

# Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*





American Association of Community Theatre  
**AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays:**  
Volume 1 (2014)

# End Papers

By Barry Weinberg



# American Association of Community Theatre AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 1 (2014)

**Exit Laughing – Comedy. By Paul Elliott.** When the biggest highlight in your life for the past 30 years has been your weekly bridge night out with the “girls,” what do you do when one of your foursome inconveniently dies? If you’re Connie, Leona and Millie, three southern ladies from Birmingham, you “borrow” the ashes from the funeral home for one last card game, and the wildest, most exciting night of your lives involves a police raid, a stripper and a whole new way of looking at all the fun you can have when you’re truly living.

**The Seamstress – Drama. By Cece Dwyer.** It is 1916, a time when women’s rights are far from equal. Cynthia McFarland, attractive and gracious wife of the extremely wealthy, albeit licentious and abusive, Richard McFarland, finds herself in a desperately compromising position. He wants the requisite wife in an attempt to enter politics. She wants to free herself from a brutal relationship. At Richard’s offhand suggestion, Cynthia hires Andorra Hamilton, a beautiful young seamstress, to be a working guest in their home and outfit her for the upcoming social season and political functions, initiating a series of events that unravel the secret lives of everyone in the McFarland mansion.

**The Vanishing Point – Drama. By Nedra Pezold Roberts.** How do you find your way home when the land, the culture and way of life, and even the relationships of your birth are vanishing all around you? That’s the problem that haunts Pierre, an environmental engineer recently returned to Point Critique to head an experimental program designed to halt the loss of Louisiana’s coastal wetlands. What he finds, in addition to a dangerously fragile ecosystem, is a brother (now engaged to Pierre’s former girlfriend) determined to break free of the trap he sees as Cajun culture, and a father, Paul, still smarting from the pain of his broken relationship with Pierre. When Paul’s shrimp boat sinks in a fiery wreck at sea, Pierre believes that replacing the vessel is the way to connect with his father and heal old wounds. But Paul wants more than a boat; he wants his son back. Gaining his lost son, however, won’t prevent Paul from losing the other one.

**Jellofish – Drama/Comedy. By Jim Henry.** Four World War II veterans have been playing a monthly game of poker and dragging 5% from every pot since 1945, and this “side pot” has grown to a sizable fortune. As the men compete, they struggle over what to do with their shared nest egg. As the debates escalate, their conflicting views on love, friendship, politics, death and taxes are exposed. The events of their lives are revealed as each player comes upon random “history chips,” created during the past 50 years by one of the players when a significant event occurred in their lives. While the significance of history chips such as Grand Slam, Raccoon and Jellofish are revealed, the deeper implications of a lifetime of friendship and competition are explored. The table is set. Shuffle up and deal.

**End Papers – Drama. By Barry Weinberg.** Kathy has to use all her ingenuity and intelligence if she is to avoid losing her home and all her possessions after her husband’s secret life is exposed. At the same time, she is forced to fend off unwelcome romantic overtures from the old boyfriend who reappears in her life. Kathy is convinced she can build a money-making business out of End Papers, the used bookstore where she works, and is encouraged by the store’s 80-year-old owner. But if she is to make her plan a reality, Kathy must use all her wiles to deal with her husband and ex-boyfriend, both of whom insist on dominating her affections and stifling her independence.

**The Boatwright – Drama. By Bo Wilson.** Ben Calloway can’t seem to get his bearings in his own home anymore. Fifty-seven years old, recently widowed, childless and retired from the Kansas Highway Patrol, he’s adrift—and even though he’s never seen the ocean, he decides he should build a boat and sail across the Atlantic, single-handedly. When he decides to let his troubled neighbor, film-school dropout Jaime Watson, make a movie about his project, the two men—generations apart and lonely in very different ways—force each other to confront the isolation in their own lives.

ISBN: 978-1-58342-714-9



9 781583 427149 >

www.dramaticpublishing.com



Anthology Code: AK6

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

*Dramatic Publishing*

311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

# **American Association of Community Theatre AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 1 (2014)**

*Exit Laughing* by  
PAUL ELLIOTT

*The Seamstress* by  
CECE DWYER

*The Vanishing Point* by  
NEDRA PEZOLD ROBERTS

*Jellofish* by  
JIM HENRY

*End Papers* by  
BARRY WEINBERG

*The Boatwright* by  
BO WILSON



**Dramatic Publishing Company**  
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.
---

©MMXIV by  
DRAMATIC PUBLISHING

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE AACT  
NEWPLAYFEST WINNING PLAYS: VOLUME 1 [2014])

ISBN: 978-1-58342-714-9

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

**American Association of Community Theatre**  
**AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays:**  
**Volume 1 (2014)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	6
Foreword.....	7
<i>Exit Laughing</i> .....	9
<i>The Seamstress</i> .....	75
<i>The Vanishing Point</i> .....	121
<i>Jellofish</i> .....	175
<i>End Papers</i> .....	241
<i>The Boatwright</i> .....	289
Author Biographies.....	362

## INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) is proud to present the six winning scripts and playwrights of the first AACT NewPlayFest cycle. AACT NewPlayFest is an initiative by AACT to address the critical need for new, high-quality plays for community theatre audiences around the globe. It has been embraced by playwrights and theatres across the country, bringing exciting theatrical journeys to producing companies and joyful realization and anticipation to playwrights and their work.

AACT is pleased to partner with Dramatic Publishing Company for this program. AACT NewPlayFest is unparalleled in new play competitions, providing full productions of the winning scripts, plus publication and rights representation by a major theatrical publisher. Also thanks to Texas Nonprofit Theatres, Inc., for pioneering the way. Its TNT POPS! New Play Project served as the model for AACT NewPlayFest.

In this inaugural cycle, ending in 2014, scripts were submitted by more than 200 playwrights. From the two dozen-plus theatres that applied, six were selected from across the country to produce the world premieres of the winning scripts. The benefits of AACT NewPlayFest will grow as additional theatres produce these top-notch plays.

We hope you will consider one of these plays for your next season.

Break a leg,

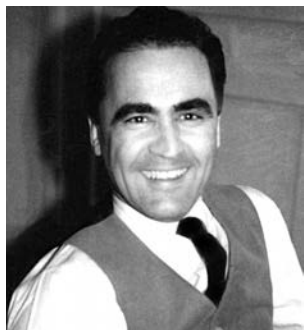
Julie Crawford, Executive Director  
American Association of Community Theatre

The American Association of Community Theatre is the resource connection for America's theatres. AACT represents the interests of more than 7,000 theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Armed Services overseas. To learn more about AACT NewPlayFest and AACT go to [aact.org](http://aact.org).



## FOREWORD

AACT NewPlayFest is made possible in part by a grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Fund.



Jack K. Ayre celebrated his 90th birthday before passing away in December 2011. At his birthday party he sang with a barbershop quartet—one of his favorite activities—and celebrated with his cousin and lifelong friend, Frank Ayre Lee. Though as adults they lived on opposite sides of the country, the cousins kept in touch through letters that displayed a love for the written word and an irreverent sense of humor. Jack had participated in theatre productions at Drew University in New Jersey and at a community theatre in Connecticut in his younger years and continued that interest when he moved to California. Frank was also an avid aficionado of theatre and had dabbled in playwriting, adapting Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* for a children's theatre production, and penning *McSteg*, a tongue-in-cheek discourse ribbing his cousin Jack and based on a scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Upon Jack's death, resources he left were used to create the Jack K. Ayre Foundation for the United States Coast Guard, of which he was a member during WWII, and the Jack K. and Agnes K. Ayre Foundation for Blind Children—his mother, Agnes, was a teacher and pioneer in educating the blind. In addition, the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation has been created by the family of Frank Ayre Lee as a legacy for the creative endeavors of Jack, who was an advertising executive and public relations director. The family is pleased to honor Jack K. Ayre and Frank A. Lee, who passed away in August 2012, through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre through AACT NewPlayFest.

*Photo: Courtesy of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Fund.*

# **End Papers**

Drama by  
**BARRY WEINBERG**

*End Papers* recieved its premier production at the Little Theatre of Mechanicsburg (Mechanicsburg, Pa.) in July 2014.

Cast:

Kathy..... Elizabeth Z. Parry  
Mr. G..... Charles (Smitty) Smith  
Rich..... Mark L. Scott  
Ted..... Jack E. Eilber  
Grace..... Kelly Scheib

Production:

Director ..... Duane A. Baker  
Producer ..... Kathie Spacht  
Stage manager ..... Michael Guenther  
Costumes..... Jackie Goodwin, Alice Kirkland  
Properties ..... Michael Guenther  
Set Design ..... Giulio Marchi  
Set Construction..... Giulio Marchi, Angie Wise  
Lighting and Sound Design ..... Jerry Sanders  
Painting ..... Giulio Marchi, Charles (Smitty) Smith  
Set Dressing ..... Kathy Spacht, Duane A. Baker  
Headshots/Photography ..... Michael Guenther  
Opening Night Reception ..... Kathie Spacht

In addition to the information on the Important Billing and Credit Requirements page (p. 3), all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*End Papers* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by the Little Theatre of Mechanicsburg (Mechanicsburg, Pa.)”

# End Papers

## CHARACTERS

KATHY: Recently unemployed editor of a literary journal. In her 40s.

TED: Kathy's boyfriend long ago. Now a successful attorney. In his 40s.

MR. G: In his 80s. Owns End Papers Books and Records.

GRACE: Kathy's best friend. In her 40s.

RICH: Kathy's husband. A bank vice president. In his 40s.

## SCENES

### **ACT I: Fall 1984**

Scene 1: End Papers bookstore.

Scene 2: That night. Kathy and Rich's living room.

### **ACT II: End Papers Bookstore**

Scene 1: The next day.

Scene 2: The next six months.

Scene 3: Two weeks later.

Scene 4: Two weeks later.

Scene 5: One week later.

Scene 6: One month later.

# End Papers

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

*(End Papers, a used bookstore. There is an entrance from the street. On the stage are bookshelves filled with books; an old wooden desk, on which there are a pile of magazines and a pile of typewritten short stories; store items such as a small cash box and a telephone; and an old long library table and a chair. On the table are a box full of books and other books in random piles.*

*KATHY is sitting on a chair at a table holding several typewritten pages. She is casually but neatly dressed. KATHY reads aloud.)*

KATHY. “‘Here I come, world!’ she said.” *(She looks up, stands and walks around, still holding the papers.)* She announced. She exclaimed! She trumpeted! She shouted! Screamed! Spat! ... Sputtered. *(She returns to the desk and begins to write in the margin of the top paper.)* A vigorous action needs a vigorous verb.

*(MR. G enters from behind a bookcase.)*

MR. G. Still acting like a high-school teacher?

KATHY. I’m *helping* a high-school teacher. I’m *not* a high-school teacher.

MR. G. You were *never* a high-school teacher. You were an editor. You should edit.

KATHY. I’m editing.

MR. G. Stories by high-school kids.

In a bookstore.

On the job.

KATHY. You said I could.

MR. G. It’s nice having you in the store since that literary journal you edited squeezed you out. It’s been like it was when you were younger, when you were always hanging around here.

But even though you're working here—for pay—I thought that the volunteer editing would lead to something bigger. You'd help out editing high-school stuff, you'd get that feeling again, and bingo! You'd go get a job at some literary journal. Editing and happy as a clam!

KATHY. I *tried*! Every journal in town says I'm either overqualified or untouchable. Do I look like a "problem" to you?

MR. G. It depends on whether you keep yelling "She shouted!" "She screamed!"

KATHY. These high-school assignments make you wonder that *anyone* becomes a good writer. (*Louder.*) Where's the vim, the verve, the vigor!?

MR. G. Probably not in what you're reading.

KATHY. Excitement! Thrills! That's what I want to see!

MR. G. Calm down. What got into you?

KATHY. Hold onto your hat! I've got news!

MR. G. I'm holding. But so far this year, the Soviet Union is boycotting the Olympics, a woman could be Vice President of the United States and the Baltimore Colts snuck off to Indianapolis. Your news'll have to be pretty big.

KATHY. I'm going to start my own literary magazine! I've figured out the format, and who I'll contact for the stories and poems and articles ...

MR. G. Good for you! I can't wait to read it!

KATHY. I need to pick a name, do a mock-up and get the numbers together. That'll take a week or two. Then, the big part—the hard part—shopping for investors.

MR. G. Just think! Kathy's Journal!

KATHY. That's not the name. I've got a few ideas that I'll narrow down tonight. Tomorrow you can help me pick the winner.

MR. G. What's wrong with right now? You got me all excited!

KATHY. Sorry about your excitement, but right now I have to finish these papers and deal with a customer who wants to buy books that go with blue.

MR. G. What author is blue? Kipling is more red and brown. Jane Austin's probably gray and green. I don't think anybody knows what Faulkner is.

KATHY. The *bindings* should go with blue. An interior decorator has clients who don't read, but they want books.

MR. G. For what?

KATHY. For display.

MR. G. They should come in and see how happy the books are on display. They could get excited and buy whole shelves of books.

KATHY. *She* wants to get the books for them—for decoration—without them having to go into a bookstore. She says it would just confuse them.

MR. G (*downcast*). They probably don't want used books. For decoration only new would do.

KATHY. They want it to look like the books have been read.

MR. G (*excitedly*). You could construct a person! Combine some books from one section, like history, and other books from another section, like economics, and keep going, section by section, until you have the right amount of books. The decorator puts them on the shelf, and bingo! It looks like they have those interests. Once they have the books, they'll want to know what's in them. They'll read the books, and bingo again! You've created interesting people!

KATHY. Won't work—no curiosity. What they are is what you see. Like this place. It hasn't changed in years. You've got to think about putting in coffee.

MR. G. There's no room for it. It's too much work.

KATHY (*points L*). We could open up the back and put a coffee bar over there.

(*MR. G looks uncomprehendingly offstage L.*)

KATHY (*cont'd*). Just move the juke box that doesn't work ... get rid of that stack of gift boxes nobody buys ... and throw out the dead plant.

MR. G. And ruin the character of the store? This is a bookstore, and it's gonna stay a bookstore. People come here to buy books.

KATHY. And browse. With coffee, when they browse, they've already *paid* for the coffee, and they might also *buy* some books. Some will stop every day for coffee. You'll make a lot of money.



MR. G. You're a Circean siren.

KATHY. Put wax in your ears. Tie yourself to a bookcase.

MR. G. It's too late. I'm enchanted. But I'm still not putting in coffee.

*(The telephone rings. MR. G answers it.)*

MR. G *(cont'd)*. End Papers Books and Records.

KATHY. Excitement! I want thrills!

*(MR. G hands the telephone receiver to KATHY.)*

MR. G. You get your husband.

*(Stage lights dim. RICH enters. Spotlights on RICH and KATHY. RICH is dressed as a bank vice president. He faces the audience and reads a document while he holds a telephone receiver, speaking in a disinterested voice.)*

KATHY. Hi, Rich.

RICH. What's today's exciting bookshop news?

KATHY. I can revise page layouts, I can deconstruct a post-modern paragraph, but how do you color coordinate a shelf of books?

*(RICH and KATHY face each other and speak as if they could see each other, with appropriate gestures and movements. RICH continues to read while he talks.)*

RICH *(uninterested)*. Here's an offer you can't refuse. You can come to the bank dinner tonight.

KATHY. Can I take off my clothes?

RICH. No.

KATHY. Can I rub up against some vice presidents?

RICH. No.

KATHY. Can I make out with the bartender?

RICH. OK, so you'll miss another bank dinner. Why am I not surprised?

KATHY. Oh, lighten up. I'll just curl up with Anaïs Nin and do my usual autoerotic things till you get home.

RICH. I called to tell you I got a bonus.

KATHY. Again? You should be close to owning the bank by now.

RICH. That's why we can buy what we have, *dear*.

KATHY. As long as you're not minting it.

RICH (*angrily*). What does that mean!?

KATHY. It's a joke! Can't you even recognize a joke any more?

RICH. I'm working my ass off here. The only joke is that you think working in that bookstore is a real job.

KATHY. Jesus you can be mean when you want to. And since you brought it up, I'm going to start my own literary journal.

RICH. Because ... ?

KATHY. Because I can't get a job on anyone else's journal and because I'm an editor and that's what I'm going to do. I'm preparing a prospectus and I'll be looking for investors.

RICH. So you called a banker because that's where the money is. Well, the bank has a policy of not lending money to bank officers' spouses.

KATHY. I didn't call you, and I didn't ask you for a loan.

RICH. You should have. You're an unsecured risk and you'll have trouble getting financing from anyone else.

KATHY. We have lots of security. The cars, the house ...

RICH. "We" is right. We, not *you*. I'm not signing off on some scheme that will never make enough to pay off investors. As things stand, you're an unsecured risk.

KATHY. Rich, a marriage isn't a business proposition.

RICH. And, no, we can't use our cash. I can't have questions raised about how much money we have.

KATHY. Forget about money. Can't we just talk, like we used to?

Let's do it. I'll say, "Hi, Rich." Now you go ahead. Say what you always said.

RICH. I'm busy.

KATHY. You know what I mean. Go ahead. Say it.

RICH. What's the story, morning glory?

KATHY. What's the word, mocking bird?

RICH. This is stupid.

KATHY. Go ahead. Just one more.

RICH. A penny for your thoughts.

KATHY. Why don't we go to a happy hour and get some munchies? Like old times. Whatever happened to the old times? They were good.

RICH. Sure they were. When a happy hour was all we cared about. Then life happened, didn't it?

KATHY. Is that really all you think we had?

RICH. It's all I could figure out to give you. So now you'll just have to settle for the things my money can buy, tangible things that have real value. Goodbye.

*(KATHY slams the phone down. The spotlight on RICH goes off. RICH exits. Lights up on stage. KATHY sits down, pauses, picks up one of the short stories.)*

MR. G. Always nice to hear warm words between husband and wife.

KATHY. Just our usual contentious chat. There was a time—you remember—a time when he would have been happy for me to start a journal. We would have worked on it together, drank Mateus, laughed at each other's silly ideas, slept in each other's arms and woke up bleary-eyed to go to work the next morning. Why did he have to change?

MR. G. I should butt out.

KATHY. I have no secrets from you. You saved my life letting me work here.

MR. G. Want some advice?

KATHY. OK.

MR. G. Buy the bookstore.

KATHY. Mr. G, I've told you ...

MR. G. I still want to sell it to you—on very easy terms—so you can make it the great place you think it can be. With, you know, coffee and ... everything. I've had it a long time. It's time for me to let it go, to someone who will take good care of it.

KATHY. Mr. G, End Papers is yours. And as Rich so nicely put it, I'm an unsecured risk.

MR. G. Be an unsecured risk for me. God knows, I was an unsecured risk when my sister loaned me the money to buy this place.

Family and friends help each other out. Buy it. I'll stay on and give you a hand. The two of us will show that big schmuck what a mistake he's making.

KATHY. Thank you. I love you. But not yet.

MR. G. At my age I had to hear, "I love you, but not yet?"

KATHY (*picks up a typed paper and a red pen*). Tonight I work on the name for the journal, tomorrow we'll choose the name, and then upward and onward! But first ... (*She begins to read.*) "It was easy to see a wagon approaching long before it drew near. Serena *knew* it could be only one of three people, all of them *bad news*. She was *encapsulated* with fear." (*She pauses then begins to write, saying aloud what she writes.*) One. If she *knew* it was one of three people, why doesn't she know which one? Two. In 1870, *bad news* was news that was bad. Three. Look up *encapsulate*, then use a different word.

(*TED enters, peering cautiously at KATHY. He is well dressed.*)

TED. Kathy?

(*KATHY is shocked to see TED. She stares at him. MR. G is also surprised.*)

KATHY. That's you, isn't it?

TED. In the flesh. (*To MR. G.*) Mr. G, I was hoping you'd still be here.

MR. G. Where else would I go?

TED. I meant ...

MR. G. I know what you meant: I'm not dead.

TED. OK. Bad choice of words. It's hard to know what to say.

KATHY. That's not the Ted Coburn I knew. (*With an edge.*) But it's been over 20 years ...

TED. Do you have a minute?

KATHY. I'm not sure.

TED. Maybe just showing up was a bad idea.

KATHY. Well, you've certainly made it awkward.

TED. I'm sorry.

KATHY. Good on sentiment. Bad on timing.

Yeah, let's talk about timing. Let's talk about how you walked out on me in college. Let's talk about caring and staying around and staying in touch. How about a phone call every five years or so? Or a Christmas card with a picture of you and the family? With the family dog. You have a family dog, don't you? You wanted a dog, and you always got what you wanted.

TED. All right, maybe I should have phoned first.

KATHY. Nah, barging in unannounced is the way it should be done.

Dump the woman, stay silent for a couple of decades, then bounce right in, smiling and natty and full of good cheer. Forgive and forget! As long as it's the other person doing the forgiving and forgetting.

I left *messages*. I *looked* for you!

MR. G. You didn't see how she was.

KATHY. Maybe time heals all wounds, Ted, but first we're going to have to settle up.

TED. OK, give me a chance here. I can see you're still angry.

KATHY. Astute. Natty and astute. Usually an irresistible combination. But right now ... Right now I think Mr. G needs my help checking the boxes of books that we got in yesterday.

MR. G. Checking books can be dangerous. Anything can go wrong at any time. You need help if you're checking books.

*(The telephone rings. The stage lights dim. GRACE enters. She is calling from outside of End Papers. Spotlights up on MR. G and GRACE, holding a telephone receiver. MR. G answers the phone.)*

MR. G. End Papers.

GRACE. Hi, Mr. G.

MR. G. Hi, Grace.

GRACE. May I speak with Kathy?

MR. G. Sure. It's like old home week here.

GRACE. You're doing it again. I don't know what you mean.

MR. G *(in a lower voice)*. Ted Coburn is here.

GRACE. You're kidding! Has Kathy broken anything?

MR. G. In a bookstore?

GRACE. Don't let anyone do anything violent. I'm on my way. (*She hangs up.*)

MR. G. Violent?

(*MR. G hangs up. The spotlights on GRACE and MR. G go out. GRACE exits. Stage lights up.*)

TED. Look, I apologize for leaving the way that I did. For not talking to you. OK? C'mon, Kathy, this is serious.

KATHY. If *you* want something, it's serious. What if *I* wanted something? Damn it, Ted, you have no idea ... Now you just pop in here ...

MR. G. If you two will excuse me, I'll go to the bathroom. It'll only take a minute or two if I'm lucky. (*He exits.*)

TED. Look, I can't talk like this, standing in an old bookstore with Mr. G about to come back.

KATHY. He won't come back for a while.

TED. But he said ...

KATHY. He's an optimist. Trust me, it'll be a while. How did you know I'd be here?

TED. We knew you worked at the journal. The journal office told me you were here.

KATHY. We?

TED. My firm. In Chicago.

KATHY. I know where you are. I know you're a successful Chicago lawyer with an international practice. And now you're a detective. A man for all seasons.

TED. Sounds like some sleuthing by you, Nancy Drew.

KATHY. Didn't have to. Your achievements are well known in town. Also, and don't take this the wrong way, the general opinion here is that you're something of a jerk. Kind of ... full of yourself. Pushy.

TED. The polite term is "autocratic."

KATHY. You always had a strong internal focus.

TED. You were notable in the internal-focus department yourself.

KATHY. Touché, pussycat.

TED. Touché yourself. That's better.

KATHY. Yeah, maybe.

TED. And I want to talk with Rich. But first ...

KATHY (*interrupting*). He's first vice president at the Union bank.

TED. I know.

KATHY. It hasn't moved. You'll find it.

(*MR. G enters.*)

MR. G. False alarm. (*To KATHY.*) Help is on the way. Grace is coming.

TED. Grace Goldman?

MR. G. The one and only!

TED. How are Grace and Allen? My god, what good times the four of us had.

KATHY. He's OK, she had breast cancer.

TED. That's awful! Poor Grace! I'm glad I'll get to see her. (*Beat.*)  
Kathy, how can we move on?

KATHY. I can think of at least two options.

One, you can leave, move on right now ... give me time to think about this. That's preferable.

Two, if you're going to stay, you can stop acting like we should welcome you back as if nothing happened.

(*GRACE enters through the door R.*)

GRACE (*to TED*). Omigod!

KATHY. He thinks so.

GRACE (*to TED with a quick cadence*). How have you been? Where have you been? Why are you here?

TED. Grace! You're looking good.

GRACE. Under the circumstances. Kathy probably told you. Did you tell him? Things haven't all been rosy. But I'm still here, and Allen's still here. And now you're here. Are you here? I mean, are you here long? Kathy, what's with this?

KATHY. He just waltzed in. Unannounced.

GRACE (*talking quickly*). Isn't that just perfect? I mean, here you are. Together. I always thought it was too bad you ended up with

other people. I mean, Rich is fine, for a banker. And I'm sure your wife, Ted, whoever she is, is wonderful. All of your wives probably are—I heard about the divorce and remarriage. But, gee, you two. (*To TED.*) And then you flew the coop, took a hike. Devil take the hindmost! And now here you are again. I mean, what are you up to?

TED. We've—

GRACE (*interrupting*). Well, I know you're eager to finish up and go.

(*GRACE abruptly puts her arm around TED's shoulder and starts walking him toward the door, still talking quickly.*)

GRACE (*cont'd*). Call next time you're in town. I'll have a party. You can have a reunion with everyone you refused to talk with in 20 years. See ya.

TED. Kathy and I were talking—

GRACE (*interrupting*). I'm sure your wife will want to hear all about it.

TED. Actually, I'm divorced. Again.

GRACE (*stops and faces TED*). You're single!? On the loose!? Is that safe? I mean, are you dating? Doing the singles scene? (*Beat.*) And now you're here. Well goodbye.

TED. Won't you even tell me what's happened to the people I used to know?

KATHY. I don't think we ...

GRACE. They're all still here. (*Unable to resist talking. To KATHY and MR. G.*) Did you hear about Susan Jeffries? She was getting her hair done and a couple of chairs away, she hears the mother of Theresa, the girl her son David went out with.

Of course, Theresa's mother doesn't know that Susan is right there. Or else she wouldn't have added that David couldn't perform with Theresa because he was traumatized when he found his mother, that's Susan, in bed with the guy who mows their lawn.

Now, I've seen the lawn guy with his shirt off, and I can tell you that wouldn't have been a bad deal, especially if he cleaned up the clippings. (*Disappointedly.*) But I know Susan, and it's prob-



ably not true. (*Quickly.*) Then bang: Susan is out of her chair like a shot and she slugs Theresa's mother in the chops! Theresa's mother calls the cops, the beauty shop owner calls a gossip columnist, Susan is charged with a misdemeanor, Theresa's mother has a contusion the size of China, and the beauty shop is booked solid for the next two months!

(*TED, MR. G and KATHY laugh.*)

GRACE (*cont'd, to TED*). Well goodbye.

TED. Time out. I know I'm not invited, but I'm here and there's something I have to tell Kathy ... (*Beat, then looking at GRACE and MR. G.*) which I'll do later. At least let me know how you're doing, Kathy. Then I'll go. Promise.

MR. G. Tell him how you edited the journal.

KATHY. He knows.

MR. G. She was *very* successful.

KATHY. And that's the whole story.

MR. G. The best writers; chapters from books in progress; short stories. But *new* owners changed it to a light-features magazine. Offered to keep her on as an "assistant," god knows to whom. She was squeezed out!

GRACE. She tried reasoning with them.

TED. In your old subtle way?

KATHY. I told them they were killing an intellectual forum that was the mainstay of the literary community for the sake of a dumb-ed-down run-of-the-mill company apologia.

TED. You said apologia to them? How did they know to be offended?

KATHY. Must've been the context. And *that's* the whole story.

MR. G. They put out the word she's "emotional," "hard to work with—"

GRACE (*overlapping*). What men say about strong women who won't bow down to them—

MR. G (*overlapping*). It was as good as a blackball against her. But now she's starting her own journal!

GRACE. Since when?

KATHY. It's a plan. I'll tell you later. (*To TED.*) And thanks to Grace and Mr. G, that's the *whole* story.