothing items from a large wooden dresser, considering them, and either putting them away or folding them neatly and placing them in her open suitcase, which lays on the bed. The suitcase is beige and tidy, with clean lines and a white trim. In contrast, Casey's suitcase lays on the floor. It is a medium sized carpet bag, tags from other trips still on the handles, dirty and a little torn from lots of use. Every so often Carol will go offstage left to what is clearly her closet, and bring back a nicer garment on a hanger. This occurs several times before the dialogue begins.

Carol: (Placing a garment bag by her suitcase) I refuse to believe you brought all the necessary belongings in that tiny, ratty bag. (Purses her lips slightly)

Casey: (Without looking up) Why?

Carol: (Ignoring the question) Do you have a toothbrush?

Casey: How would that not fit in the bag…?

Carol: (Continuing) Do you have your dress?

Casey: Yes.

Carol: A backup dress?

Casey: ...What?

Carol: In case of a spill or shampoo explosion along the way! Did you bring shampoo?

Casey: Got it.

Carol: (Trying to find another thing she forgot) Well, what about a pair of pants?

Casey: Really, Mother? Pants? So I can have a lovely case of butt sweats in the 110 degree Texas heat? I don't think so.

Carol: It might be chilly one night! Do you have your pearls?

Casey: (Getting increasingly irritated) I don't own pearls. So no.

Carol: Why can't you just participate in the checklist process with me? Did you remember underwear?

Casey: (Nearing her boiling point) Yes!! I'm not--

Carol: (Triumphantly) Now I know you didn't remember nail polish!!
Casey: (Snapping) No, you caught me Mother, I didn’t bring nail polish! My nails are perfectly fine, why in God’s name would I travel hundreds of miles with a tiny jar of paint?! Calm down, we’re not going to see the queen of England!

Carol: (Coy) Well do you at least have your ticket?

Casey: (Pointedly) Unfortunately, yes.

Carol: (taking a blouse from a drawer and looking at it) I told you, you don’t need to come if you don’t want to- I’m sure the last thing Tucker wants is you skulking around the wedding because you don’t want to be there. (Shakes blouse, re-folds it, and returns it to its proper drawer)

Casey: (raising her eyebrows) Mom, you told me that if I didn’t come with you, you were going to throw yourself off the balcony...

Carol: (exiting to closet) I did no such thing! Don’t start acting like a drama queen now, we haven’t even left yet! For goodness sake.

Casey: (going back to her magazine) That’s what it sounded like.

Carol: (Returning from closet with a crisp, feminine suit) Tucker is my nephew. I know you feel you two have never been close, but honey, he’s still family. Not to mention Jamie would have a heart attack if we didn’t come to help. (Considers suit, lays it neatly on the bed beside Casey)

Casey: Look, I adore Jamie as much as you do, but that doesn’t mean I want to watch his son, who practically never speaks, say I do to some redneck trophy wife. No thank you.

Carol: (Removing what looks to be an entire drawer of panty hose and putting them in her suitcase) Like I said, if you’re going to pout the entire time like an overgrown four year old, I don’t want you to come at all.

Casey: Uh, Mom...? You, uh, gonna outfit the wedding party in those panty hose? Making them all bouquets of tights?

Carol: (Annoyed) You can never have too many pairs of hose, Casey. One will always rip, and nothing looks tackier than wearing a nice outfit with a pair of grungy hose.

Casey: (To herself) Somehow I think your ripped hose wouldn’t be the tackiest thing at this wedding...

Carol: (Stopping her flurry of packing) Now that’s it! I definitely don’t want you to come with me if you’re going to behave like this the entire time! I’d rather take your father, and Lord knows he wants to come even less than you do!!

Casey: (Softening) I’m sorry.
Carol: Well, you'd better be!

Casey: So, what's the deal with this "bride" anyway?

Carol: What do you mean?

Casey: Her name isn't actually Jilda is it? What is it supposed to be, a cross between Hilda and Jill? That's not a name!!

Carol: (Laughing slightly, amused) I'm aware. I have a feeling with some families it's just a never ending cycle of horrible names. That's the only reason I can think of to explain why in the world she would name her child "Devine".

Casey: (Enjoying the shift in mood and camaraderie. Closing her reading.) You can't be serious.

Carol: Oh but I am! (Continuing to inspect clothing items from her dresser, fold them, and put them into her suitcase)

Casey: But the kid isn't Tucker's right? I mean, he's not some baby daddy, is he?

Carol: No, no, of course not. Lord, can you imagine? (Conspiratorily) No, apparently she decided to have the child out of wedlock with her highschool sweetheart. I could've sworn Jamie said something about him being involved in the wedding in some capacity... (trying to remember) exchanging vows?

Casey: You're joking!! How did you forget to mention all of this over the phone? I would've been much less irritated about coming if I'd known there was drama involved...

Carol: Now, now, let's not be so quick to judge.

Casey: No judging here! Just innocent amusement. I swear.

Carol: (Giving her a look) Mmmhmm...

Casey: Here's the thing, Mom. We've always kinda thought Tucker was gay. Isn't it a little weird that he's not only marrying a woman, but also exchanging vows with her baby daddy? I mean, come on.

Carol: Now, Case, I know we've speculated in the past, but that's all just talk!

Casey: Mom. He's never had a girlfriend. He watches a lot of Gray's Anatomy. He's well dressed. He just has a...

Carol: Quality? I know. But none of those things could mean anything! You're making empty assumptions. (Definitively) And he's getting married so there's no room for questioning it now. Hopefully he will be happy with his new family, that's all we can wish for him!
Casey: Shut it down all you want, but I still have my doubts.

Carol: (Looking over the items in her suitcase, making a final tally) Fine, fine, just don't make it an issue, alright? Now, where are my pumps? (Exits offstage left to look for them) I just have to grab them and then we can head out!

Casey: (Sarcastic) Oh, joy.

Carol: (Returning, shoes in hand) I heard that. (Checking her wristwatch) Now we are running three minutes late! (Puts shoes into suitcase, hurriedly) Let's zip this baby up and go, go, go!

Carol and Casey gather their belongings, Carol does one last sweep of the room, and the two exit downstage right.

Scene 2. Lights up on Jamie's kitchen/dining room. The only item of furniture in the room is a long, metal folding table, the kind usually reserved for tailgates. Along the back of the set is a kitchen counter, stove, microwave, etc. Casey and Carol enter SL at the door, and where a welcome mat should be, a bath mat lies instead.

Casey: (Looking down at the bath mat): Uhhh...mother? Why does your brother have a bath mat at his front door?

Carol: (Also looking at her feet) Well, hun. That's a darn good question. He told me your Aunt Anne took a lot of things when she left, but taking a welcome mat is just plain...rude.

Casey: (sighs, under her breath) What in the world have we gotten ourselves into?

Carol: Now don't start that! It's now or never so here we go! (Knocks cheerfully on the door)
Enter Jamie SR, crossing the kitchen area to the get the door. He looks tired and slightly harried but is putting on a happy face.

Jamie: Everyone, they’re here! Come say hello to my best gals! (Swinging open the door with a flourish) Big C and Lil C! Welcome to my ransacked abode! (Gesturing to the mat) I see you’ve noticed some of my decorative charms already. (Giving both women a huge hug and Casey an additional hair scuff) I’m so happy to see—

Enter Jilda from SR, running towards the door as best she can in the 4 inch heels she proudly sports on her feet. They are hot pink and feature a puff of white fluff on the toes. They are her pride and joy.

Jilda: Oh ma God, they’re here! They’re here, they’re here! (Reaching the door, jumping and clapping for joy) I been waitin’ forever for you ladies! The way ole Jamie talks about y’all I just knew you were the cat’s meow! Look at y’alll, you’re just the cutest lil thangs! (Shouting back over her shoulder) Tucker! Devine, baby! Coop! They’re heeeere!!

Jamie: (Giving the girls a look) This, my dears, is Ms. Jilda Landry.

Jilda: (Playfully hitting his arm) The soon to be Mrs. Jilda Jennings! (giggles) Oh I’m jist so excited! Finally we can have some girl time! (Shouting over her shoulder again, sterner) Come ON, y’all! Hurry it on up!

Casey stands dumbfounded by this person in front of her, mouth slightly agape. Carol glances at her and gives her a swift elbow to the ribs.

Carol: (Inhale deeply, exhale with a small, stilted smile that could be taken for enthusiasm) Well, well, Ms. Jilda, it’s a pleasure to meet you. I’m Carol Wight. (Extends her hand to shake)

Jilda: Aw hush now, I’m a hugger!! (Practically tackles Casey and Carol with a hug that envelops both their necks)

Jamie: (Sighs) Now Jilda, not everyone’s quite as enthusiastic about hugging as you...

Carol: (As she tries to politely extract herself from Jilda’s hold) And this is my daughter, Casey. (Pointedly) Casey?

Casey: (Still at a loss) Oh. Right. Yes. Casey. That’s me.

Jilda: (Squeals) Oh we’re gon have SO MUCH FUN!

Jamie: (Wanting to break the awkward scene on the stoop) Why don’t you all come inside, it’s hot as hell out here. Can I get you anything? Sweet Tea? Lemonade?

(All following Jamie into the house.)
Carol: (Starting) Why, Jamie there's nothing here! Where's your gorgeous table? Chairs? The rug?

Jamie: Well, it's kind of a long--

Jilda: (Interrupting) His lousy wife jist up and took it all, y'all!!! Poor Jamie!

Carol: Jamie, that's awful, I--

(Enter Tucker and Devine practically tumbling over each other. Devine sprints into the room from SR, cackling and holding a pair of neon green snake print boxers high above her head like a prize. Tucker sprints after her in circles, trying to catch her without bowling over any of the other people in the room)

Devine: You cain't catch me! You cain't catch me! (Laughs and laughs)

Tucker: Devy you give those back to me right this instant!

Devine: (Screams) NO!!!! Mama didja know Tuck wears these funny underpants?! (Still running, waving them in the air)

Jilda: (giggling, to Casey) She's such a silly lil thang. She loves causin' trouble.

Tucker: (finally catching her, scooping her up in his arms): Now, Devine, it's not nice to take other people's things.

Devine: I DON'T CARE!

Tucker: Devine, please, we have company. Don't you want to meet our guests?

Devine: NO!

Tucker: (Trying) Well you're going to meet them anyways. (Carrying her over to where Carol, Casey, and Jamie stand in a small clump) Now, Devy, this is my Aunt Carol. And guess what? This is my cousin Casey. We're practically the same age. Isn't that neat?

Devine sticks her tongue out at them and blows a rasberry.

Tucker: (Putting Devine back on the ground) You know what? Why don't you go get your Daddy so he can meet our guests too?

Devine: (Sprinting offstage right, still clutching the underwear, her prize) OK!!!

Jilda: (To the room with a grin) Isn't she just the sweetest thing?

Pause. No answer. No one's quite sure where to go from here. Tucker finally crosses and takes Jilda's hand, giving Carol an excuse to break the silence.
Carol: Well congrats, you two! Tucker, sweetie, it's so great to see you.

Tucker: Thank ya'll for coming, it's always...good to see family.

Jamie: Blood is thicker than water, that's what I always say! (Clapping his hands together, eager to break the silence) Now. I apologize for my sparse place, with all the wedding plans I haven't had time yet to redecorate. Jilda, be a love and run out to the garage and grab some of those lawn chairs. That'll have to do for tonight.

Jilda: Aww arright now, but I'm gonna have to hurry back! (On her way out, to Carol and Casey) I don't like to be away from my hubby to be for too long (winks, exits USL)

Casey: (Finally finding her words) So, boys...what exactly are the wedding day plans?

Jamie: Well, as I was telling Big C over the phone, it's a bit of a...non-traditional kind of day.

Carol: Yes, you started to tell me but we never really got into details!

Tucker: Uhm...maybe you should meet Coop first. (calling offstage right to where Devine exited) Dev, you find your Dad?

Cooper: (From offstage) I'm a comin', I'm a comin'.

Enter Cooper, a burly man of 24. He sports a bushy, bright red beard, matching his bright red straw-like hair. A smattering of freckles overs his face. He enters at a slow pace, taking his time, practically lumbering. Devine clutches his back.

Cooper: Now, I hope y'all don't think I'm rude, here. I was just catchin' the tail end of the Cowboys game. (chuckles good naturedly) I'm Cooper Belby. Y'all must be the relatives. (Devine jumps down from the piggy back and goes to play under the metal table)

Casey: Yeeeep, that's what they call us.

Carol: It's a pleasure, Cooper. We were just talking about the plans for the day tomorrow!

Cooper: Aw yeah, did Tuck tell you about Jilda's bright idea?

Jilda: (re-entering as if saying her name summoned her. Carrying four of the rattiest lawn chairs anyone has seen) Are you talkin' bout me?!

Tucker: Just our unique wedding.

Jilda: (Dropping all the lawn chairs dramatically. As she speaks, Jamie crosses to the pile and begins setting them up so his guests can sit. Crosses to Carol) AWW they don't know?! Ok. Picture this! I come down the aisle in the poufiest white dress anyone's ever seen!! Tucker's waitin' at the end with Coop, his best man!! Oh and Dave. You'll jist love Dave. He's Cooper's daddy, he said he'd perform the ceremony for free! He got his preachin' license online, he's so smart.

With so much going on you may need to say more about Dave so we know who he is when we get to see him...
Carol: (Aside to Jamie) Well, that’s sweet at least.

Jamie: Just wait.

Jilda: (Continuing) And Tucker and I do our vows. Now, here’s the really fun part! After Tuck and I do vows, then Devine and Cooper get up on the altar with us, and we all say lil vows to each other!! OH and we’re doin’ rings too!! (Squeals with delight, runs to throw her arms around Tucker) Should Carol or Casey have a follow up question to this?

Cooper: It’s gonna be a big ole party! (With a wink) Tucker’s excited too, he jus don’t know how to show it! Ain’t that right, Tuck?

Tucker: (With a big grin, it’s the first time we really see him light up at all) Oh don’t say that, you know I’m excited.

Devine: Hey!! I’m real sleepy!!

Jilda: Well come on, lil baby girl, let’s git you into bed.

Devine: Noo!! I want my daddys to do it!!

(Cooper and Tucker exchange a look. At first a little pleased, then turning more serious to Devine)

Cooper: Now, Dev baby, you know that’s not what we call us. I’ll always be your Daddy. Tucker’s your Tucker. ‘Member? You don’t have two Daddys. People git all confused if ya say that.

Devine: If I want two Daddys I GIT two Daddys! (Devine runs out of the room screaming, Cooper and Tucker start to follow)

Cooper: We got this, don’t we, Tuck? Let’s be parents. Good practice.

Tucker: Let’s take care of our girl.

(Tucker pats Cooper on the back and they exit stage right)

Jilda: Aww!! Look at how sweet they are! I jist feel like the luckiest girl in the world that they get along so good!

Carol: Well, this has been just lovely, but we should probably get to our hotel and check in...

Jamie: Oh nonsense, Big C, you’re staying here! I’m not letting my best girls pay extra to come see us, you’ll never come back!

Carol: Don’t be silly, you’ve got a full house as it is! Casey and I will be just fine at a hotel, I promise.
Jamie: No, no, no. I won’t allow it! Now we’re going to make you as comfortable as possible. Give you gals the royal treatment. Now lemme just find that air mattresses and we’ll be good to go. The kitchen’s the nicest room in the house!

As close to blackout as possible. In the dark, one can barely make out the shadowy outlines of the mattresses Carol and Casey sleep on. Casey sits up.

Casey: (Loud whisper) Mom. Mom, are you awake?

No answer.

Casey: Mom. I know you’re awake. We have to talk about this.

Carol: No.

Casey: I knew you were awake! We have to talk about this!

Carol: No.

Casey: (Ignoring her) Can you believe all that insanity? I’m shocked.

Carol: (Realizing Casey is not going to let up) It’s definitely a little odd--

Casey: Mom. Odd would be the understatement of the century. Where do I even begin?!

Carol: (Sighing) Poor Jamie. Did you see how exhausted he looked? He’s been trying to do all this himself.

Casey: Poor Jamie?! They’re all marrying each other! Jamie’s going to be fine, how can you overlook the fact that tomorrow Tucker is marrying redneck Barbie, her demon daughter, and a MAN? What about that picture is not ridiculous to you?

Carol: (relenting) Yes, yes, you’re right. I have no idea what they’re thinking. I mean, where in the world are they going to live? Who is going to be in charge of that child?

Casey: God, she’s a spoiled brat! How has Jamie been letting them stay with him for so many days?
Carol: Hun, I have no idea. Who would’ve known Tucker would turn out to be the wildcard of the family?

Casey: Oh come on. Tucker’s been the most bizarre out of all of us from the start! Are you joking?

Carol: Now, Casey, that’s really not fair to say. He’s been through a lot in his lifetime. Children never recover from their mother just up and abandoning them. He was only 6 years old, try to imagine. And now his stepmother is gone too, cleaning Jamie out like that. The two of them having collective stress is the only reason I can think that this wedding is going to happen at all.

Long pause as Casey considers this.

Casey: Mom?

Carol: Hmm?

Casey: Thanks for--

Carol: You’re welcome, hun. Now get some sleep.

The Wedding:

Lights up on a small chapel. Pews face upstage, backs completely to the audience, line SL and SR, creating an aisle. US center is a small, stained glass window that has clearly been broken and repaired several times, so now, rather than being an image of Jesus on the cross, looks more like a large, bizarre flower. A block large enough for Dave to stand on lies underneath. It is the wedding day.

Enter Dave from US left.

Dave: (Practicing his prompts for the vows alone, beer in hand) Ok, let’s do this shit! Oh, shit, sorry God, I didn’t mean to say shit in church! Now I said it again...arright, arright, I’m done. Ok. Now let’s see here. Uh...you, Tucker, take this Jilda to be your uh...your....wedding wife? awful wedding wife? Dammit. (Looks at a page of notes) HA! Lawful wedded wife! To have and to hold, blah blah blah, sick, poor, death...by God’s holy
what? Omi...Ornidance? What kinda shit word is that, sounds like horny dance. Now I know it does not say "til death do us part, according to God's Holy Horny Dance!! (finds this very amusing. Laughs for a few beats, then puts on glasses to re-examine the notes) Ok, Ok, I see ya, Or-di-nance. Whatever that means. “And thereto I give thee my troth”...? What in sam heck is a troth? Why in the hell would Tucker want her troth? I could write better weddin' thingys than this load of...crap! Is crap allowed to say in church? Eh, whatever. Sorry God. Whoooooo-eeeee I don’t know if I’m ready for this. It’s a lot of pressure for ole Dave. I just gotta power through. (takes a swig of beer) Yes, sirree just power on through.

Dave exits DS right.

Enter Jilda, three bridesmaids in tow, who are all trying to take care of her train and veil and ensure she doesn't trip and fall all at once. The bridesmaids wear long sleeved purple velvet dresses, attempting to ignore the heat. The dresses all appear to be the same size, an amusing fact due to the varying body sizes of the women. One, a large woman named Charity, sports a small moustache like a badge of honor, is entirely too rotund for the aforementioned dress. The second, Faylene, is a woman so skinny one would think she'd never eaten a day in her life, makes the dress look like a mumu. She constantly feels the need to suck up to Jilda. The third, Gracelyn, is average sized, but has a wig that refuses to stay on her head due to the sweat and heat. She is forced to adjust it (usually only making it worse) every few minutes. The scene is a blur of white and velveteen colors. Jilda is in a flurry, has entirely too much energy, and speaks excitedly, not allowing any of the girls to get a word in edgewise. She continues to frenzy around as she speaks.

Jilda: (Squeals) Aren’t I just the prettiest bride you ever saw?! Thank gawd Tucker shelled out the cash for this weddin’ cus Lord knows I couldn’t’ve paid for it. (Slyly) He’s gonna take care of me and my Devine, you know that? (Conspiratorially) His granmama died a couple months back? And whatdyas know, he’s got a pretty little pocket of cash. Now, I’m not sayin’ thank gawd she died... (Mimes the sign of the cross, backwards)...But thank GAWD she died! Who knows if I coulda married him without those savings there! (Giggles) I’m sorry but I’m just a person who deserves nice things every once and awhile! I mean would ya look at this dress? I bet none of y’all have a dress this fancy. (Side note: it’s hideous) Aww, gittin’ married is fun, ya’ll. Now I’ll have Tucker and Cooper and Emerald, one big happy family! Is ma lipstick ok? (It’s a horrible shade of mauve) Got any on ma teeth? (Bares her teeth at the bridesmaids).

Charity: You’re good, darlin'. How’s my lady ‘stache?

Jilda: Very...shiny, Charity!

Charity: (Pleased) Aww, shucks.

Faylene: (Jumping in, excitedly) I always knew you’d get married first, Jilda! You always been the prettiest of us all!

Jilda: (Preening) I know, I know...Oh wait! Gracelyn, are you ready for your big ole solo? You’d better make it real pretty now, ya hear? I ain’t walkin’ down the aisle to nuthin’ but the best.
Gracelyn: I got my tape recorder all set up! *(Curtsies to Jilda, much to Jilda's extreme delight)*

Jilda: It's just so perfect!! Y'all got your bouquets?

Charity: *(Holding up three small bouquets of fake flowers)* We're all set, darlin'.

Jilda: YAY! Now we just gotta wait!

*Jilda rushes offstage US right, with the bridesmaids tripping and carousing after her.*

Enter Devine and Cooper OS left. Devine drags Cooper by the hand, yanking on his arm while she half runs half skips into the chapel. She wears a t-shirt over a light pink dress with a tulle skirt so large she's practically wading through it. The bottom is covered in mud. In her other hand she holds an enormous bouquet of fake, light pink flowers.

Cooper: *(Out of breath)* Now, lil' bitty pretty one, you gotta finish gettin' ready for the wedding before you run your Daddy ragged.

Devine: But I wanna practice tossin' ma bouquet! *(Heaves her arm back and chucks the bouquet straight at Cooper's head)*

Cooper: *(Out of patience, yelping in pain)* Now you listen here, you little nutball! That is no way to treat me! Imma have to take away those stupid flowers if you keep throwin' em like a World Series pitcher!

Devine: *(Rushing over to pick up her flowers)* But Momma said you throw your bouquet! I was just doin' what she said to!

*Like a child, Cooper snatches the flowers out of her hand.*

Cooper: HA! Nah Nah, who's got the flowers now?

Devine: GIVE THOSE BACK!

*Enter Casey, US Left, unbeknownst to Devine and Cooper. She watches this exchange, mixed with horror and amusement.*

Cooper: *(Holding the bouquet high above his head)* You can't reach them! That's what you get for hittin' your Daddy!

Casey: Uhm. I don't mean to interrupt, but I think guests are going to start arriving soon... *(Raising her eyebrows)*

Cooper: *(As if to justify his actions)* Well she started it.

Devine: DID NOT!
Casey: Hey, don’t shoot the messenger, I was just--

Devine: I hate you! (Swiftly kicks Cooper in the shins and sprints off DS Right)

Cooper: (Wincing in pain, looking embarrassed) Kids, ya know? Can’t control ‘em, am I right?

Casey: I wouldn’t really know.

Cooper: (Good naturedly) Right, you probably weren’t dumb enough to git knocked up at 17, huh?

Casey: That’s one way of putting it.

Cooper: (Casually) Well, I guess I’d better go take care of Dev. What a spitfire. Exits DS Right, following Devine’s path. Casey is left alone in the chapel. She sighs, looking around.

Casey: (Singing sotto vocce) Goin’ to the chapel and we’re gonna get married, goin’ to the chapel and we’re--

Enter Gracelyn US Left

Gracelyn: Hey now! Don’t you be stealin’ my solo now, ya hear?

Casey: (Embarrassed) Oh I wasn’t, trust me.

Gracelyn: (Laughing) Aww, girl. I’m jist kiddin’ you! I’m jist here to set up my recorder for when I sing Jilda inta Tucker’s lovin’ arms.

Casey: (Noticing Gracelyn’s askew wig) How...sweet.

Enter Carol DS Left with a sweeping sensibility.

Carol: Ladies, the guests are starting to arrive! Case, let’s grab a seat before they’re all gone.

Gracelyn: Git ready for some pretty music, ladies! Exits US Right

Casey: Well. Here we go.

Carol and Casey take a seat in the back row of pews. Light shift. (Imply somehow that other guests have started to arrive?)
First, enter the three bridesmaids in succession. First Charity, next Faylene, then Gracelyn. They practically sprint/skip down the aisle, none walking at the same time or in the same fashion, but all very quickly, looking very absurd. They take their places to the left of the altar. Gracelyn gears up her kiddie tape recorder with the small, yellow plastic microphone to sing Jilda down the aisle. Next come Tucker and Cooper, walking down the aisle
together, awkwardly. They realize they can’t both fit comfortably down the aisle and have a brief struggle with deciding who will walk in front. Tucker wins as he is the actual groom. Next, it’s the bride’s big march. Instead of the bridal march, as Jilda rounds the corner, Gracelyn presses play on the tape recorder and begins to sing. The song is “The Wind Beneath My Wings”. Gracelyn makes it through several seconds before, apparently, the battery in the recorder begins to die. The accompaniment and background choral vocals begin to slowly die with it. Gracelyn, determined not to let Jilda down, continues to sing with gusto. Jilda, apparently not noticing, continues down the aisle with tears of joy in her eyes. Carol and Casey exchange looks, biting their tongues and squeezing their hands to keep from exploding into laughter at the absurdity of it all. Dave sneaks in from the US Left, horribly late, and takes his place at the altar. He begins the ceremony.

Dave: (Starting at a louder volume) Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here (Continues at a lower volume, barely audible)

Casey: (Turning to Carol, over the sounds of Dave’s vows, gleefully) Ok, I changed my mind, I am so SO glad we came! This is priceless!

Carol: Don’t make me talk, I’ll start laughing.

Casey: I’m going to cry. This is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever seen in my entire life.

Carol: Jamie told me last night that Jilda hardly knows the bridesmaids, they’re just people she’s met at work!

Casey: Dave is Cooper’s father! Why in the world is he officiating?

Carol: Because who wouldn’t want to have their bastard child’s grandfather marry you to another man? Lord have mercy.

Jilda and Tucker exchange rings. Faylene claps and jumps up and down before realizing that everyone else is silent and gets embarrassed.

Dave: (Returning to full volume) Well. Now. Do you, Devine and you, Coop, take these good fine people to be your family, forever and ever, Amen? Would you all please uh, join hands?

Tucker and Jilda expand to include Cooper and Devine. Tucker holds Cooper and Jilda’s hands, Jilda links to Devine, and Devine back to Cooper. They look absurd.

Devine: (Very solemnly) Yes, I do!

Cooper: (Equally solemn) I swear on The Bible I do.

Jilda: That’s not what you’re supposed to say. Make him say it right, Davie!

Dave: Oh hush up, Jilda, he can say whatever he wants. He said it on The Bible so who cares?
Jilda: It's not right! He has to say I do!

Cooper: Fine. I do.

Jilda: Oh, that's enthusiastic.

Tucker: Let's just exchange rings, honey.

Jilda: (Shifting moods suddenly) Ok!

Jilda and Tucker, who are already wearing their rings, each pull out a small pouch with a ring inside. Jilda bends down and places one on Devine's finger, and Tucker does the same for Cooper.

Casey: Mother, I know I promised you I wouldn't say anything about Tucker clearly liking men, but come on!! He just--

Carol: (Trying to suppress a laugh) I know. I know!!

Dave: You may now, uhh. Tucker, you and Jilda can...You can kiss the bride.

Tucker and Jilda share a quick peck to end the ceremony. In a very rehearsed fashion, they then both kiss Devine on the top of her head and Cooper on his cheeks. Instead of the newlywed couple walking back up the aisle together, the four form what appears to be a small parade and cheer and dance as they exit the chapel.

The Reception:

Lights up on Jamie's living room. The only difference is, now it's covered in silver foil pans of varying (large) sizes. They sit upon every available surface, hardly allowing room to walk, much less host enough people for a reception.

Enter Carol, Jamie, and Casey from the front door, USL. They appear to be in a bit of a hurry to beat the guests. Their voices can be heard from offstage as they unlock the door and enter the house.

Casey: So, what exactly is the plan here?

Jamie: El Senor Sabatez's Mexican Cantina is delivering the food here in about 10 minutes. From there we'll take it outside to where the party will be held and set it up for the guests.
Carol: I'm sorry, you're serving them what, exactly?

Jamie: I can't exactly remember what I ordered. (*They are getting closer to actually entering the house*) Bean burritos, some tacos I think... (*He fumbles with his keys, unlocking the door*) Maybe a few orders of... (*Opening the door to see the pan covered room*) Holy hell!

Casey: A few orders of everything in their kitchen...?

Carol: Good Lord, Jamie! What is all this? I thought they were delivering it in ten minutes!

Jamie: How in the world did they get in here?! I didn't give them a key!

Carol: Well, there's really no time to figure it out. The guests will be arriving any minute. Do you have food warmers prepared?

Jamie: Was I supposed to?

Carol: Well yes, unless you'd like to serve the guests cold...chalupas! (*Wrinkles her nose*)

Jamie: I didn't think about it...

Carol: (*Beginning to bustle around and look through things*) Where are your slotted spoons?

Jamie: Uh...


Jamie: (*Searching through drawers*) I have...this! (*Proudly extracts a garlic press*)

Casey: Jamie, that's not going to help us one little bit.

Jamie: (*Crestfallen*) Why not?

Carol: Because that's a garlic press, dear. We'll just have to make do.

Casey: Not to be a Debbie Downer here, but how are we going to manage to do that if we can't even walk?

Carol: We'll take them outside. That's where they belong anyway.

Jamie: Are you insulting my food?

Carol: (*Coyly*) Not at all, but you were planning on having the festivities out there by the pool, no?

Jamie: Yes. Right. Yes. The pool. Let's go. (*Grabs several of the pans and heads offstage, DSL*)
Casey: Mom. This is insanity. I can sit there and make snide comments about the wedding all day long, but I am not running this reception.

Carol: We don’t have a choice, Case. We’re the only ones here.

Casey: I’m so sick of this. Why do we have to suffer just because no one else is around?

Carol: (Getting agitated) Do you hear how spoiled you sound?

Casey: This whole thing is a complete joke. How do you not see that? How is it that Tucker is married and I am not?

Carol: (Exploding) Casey Wight, I cannot deal with your sulking right now. We have 500 trays of fake beef burritos and cheap chicken tacos and God knows what else getting cold and disgusting as we speak. We have one garlic press and no other utensils to serve this so-called food. Jamie is a mess, has no furniture, no plan, and no brain right now.

Casey: Yes, but--

Carol: Sometimes you just have to suck it up and do it because they’re family. Now, I don’t care how absurd you think this day has been. In the big scheme of things, to us, it is only one day. But to these people, it is THE day. And they deserve to have it nice...enough.

Casey: Why are you trying to create some big happy family now? What’s wrong with leaving them as they are? Why do you insist on meddling in absolutely everything?

Carol: Casey Wight, you may be twenty two years old, but don’t you think I won’t come over there and give you a spankin’.

Casey: What is it, Mom? Can’t take honesty? An hour ago you were mocking these people with me, what changed in the past ten minutes?

Carol: That is enough out of you! I’m sorry this trip isn’t exactly what you want to be doing and I’m sorry that I’m not behaving exactly how you’d like me to. But you need to realize that this has nothing to do with you.

Casey: Oh, really? My time has nothing to do with me? Really? Good luck explaining that logic.

Carol: Did it ever occur to you that I’m doing this all for Jamie? Did you consider even for a second the kind of hell he’s had the past few years? Sue leaving practically destroyed him. Do you understand that?

Casey: Well, no, but--

Carol: And did you ever stop to think about the kind of life Tucker’s had? Growing up in an absolutely insane household with no structure whatsoever? He hasn’t grown up with the warm and fuzzy childhood you did.
Casey: (softening) You’re right.

Carol: (On a roll now) And do you see how happy he is? He’s getting the whole package all in one day. Now the way he’s going about it might seem crazy to you, but at the end of the day, he’s getting people who will be there. Every day.

Casey: I just...wish it was me.

Carol: Good Lord, girl, your time will come. Be patient, for goodness sake. (Teasingly) This world can’t revolve around your schedule all the time.

Casey: I’m sorry.

Carol: I know. Now we could have a sweet little moment here, or we could get to work and make this insanity happen.

Casey: We might as well--

Enter Devine, sprinting, with enchilada sauce spilled entirely down the front of her dress. In her right hand, she clutches what remains of an enchilada. In her left hand, she holds fast to her fake flowers from the ceremony. Jilda chases her, frantically trying to get her to relinquish the enchilada.

Jilda: You horrible, HORRIBLE little girl! You done ruined your pretty dress! I spent fifteen hard earned dollars and two hours at Walmart pickin’ that thing out!

Devine: This is yummy!

Jilda: (Halting) Devine Emerald Jennings. I am counting to three, and when I get there, you’d better give Mawma that enchilada and come git cleaned up.

Devine: NO!

Jilda: One...

Devine: You’re stinky!

Jilda: Two...

Devine: You have doodoo shoes!

Jilda: THREE.

Devine stops. She stares at Jilda. Jilda smirks, pleased this trick has actually worked. Just as she shifts to approach Devine and get her cleaned up, Devine throws the enchilada as hard as she possibly can. It lands smack in the middle of Jilda’s dress. Silence. Then,
Jilda: Oh you’ve done it now, you awful awful child! This is mommy’s ONE special dress and now it’s RUINED. How could you do that to mawma?!

To Casey and Carol’s horror, she begins to cry. Mascara begins streaming down her face as she stares down at her dress.

Carol: Oh, honey, we can get that out. Don’t worry…

Jilda: (Ignoring her, still speaking to Devine) No party for you! Go to your room right now! You have a good long think about what you done.

Shockingly, Devine skips off USR without complaint, unbothered by being sent to her room. Jilda continues to ruin her mascara, and is beginning to look like a bloodied bride of Frankenstein.

Jilda: This is my ONE day to have all about me and it’s getting ruined by my brat of a kid. I shoulda known.

Casey: (Hesitantly) Now, it’s not all that bad. You’ve had a gorgeous ceremony that was one of a kind, and now all your closest friends are coming to a party all about celebrating you. This is just one little hiccup.

Carol: Jilda, honey, do you have a dress for when you leave the reception?

Jilda: Oh yeah, its real purty. But it’s not a weddin’ dress, it’s just a little cotton sundress.

Carol: Well let’s go put it on and wash your face and you’ll be good as new!

Casey: (Hesitantly) Can I help?

Jilda: You really wanna? 

Casey: Of course. It’s your day, after all.

Jilda: Well blow me down! I’d love your help, sweet thing. Let’s go git me out of this mess.

Carrol and Casey each take Jilda by one arm and help lead her out of the kitchen, off USL. A few moments pass. Some rustling is heard, then Cooper and Tucker cautiously step into the kitchen from DSL, looking suspicious. Their hair is mussed, clothes rumpled, shirts untucked, etc. Tucker carries an open bottle of champagne. They glance around nervously.

Cooper: You think they saw us?

Tucker: Doesn’t seem like it.

Cooper: What if they did?

Tucker: I’m sure they didn’t. Jilda would’ve pitched a fit.
Cooper: *(Aimlessly pacing and looking around the kitchen)* Oh my God. When Jilda finds out...

Tucker: Cooper.

Cooper: ...And everyone's going to....they'll just...I can't.....

Tucker: Cooper.

Cooper: I don't know what's gotten into me....I jist...

Tucker: Coop.

Cooper: *(Stopping, looking at Tucker)* What?

Tucker: Lets run off.

Cooper: What?

Tucker: You heard me. Let's run away together.

Cooper: Are you out of your goddamned mind?

Tucker: We don't need all this. We don't need anyone's questions.

Cooper: I think you're gettin' the wrong idea...

Tucker: I know you feel the same way I do. I know we've been doing our best to ignore it and forget about it but I just can't do it anymore. Can you?

Cooper: *(Looking grave)* I'm not sure. Maybe we've had too much champagne.

Tucker: Or maybe this is right. Maybe this is the life we're supposed to have. Maybe the rest of this had to happen so we could have our moment.

Cooper: *(Considering this)* But we've talked about this before. I ain't no homo.

Tucker: *(Laughing slightly)* Coop, I think there's a very good chance you are. Look, we don't have to have it all figured out. We can go somewhere and figure it out together. You and me. What's stopping us?

Cooper: Jilda...

Tucker: You and I both know that all Jilda wants is my money. So let her have it. We don't need much. We'll all be happier this way.

Cooper: I don't know...
Tucker: Look. If you want to stay at this big party and act like nothing’s going on, eat chalupa’s until you get sick, and make sure Devine doesn’t mush her hands in the cake, be my guest. But I’m going to steal some champagne, sneak away, and hope for the best.

Cooper: *(Considering, then whispering)* Let’s do it.

Tucker: *(All grins)* We’ll be long gone before anyone even realizes we’ve left!

Cooper: *(Liking this)* Just like a coupla cowboys.

Cooper picks the champagne up off the floor and takes Cooper’s hand. They glance around once again before stealthily running off DSR to rejoin the party before making their getaway. As they leave, Charity, Gracelyn, and Faylene hustle on from USR, eyes wide. They have clearly overheard at least some of the previous conversation. There is a moment’s pause as they try to process this, then all three can’t stop talking.

Charity: Oh. My. Gawd.

Gracelyn: What are we goin’ to do?!

Faylene: How dare those boys ruin this day for Jilda! How dare they?

Gracelyn: And they were sayin’ Jilda’s a no-good golddigger!

Faylene: Which she ain’t!

Charity: I mean, maybe she thinks a lot about money…

Gracelyn: But that’s normal! What I married Hank that’s all I could think about.

Charity: That poor thang. She’s gonna be humiliated in front of all these people.

Gracelyn: We gotta tell ‘er.

Faylene: *(Dramatically)* No! We cain’t! She deserves better!

Gracelyn: *(Bossy)* Honey, you want that girl walking out to that pool not knowing what just happened? She gotta know!

Faylene: We gotta make something up. Let her be happy for a lil while longer!

Charity: *(Boldly)* Maybe she ain’t gonna care. Maybe she’s gonna be happy.

Faylene: How could you say that?!
Charity: Well what woman in her right mind would want to marry two men?! Trust me ladies, she's gonna be much happier without them. She'll get her money, what else could she need?

Gracelyn: Yes. That's what we'll tell her. Convince 'er she's better off without those losers. Lady power and all that shit.

*Jilda is heard offstage, clomping towards the kitchen in heels and singing a Shania Twain song to herself.*

Faylene: Oh ma gawd. Oh ma gawd oh ma gawd oh ma gawd. Here she comes.

Gracelyn: Are you ready? Here we go.

*Jilda enters from DSL. Seeing her bridesmaids, she lights up and gives a little twirl in her white sundress.*

Jilda: Well hello, gals! Look at my fabulous lil wardrobe change. I'm jist like those celebrities.

Faylene: *(Overeager)* You look amazing, Jilda!

Charity casts a sarcastic look in Faylene’s direction.

Charity: *(Matter of factly)* Jilda, darlin', we've got somethin' we gotta tell you.

Gracelyn: Now hear us out, ya hear?

Jilda: Did someone git me a bad gift? I *told* Aunt Darlene not to give me that stupid rat killer...

Gracelyn: Honey. Listen up. Tucker and Cooper have run off together. Jist now. We heard them talkin'.

Charity: We're so sorry.

*Long silence as Jilda considers this.*

Jilda: *(Raising her eyebrows)* Already?

Faylene: What do you *mean*, already?!

Jilda: *(Matter of factly)* Well I knew they were goin' to, I jist didn't think it'd be so fast!

Charity: *(Skeptically)* What do you mean, you knew?

Jilda: *(Taking a superior and condescending tone)* Listen gals, I don't expect you to understand. It takes a very smart woman to pull this off.
Gracelyn: What in the hell are you talking about?

Jilda: Don't be stupid. Cooper introduced me to Tucker. After about three dates I could tell he was more excited by Cooper than he ever was by me. Gawd knows why.

Faylene: Then why did you marry him?!

Jilda: Money, baby. I figured we'd git divorced eventually and then I could take the money and run.

Charity: Well I'll be damned.

Jilda: (Suddenly, excitedly) Wait! Did they leave the trailer?!

Faylene: What?

Jilda: The trailer, it's parked out back.

Gracelyn: (Peering out the window) Naw, it's still there.

Jilda: Well hawt DAMN! That's even better than I wanted. I can't believe they already ran off. Now I can make that trailer all girly.

Devine runs back in from USL.

Devine: Mawma, do you still hate me?

Jilda: Naw, sugar darlin', everything's workin' out jist right.

Devine: So I can go back to the party?

Jilda: (Kneeling to Devine's level) Well hun, how's about you and Mama take a lil vacation to Panama City in our brand new trailer instead?

Devine: (Yanking Jilda's hair) YES YES YES!

Devine begins hopping and dancing around the kitchen, screaming and singing about going to the beach. Jilda stands, brushes her hands, and looks to her bridesmaids coyly.

Jilda: Now see ladies. That's how it's done.

Blackout.
Imagine my shock when I began discussing the play with my advisor and found he thought it would serve the story best to remove the two central characters entirely. Scenes including Carol and Casey made up a large bulk of my writing, and, initially, writing them out seemed to confuse the entire structure of the play. In further discussion, however, it became clear to me that these characters were serving little purpose more than to comment on the action and tell the audience how they were supposed to feel about any given situation in the plot. I learned a very crucial lesson in the dynamics between a show and an audience, and came to the same conclusion as my advisor: Casey and Carol had to go. Thus began the enormous overhaul the play underwent as I entered my revision process.

The more I removed of Casey and Carol, the clearer every other character became. Replacing their meaningless chatter with alternate developments in relationships allowed me to understand the motivations and individual personalities of the other people in the play much more deeply. For example, I was now free to explore the interactions between Jilda and Tucker or the burgeoning relationship of Tucker and Cooper, ultimately removing the useless commentary and supplementing significant developments; as a result, my writing became less contrived. Additionally, the play began moving farther and farther from the actual events and became more of a story fabricated from my imagination.

Once I felt I had completed a solid second draft, I gathered a group of actors to do a table read. Rather than an entire staged production, a table read would be the group sitting down to read the play aloud, while everyone involved took notes on what was effective and what was not. The impetus was that it would be beneficial for me to hear
the dialogue spoken and get a sense of how an actor may play with a character’s personality. Consequently, I was absolutely terrified to turn my creation over to a group of my peers and incredibly nervous to encourage their feedback, both positive and negative. In hopes of getting a true variety of comments, I specifically chose actors I felt would be comfortable being completely honest with me about their notes. I sent the script to them several nights before the reading was to occur and quite literally felt nauseous at the idea of them reading what I had written. Beginning the read-through was equally nerve-wracking, but it began without a hitch. I passed out forms for the actors to fill out at the conclusion, asking questions about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of scenes, which characters they would like to see more or less of, and dialogue they believed should be added or removed (See Appendix B). Much to my surprise, as each actor put their spin on my words and created characters, they began becoming incredibly enthusiastic about the material and what their character would do next. There were moments in which the company had to stop reading because they were laughing so hard. It was an amazing feeling, knowing my peers were genuinely responding positively to a project I had been working on for so many months. When the reading concluded, we shifted gears for a talkback session so I could get their immediate thoughts and reactions to what had just occurred. They had so much energy, all enthusiastically congratulating me and telling me they enjoyed my work, even expressing a desire to perform it in the future. Afterward, they pointed out areas of the play they felt needed the most work. Most notably, there was a unanimous sense of joy about the surprise of Cooper and Tucker’s escape together, but a desire to have their relationship justified more throughout the play. Additionally, it was suggested that I delve deeper into Jamie and Tucker’s relationship, as
they enjoyed the more serious tones of the play as much as they did the comedy. Many said they wanted to see more of the bridesmaids, and they gave recommendations of how I might use them to convey more about other characters as well. Overall, I was completely overwhelmed by their positive responses and incredibly helpful advice on where the play should head in my next draft.

The actors from the table read had a myriad of ideas about how I could incorporate their notes as I moved forward with the project. Most notably, one actor suggested adding a short scene between the bridesmaids at the onset of the wedding, which would serve to introduce and legitimize them as characters while also allowing for some dialogue offering a third-party perspective on Jilda and Tucker’s relationship. I believed this would be extremely effective and restructured the beginning of the wedding scene to include the modification. Whereas the previous draft began with Jilda and her bridesmaids getting ready, the newest work showcased the bridesmaids and more seamlessly integrated them with the rest of the action. In order to address the concern with Tucker and Cooper’s relationship, I peppered the show with small moments of affection (Touches on the arm, pats on the back, etc.), small hints at Jilda’s knowledge of their chemistry (most clearly in the conclusion of the first scene), and added the exchange between the two before the marriage ceremony. The show seemed incredibly devoid of interactions between Tucker and Cooper, especially one-on-one, and the added dialogue made their blossoming relationship seem more natural. I also spent time reworking and expanding the interaction between Jamie and Tucker in hopes of making their familial relationship clearer, as well as allowing them to get closer to the seriousness of their conversation. It became very important to me to stress that Jamie has suspicions of
Tucker’s interest in Cooper, as well as to juxtapose his acceptance of that concept with Cooper’s fear of Dave disowning him. In all, the table read allowed me to look at the play and characters with fresh eyes, and the ideas the actors had gave me significant jumping-off points for the subsequent drafts. What follows are the feedback forms from the table read.
Table Read Feedback Form

1. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most effective in your opinion?
   
   I loved the scene between Tuck and Coop. Maybe have some more time for
   them to interact.

2. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most ineffective in your opinion?
   
   I thought it was great.

3. Are there any characters you feel need to be significantly modified? If so, how?

   No. I like all the characters. Maybe even add some more lines for Jula. I loved him.

4. Are there any scenes you feel need to be significantly modified or removed? If so, which one(s) and why?

   I felt like all the scenes were needed, maybe add one or two more scenes. Maybe a scene with Tuck, Jula and Gildy and another scene with the Bridesmaids.

5. If scenes were to be added, what would you like to see? Which characters would you like to see more of?

   Maybe a scene with Jula, Tuck, and Coop. A scene that better shows their relationship.

6. Additional comments and thoughts:

   I love you. Great job. Great comedic and honest moments.
Table Read Feedback Form

1. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most effective in your opinion?

Recception

2. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most ineffective in your opinion?

Tuck/Coop scene - lines need rewording

3. Are there any characters you feel need to be significantly modified? If so, how?

Not in my opinion.

4. Are there any scenes you feel need to be significantly modified or removed? If so, which one(s) and why?

Maybe expand Tuck's dad scene

5. If scenes were to be added, what would you like to see? Which characters would you like to see more of?

Maybe more leading up to announcing he's gay

6. Additional comments and thoughts:

Very good work!!
Table Read Feedback Form

1. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most effective in your opinion?
   - The comedy flows a lot, and
   - the sentimental scene btw Jamie and Tucker

2. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most ineffective in your opinion?
   - Tucker, Cooper relationship
     - i.e. what we discussed

3. Are there any characters you feel need to be significantly modified? If so, how?
   - Bridesmaids - expand
   - Dave - expand

4. Are there any scenes you feel need to be significantly modified or removed? If so, which one(s) and why?
   - Expand Tucker/Cooper and Tucker Jamie
   - Add more to Jilda and Girls

5. If scenes were to be added, what would you like to see? Which characters would you like to see more of?
   - More from Tucker, Cooper at end maybe together? More physical interactions

6. Additional comments and thoughts:
   - Poptart, odd moments
Table Read Feedback Form

1. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most effective in your opinion?
   
   I really like the comedy but also the real sweetness in the Jamie-Tucker scene & the Tucker-Cooper scene.

2. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most ineffective in your opinion?
   
   The first scene could be a little longer. I feel like we don’t get to know the bridesmaids enough for them to be real characters.

3. Are there any characters you feel need to be significantly modified? If so, how?
   
   The bridesmaids need to be fleshed out more and the relationship between Jamie & Tucker needs to be looked at.

4. Are there any scenes you feel need to be significantly modified or removed? If so, which one(s) and why?

   I think the first scene could go further.

5. If scenes were to be added, what would you like to see? Which characters would you like to see more of?

   I would love to see more interaction between Cooper, Tucker, and other people ... does that make sense?

6. Additional comments and thoughts:

   I would love again more bridesmaids & a little more divine - need a little more of a mother daughter thing!
Table Read Feedback Form

1. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most effective in your opinion?

Comedy and twist at the end.

2. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most ineffective in your opinion?

Some language is difficult to understand.

3. Are there any characters you feel need to be significantly modified? If so, how?

Nope.

4. Are there any scenes you feel need to be significantly modified or removed? If so, which one(s) and why?

Jaime and Tucker's scene.

5. If scenes were to be added, what would you like to see? Which characters would you like to see more of?

I would guess expand on scenes rather than adding new scenes.

6. Additional comments and thoughts:

Sorry for not being a lot of help.
Table Read Feedback Form

1. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most effective in your opinion?
   
   the feeling of family

2. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most ineffective in your opinion?
   
   Tackle, cooperation andilda feel disconcert

3. Are there any characters you feel need to be significantly modified? If so, how?
   
   No. All the characters have distinct personality

4. Are there any scenes you feel need to be significantly modified or removed? If so, which one(s) and why?
   
   No scenes need to be removed, but modifying the characters more involved in the situation may be a good idea

5. If scenes were to be added, what would you like to see? Which characters would you like to see more of?
   
   A scene with Dave would be nice.

6. Additional comments and thoughts:
   
   Some unnecessary lines in the action lines
After these alterations were made, it became time to implement the final piece of the puzzle: a staged reading of the play, showcasing my work to professors, peers, and my readers. This aspect of my work proved to be perhaps the most challenging of all. Actors were replaced due to unavailability and roles were switched based on impulses I heard in the table read, culminating in a cast that was quite different than the one I worked with on the table read. To prepare, we had a rehearsal prior to the reading, during which the actors experimented with voices, relationships, and the language of the play. It seemed under mounting pressure the actors were attempting to top each other’s energy and each make their characters funnier than the others, which in turn was making the characters seem alienating and the play feel lopsided. Afterward, I gave some feedback, reminding them of the importance of balancing their energy and the need to make each character a human being rather than a simple stereotype. I hoped they would take these suggestions into account before we added a live audience into the mix. The day of the staged reading was entirely nerve-wracking; I was a bundle of nerves, anxiety, and apprehension about this final culmination of my work. I worried about setting up, my peers and professors attending, their reactions, and how the actors would perform. Immediately before the reading, I talked to the actors once more, running scenes and warming their characters up. They were significantly more focused and seemed to have considered my ideas from the previous night; they were ready. Even so, as my invited audience began to arrive, I was tense and absolutely terrified.

Before I knew it, I was making opening remarks, thanking them for coming, and beginning the show. As it progressed, I felt surrounded by joy as the audience laughed at moments I did not expect and processed the plot of the show. At the conclusion, I opened
it up for discussion, asking for reactions and comments. I was incredibly pleased to
discover many of them engaging in the discussion, inquiring about choices I made and
various plot points, bouncing ideas off each other, and making suggestions. I was asked
about a variety of facets of the show, but much of the commentary focused on the
conclusion of the play. What stood out the most was a practically unanimous desire for
more of a struggle between Cooper and Tucker before they make their getaway together.
Many said they felt a real connection between both characters and Devine, and they
worried that neither stopped to consider the effect their choices would have on the people
in their lives--particularly those that they previously seemed so excited to marry. The
motivation was unclear, they said, and many expressed a desire to see a more fleshed out
scene showcasing their hesitations. Several said that it seemed as though Tucker had
planned it all along, that he turned almost sinister in his convincing Cooper to run away.
While I was writing, I felt I was allowing the characters to get swept up in the moment, to
make an impulsive and rash decision without pausing to consider the consequences or
solidify a plan. As such, I certainly do not view Tucker as having malicious intentions.
As such, I made modifications to the dialogue and expanded the scene in hopes of more
clearly expressing Tucker’s nervousness and Cooper’s hesitations without losing the
“caught up in the moment” feel of the scene.

Another voiced concern was the lack of change that occurs in Jilda--some were
confused by the fact that she was already aware of Tucker and Cooper’s attraction, and
they felt that to make her a more rounded character, the audience needed to see a shift in
her character. The aforementioned flaw was an issue I had considered previously, most
intensely as I was initially writing the ending. I felt strongly that if she was blindsided by
their choice, the ending would become quite sad as she discovered the truth and attempted to come to terms with it. For me, the play is divided in that there are characters who are more real (Tucker, Jamie, Cooper) and those who serve the comedy with their larger-than-life personas (Jilda, Devine, the bridesmaids, Dave). As I considered this aspect of the feedback, I reached the conclusion to have Jilda undergo a large change might completely alter the established perception of who she is and remove her from being the foundation of comedy I feel that the show needs. In the future, I believe I would create a small onstage moment of change to accommodate this complex question of character, as well as making some of her comments about Tucker and Cooper’s relationship less overt, thus allowing the audience more of a shock when they discover she has known about their attraction all along. Alternately, I could restructure the ending, incorporating one audience member’s suggestion to have the show conclude with another interaction between Tucker and Cooper to clarify their motivations and allow for a less stark ending.

Another audience member inquired whose story the play is, a question that has challenged me ever since Casey and Carol were removed. One audience member deftly summed up my feelings on this topic, responding that Tucker and Jilda are somewhat symbiotic, that neither of their stories can exist without the other. Their plots and developments feed each other, so much so that they become permanently linked. For me, the show is the depiction of their story together, and I have worked to ensure that each scene serves either Tucker or Jilda in order to accomplish this bond.

As the talk back progressed, I was asked many more things: why I chose to put the surprise at the end, how the actors felt playing their roles, if I had written with
specific actors in mind, the absence of mother figures, and much more. It was incredible to see people whose opinions I respect and value so much engaging with my work and caring enough about each character to the extent of wanting to see more. I left feeling that the show had succeeded on many levels and was encouraged by the level of interest the play had generated among my peers and professors. Finally, the show was able to stand on its own two feet. What follows are the feedback forms from the staged reading.
1. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most effective in your opinion?
   
   Gilda has great dialogue
   good stage direction

2. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most ineffective in your opinion?

3. Are there any characters you feel need to be modified? If so, how?
   
   Some of the word choices...

4. Are there any scenes you feel need to be significantly modified? If so, which one(s) and why?
   
   NO... really great

5. Additional comments and thoughts:
   
   Love Gilda
1. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most effective in your opinion?

   The two dads part, the end is ashock, but maybe make it more shocking.

2. What aspect(s) of the play is/are currently the most ineffective in your opinion?

   Why was Cooper getting married to them?
   Why were 4 married?
   Is he poor too or what?

3. Are there any characters you feel need to be modified? If so, how?

   Nope! Characters were awesome, Max's character was the most real for me. Like he reminds me of like 20 ppl I've met in this state.

4. Are there any scenes you feel need to be significantly modified? If so, which one(s) and why?

   Not really, I really liked the Tucker & his dad scene. A moment of seriousness was nice.

5. Additional comments and thoughts:

   Numd what I wrote lol

   Good job! I enjoyed it.

   Also does their leaving mean Gilda & divine are married?
When I began this project, I expected a challenge but hardly anticipated the extent of
the journey I would take throughout the writing process. I had very low expectations for the
outcome of the show; I never predicted I had the capacity to write a work that anyone other
than myself would find amusing and engaging. The project pushed the boundaries of my
comfort zone further than any previous academic undertaking, ultimately allowing for
immense personal growth and understanding. It has created a deep well of knowledge
regarding the writing process, the incorporation of revisions, and the test of showcasing one’s
work to a group, and I feel incredibly proud of the final product.
Trailer Hitched
A One Act Play

By
Shelby Grady
Cast of Characters:

*Jilda Landry*, The bride, Devine’s mother

*Tucker Jennings*, The groom

*Devine Landry*, Jilda and Cooper’s daughter

*Cooper Belsum*, Devine’s father

*Jamie Jennings*, Tucker’s father

*Dave Belsum*, Cooper’s father

*Charity*, Jilda’s maid of honor

*Faylene*, Jilda’s bridesmaid

*Gracelyn*, Jilda’s bridesmaid

*Please note, the inclusion of dialect and unusual sentence structure is intentional and reflect the specificity of the accents exhibited in rural Texas.*
A stage bare save one long, cheap metal table accompanied by two ragged lawn chairs. Enter Jilda Landry, 24, in a floor length robe adorned with feathers around the neck and cuffs. The bottom has clearly been stepped on too many times, as a long, partially disconnected piece trails behind her. Her hair is partially done up in curlers, and she carries a large, plastic cosmetics bag in one hand and a box of Pop-Tarts in the other. Under her arm is a bottle of cheap champagne. She saunters on slowly, singing:

JILDA: Goin’ to the chapel and weeeeee’re gonna get married, goin’ to the chapel and weeee’re aaaaall gettin married. Devy, Tuck and Cooper and me, gonna get married, Goin’ to chapel of love…

While she sings/hums, she places her items on the table, opening the box of Pop-Tarts and carefully beginning to unwrap several packages of the pastries. Inexplicably, she also pulls a knife out of the box and begins cutting each Pop-Tart into several pieces, munching on one herself. When she feels she has opened and cut a satisfactory number of Pop-Tarts, she brushes off her hands, looking pleased.

JILDA: Tucker!

No response.

JILDA: (In a singsong tone) Tuuuuck!

No response.

JILDA: (No longer sounding sweet) Tucker Jennings!!

Enter Tucker, 24, shuffling slowly into the kitchen, blinking blearily. He wears a pair of bright blue boxer briefs and a large T-shirt with a screenprint of an oversized arrow pointing left above the words “I’M HERS!”

JILDA: (Talking a mile a minute) Well there you are! I’ve jist been callin’ and callin’ for you. Aww look you’re wearin’ your shirt! Aint that jist the sweetest thing? Now, I’ve got breakfast on the table, I’ve been up slavin’ over it and makin’ it just right jist for you. Gotta be good to ma man.
TUCKER: *(Bemused and bewildered)* Jilda?

JILDA: Yes, darlin’?

TUCKER: It’s seven in the morning.

JILDA: Oh I know sweet thing, which is why you gotta hush up and keep the noise down so you don’t wake Cooper and Devine. That lil girl will come bargin’ in here faster than a bull can buck a cowboy.

TUCKER: Babe, why are you awake at seven in the morning?

JILDA: Don’t be annoyin’! We’re gittin married tomorrow! We need all the livelong day to get ourselves ready.

TUCKER: Cooper and Devine don’t?

JILDA: Tucker Jennings. I thought I was doin’ you a favor givin’ you a break from chasin after that roadrunner of a lil girl. And I wanted some time with you away from Coop. You two always git all caught up and distracted in each other. Don’t you like havin’ your wife-to-be all to yourself?

TUCKER: *(Reaching for a Pop-Tart fragment)* I do. You know I do.

JILDA: That’s what I thought. Now gimme a kiss.

*Tucker obediently leans across the table and gives Jilda a kiss.*

JILDA: There! Now that’s better.

TUCKER: *(Noticing the bottle)* Isn’t it a little early for champagne?
JILDA: Darlin’, when are you gonna realize that when you’re gettin’ hitched all rules are zip out the window? Now let’s pop this sucker.

Jilda hands the bottle to Tucker, who, try as he might, cannot pop the champagne. Jilda watches him struggle with a raised eyebrow through several attempts before snatching it away from him.

JILDA: Oh good God in heaven, give me that.

Jilda pops the champagne easily and takes a swig directly from the bottle.

JILDA: Aint that fun?! Have some!

Tucker, looking reserved, takes the bottle in both hands and takes a small sip. Jilda grabs her chair by the back and drags it next to Tucker’s. He instinctively puts his arm around her and she cuddles up to him.

TUCKER: You’re a nut.

JILDA: I keep you young!

TUCKER: So you ready for this shindig tomorrow?

JILDA: (Small squeal) I don’t think I’ve ever been more excited for any anything in ma whole long life!

TUCKER: (Kissing the top of her head) A day to remember.

JILDA: (Cuddling closer) Now, there’s jist one little bitty favor I need to ask you.

TUCKER: Oh yeah? What’s that?
JILDA: Well...see...I know we said we didn’t need food at the reception. But Senor Sabatez said he’d cut us a deal. And I was thinkin’...as the bride, I should carry some real flowers. And I could use some cash to git ma nails done real pretty, like with little rhinestones, ya know? Real classy.

TUCKER: *(Slowly, but not rejecting)* Well...that’s all going to add up…and that’s three favors, not one.

JILDA: *(Pouting and beginning to make her eyes well with tears)* You don’t think I deserve it?

TUCKER: *(Realizing he’s dug himself into a hole)* That’s not what I said!

JILDA: *(Burying her face in her hands)* And you don’t have the money for these teeny tiny mini things?!?

TUCKER: Well it’s not that. It’s just…

JILDA: *( Emitting loud, possibly false sounding sobs)* Jist forget it!

TUCKER: *(Looking upset)* Can that all be done by tomorrow?

JILDA: *(Still sobbing)* Don’t say anything more! I see how you feel!

TUCKER: No, no, shh, don’t cry. Please don’t cry. We can have all of that. It’s just fine.

JILDA: *(Cutting her eyes to look at him slightly)* You mean it?

TUCKER: Of course.

JILDA: *(Throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him)* Oh you really are a love! Oh, Cooper! Devine! Come here and hear the good news! Come on now!
Enter Jamie, the 56 year old father to Tucker. Clad in a large, ratty terrycloth robe, old striped pajama pants, and slippers shaped like giant gorillas, he looks exhausted, but puts on a happy face. He crosses to the table and grabs a Pop-Tart.

JAMIE: Y’all are making additions to the wedding?

JILDA: *(fondly, teasing)* You been eavesdroppin’ ya big ole snoop?

JAMIE: No, I suspect the neighbors and the rest of Texas heard you wailing and carrying on. I’m surprised I beat Devine in here.

JILDA: I was not *wailin’*, thank you very much. And it’s just a few lil things really. It won’t be too crazy.

JAMIE: Well you two are only going to get married once. Might as well make it perfect this go round.

Small silence. Jamie chews his Pop-Tart. Finally:

TUCKER: Hey, could we use this table for the reception?

JAMIE: *(In good humor, teasing)* Now what kind of father would I be if I didn’t let my son use this beautiful hand made table, stay in my palatial house, and host his reception here?

TUCKER: We’ve thanked you.

JILDA: Of course we have! Yer jist the sweetest ole pop a guy could have!

JAMIE: Well you’re quite welcome. Thank you for the gourmet buffet, but now this ‘ole pop’ could use a shower. *(Exits USR)*
Jilda goes back to her work opening and cutting Pop-Tarts, taking swigs of champagne all the while. A few moments go by.
Enter Cooper and Devine, a 24 year old father and his 7 year old hellion, who has mussed hair wears a nightgown spotted with dirt, ketchup, and other unidentifiable food stains. The two practically tumble over each other. Devine sprints into the room from SR, cackling and holding a pair of neon green snake print boxer briefs high above her head like a prize. Cooper sprints after her in circles, trying to catch her without bowling over the table or anyone sitting at it.

DEVINE: You cain’t catch me! You cain’t catch me! (Laughs and laughs)

COOPER: Devy you give those to me right this instant!

DEVINE: (Screams) NO!!!! Mama didja know Tuck wears these funny underpants?!
(Still running, waving them in the air)

Tucker, realizing what she’s holding, jumps from the table and begins to chase Devine. Cooper takes a seat next to Jilda. He’s practically out of breath. A tall, burly man, he does not look like one made for chasing small children.

COOPER: That lil spitfire decided to wake me up by throwing those there underpants on my face.

JILDA: (Giving him a slight poke) That’s our girl. You should expect worse after all these years.

COOPER: She jist loves gettin’ me riled and annoyed. ‘Specially bright and early. Dang kid.

TUCKER: (Finally catching her, scooping her up in his arms): Devine, come on now, it’s not nice to take other people’s things.

DEVINE: I DON’T CARE!

TUCKER: (Calmly, soothingly) Devy, you know those are mine. Why would you throw them in your Daddy’s face?
DEVINE: NO!

TUCKER: No is not an answer, Devine. You have to learn to respect people who are older than you.

DEVINE: DADDY’S A DOODOO FACE!

TUCKER: *With wide eyes* Ooooh little miss Devy. That was the wrong thing to say!

DEVINE: *Changing to looking worried* Why, Tuck?

TUCKER: Well now you don’t get any Pop-Tart treats your mama made.

DEVINE: *Quietly* But I want a Pop-Tart treat.

TUCKER: Oh you do, huh? Well why don’t you give a sweet apology to your Dad first. *Places her back on the ground*

DEVINE: *Padding over to Cooper’s side* Sorry, Daddy. I won’t throw Tuck’s panties at you anymore.

JILDA: *To the room with a grin* Ain’t she just the sweetest thing?

DEVINE: *Crawling up on Jilda’s lap* Mama, tell me about the weddin’ again.

JILDA: Now baby you done heard the plan a million times!

DEVINE: AGAIN!
JILDA: *(Taken aback)* Oh all right, lil bitty pretty one, picture this! *(Speaks animatedly)* I come down the aisle in the poufliest white dress anyone’s ever seen. Tuck’s waitin’ at the end with your Daddy, his best man!

DEVINE: *(Interrupting)* Because Tuck and Daddy are best friends!

JILDA: That’s right. And grandpappy Dave is gonna make us man and wife. *(Becoming more and more excited and animated)* Now, here’s the really fun part! After Tuck and I do our weddin’ vows, you and Daddy get up on the altar with us, and we all promise to be a family forever and ever!!

DEVINE: AND we all get rings! *(Competitively)* I’m the MOST excited!

COOPER: It’s gonna be a big ole party! *(With a wink)* Tucker’s excited too, he jus don’t know how to show it! Ain’t that right, Tuck?

TUCKER: *(With grin, conceding)* Oh, you know I’m excited.

DEVINE: *(Jumping off Jilda’s lap and going to take Tucker by the hand)* Tuck, will you help me pick out my clothes today?

JILDA: Come on lil baby girl, you know that’s my job!

DEVINE: NO! Tucker is better at outfits than you!

JILDA: *(Getting annoyed)* Well that’s just rude, Devy. You know mama likes helpin’ you.

DEVINE: Noo!! I want my daddys to do it!!

*(Cooper and Tucker exchange a look. At first slightly pleased, but recovering quickly to address Devine)*
COOPER: Now, Dev baby, you know that’s not what we call us. I’ll always be your Daddy. Tucker’s your Tucker. ‘Member? You don’t have two Daddys. People git all confused if ya say that.

DEVINE: If I want two Daddys I GIT two Daddys! *(Devine runs out of the room screaming, Cooper and Tucker start to follow)*

JILDA: *(With a raised eyebrow)* Now why’d you go make that big stink? She *is* gettin’ two Daddy’s. What’s the fuss?

COOPER: Well, you know…two Daddy’s makes it sound like we’re…*(Getting embarrassed, doesn’t want to say what)*…You know.

JILDA: *(Breezily, looking back and forth from both of them)* Don’t be ridiculous. Now should I go help her before she tears this lil house to shreds or are y’alll up for the job?

COOPER: We got this, don’t we, Tuck? Let’s be parents. Good practice.

TUCKER: Let’s take care of our girl.

*Tucker pats Cooper on the back and they exit SR. Jilda is left sitting at the table, drinking champagne and looking satisfied.*
The Wedding:

_Lights up on a small chapel. Pews face upstage, backs completely to the audience, line SL and SR, creating an aisle. US center lies a block big enough for Dave to stand on. Faylene, a bridesmaid, stands attempting to sweep the floor with a dry mop, as well as curiously attempting to sweep the pews._

_Enter Jilda’s two other bridesmaids, each wearing a long sleeved purple velvet dress, attempting to ignore the heat. The dresses all appear to be the same size, an amusing fact due to the varying body sizes of the women. Faylene is a woman so skinny one would think she’d never eaten a day in her life-she makes the dress look like a mumu. The second, a large woman named Gracelyn, sports a small moustache like a badge of honor, and is entirely too rotund for the cheap, stretchy design. The third, Charity, has a wig that refuses to stay on her head due to the sweat and heat. She is forced to adjust it (usually only making it worse) every few minutes. They fan themselves intermittently with any item they can--trying with Bibles, their fake flower bouquets, the hems of their dresses, etc._

GRACELYN: _Observing Faylene sweeping, rolling her eyes_ What in the sam hell do you think you’re doin’?

FAYLENE: Well I’m jist sweepin’ everythin up, makin’ sure the floor is perfect for Jilda’s big day!

GRACELYN: Faylene. That’s a mop.

FAYLENE: _Getting increasingly agitated_ I don’t want her dress to get all dusty, OK?! _Turning to Charity_ I’m a bridesmaid, this is what we do. We maid the bride.

CHARITY: That don’t even make sense. And there’s no prize at the end for bein’ the best one. So you just get the ants out of your pants.

GRACELYN: Ladies, ladies. This is Jilda’s day, let’s focus on her.

CHARITY: Yes. Her and Tuck. The world’s oddest couple.
FAYLENE: *(Horrified)* Charity!! You take that back right this instant!

GRACELYN: Oh please, we all know it’s true.

FAYLENE: *(Emphatically)* It is NOT! Jilda and Tuck were made for each other. I’ve never seen two people so happy in love!

CHARITY: Look, all I’m sayin’ is I’ve never in my life seen Tucker with a woman before Jilda. Not once.

FAYLENE: And so what?

GRACELYN: And so it *is* a little weird. Jilda’s been with everyone and Tuck’s been with no one…

FAYLENE: I can’t stand here and let you two have this *horrible* conversation in Jilda’s wedding church! You’re both plum crazy and I can’t stand y’all right now. I’m gonna tell Jilda you’re talkin’ smack!

CHARITY: *(Backpedaling)* Why you always gotta be such a drama queen? I ain’t sayin’ nothin’ bad. I’m just sayin’ that whole opposites attract thing must be right.

GRACELYN: Exactly. Gawd, Faylene. Tuck’s as sweet as can be, no one’s sayin’ anything mean about him.

FAYLENE: Y’all are just gangin’ up on me...

Enter Cooper’s father, Dave, from US left. A portly man in his late 50’s, he wears jeans, bright blue snakeskin cowboy boots, a white undershirt, and a suit coat. His bald head is covered by a cowboy hat that is slightly too small. In one hand he carries a beer, in the other he holds the notes for officiating the ceremony.

DAVE: Oh heeeeeeey there, ladies! Wooo-eее, y’all are lookin’ mighty fine today!
All three giggle slightly.

FAYLENE (Looking flirty, pouting) Well, Dave, you just about saved the day. These two were bein’ real mean to me jist now.

DAVE: Is that so? Well, so glad I could be of service to ya, ma’am (Tips his cap to her, Charity and Gracelyn roll their eyes).

CHARITY: We were jist about to go get Jilda and help her finish primpin’.

DAVE: (Laughing) That girl sure does love to primp. Y’all run off now, ole Dave’s gotta practice his speechin’.

GRACELYN: We’ll be back before you can say jack rabbit, so you better git to it.

The three women exit USR. Faylene gives a little wave to Dave.

DAVE: (Practicing his prompts for the vows alone, beer in hand) Ok, let’s do this shit! Oh, shit, sorry, God, I didn’t mean to say The S Word in church! Now I said it again...no more! I swear. Ok. Now let’s see here. Uh...you, Tucker, take this Jilda to be your uh...your….wedding wife? awful wedding wife? (Chuckles to himself, looks at a page of notes) HA! Lawful wedded wife! To have and to hold, blah blah blah, sick, poor, death...by God’s holy what? Ormi...Ornidance? What kinda shit word is that, sounds like horny dance. (finds this very amusing. Laughs for a few beats, then puts on glasses to re-examine the notes) Ok, Ok, I see ya, Or-di-nance. Whatever that means. “And thereto I give thee my troth”...? What in sam heck is a troth? Why in the hell would Tucker want her troth? I could write better weddin’ thingys than this load of...crap! (Looking up) Can I say that one in church? Eh, whatever. Sorry God. Whoooooooo-eee I don’t know if I’m ready for this. It’s a lot of pressure for ole Dave. I just gotta power through. (takes a swig of beer) Yes, sirree, just power on through.

Dave exits DS right.

Enter Jilda, three bridesmaids in tow, who are all trying to take care of her train and veil and ensure she doesn’t trip and fall. The scene is a blur of white and velveteen. Jilda is in a flurry, has entirely too much energy, and continues to frenzy around as she speaks.
JILDA: *(Squeals)* Ain’t I jistt the prettiest bride you ever saw?!

FAYLENE: You look like an angel, Jilda. Like somethin’ straight outta a fancy magazine!

JILDA: I know! Thank gawd Tucker shelled out the cash for this weddin’ cus Lord knows I couldn’t’ve paid for it. *(Slyly)* He’s gonna take care of me and my Devine, you know that? *(Conspiratorially)* His granmama died a couple months back? And whatdy know, he’s got a pretty little pocket of cash. Now, I’m not sayin’ thank gawd she died…*(Mimes the sign of the cross, backwards)*...But thank GAWD she died! Who knows if I coulda married him without those savings there!

GRACELYN: You jist got lucky. If I could find a man half as sweet at Tucker--

JILDA: *(Interrupting)* I’m sorry but I’m just a person who deserves nice things every once and awhile! I mean would ya look at this dress? I bet none of y’all have a dress this fancy. *(It’s hideous)* Aww, gittin’ married is fun, ya’ll. Now I’ll have Tucker and Cooper and Devy, one big happy family!

CHARITY: Lord, girl, you’ve bitten off more than your little mouth can chew…

JILDA: Wait! Is ma lipstick ok? *(It’s a horrible shade of mauve)* Got any on ma teeth? *(Bares her teeth at the bridesmaids).*

CHARITY: You’re good, darlin’.

FAYLENE: *(Jumping in, excitedly)* I always knew you’d get married first, Jilda! You always been the prettiest of us all!

JILDA: *(Preening)* I know, I know…Oh wait! Gracelyn, are you ready for your big ole solo? You’d better make it real pretty now, ya hear? I ain’t walkin’ down the aisle to nuthin’ but the best.
GRACELYN: I got my tape recorder all set up! *(Curtsies to Jilda, much to Jilda’s extreme delight)*

JILDA: It’s just so perfect!! Y’all got your bouquets?

CHARITY: *(Holding up three small ragged bouquets of fake flowers)* We’re all set, darlin’.

JILDA: YAY! Now we just gotta wait!

*Jilda rushes offstage US right, with the bridesmaids tripping after her.*

*Enter Devine and Cooper DS left. Devine drags Cooper by the hand, yanking on his arm while she gallops into the chapel. She wears a t-shirt over a light pink dress with a tulle skirt so large she’s practically wading through it. The bottom is covered in mud. In her other hand she holds an enormous bouquet of fake, light pink flowers.*

COOPER: *(Out of breath)* Now, lil bitty pretty one, you gotta finish gettin’ ready for the wedding before you run your Daddy ragged.

DEVINE: But I wanna practice tossin’ ma bouquet! *(Heaves her arm back and chucks the bouquet straight at Cooper’s head)*

COOPER: *(Out of patience, yelping in pain)* Now you listen here, you little nutball! That is no way to treat me! Imma have to take away those stupid flowers if you keep throwin’ em like a World Series pitcher!

DEVINE: *(Rushing over to pick up her flowers)* But Momma said you throw your bouquet! I was just doin’ what she said to!

*Like a child, Cooper snatches the flowers out of her hand.*

COOPER: HA! Nah Nah, who’s got the flowers now?

DEVINE: GIVE THOSE BACK!
Enter Jamie, US Left, unbeknownst to Devine and Cooper. He watches this exchange, mixed with horror and amusement.

COOPER: *(Holding the bouquet high above his head)* You can’t reach them! That’s what you get for hittin’ your Daddy!

JAMIE: I’m sorry, I don’t mean to interrupt, but I think guests are going to start arriving soon… *(Raising his eyebrows)*

COOPER: *(As if to justify his actions)* Well, she started it.

DEVINE: DID NOT!

JAMIE: Devine, please keep your voice down. We’re in God’s house.

DEVINE: I hate you! *(Swiftly kicks Cooper in the shins and sprints off DS Right)*

COOPER: *(Wincing in pain, looking embarrassed)* Kids, ya know? Can’t control ‘em, am I right?

JAMIE: I can’t say I’d know, Tucker was always a very reserved kid.

COOPER: *(Good naturedly)* Right, you probably weren’t dumb enough to git a girl knocked up at 17, huh?

JAMIE: I’m not sure that had a lot to do with it. It’s very important for children to have structure, especially in an environment in which--

COOPER: *(Interrupting, not wanting a lecture)* Sorry man, but I’d better go find Dev. What a spitfire.

Exits DS Right, following Devine’s path. Jamie sighs and takes a seat on one of the pews. A few seconds go by, during which he appears to be lost in thought. Enter Tucker from
US Right. His jacket is unbuttoned and his bow tie hangs limply around his neck. He looks nervous. Upon seeing Jamie, he relaxes a bit and takes a seat in the pew across from his father. Jamie brightens.

JAMIE: So the big day is finally here--how do you feel?

TUCKER: Like I’m going to throw up.

JAMIE: (good naturedly) I’m very familiar with the feeling.

TUCKER: I just never really thought...I mean the whole family thing. That was never really my plan.

JAMIE: Was it not? What was your plan?

TUCKER: (Treading lightly, trying to find the right words) I mean...after mom walked out on us. And then Sherry seemed so great until she left with everything. It just seemed like the marriage family package deal was so...toxic, I guess.

JAMIE: (Quietly) I did the best I could.

TUCKER: I’m sorry. You know I don’t blame you for any of that. I’m just stressed and nervous and you know. All that.

JAMIE: (Not offended. As if he’s needed to say this) Look, Tuck, I’ve made my fair share of mistakes, and I hope you know I’m very aware of them. (Pause) That being said, the biggest regret I have from those mistakes is that you were collateral damage. I know we haven’t always had the closest relationship. After your mom left it seemed like we both just went to our separate corners to process everything and we never really came out.

TUCKER: I know. I think in a way I was too little to understand what was happening. (Trying to lighten the mood, with a small laugh) We’re better off without her, huh?

JAMIE: (Slight laugh) I know, I don’t mean to be a sourpuss. This is an incredibly exciting day for you, and for me. All I want is to know you’re absolutely positive this
commitment is going to make you happy. I want you to be sure you can build a life with Jilda, that’s all. If the family plan wasn’t for you, what made you change your mind?

TUCKER: I just. I never really pictured finding a family I felt so…comfortable around. And I want to take care of them. They’re good people.

JAMIE: (Wanting to say more, but hesitating) You’re a good person, Tuck.

TUCKER: (Slightly surprised) That means a lot.

JAMIE: I just wish someone had told me before I got married how tense and stressful and tumultuous it can be. It’s difficult and exhausting, committing to share your life with another person.

TUCKER: Well, gee, that calms my nerves.

JAMIE: Now, just let me finish. It’s also exhilarating and...fulfilling and worth the world.

TUCKER: That’s a bit more like it.

JAMIE: Having said that, I must admit I’m amazed that in one day you’re willing to commit yourself to not one person, but three. It’s your decision to make and I’ll support you no matter what, but I felt I had to make sure you took a moment to remember exactly what you’re getting into.

TUCKER: I am. I know it’s an unusual situation, but I love ‘em all. Honest.

JAMIE: (Another small laugh, affectionately) My son of many words.

TUCKER: Well I don’t know what to say except the truth.

JAMIE: (Hesitantly) My point exactly. You know you could tell me anything, don’t you?
TUCKER: *(Slight laugh)* Well you know I’m not one for heart-to-hearts, don’t you?

JAMIE: Now come on, Tuck, humor me here. You’re my only son, and I need you to know that come hell or high water this old man will stand by you. You understand?

TUCKER: You mean it? I guess I’m just nervous because…you know. What if for some reason it doesn’t work out?

JAMIE: Of course I mean it, are you kidding? *(Pointedly)* It’s all going to be great. In any case, there is absolutely nothing in the world you could do or say that would make me stop being your Dad.

TUCKER: *(Long pause)* I’m really glad to hear you say that, actually…

JAMIE: There we go. I could tell something’s been on your mind for weeks, so just let it out.

TUCKER: I just. I’ve been kind of...thinking about something a lot lately. I feel like I need your advice--

*Enter Gracelyn from USL. She bustles in with authority, armed with a small child’s tape-player and a mini microphone.*

GRACELYN: Oh Lordy, I’m so sorry, I’ve interrupted a sweet lil moment, haven’t I? Y’all jist git back to whatever you were talkin’ about.

*The moment has passed. Tucker looks like he has more to say, but avoids it saying:*

TUCKER: ...I was just saying I need some advice on my style for today.

JAMIE: *(Disheartened, but playing along)* Yes. Right. Now. As I was saying, that tie looks atrocious, will you let me fix that for you?

TUCKER: I think I’ve tied enough bow ties to know when they’re--
JAMIE: Just let me be a Dad, please?

GRACELYN: Y’all are just the cutest things! I think I’m jist about ready to sing Jilda into your lovin’ arms, Tuck. *(Places the tape recorder in several different locations, trying to see how it looks)* I think Cooper wanted to come make sure everythin’ was all ready.

JAMIE: *(To Tucker)* I’ll give you two a moment.

*Jamie and Gracelyn exit USR. Cooper can be heard laughing at someone’s joke, and saunters on from DSR, holding a beer in his hand just as his father was. There is a playfulness about their back-and-forth.*

COOPER: *(Giving Tucker a playful punch to the arm)* You ready to get hitched, man? It’s gonna be one hell of a ride.

TUCKER: *(Laughing)* And how would you know? You never married the woman.

COOPER: True. *(Jokingly)* What in the world am I thinkin’, tyin’ myself to her now? TUCKER: *(Enjoying the banter)* It’s three for the price of one! How could you turn that down?

COOPER: This is true. I *am* a man who loves a good bargain.

TUCKER: I should be the one drinking. I’m nervous as all hell.

COOPER: Aww, c’mon now. It’s just us. Whenever you git nervous, just look over my way and I’ll give ya a little thumbs up or somethin’.

TUCKER: *(Smiles)* I’ll definitely do that.

COOPER: Well, good! Cuz it’s time to get this show on the road. We better git in our places.
Both exit USR in preparation. Jamie returns to take a seat in the front pew as Dave saunters on, making a big to-do about being the officiator, and stands proudly at the altar. A pre-wedding march of sorts begins.

Enter the three bridesmaids in succession. First Charity, next Faylene, then Gracelyn. They practically sprint/skip down the aisle, none walking at the same time or in the same fashion, but all very quickly, looking very strange. They take their places to the left of the altar. Gracelyn gears up her kiddie tape recorder with the small, yellow plastic microphone to sing Jilda down the aisle. Next come Tucker and Cooper, walking down the aisle together, awkwardly. They realize they can’t both fit comfortably in the aisle side by side and have a brief struggle with deciding who will walk in front; Tucker wins as he is the actual groom. Finally, it is the bride’s big entrance. Instead of the bridal march, as Jilda rounds the corner, Gracelyn presses play on the tape recorder and begins to sing. The song is “The Wind Beneath My Wings”. Gracelyn makes it through several seconds before apparently, the battery in the recorder begins to die. The accompaniment and background choral vocals begin to slowly die with it. Gracelyn, determined not to let Jilda down, continues to sing with gusto. Jilda, apparently not noticing, continues down the aisle with tears of joy in her eyes. Dave beams at Jilda.

DAVE: (Starting at a loud, enthusiastic volume) Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here to...(Clearly forgetting the actual script) git some kiddos hitched! Can I get an Amen?!

The bridal party, minus a reserved Tucker, enthusiastically chimes, “AMEN!”

DAVE: Now, Jilda and Tuck here have made it easy on this old man and written themselves some vows of their own! Tuck, you wanna go first?

TUCKER: (Getting nervous) Umm...sure--

JILDA: I’M first!

DAVE: (Amused) I forgot, ya always let the ladies go first. Am I right, men?

JILDA: (Practically bouncing with excitement): Dear Tuck, yer jist the sweetest thing goin’. I knew from the moment I metcha that you were gonna take real good care of me’n’my babygirl. And I’m darn lucky to have a man who gits along so crazy well with
ma Cooper here. You’re a bright star up in heaven, yer the prettiest pumpkin in the patch. I sure do love ya!

At this point, Jilda has so much pent up energy that she impulsively flings her bouquet into the stunned audience. Faylene claps and jumps up and down before realizing that everyone else is silent and gets embarrassed.

DAVE: Well now, that’s gonna be hard to beat! Tucker, you up for the job?

TUCKER: I’ll try.

DAVE: (With a laugh) You’d better do more than just that! Let’s hear ‘em.

TUCKER: (Awkwardly, clears his throat) Umm. Jilda. You know I’m not so great with talkin’ in front of a lot of people, so I’ll make it short. I care so much about you. I want you and Devy and Cooper to be incredibly happy. And I’ll do everything I can to make that happen. I promise.

JILDA: (Overly excited) HELL yeah, he will!

With that, she gives him a giant kiss on the lips, creating an audible smack.

DAVE: (Scolding) Jilda! You’re too early! Did you hear me say, ‘And now ya kiss the bride?! NO! Wait your turn.

JILDA: Dave Belsum this is my wedding, I am the blushin’ bride, and I will kiss this man if my lil heart desires!

DAVE: Let’s jist get back on track here. Do you, Devine and you, Coop, take these good fine people to be your family, forever and ever, Amen? Would you all please uh, join hands?

Tucker and Jilda expand to include Cooper and Devine. Tucker holds Cooper and Jilda’s hands, Jilda links to Devine, and Devine back to Cooper.
DEVINE: *(Very solemnly)* Yes, I do!

COOPER: *(Equally solemn)* I swear on The Bible and The Cowboys, I do.

JILDA: That’s not what you’re supposed to say. Make him say it right, Davie!

DAVE: Oh hush up, Jilda, he can say whatever he wants. He said it on The Bible so who cares?

JILDA: It’s not right! He has to say “I do!”

COOPER: Fine. I do.

JILDA: Oh, that’s enthusiastic.

TUCKER: Let’s just exchange rings.

JILDA: *(Pouting slightly)* Ok, Ok, git those rings on.
Jilda and Tucker, who are already wearing their rings, each pull out a small pouch with a ring inside. Jilda bends down and places one on Devine’s finger, and Tucker does the same for Cooper.

DAVE: Tucker, you may NOW you can kiss that bride.

*Tucker and Jilda share a quick peck to end the ceremony. In a very rehearsed fashion, they then both kiss Devine on the top of her head and Cooper on his cheeks. Instead of the newlywed couple walking back up the aisle together, the four form what appears to be a small parade and enthusiastically exit USR.*
The Reception:

*Lights up on Jamie’s living room, every surface covered in silver foil pans of varying sizes. They sit upon every available surface, hardly allowing room to walk, much less host enough people for a reception.*

*Jamie and Charity are heard from USL offstage as they attempt to unlock the front door and enter the house.*

JAMIE: Thank you for helping me out, I just couldn’t get everything prepared by myself.

CHARITY: Aw, nonsense, what’s a maid of honor for?! So, what exactly is the plan here, hmm?

JAMIE: El Senor Sabatez’s Mexican Cantina will be delivering the food here in about 10 minutes. From there we’ll take it outside where the party will be held and set it up for the guests.

CHARITY: That place is God’s lil gift to Texas. What’d ya get? Their fajitas are to die for!

JAMIE: I can’t exactly remember what I ordered. *(Getting closer to actually entering the house)* Bean burritos, some tacos I think… *(He fumbles with his keys, unlocking the door)* Maybe a few orders of… *(Opening the door to see the pan covered room)* Holy hell!

CHARITY: *(laughing)* A few orders of everything in their kitchen…?

JAMIE: How in the world did they get in here?! I didn’t give them a key!

CHARITY: Well, as my Grandmawma always says, you just gotta rock and roll with the punches. Now hun, you have food warmers prepared?

JAMIE: Was I supposed to?
CHARITY: Yessiree, unless you’d like to serve the guests cold…(examining the closest pan, getting excited) chalupas, it looks like!

JAMIE: I didn’t think about it…

CHARITY: (Beginning to bustle around authoritatively and look through things) Where are your slotted spoons?

JAMIE: Uh…


JAMIE: (Attempting to mask his frustration) What are you, a professional chef?

CHARITY: Every good mawma knows her way around a kitchen. Do you have anything?

JAMIE: (Searching through drawers) I have...this! (Proudly extracts a garlic press)

CHARITY: (Laughing) Oh honey that’s not going to help us one little bit!

JAMIE: (Crestfallen) Why not?

CHARITY: Cuz that there is a garlic press. We’ll just have to make do. Now, we gotta git these suckers outside where they belong.

JAMIE: Are you insulting my food?

CHARITY: Hell, no, I love this slop just as much as the next girl! But Jilda said she wanted everythin’ by the pool.

JAMIE: Yes. Right. Yes. The pool. Let’s go. (Grabs several of the pans and heads offstage, DSL)
Enter Devine, sprinting, with red sauce spilled entirely down the front of her dress. In her right hand, she clutches what remains of an enchilada. In her left hand, she holds fast to her fake flowers from the ceremony. Jilda chases her, frantically trying to get her to relinquish the enchilada, with Faylene chasing Jilda in hopes of helping out and saving the day.

JILDA: You horrible, HORRIBLE little girl! You done ruined your pretty dress! I spent fifteen hard earned dollars and two hours at Walmart pickin’ that thing out!

DEVINE: This is yummy!

JILDA: (Halting) Devine Emerald Jennings. I am counting to three, and when I get there, you’d better give Mawma that enchilada and come git cleaned up.

DEVINE: NO!

JILA: One…

DEVINE: You’re stinky!

JILDA: Two…

DEVINE: You have doodoo shoes!

JILDA: THREE.

Devine stops. She stares at Jilda. Jilda smirks, pleased this trick has actually worked. Just as she shifts to approach Devine and get her cleaned up, Devine throws the enchilada as hard as she possibly can. It lands smack in the middle of Jilda’s dress. Silence. Then,

JILDA: Oh, you done it now, you awful awful chilld! This is mommy’s ONE special dress and now it’s RUINED. How could you do that to mawma?!
To Faylene’s horror, Jilda begins to cry. Mascara begins streaming down her face as she stares down at her dress.

FAYLENE: *(Talking a million miles an hour)* We can fix that! I can fix it. I mean, it’s all going to be alright. I’m sure we can take it dry-cleanin’ or somewhere where they--

JILDA: *(Ignoring her, still speaking to Devine)* No party for you! Go to your room right now! You have a good long think about what you done.

Shockingly, Devine skips off USR without complaint, unbothered by being sent to her room. Jilda continues to ruin her mascara, and is beginning to look like a bloodied bride of Frankenstein.

JILDA: This is my ONE day, my ONE day to have everything all about me and it’s getting ruined by my brat of a kid. I shoulda known.

FAYLENE: *(Getting nervous)* Nonsense, darlin’, you still look more beautiful than any of us other girls. Now come on, let’s go git you cleaned up.

Jilda nods, allowing Faylene to take her by the arm and lead her off USL. A few moments pass. Some rustling is heard, then Cooper and Tucker cautiously step into the kitchen from DSL, looking suspicious. Their hair is mussed, clothes rumpled, shirts untucked, etc. Tucker carries an open bottle of champagne. They glance around nervously.

COOPER: *(Loudly, sounding false and awkward)* Gee, thanks for helping me with my tie, Tuck. I caint ever figure these bow tie thingys out.

TUCKER: *(Teasingly sarcastic)* Yeah, there’s a great coverup. No one will ever suspect anything now.

COOPER: *(Fierce, defensive)* Oh, shut up! At least I’m trying. You want the whole damn world to know?

TUCKER: *(Automatically putting his hand on Cooper’s shoulder)* Whoa, let’s just breathe now. No one knows.
COOPER: *(shrugging away)* Don’t you tell me to breathe! I do what I want!

TUCKER: Coop, just take a deep breath. We’re fine. Ok? *(soothingly, rubbing Cooper’s arm as he reluctantly takes a deep breath.)* See? That’s better. Now talk to me. Why are you panicking?

COOPER: You think they saw us?

TUCKER: Doesn’t seem like it.

COOPER: *(aimlessly pacing and looking around the kitchen)* Oh my God. When Jilda finds out…

TUCKER: *(trying to stay calm, but reality beginning to dawn on him)* What if she doesn’t?

COOPER: Oh yeah right! Jilda always finds out, that sneaky woman, she’ll be onto us like white on rice.

TUCKER: *(as if to reassure himself)* It’s all gonna be just fine. I promise.

COOPER: I’ll git disowned! Dave’ll write me straight outta that will. I’m over. Ruined.

TUCKER: *(reservedly)* We don’t have to tell anyone.

COOPER: *(height of exasperation)* Don’t you see? It won’t matter, they’ll be able to tell just from the way I look atcha!

TUCKER: *(shocked)* How do you look at me?

COOPER: *(hardly getting the words out)* Ya know, like I...like I...like you or somethin’.
TUCKER: *(Even more surprised)* Well do you?

COOPER: *(Still frenzied)*...And everyone’s going to….they’ll just...I can’t....

TUCKER: *(Slightly stunned)* Ok, Ok, let’s just talk this through. My brain isn’t thinking straight.

COOPER: You just got married. I’m Devine’s Dad. What the hell were we thinkin’?

TUCKER: *(Unable to process)* Well...we weren’t. But if this wasn’t just a one-time thing...God, what am I saying? I love Jilda. I mean we can’t just...

COOPER: *(Hardly listening)* I don’t know what’s gotten into me….

*Tucker and Cooper pause, make real eye contact for the first time.*

TUCKER: I think I’ve made a huge mistake.

COOPER: What are you saying?

TUCKER: *(Trying to articulate)* I mean, Jilda’s…amazing and interesting. She’s energetic and…*(Getting sidetracked)*….and gosh do I adore Devine. I want to give them the world.

COOPER: But…?

TUCKER: But I can’t lie to them. And I can’t tell them the truth, because it would…well I don’t even know what it would do.

COOPER: *(Resuming his frantic pacing)* You’d better come up with a plan quick, Tuck, cuz I’m freakin’ out. What the hell are we supposed to do?
TUCKER: *(Looking nervous)* What if…what if we left?

COOPER: *(Stopping, looking at Tucker)* What?

TUCKER: *(Tentative)* We could leave.

COOPER: Are you out of your goddamned mind?

TUCKER: *(Getting lost in this idea, starting to get swept up in the moment)* We don’t need all this! We don’t need people’s questions.

COOPER: I think you’re gettin’ the wrong idea…

TUCKER: *(Gaining energy, talking increasingly fast)* You just said you look at me like you like me. How exactly am I getting the wrong idea?

COOPER: *(Searching for excuses)* I’m not sure. Maybe we’ve had too much champagne.

TUCKER: Or maybe this is right. Maybe the rest of this *had* to happen so *we* could.

COOPER: *(Considering this, giving a disbelieving laugh)* That just sounds plum crazy.

TUCKER: *(Also laughing slightly)* Coop, we don’t have to have it all figured out this minute. *(Unable to abandon the idea)* We can go somewhere and figure it out along the way. We just need some time! What’s stopping us?

COOPER: Jilda…

TUCKER: You and I both know that the thing Jilda really truly loves most in this world is money. So we’ll leave her with it! Let her and Devy have it all! Everyone gets what they want.

COOPER: *(Getting excited, trying not to show it)* I don’t know…
TUCKER: Look. If you want to stay at this big party, act like nothing’s going on, and eat chalupas until you get sick, be my guest. But I’m going to take this champagne, sneak away, and hope for the best.

COOPER: *(Considering, then quietly)* Let’s do it.

TUCKER: *(All grins)* We’ll be long gone before anyone even realizes we’ve left!

COOPER: *(Liking this)* Just like a coupla cowboys.

Cooper picks the champagne up off the floor. They glance around once again before stealthily running off DSR to rejoin the party before making their getaway. As they leave, Charity, Gracelyn, and Faylene bustle on from USR, eyes wide. They have clearly overheard at least some of the previous conversation. There is a moment’s pause as they try to process this, then all three can’t stop talking.


GRACELYN: What are we goin’ to do?!

FAYLENE: How dare those boys ruin this day for Jilda! How dare they?

GRACELYN: And they were sayin’ she’s a no-good golddigger!

FAYLENE: Which she ain’t!

CHARITY: I mean, maybe she thinks a lot about money…

GRACELYN: But that’s normal! When I almost married Hank that’s all I could think about.

CHARITY: That poor thang. She’s gonna be humiliated in front of all these people.
GRACELYN: We gotta tell ‘er.

FAYLENE: *Dramatically* No! We cain’t! I just spent a million minutes gittin’ that girl’s runny mascara off her face and cleanin’ her up! No way!

GRACELYN: *Bossy* Honey, you want that girl walking out to that party not knowing what just happened? She gotta know!

FAYLENE: We gotta make something up. Let her be happy for a lil while longer!

CHARITY: And what’s the point of that?!

FAYLENE: She’s jist gonna die, I jist know it. We’re gonna tell her and the poor thing is just gonna die right then and there.

CHARITY: We gotta convince her she don’t need ‘em.

GRACELYN: Yes. Yes. Remind ‘er she’s better off without men. Lady power and all that shit.

_Jilda is heard offstage, clomping towards the kitchen in heels and singing to herself._

FAYLENE: Oh ma gawd. Oh ma gawd oh ma gawd oh ma gawd. Here she comes.

GRACELYN: Are you ready? Here we go.

_Jilda enters from DSL. Seeing her bridesmaids, she lights up and gives a little twirl in a white sundress._

JILDA: Well hello, gals! Look at my fabulous lil wardrobe change. I’m jist like those celebrities.

FAYLENE: *Overeager* You look amazing, Jilda!
Charity casts a sarcastic look in Faylene’s direction.

CHARITY: (Matter of factly) Jilda, darlin’, we’ve got somethin’ we gotta tell you.

GRACELYN: Now hear us out.

JILDA: Did someone git me a bad gift? I done told Aunt Darlene not to give me that stupid rat killer…

GRACELYN: (Slowly, carefully) Honey. Listen up. Tucker and Cooper have run off together. Jist now. We heard them talkin’.

CHARITY: We’re so sorry.

Long silence as Jilda considers this. She shifts, her flounce and flutter slowly replaced by a sly confidence.

JILDA: (Raising an eyebrow) Already?

FAYLENE: What do you mean, already?!

JILDA: (Incredibly pleased with Faylene’s reaction, becoming increasingly lofty) Well I knew they were goin’ to, I jist didn’t think it’d be so fast!

CHARITY: (Skeptically) What do you mean, you knew?

JILDA: (Taking a superior and condescending tone) Listen gals, I don’t expect you to understand. It takes a very smart woman to do what I’ve done.

GRACELYN: What in the hell are you talking about?
JILDA: *(As if it were obvious)* Don’t be stupid. Cooper introduced me to Tucker. After about three dates I could tell he was more excited by Coop than he ever was by me. Gawd knows why.

FAYLENE: Then why did you marry him?!

JILDA: *(Scoffs)* Money, baby. I figured we’d git divorced eventually and then I could take the money and run.

CHARITY: Well I’ll be damned.

JILDA: *(Suddenly, excitedly)* Wait! Did they leave the trailer?!

FAYLENE: What?

JILDA: The trailer, it’s parked out back?

GRACELYN: *(Peering out the window)* Naw, it’s still there.

JILDA: Well hot DAMN! That’s even better than I expected. I can’t believe they already ran off. Now I can make that trailer all girly!

*Devine runs back in from USL.*

DEVINE: Mawma, do you still hate me?

JILDA: Naw, sugar darlin’, everything’s workin’ out jist right.

DEVINE: So I can go back to the party?

JILDA: *(Kneeling to Devine’s level)* Well hun, how’s about you and Mama take a lil vacation in our brand new trailer instead?
DEVINE: *(Yanking Jilda’s hair)* YES YES YES!

Devine begins hopping and dancing around the kitchen, screaming and singing about going to the beach. Jilda stands, brushes her hands, and looks to her bridesmaids coyly.

JILDA: Now see, ladies. That’s how it’s done.

Blkackout.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
