

KATHARINE. No one knows that better than I. It's presumptuous of you to think you could ever take his place.

WILL. Cal didn't want another Andre.

KATHARINE. There is no other Andre, just mine, and he is gone forever and I will mourn him forever. I don't want peace or closure — another word I detest. I want revenge. I'm Hamlet. Take my picture. I'm my own poster. Vengeance!

WILL. You won't find it here.

KATHARINE. Then where?

WILL. I don't know but not in our home.

KATHARINE. It's not a home, it's an apartment. I hate it when people call their apartments homes.

WILL. You say "hate" a lot.

KATHARINE. I dislike imprecision. You're a writer, so should you. *(Cal returns.)*

CAL. I said he could stay in for another 5 minutes. We don't have a child, we have a fish.

KATHARINE. I still want to know what you're going to tell him when he grows out of bathtubs.

WILL. I told you.

KATHARINE. Easier said than done, Mr. ...

WILL. Ogden.

KATHARINE. Ogden. Easier said than done. *(Will has noticed Andre's diary.)*

WILL. What's this? "A.G."?

CAL. A diary Andre kept, a journal. I sent it to Mrs. Gerard quite a few years ago and now she's returning it to me.

KATHARINE. I bought it for him on his 18th birthday.

CAL. I didn't know that.

KATHARINE. He hated the initials on the cover. He thought they were tacky. I thought they were classy. "A.G." It's the very last trace of him, that he ever existed.

CAL. There isn't a day I don't think of him.

KATHARINE. How does that make Mr. Porter's second husband feel?

WILL. I'm Cal's first husband. I like precision, too.

KATHARINE. I stand corrected.

WILL. I'm happy he was in a good relationship before he met me. If you're wondering if I'm jealous, I am a little bit. Cal and I weren't young together. I never got to see him screw things up the way he

sees me screw up. He was all evolved and perfect and his own man by the time I met him. I'm sure Andre had a lot to do with that.

CAL. He did. (*Will opens the diary.*) What are you doing?

WILL. Aren't you curious? Very legible handwriting. (*He reads from it.*) "4th of July weekend. The Pines. Parker lent us his house while he's on jury duty."

KATHARINE. What are the Pines?

CAL. A community on Fire Island.

WILL. A gay community. Who's "us"?

CAL. I don't know.

WILL. Who's Parker?

CAL. I don't know.

KATHARINE. I'm sure I'm in there somewhere. It won't be flattering.

WILL. "I told my mother I was on the Cape, as if she knew what the Pines were, let alone Fire Island. The Pines is the new Port Chester. Lord, what fools we mortals be."

KATHARINE. I told you so.

WILL. "It's a beautiful day. Enjoy it while it lasts. Rain tomorrow. Right now the ocean is blue, perfect surf. I didn't want to get out but I have to run lines. It's my first Albee, the theatre said he's coming (all the way to Providence? Really?), and I want to be good. There's a beautiful sailboat way out on the horizon (Parker has great binoculars) probably on its way to Nantucket or Martha's Vineyard. Anyway, I'm just breathing and feeling the sun and enjoying the sea breeze and wondering why life can't always be like this. The cute guy in the house next door just came out on his deck again. To be continued." It's been more than five minutes. This is between the two of you. Coming, Buddy Bud Bud! (*He goes.*)

CAL. Bud likes one of us to dry him after his tub.

KATHARINE. Andre loved my mother drying him off after a tub. She'd stand him on top of the toilet seat and put a bath towel between his two little legs and go back and forth with it. "See-saw," she'd go, "see-saw." I never approved. I think it's improper to touch a child down there. I don't know why I told you that. And no, I don't think Andre turned out gay because my mother ran a towel between his legs and went, "See-saw, see-saw."

CAL. I wasn't going to say that.

KATHARINE. But you thought it was what I was thinking.

CAL. Nothing made Andre gay.

KATHARINE. I didn't. *(Cal holds the journal out to her.)*

CAL. Read from anywhere.

KATHARINE. "Kansas City. We're a hit. The local cricket said I had a lot of promise ... " He called them crickets instead of ...

CAL. I know.

KATHARINE. "... of promise and predicted a bright future." I can't.

CAL. He's your son. *(She goes to another part of the journal.)*

KATHARINE. "Cal bought a NordicTrack and is taking lots of vitamins. I think he's scared. We both know I've put him at risk but we don't talk about it. It's just there, our own elephant in the room. I'm not a bad person, just a very imperfect one. Cal deserved so much better than me." Should I stop? *(Cal is motionless.)* "One day we're certain we're going to beat this. The next, I'm dying. Cal is a rock. I am blessed. My family wouldn't be able to handle it."

CAL. I wasn't a rock but I'm glad he thought so. *(Will enters with Bud, who is in a terrycloth robe. Bud's hair is wet.)*

WILL. Meet the cleanest young man on Central Park West. You clean up good for a little boy, Buddy Bud Bud.

BUD. I'm not a little boy. I'm almost 7. *(To Katharine.)* Do you like our apartment? At the Thanksgiving Day Parade, Spider-Man is so close to our window you can almost touch him.

WILL. You're lucky you have *two* dads to keep you from falling out.

BUD. Can I have a cookie?

WILL. You know where they are.

BUD. Would you like something, Andre's mother?

KATHARINE. No, thank you. I'd like you to call me Katharine.

BUD. Pappy?

WILL. Sure. *(Bud goes. We will hear sounds from the kitchen from time to time. Doors, drawers opening and closing.)*

KATHARINE. I've stayed way too long. I'll be late.

CAL. For what? You said you didn't have any friends, especially in the big cold city.

KATHARINE. The Algonquin and I are not total strangers. The Dorothy Parker Suite and I have become very good friends.

CAL. Andre loved Dorothy Parker.

KATHARINE. Who do you think got him reading her?

WILL. Our doorman will help you get a cab. Unfortunately, this is the worst time for one. They all have their off-duty lights on.

BUD. *(Off.)* Pappy! Pappy! *(There is the sound of crash, things breaking.)* Ow! *(He begins to cry.)*

WILL. Coming, honey, Pappy's there! I've got it. *(He goes.)*

CAL. You should have held me that day in the park. I'd lost Andre, too. Instead you made me feel ashamed and unwanted, just as you'd made Andre feel. We weren't strong then against people like you. You held all the cards. He wanted your love all his life, so much he had to pretend he didn't. So did I that day, God forgive me. I wanted you to love me for loving Andre. I wanted to forgive you. I don't anymore. I don't care. If you hadn't done this I wonder if I would have thought of you ever again. No offense, but I don't think news of your passing will make the *New York Times*, Mrs. Gerard. And then there truly will be none. It is sad when you think about it. But this thing isn't over. This thing that brought us all together and can still tear us apart. Young men are still falling in love but some of them are still being infected. And some of them are still dying. If anything like this happened to Bud — or Will, sure, there's that possibility, too — I would be devastated but I would not reject either one of them. I'm Will's husband, not his judge; Bud's father, not his scourge. If that were my son wasting, writhing, incoherent, incontinent in that bed in St. Vincent's, I would want him to know how much I loved him, how much I would always love him. I did what I could for Andre. I hope to this day it was enough. *(He collects himself.)* Being a parent has made me quite defenseless. It's a good thing I don't want anything from you anymore. I'll get your coat.

KATHARINE. I couldn't hold you when I should have had my son to hold. I still can't.

CAL. Jesus Christ, woman, reach out to someone, let someone in.

KATHARINE. There is so much I want to say that's not about Andre. It's about me and no one else. Me, as if I were the only person on the planet which is what I have felt all my life. There were other people: a mother, a father, a husband. It didn't matter. I was still alone. And then there was Andre and I thought everything would be fine. He was going to fix it. He didn't even come close. Maybe when he fell down and I soothed him until he stopped crying, I felt a connection. When he was in pain, I was his mother. When he needed me. Like what's going on in there. *(She means the kitchen off where Bud and Will are.)* Don't mistake that for love. It means comfort. It means concern. It doesn't mean love. I watched Andre give our dog more of himself than he gave me.

CAL. We've all felt like that. It's human nature being ridiculous.

KATHARINE. He was a dachshund turning gray. Andre tried to dye him with some of my hair coloring. It didn't work.

CAL. That sounds like Andre.

KATHARINE. I'm the only one who thought Andre was a difficult child. He was smarter than anyone else. He had secrets. I was afraid of him. He could be so remote. I didn't know where he'd go in his head. I wanted him to take me with him — away from Dallas and a husband I didn't love and never *tried* to love, he was unlovable. Some people are, you know — I've turned into one — but I would have married anyone who took me out of Port Chester, even if it was only across the railroad tracks to Rye. But Mr. Gerard wanted to go west, young man. Which is ridiculous because he wasn't a young man and Dallas isn't the west, it's Dallas. I was, I am a Yankee. I remain one. I need four seasons. I need to be around people who know what time it is. I don't suffer fools. I was a smart young woman. I thought I was going to die with that secret. My father worked in the post office. My mother spent the day ironing and baking and cleaning and we ate on a table covered with an oil cloth. With my Port Chester High diploma, I went to work for a dentist, Dr. Minnerly. Dr. Pain, his patients called him. He didn't believe in Novocain. I hated him and I hated my job (you can tell your husband I know how much I use that word; he didn't score any points there). Every week I saved my money until I had enough to buy myself an evening dress that would get me into the Rye Country Club Spring Dance where I knew I would meet my savior and I did. I got him to marry me like *that*. (*She snaps her fingers.*) And I didn't get knocked up to get him to do it, like most of my girlfriends. I turned on the charm. I can when I want to. I've given you a glimpse of it. And I always had good legs. I still do. Andre got his legs from me. He had beautiful legs for a man.

CAL. Yes, yes he did.

KATHARINE. And I thought I could be happy for a little bit. I don't know what I mean by happy anymore. I thought I did then: content, not jealous, able to stop jiggling. I'm a nervous woman. I still can't cross my legs without jiggling them. Andre once said, "Mom, you look like a woman in heat when you pump your legs like that." He could be very fresh. I wanted to slap him. Then, out of the blue, just like that, he decides he wants to be an actor. Drama club, acting lessons, singing, dancing. And I was his chauffeur for all of this. I read a lot of good books in the car, waiting for Andre, our gray dachshund happily drooling away on the seat beside me. I

got thanks, I got presents, I got “I love you,” but I didn’t get him. I got everything else but him. He was supposed to let me love him the way I’d never been loved. I was going to make him happy the way I’d never been. And then he was off to New York City. Suddenly he had a life and it had nothing to do with me. All I was was Andre’s mother: the woman who bore him. He wrote something when he wasn’t much older than your boy. “God bless the Lord. God bless my mommy. She has good things in her oven.”

CAL. That’s lovely.

KATHARINE. I was Andre’s mother to him as much as I was to any of his little friends. “Can I have a cookie, Andre’s mother?” “You can if you call me Mrs. Gerard.” But they never did. I wasn’t a person to them either. I was Andre’s mother. I got pregnant when Andre was 4. I aborted it. I never told anyone. I was waiting for the right time to tell Andre. It was going to be our final secret together.

CAL. Andre loved you.

KATHARINE. We all say we love someone. Words are the bridge we build across the void that separates us, desperate to cling to something. “I love you” is the best we’ve come up with for pretending it isn’t there.

CAL. I don’t agree with you.

KATHARINE. I’m almost done. Before I knew it, he was in New York and then there was a friend, who became a roommate, who became a lover.

CAL. That would be me, Katharine.

KATHARINE. You took him from me forever.

CAL. All you had to do was open your heart to him.

KATHARINE. I couldn’t, I still can’t. I don’t know why, I don’t care why anymore. It sickens me. After all these years, it still sickens me.

CAL. Is it the sex? Two men, physically intimate? Fucking, sucking, making love? All those things people do and are never going to stop.

KATHARINE. It’s everything. What kind of life is that child going to have?

CAL. A better one than Andre’s. A better one than yours.

KATHARINE. There’s only one thing I ever did to Andre that I’m ashamed of. If he were here I would fall to my knees and tell him how sorry I am. He’d just gone to New York. I called him. It was late, very late. I woke him up. “What’s wrong, Mom? Are you okay?” I was laughing, I was crying, I’d been drinking. I said, “Honey, your mother just let a man pick her up at the Adolphus Hotel and he

drove me in his car to the very edge of Dallas where it was still woody and dark and he started making love to me. I couldn't do it and I asked him to take me back to town. He could have been very nasty about it but he wasn't. I think he was married, too. 'So what do you think of your old lady now, kiddo? Somebody still wants to fuck her.'" He didn't say anything. After a while one of us hung up. We never spoke of it. I won't ask if he told you that story.

CAL. Thank you.

KATHARINE. And when his father was in the hospital after the first surgery for lung cancer (I said there was only one thing, Mr. Porter. I lied. There were two. Things that can never be taken back.), I found Andre in the visitors' lounge. He was crying. I said, "I know why you're crying. You're not crying for your father. You're crying because of what you are."

CAL. I know, Mrs. Gerard. He called me right after from a pay phone there. He was pretty devastated.

KATHARINE. Can you imagine a mother saying that to her son? Her only child?

CAL. I'll get your coat.

KATHARINE. Please. *(But she doesn't move.)*

CAL. I don't want the journal.

KATHARINE. Neither do I. *(Cal brings the coat to her. He tries to help her with it but her arms stay at her side. The coat hangs on her shoulders. Awkwardly, they hug goodbye.)* Thank you. *(Bud and Will come back into the room. Bud is in his pajamas. He has a Band-Aid on his forehead from where he fell. He is carrying a glass of milk and a plate of Oreo cookies for Katharine. Will is right behind him.)*

WILL. Ta da! In lieu of martinis, Master Bud Ogden-Porter is offering milk and Oreos this evening.

KATHARINE. Evening! I really must go. What time is it?

CAL. Honey, your head! Let Pop-pop see.

BUD. Pappy fixed it.

CAL. Did he give you a kiss and make it go away?

BUD. That's for little boys.

WILL. *(To Cal.)* Of course I did.

CAL. Is he okay?

WILL. A little scratch. That chair is too wobbly to stand on, I told you this would happen. *(Bud has walked over to Katharine who is still sitting where she was.)*

BUD. Here. I was crying, too. These will make you stop. They're Oreos.

KATHARINE. Thank you.

BUD. Do they have Oreos where you live?

KATHARINE. I think they have Oreos everywhere.

BUD. You don't have to be my grandmother if you don't want. (*Katharine still hasn't taken an Oreo or touched the milk.*) They're really good, Katharine.

CAL. That's enough, Buddy.

KATHARINE. What did you call me?

BUD. I'm sorry, you're Andre's mother.

KATHARINE. No, I'm Katharine. Thank you, Bud. (*She takes an Oreo and bites into it.*) This is an excellent Oreo. I think it might be the best Oreo ever. (*She takes another bite.*) I'm sure of it.

BUD. Aren't you going to drink your milk? (*Katharine takes up the glass of milk.*)

KATHARINE. It's ice cold, just the way it should be. (*She takes a sip of the milk.*) Excellent.

BUD. You have a milk moustache.

KATHARINE. So do you.

BUD. Do you want me to tell you a story? I know how to tell stories. But you can't cry anymore, Katharine. (*He sits next to her.*) Once upon a time, there was a boy with two fathers: Pappy and Pop-pop. They lived up high where they could see Spider-Man very, very close every Thanksgiving. They were blessed. But they had no grandmother. (*Cal and Will are close together but apart from Katharine and Bud. Bud continues to spin his tale. The fireplace looks especially appropriate. Katharine still has her coat on. We hear a clear, lyric soprano singing "L'ameró, sarò costante" from Mozart's Il re pastore, the same music that was performed at Andre's memorial service. Katharine takes it in.*)

KATHARINE. Oh.

BUD. One day they found one. She had a milk moustache and her name was Katharine. (*The four of them have stopped moving. The lights have stopped fading. Instead they are swiftly raised to a blinding white intensity. We look at them like this, motionless, until the lights snap off.*)

End of Play

PROPERTY LIST

Andre's journal
Large framed *Hamlet* poster with Andre's photo
Large cardboard box of photos and clippings
Photos of Andre
Bottle of Dewar's
Glass of Dewar's
Yellowed press clipping
Glass of milk
Plate of Oreos