

Perseverance
Theatre

Presents
The Great Alaskan

Play
Rush
'81

WHAT THE RAIN WILL DO

by
Jason Ohler

Copyright 1983, Jason Ohler

Cast. *Mother, Father, Paperboy, Stella, Benjamin Clok, Rev. Harkins, and Johnathan.*

Setting. Typical living room that extends to a porch just beyond the living room door. In the living room there are three windows, a closet, an umbrella stand, some religious articles, and a collection of other living room trappings. The play opens with Father dragging a chair with a rug piled on top of it across the floor.)

Mother. Dear, stop!

Father. Alright!

Mother. Thank you. Whenever you move furniture, please pick it up. Look what you've done to the floor -

Father. Alright!

Mother. Where are taking grandfather's chair? - And grandfather's rug too? Where are you going?

Father. I am taking them onto the porch where I will beat them every last piece of dirt and dust they hold is gone. Where is Johnathan's baseball bat?

Mother. But they are antiques; they've been in the family for generations -

Father. Where's Johnathan's baseball bat? Here it is.

Mother. But it's raining; they'll get wet.

Father. Good. It will keep the dust down.

Mother. Dear, please!

(Father exits onto the porch.)

Father. Okay Jonathan, this is for you.

(Father begins beating the chair with the baseball bat and speaking simultaneously.)

Father. For being a bad, bad, boy. For hurting your mother and me very, very much. Damn your soul!

Rev. Harkens. *(from a distance)* Help me!

Father. Go help yourself!

Rev. Harkens. *(puffing)* It's me, Rev. Harkins. Help me!

(Enter Rev. Harkins, carrying Benjamin Clok onto the porch.)

Father. Rev. Harkins - I'm sorry - I didn't know who it was. I was just doing some, cleaning. Who are you carrying?

Rev. Harkins. Shouldn't matter who cries for help.

Father. No, forgive me.

Rev. Harkins. Though you do have to be careful these days. Give me a hand will you? We've got to get this man indoors. He needs shelter, fast.

Father. Certainly Reverend. Who is it?

Rev. Harkins. His name is Benjamin Clok. Your daughter knows him.

Father. Our little Stella know him?

Rev. Harkins. Yes; he is Stella's new Sunday school instructor. Unfortunately he turns out to be quite a liability when bad weather's upon us.

Father. Oh? What's wrong with him?

Rev. Harkins. He's allergic to the rain. The rainy season hits and he falls into one of the deepest sleeps witnessed by medical science.

Father. How awful.

Rev. Harkins. Yes, I suppose - could be worse - the rain could keep him awake - it could kill him, though that's not necessarily bad; depends on what kind of life you've lived or tried to live I guess; could you get him the rest of the way indoors? I've got to go.

Father. Certainly.

Rev. Harkins. I will pick him up later; I'm headed to the store to pick up some, uuh, liquid refresher for this parched throat of mine. All that preaching leaves a man dry.

Father. Certainly, Reverend.

Rev. Harkins. *(trailing off)* Just stick him anywhere. He's not too choosy about where he sleeps.

Father. *(struggling)* Yes Rev.. Okay old fella', let's go. Just a few more steps; we're almost inside -

(Father enters into the living room carrying Benjamin Clok.)

Mother. Oh my lord, what have you done!

Father. What?!

Mother, You said you were beating the furniture, but you needed a moving target to vent your hostilities, is that it? Something alive -

Father. Stop, will you! I didn't touch this man. Rev. Harkins dropped him off.

Mother. Father Harkins was here?

Father. This happens to be Benjamin, Stella's new Sunday school teacher.

Mother. Stella's new Sunday school teacher?

Father. He has some sort of disease it seems. Whenever it rains he passes out. The Rev. had to go out and asked us to watch him for awhile. I'll set him over here, out of the way.

(Father sets Benjamin down.)

Mother. I don't know whether I want someone who is diseased sleeping in my living room. I work so hard to keep this place clean,

Father. It is our duty.

Mother. I suppose; Wait! Where are you going? Don't leave me alone with a strange, diseased man.

Father. *(Trailing off)* He's asleep!

(Father exits onto the porch. Mother paces nervously.)

Mother. Dear, I think you've beaten them long enough . . . Dear

(She walks to the door and opens it.)

Mother. Dear, please . . . would you - STOP! Father. *(from the porch)* ALRIGHT!

Mother. Thank you.

(Father enters from the porch dragging the chair with the rug piled on top of it. As he speaks, he sets the chair in place.)

Father. But if they're still dusty, don't blame me.

Father. Of course not. I was frightened. This Mr. Benjamin is awfully quiet for a Sunday school teacher.

(Father rolls Benjamin out of the way. He lays out the rug in Benjamin's place, and rolls Benjamin back into place on the rug.)

Father. He's dead to the world; forget about him. What are we going to do about Johnathan? Are you at all concerned about that?

Mother. Now dear, please calm down - take a nice hot shower why don't you; know how that soothes you - but please don't start ranting.

Father. I can't believe that our son did this to us - and to God.

Mother. It's raining again.

Father. As though he was determined to get to hell no matter how it effected us.

Mother. It's going to be another day inside.

Father. Are you listening to me?

Mother. You're ranting. It's bad for you.

Father. Doesn't this upset you? Don't you feel deceived and abused? We're talking about Johnathan, our son; after eighteen years of our efforts invested in that boy, he . . . he does this.

Mother. Of course this upsets me, but one of us has to remain calm.

Father. The greater part of God is the wrath I feel for a sin so deliberately committed.

Mother. I wonder.

(Mother walks to a window.)

Mother. It's raining hard; very hard.

Father. I know what I'm doing - the boy must be punished for his own well being. He's cultivating a wayward morality and he will grow up to hate us if we don't stop him. Do we stand together on this or don't we?

(Pause.)

Father. Very well then I shall lead the crusade by myself and speak twice as loud to make up for your absence.

Father. I didn't say 'no'.

Father. Aren't you at least angry? I believed he was everything he appeared to be; a good student, an alter boy, and captain of the baseball team for three years.

Mother. All of which he is.

Father. Ha! And more. Johnathan is a master deceiver. He didn't just do it; he thought about, planned it, and then did it.

Mother. We don't know who is responsible.

Father. Such acts are not committed accidentally.

Mother. Nor without some source of inspiration.

Father. Perhaps, but Johnathan bears the burden of his actions. We taught him that.

(Pause)

Mother. What do you and he talk about during your 'man to man' conversations.

Father. You think that . . . that I . . . ?

Mother. Of course not; I was wondering if there were any . . . signs.

Father. None.

Mother. Do you look for them?

Father. I can see them if they are there. No; this comes as a complete shock to me.

Mother. Maybe we are responsible, for not seeing that there was something wrong with a boy that likes to spend as much time as he does just walking in the rain, thinking . . .

Father. Where is Johnathan anyways? We will have to keep a closer eye on him from now on. What has he been doing all day? Where has he been?

Mother. I don't know.

Father. You don't know? You don't know!

Mother. Dear, please . . .

Father. You're afraid I'll be too hard on the boy; without to stand with me on this one I just may be. other. I'm afraid you won't have a chance.

Father. What do you mean?

Mother. I think Johnathan's gone.

Father. Gone?

Mother. And I don't think we will see him for a long time.

Father. Nonsense. He's not gone; he's out there, walking in the rain again. He'll come home when he's wet enough.

Mother. I don't think so. Not this time.

Father. I'm sure of it.

(Father walks to the window and scans the outside.)

Father. There; who's that? There he is, see him? He is probably trying to get up the courage to face us at this very moment.

(Father opens the window and begins to scream outside.)

Father. Johnathan, is that you? is it?

Mother. Don't broadcast!

Father. You come in here boy, you hear me.

(Father pulls out of the window, slams it shut and runs to another window.)

Father. It is. it's him. He's over here.

(He struggles to open the window.)

Father. Would you please help me? No . . . of course you wouldn't.

Mother. I didn't say I wouldn't. Please don't broadcast, please . . .

(Father jerks the window open and leans out.)

Father. Johnathan! Johnathan! *(Aside to mother.)* It's him - he hears me; he's walking this way.

(Out the window)

Father. The issue is responsibility - either you are man enough to come home and face what you've done or you're not.

(Father jerks out of the window and slams it shut. He grabs Mother b'v the hand and runs to the window nearest the door.)

Father. Over here. He's coming. For the love of God gather your faith and help me; he needs us.

(Father jerks open the window.)

Mother. Are you sure it's him?

Father. Look! He's running; he's running to us! He thirsts for judgment, can't you see that?

(Mother leans out the window.)

Mother. Johnny, is that you? Johnny, come home honey; we can talk.

Father. Don't coddle him. He wants punishment. Tempt him with his own salvation, like this:

(Father pushes through the same window Mother is occupying.)

You've been out in the rain long enough. God drowns those that can't be cleansed, you hear me? Get home before it's too late!

Mother. Don't yell at him.

Father. Alright!

Mother. And don't yell at me either!

Father. ALRIGHT!

(They finally work themselves free and fall to the floor in a heap; footsteps can be heard on the porch.)

Mother. Honestly!

Father. Shhh.

Mother. Don't shhh me!

Father. Listen - it's him. He's here. Can you hear him?

(Father begins moving about excitedly.)

Father. Okay, this is it. He's come back to us to receive judgment. We've got to hit him hard from the outset or we'll lose him. It's we're going to stand together on this, now is the time.

Mother. I need to sit down.

(Mother sits. Father opens the door with a flurry.)

Father. To your knees!

(The paperboy immediately drops to his knees, clutching a paper which is outstretched towards Father. He is dressed in foul weather gear and he is very wet.)

Mother. The paperboy!

Father. Uh, son, I ...

Paperboy. Here's your paper. I heard you yelling. I came as fast as I could. I'm sorry the paper's so late; the streets got flooded and the trucks couldn't get through.

Mother. It's alright.

Paperboy. The rain made the ink run and I'm sorry about that, too.

Father. You can get up now.

Mother. It's not your fault; besides, we don't get the paper.

Paperboy. You don't? Oh, I'm sorry, I'm real sorry.

Mother. It's not your fault. Paperboy. I have to go. I'm sorry.

(The paperboy abruptly moves to leave.)

Father. Wait!

Paperboy. Yess . . .

Father. Can I ask you something? Do you like baseball?

(He looks at Mother, she is shaking her head 'yes.')

Paperboy. Yes.

Father. *(Father, giving him a coin.)* God bless you, son.

(Paperboy exits)

(Pause. Father sits despondently in the chair he brought in earlier.)

Father. All for naught, all eighteen years of patience and understanding and guidance undone . . . I remember sitting in Grampa's chair, and you Johnathan, You would lie on that rug, Grampa's heirloom, and the one I would lie on in front of the fire when I was a child. And I remember reluctantly, but firmly, smacking your little bottom every time you . . . you touched . . . your . . . your body, just like your Grampa did to me. I remember thinking, 'no son of mine is going to grow up diseased.' And then I'd wash your hands and pray for you. Why, who would have thought . . .

Mother. Yes, who would have thought . . .

(Enter Stella, age 8 to 11, dressed primly as a little girl.)

Stella. Why who would have thought what? You mean why would they have thought it? Or what would they have thought or what? Who thought it? Tell me what they thought and I'll try to think who thought it and why.

Father. gggGOD!

Mother. Oh, Stella. Shhh honey.

Father. She hates me. She must.

Mother. Your brother, we're talking about your brother.

Stella. What's he done?

Father. Please, Stella, go Outside and play.

Stella. It's raining.

Father. Then go . . . I don't know; use your imagination. Go play with your dolls.

Stella. uuuh uh. I want technology.

Father. Then go mix up something in the blender.

Stella. In the rain, you mean rain blendering, just blendering, blendering, blendering . . .

Father. Yes, Stella. With or without technology, You spend a lot of time just blendering . . . No, Stella, do your blendering inside where it's dry, where it makes sense to blender . . . gggGOD!

Mother. She's not *(Mother points to her head)* . . . enough for that.

Stella. I might hurt myself, right? Or not, huh?

Father. You might, indeed.

Mother. Your brother is in trouble . . .

Father. Oh, for God's sake! Don't!

Mother. Well, why not? She can't understand any of it anyway. And at least this way, she thinks she's included.

Father. Because she is just a child and she gets enough dirt everywhere else. Besides (aside to Mother), stop pretending; she's lost her marbles and you know it.

Mother. (*staunchly*) When it's family, it's not dirt.

Stella. They're my marbles anyway.

Mother. We are not talking about real marbles, dear.

Stella. Oh.

Father. Let's go for a walk.

(*Mother hesitates*)

Father. Come on, we're going for a walk. Mother. Wait. Honey, come here, please.

(*Stella moves hesitantly toward Mother.*)

Father. Stella, listen to me and try to understand, okay? Now, some things are, well, complicated and can be very hard to explain.

Father. I'm going.

Mother. (*ignoring him*) The problems that grownups have are especially hard to explain to little girls. Your brother, who is a grownup -

Father. So we thought.

Mother. (*ignoring him*) - has one of these especially hard to explain problems. I don't know how well you will be able to understand this, but your brother has made 'an error in judgment.' Do you know what that is?

Father. You're not getting anywhere.

Stella. Sure. Like going out for a walk when it's raining out.

Mother. *(stammering)* Errr, yes

Stella. Unless you like walking in the rain, then it would be an error in judgment to go for a walk when it's sunny.

Mother. Errr, yes. That's fine dear.

Father. HERE SHE GOES!

Mother. SHHH.

Father. ALRIGHT! She hates me; she must.

Stella. Unless you don't care what the weather's like. Then you don't have to decide. That's the best.

Mother. Yes, dear.

Stella. Though, sometimes it rains when it's sunny out, that's when there's rainbows; then sometimes it's not sunny, like at night and you figure it must be raining and bingo it's as dry as a bone.

Father. gggGOD!

Mother. Honey, listen to your mother for a minute.

Father. No, no more. You didn't learn to babble like an idiot from us.

Mother. Good Lord, can't you see she's confused?

Father. Tell me, Stella, are you as confused as your mother thinks you are?

Stella. *(pausing, screwing up her face)* HUUHH?

Mother. See? Good girl. You stay confused; it might be your only hope to keep from being poisoned by all of this.

Father. Ha! *(Father fetches two raincoats from the closet.)*

Stella. Where's Johnathan?

Mother. He's ... he's ...

Father. He's on his way to hell.

Stella. Huh?

Mother. SHHH.

Father. *(Father runs to a window.)* You are, you are, you are. That's exactly where you are headed!

Stella. Now Johnathan's gone again, right? Father yells and Johnathan walks in the rain, right Mother? Then I get upset and start crying.

(Stella begins to cry.)

Stella. Mother, my brain hurts. Can I take a nap?

Mother. Look what you've done. Now Stella's brain hurts. Is Father boring you again, is that it?

Father. Oh, thank you very much.

Mother. She says 'bored,' but she means 'tired.' She tells me you bore her so badly that first it makes her nauseous and then it makes her 'tired.' By 'tired' she means 'confused' and that's what gives her a headache. You should get to know your own daughter better. You should know by now that when you talk to her you have to remain calm and speak as lucidly as you can.

(Mother moves to Stella and holds her.)

Mother. Is that it, dear? Is Father boring you until your head hurts again? Is that why you want to take a nap?

Stella. No, I'm not bored. Father's just tiring me. I mean, I'm not tired, he's just boring me . . . I mean . . .

Mother. *(patiently and encouragingly)* Keep trying, dear. Come on . . .

(Stella presses her head into her hands to demonstrate her effort.)

Stella. I'm not boring, Father's just tired; Father's not tired, he's very boring; ummmm, Father's so boring, he just must be very tired...

Father. She's getting worse, leave her. Let's go. Do I still run this house or don't I?

Mother. Of course you do, dear. I'm going for a walk with your father. We'll talk some more later.

Father. Over my dead body.

Mother. *(reassuringly)* We'll talk some more later.

Stella. Does that mean Father will die soon?

Father. Let's Go!

Mother. We can't just leave her here alone!

Father. Well, we can't stand to be around her!

Mother. That's not true! Stella honey, that's not true.

Father. No. No more; let's go. Benjamin will watch her.

Mother. He can't do a very good job if he's sleeping. And what if he wakes up while we're gone?

Stella. Oh boy, Benjamin's here?!

Father. He teaches Sunday school for God's sake!

Mother. *(her voice trailing off)* Alright! See you later dear. You take a nap if you want. And if this Mr. Benjamin gets in the way, you just shuush him out the door, you hear me?

Father. *(his voice trailing off)* Let's go!

(Father and Mother exit.)

Stella. I'll do better than shuush him out the door Mother; I'll put him in a shoe-box and stick him in the closet. That's what happened to my marbles. I didn't lose them, you took them from me! You put 'em on that shelf in the back of the closet, where only grownups can reach, where they'd be dry! And you used my new shoe-box without even asking me. I was going to put my thoughts in there and save them for when my brain didn't hurt so bad and you couldn't fluff it up like a pillow and then smack it down whenever you needed head room!

(She mimics Father and Mother.) DON'T YELL! ALRIGHT!

(Stella fidgets, and begins to move about aimlessly. She bumps into Benjamin.)

Stella. Benjamin, Benjamin, get up please! It's time for Sunday school, so rise and shine! The monsters are gone and they've chased Johnathan away again, and now I don't have anyone to be my friend, so get up now, hear me? Okay, one, two, three, get up! ... BENJAMIN!

(She pauses.)

Stella. Okay Benjamin, you know the rules. You wouldn't get up when I asked nicely, so now I have to get my rain pail. I'm gonna' get it ...

(Stella runs to the porch, fetches a pail full of water, and runs back.)

Stella. It's right here Benjamin, I got my rain pail. Here goes, ready?

(Stella douses Benjamin with the bucket of water.)

(Pause)

Stella. Oh, Benjamin, please get up. My cute little face is wrinkling and everyone will lose their fun if I start to grow old. I'll grow old, Benjamin. I swear to God, I'll grow old if you don't get up. Do you hear me? Get up! it's the rainy season when we need you most, and we must always believe in trying, remember! GODDAMNIT! IF THE TRULY WISE PREFER IGNORANCE THEN GET UP AND HELP ME STUPID! THE MONSTERS HAVE CHASED BROTHER JOHNATHAN AWAY AGAIN AND I HATE THEM! DO YOU HEAR ME! I'M IN DANGER; THEY'VE CHASED JOHNATHAN AWAY AGAIN AND WHO KNOWS WHAT THEY'LL DO TO ME!

(Stella drops, lethargically, removes her shoes, puts one on each hand, and begins puppeteering with them. At first she alternates her hands, concurrently alternating between speaking in a high, falsetto characterizing her mother, and in a low gruff voice, characterizing her father. The actor is called upon to improvise here. At an appropriate moment, Father reenters. He enters quietly, goes to the closet, pulls out an umbrella, and then returns to the doorway. He stops and watches Stella.)

Father. *(sternly)* Where are your hands? Where are they? What are you touching? Answer me! What are you doing?

Stella. *(upset, racing to cover her hands)* Nothing.

Father. Do you need to wash your hands? Do you?

(Stella doesn't move. She and her father stare at each other. Father vacillates, passing hurried nervous glances out the door and then looking at Stella. He leans the umbrella against the wall next to the bat and approaches Stella slowly and with great reserve.)

Father. We don't get to be alone very much. I think that's too bad. Your mother won't let me. I ... she ... well, she thinks that I might ... get mad ... too mad ... She says I should get to know you better, but she sort of hopes that I don't ... I want to be a good father to both you and Johnathan, but Johnathan, he ... he just shouldn't have done what he did - not to your mother and me. And you and I, well, I guess we just don't understand each other. I guess that must be it.

(Father runs back to the door and cranes his neck out, scanning the outside nervously. He runs back to Stella and begins speaking anxiously. As he speaks, he moves closer and closer to her so that eventually they are face to face with little distance between them.)

Father. Look, Stella. Do your dear old dad just one tiny favor? Just one time make sense for me. I'll just ask you your name and how old you are and you just say, my name is such-and-such and I'm so many years old. Okay?

Stella. Huhhh . . . ?

Father. Come on, Stella. Just this once, try it, will you? Okay, and what's your name, little girl?

Stella. Huhhh . . . ?

Father. Come on, Stella, will you, please . . .

(Mother enters and stands at the doorway. Stella sees her but Father does not.)

Stella. Okay, Father, I'll obey you. I part my glistening lips, and then what do I do with my dew-covered tongue?

Father. Huhhh?!

(Mother screams, and enters dazed.)

Father. Huuhhhh?! Now, wait a minute. I didn't . . . Don't think . . . I didn't! I didn't!

Mother. Because I arrived in the nick of time to stop you!

Father. I didn't! I didn't! I was just trying to get closer to my children . . .

Mother. Well, dear God in heaven, that is not how you do it! Oh . . . oh . . .

Father. STOP!

Mother. And you, Stella dear, are you alright?

Stella. Oh, yes. I feel fine.

Father. Stop!

Mother. Thank God He gave you enough stupidity to keep you from knowing what's going on.

Father. I was just trying to get to know my own daughter and she kicks me in the bbb . . . bbb . . .

Mother. Say it dear. Dump all your filth out while I'm here to stand by you!

Father. I'm not dirty!

Mother. All of a sudden it is all so clear to me. it's not Johnathan's fault at all.

Father. I am clean, damnit!

Mother. And you swear now too?! Dear God, cleanse yourself; fall to your knees and pray for forgiveness - I feel my faith surging like it never has before.

(Rev. Harkins enters through the porch door. He knocks his folded umbrella to announce himself but he is unnoticed. He clutches a flask.)

Mother. Say it! Yell it out! Cleanse yourself! I'll stand by you - I'll say it with you; SHE KICKED ME IN THE BUNDLES!

(In the excitement, Rev. Harkins spills the flask contents on himself.)

Father Harkins. what a horrible night.

Rev. Harkins. I know, it's God-awful wet outside. I came inside to get dry, and I spill a whole bottle of uh, throat healer down my front in the excitement; went all the way to the store in rain for it too.

Mother. Forgive me Father.

Rev. Harkins. You don't usually address a Protestant minister with 'Father.'

Mother. I'm sorry; I'll get you a towel - and excuse my awful language - it wasn't me - they weren't my words - it's very complicated, but if you want to take Benjamin home right now, I understand.

Rev. Harkins. No, I'm sure he's safe with you folks, especially if he's asleep. Actually I came over here tonight to talk to Johnathan - but first, I, uh, emptied my flask on that last one, and my throat's dry as a desert - could you give an old soldier a refill?

Mother. How do you know about Johnathan?

Rev. Harkins. Know what about Johnathan?

Mother. Who knows? My god, who told you - and never mind about Johnathan, it's not his fault. I found out tonight where he gets his wayward tendencies from.

Father. Stop!

(Father sits in the chair and begins failing into a quiet stupor.)

Rev. Harkins. 'Wayward tendencies'?

Mother. Father...

Rev. Harkins. Reverend...

Mother. I've got to call you 'Father'; do you mind?

Rev. Harkins. No I suppose not; not if it helps you to fantasize about me...spiritually speaking. That's what I'm here for.

Mother. I don't know where to start, whether to tell you what my husband almost did to Stella tonight, or to tell you about his newly acquired fondness for foul language - but first, I have to tell you that that wasn't me - those were my husband's words.

Rev. Harkins. What was?

Mother. What I said. What you heard - they were my husband's; I was helping him to say them.

Rev. Harkins. ...that?

Mother. Yes, that.

Rev. Harkins. I can assure, I've heard much worse.

Mother. Yes, but I didn't - they weren't mine – they weren't mine - I've got to sit down. You don't understand . . .

Rev. Harkins. I wasn't offended, so it doesn't matter whether you said it or not. I wish people wouldn't get so nervous about their speech when a man of the cloth is around. Now, please, before I lose my voice altogether, just tell me where you keep your, uh, refreshments . . .

Mother. You don't understand.

Rev. Harkins. But if I wasn't offended, I don't need to understand; see how easy that it is? Never mind, you keep talking and I'll find the uh . . .

(Father, sitting in Grandpa's chair, slowly fades into a quiet stupor. Rev. Harkins begins snooping around for whiskey as he talks.)

Rev. Harkins. Yes, well that raises an interesting theological issue, can someone else's thought be as bad as your deed? That's a tricky one, because if you're implying you thought the same bad thoughts someone else thought, though it wasn't yours to begin with, and then you go ahead and commit a deed based upon that thought, well, let's see, where does that

leave you? Could you give me a hint as to where you keep your, uhhh . . . Is it in this room?

Mother. But if I'm trying to help someone say something bad for his own good . . .

Rev. Harkins. Never mind, I'll find it. Yes, you were saying? Benjamin, there you are! I hope he hasn't been too much trouble. Still asleep, eh? Well, better to do nothing than do wrong, I always say. Hmmm . . . I wonder, can you sin in your dreams? No, God wouldn't judge us for what we keep in our subconscious . . . Don't know . . . could very easily. Ah hah!

(Rev. Harkins extracts a bottle from the umbrella stand.) Here we go; so you keep it in the umbrella stand, eh? I'll have to remember that.

Mother. *(hysterically)* Father, I never dream about naked people - never!

Rev. Harkins. That's interesting. What's more interesting is that you would want me to know.

Mother. Everyone I dream about is dressed for inclement weather, every last one of them. I just wanted you to know that.

Rev. Harkins. That's fine. Oh, hello Stella.

Stella. Huh?

Rev. Harkins. Does she make any sense yet?

Mother. She's better than you.

(Rev. Harkins begins pouring the whiskey from the bottle into his flask.)

Rev. Harkins. So, Stella, let's hear you. Your mother tells me you're better.

Mother. Well, yes, but being put on the spot isn't too good for her. The doctor says to stay out of the rain and get lots of rest.

Stella. Could God do something so bad even He couldn't forgive Himself for it?

Rev. Harkins. Well, now, that's an interesting question. Hmmm, I wonder . . .

Stella. Do you think of God as the author of only one book?

Rev. Harkins. Huh? I'm not quite sure I see . . . Oh, yes, I see what you mean; well, that's interesting. I suppose I do. I am sort of committed to that idea I guess, though you'd think he would have written more than that you? But I suppose not if you can fit it all into one volume. Many do quit

after a best seller though. I don't rightly know. Of course, this is never a matter of knowing, I think, I believe . . . no, that's a bit strong -

Stella. If you heard God's voice and He told you to stand in the rain 'til you melted, would you do it? Mother. That's enough, dear.

Rev. Harkins. I thought you said she was better. God knows as the father of this house you must need the patience of Job.

(Father maintains his quiet stupor.)

Father. uhhhh . . .

Rev. Harkins. You okay? You're looking a bit drug out. Her foul language gettin' you down? Get over it . . . I did. My wife cusses every chance she gets just to spite me. You just encourage her if you let it bother you.

Father. . . . uhhhhh . . .

Rev. Harkins. Hello, anybody home? What's wrong with this man?

Stella. Well, for one thing, he taught me the "F" word tonight.

(In surprise, Rev. Harkins spits his whiskey out and onto Father, spilling the greater part on himself. Father doesn't notice and continues in his low moan.)

Father. uuuh . . .

Mother. Dear God in heaven, not that too! Get Rev. Harkins a towel, do something, wake up!

Rev. Harkins. Uh, God! I spilled the whole thing again. I can't seem to keep my liquor down in this house. Do you people usually have this much trouble staying dry indoors?

Mother. I'm terribly sorry - I'll get you a towel, but first to me please. I have to tell you what my husband almost did to Stella tonight.

Rev. Harkins. Almost did? I'm not sure that counts. It's difficult to say just how far into something you have to be before it counts as a deed.

Stella. Do your song daddy: (in a sing-song) Little lady you're in luck, just climb into my big truck, we'll take a drive to my house, and really, really, really -

Father. UUHHH . . .

Mother. You know the song? You know the song?! Oh God-

Rev. Harkins. She doesn't understand what she's singing, and even if she does, what of it? I'll admit, it is a bit offensive -

Stella. And really, really, really -

(Mother rushes towards Stella.)

Mother. Stella, shhh honey, SHHHH.

Rev. Harkins. Stop making such a fuss, you're just encouraging her, though it's good for her to get it out.

(Short pause)

Rev. Harkins. Now, if we're settled, I believe I have just a drop left and my throat is positively on fire -

Mother. I wouldn't! She's going to say something! Don't! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SAY! Oh father, GOD!

(Mother swoons, and as she falls she grabs Rev. Harkins.)

Rev. Harkins. Ahhh . . . not again; my last drop is gone and another has fainted away.

Stella. Poor mother. She must be very tired . . .and really, really, really . . .

Rev. Harkins. Yes child, go ahead. Your mother and father fail to respond; finish your song by all means.

Stella. And really, really, find our father, without whose love we might not bother. The "F" is for father and that's what father taught me tonight.

Rev. Harkins. *(nervously)* How interesting. I really should get going. I didn't mean to create such a stir.

Stella. I understand.

Rev. Harkins. Okay, Benjamin, time for me to carry you home.

Stella. Wait!

(Stella begins tugging at grandfather's rug, trying to pull it out from underneath Benjamin.)

Stella. Could you help me please? I'm going to cover father with it so he'll stay warm and dry.

Rev. Harkins. Of course child, what a charitable idea.

(Together they cover father with the rug.)

Stella. That's it, tuck him in. Father always liked grandfather's rug.

Rev. Harkins. There you go. I must go home and dry out, and do something for this throat of mine.

Stella. Wait! I have to tell you a secret. Mother thinks you look sexy in a Roman collar.

Rev. Harkins. Uh, well, whatever helps her to fantasize, that's what I'm here for. You stay inside, and I'll say something to Johnathan on my way home, if I see him.

Stella. Oh? What will you say?

Rev. Harkins. Oh, I don't know, I don't think it really matters, just as long as I say something -

Stella. Wait! if you don't know, let's ask Benjamin.

Rev. Harkins. Child, you can't get Benjamin up when it's raining - when the weather's like this I have to carry, him everywhere I go.

Stella. There's a way to make Benjamin sit up.

(Stella moves next to Benjamin, picks up one of his arms, and begins twisting it slowly. As Benjamin awakens, his awareness of pain grows, as does his scream.)

Benjamin. oooooowwwwwwWWWWwWwwwW!!!!

Stella. Pain makes Benjamin sit up. Don't be afraid, go ahead, ask him.

Rev. Harkins. Uh, Benjamin? Sorry to get you up old boy, but one question: Does it matter?

Benjamin. You can love the rain You can hate the rain. You can do both, neither, or spend all of your time deciding - Or you can sleep.

(Benjamin returns to his place, falls down, and resumes sleeping.)

(Short pause)

Rev. Harkins. You know, I could use a nap myself. I've got to go home and change, I really do.

(Harkins hurries to the door.)

Stella. So what will you tell Johnathan?

Rev. Harkins. Oh, I don't know, it'll be something for sure, I'm sure -

Stella. But what will you say?

Rev. Harkins. With a little luck I won't even see him. It gets raining as hard as it does out there and we all tend to walk about with our faces pointed towards the ground -

Stella. But if you do see him?

Rev. Harkins. Well that will depend on his mood and mine of course, but I think I'll tell him...

(Johnathan enters from inside the house dressed in rain gear and carrying a suitcase with baseball pendants on it.)

Rev. Harkins. Johnathan, you just stay as dry as you can.

(Johnathan picks up the baseball bat and the umbrella and talks to Stella.)

Johnathan. I have to go.

Stella. I know.

(Johnathan and Stella embrace.)

Rev. Harkins. Oh, what the rain will do.

(Harkins exits. Lights fade.)