

TRIED and TRUE

A New Play by Scenes

By

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MICHAEL EGAN AN ADVERTISING WRITER, WIDOWER
AGE 40

BILL WESTHEIMER. . . . A FELLOW WORKER
AGE 42

A WAITRESS AGE 22

GRACE HENRY. MICHAEL'S SECRETARY
AGE 52

DHL MAN. DHL DELIVERY MAN . . .
AGE 35

MR. MARTIN MICHAEL'S BOSS
AGE 65

SCENES

Downtown Fargo, North Dakota; Farmland in western Illinois

TIME

Present

-SCENE BREAKDOWN-

Scene One MONDAY, Noon, a Restaurant.
Fargo, North Dakota. May 2
Present Day.

Scene Two TUESDAY, Morning, Two Adjoining
Offices, Fargo North Dakota May
24, Present Day.

Scene Three Wednesday afternoon, Offices,
Fargo, North Dakota. One week
later, May 31, Present Day.

Scene Four . . . Friday, Late Afternoon, Offices,
 Fargo, North Dakota, one month
 later, June 31, Present Day.

Scene Five . . . Monday, late afternoon, Offices,
 Fargo, North Dakota, one week
 later July 5, Present Day,

Scene Six . . . Wednesday Morning, Offices, Fargo,
 North Dakota, July 12, Present Day,

Scene Seven . . . Friday, Afternoon, Offices, Fargo
 North Dakota, July 14. Present Day.

Scene Eight . . . Friday, Late Evening, Offices,
 Fargo North Dakota, July
 21. Present Day

Scene Nine . . . Monday, morning, Offices, Fargo,
 North Dakota, July 24. Present Day

Scene Ten. . . Monday Afternoon, Offices, Fargo
 North Dakota, July 24 Present Day

Scene Eleven . . . Tuesday, Noon, Offices, Fargo,
 North Dakota, July 25, Present
 Day.

Scene Twelve. . . Monday, Late Morning, Farm House
 in Western Illinois, Five years
 later. October 31,

Scene Thirteen. . . Thursday, Three Days Later, Farm
 House, November 3, Present Day.

Scene Fourteen. . . Monday, One Month Later, Farm
 House, November 3, Present Day

Scene Fifteen. . . Monday, Later that Evening, Farm
 House, November 3, Present Day

(The WAITRESS approaches.
BILL orders dessert.)

MICHAEL

You'll never fit into that bikini this summer.

BILL

Could you picture me in a bikini?

MICHAEL

OH! . . . did you have to say that? You didn't have to go there! . . . Why didn't you just leave well enough alone?

BILL

Well, you asked for it.

MICHAEL

Well, maybe. But I didn't ask for my lunch to come back up on me this is the last time that I talk business over lunch with you.

BILL

So what's the business?

MICHAEL

It's the JAM account. They're planning on doing a big campaign. Radio, newspapers, TV, billboards, the works; and we've got to be synchronized, Kaphish?

BILL

Kaphish . . . but what do you want from me? You're the writer.

MICHAEL

But you're the visual artist; I need to know just what kinds of images you have wandering around in that thing that you call a mind.

BILL

Wouldn't you like to know?

MICHAEL

No, not really, but Old Man Martin will have both our hides if this falls through.

BILL

OK, OK, I apologize. I've been seeing images of a grandmother sitting in a rocker, obviously listening to JAM.

MICHAEL

That's Great! We'll call the campaign: Tried and True.

BILL

Now There You Go! Now I see why they brought you all the way in from Atlanta to head the department.

MICHAEL

Well, I needed a change of venue anyway.

BILL

Why? The Atlanta police looking for you?

MICHAEL

Na, too many memories.

BILL

Of what?

MICHAEL

My wife, Sally. She passed away from ovarian cancer, about two years ago.

BILL

I'm sorry, scuttlebutt around the office says that you're a widower, but no one seems to know much about it.

MICHAEL

It's all right, life goes on.

(A short pause)

BILL

But what was she like? If you don't mind me asking.

MICHAEL

No, not really. (He thinks for a moment) Well, she was the most beautiful woman that I've ever seen, and the kindest human being I've ever met..... SHE was tried and true.

BILL

I'm sure you miss her.

MICHAEL

I do, more than any thing else in the whole wide world.

BILL

She must have been awful young.

MICHAEL

Thirty-four.

(A pause)

But, you know what, I've met someone who could be tried and true again!

BILL

Hey! That's great! Is it someone who works for the company?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

BILL

Well, who is she? Maybe I know her.

MICHAEL

You do.

BILL

Well, come on, give! What's her name?

(A beat)

I bet its Rachel down in the art room . . . or is it Stephanie in accounting? Man, you sure move fast in six months.

MICHAEL

No, no, no, . . . settle down boy, its Grace, my secretary.

BILL

Are you mad? That woman is nearly fifteen years your senior!

MICHAEL

I know . . . but—

BILL

And what if Old Man Martin found out? I'm sure that you know by now that he thinks of us all as his family, as you might say, his children, don't you?

MICHAEL

Yes.

BILL

And do you know just how he'd feel about it?
He'd think it was, was, was, . . .

MICHAEL

Was what?

BILL

Incest, that's what. She'd loose her job.

MICHAEL

I know, and I think that's what's keeping her from coming forward.

(Pause)

I could always quit mine.

BILL

Are you out of your mind? With every ad agency in town after this JAM account, he'd look upon that as desertion in the face of the enemy. And with his connections, you'll never work in this business again. Here or in Atlanta.

MICHAEL

Yeah, I know that too. I'm between a rock and a hard place, what am I suppose to do?

BILL

Brood and admire the view.

MICHAEL

Fat lot of help you are.

BILL

Well, it's the GOD's honest truth.

(Calls the WAITRESS)

MICHAEL

Grace, must you call me Michael? It seems rather personal; people might start to think that we're getting a little too cozy in here. Besides, I prefer Mike.

GRACE

Yes, I must call you Michael, Michael.

MICHAEL

Well, if you must.

(He smiles, then enters his office)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

(Loudly)

GRACE!

GRACE

(From her desk)

Yes Michael?

MICHAEL

Just what are these daisies, and these balloons doing in here?

(GRACE approaches Michael's office)

GRACE

Today is the third anniversary of your wife's death. I thought that you could use some cheering.

MICHAEL

OH! Thank you! . . . That was very thoughtful of you Grace. Very thoughtful.

GRACE

I hope it helps.

(Returns to her desk, smiling)

(END OF SCENE)

GRACE

I know, Michael, and I'm glad for you.

MICHAEL

Grace, I'm writing poetry now, all thumbs, and two left feet me, is writing poetry . . . And I'm going to write a poem about you, about you Grace.

GRACE

Why, Michael, I mean Mr. Egan. Do you really think that you should?

MICHAEL

(Not listening)

Yeah, that's what I'm going to do. After class tonight, I'm going to go home and write a poem about you . . . after all, you are the most attractive woman I know, Grace.

GRACE

Why Mr. Egan, people might talk. Mr. Martin might walk in.

(A pause)

But, I would like to read some of your poetry someday, Michael; that is if you would like to share it with me.

MICHAEL

Grace, what's mine is yours, and what's yours is mine. But, right now, I've got to get to class.

(He rushes out)

GRACE

Good Night.

(END OF SCENE)

-Scene Five-

SETTING Monday. Two adjoining offices.
Fargo, North Dakota.
Late-afternoon

AT RISE GRACE at MICHAEL's desk, reading papers.

(MICHAEL, enters his office.)

MICHAEL
Grace . . . ?

GRACE
(startled)
Oh!

MICHAEL
Is there something that I can help you with?

GRACE
Oh, no Michael, I mean Mr. Egan, no Sir, I was just straightening up, Sir. And then I found this.

MICHAEL
Oh that, that's just some of my homework from class.

GRACE
But Michael, I mean Sir. It's beautiful. It really is.

MICHAEL
Why, thank you, Grace you're just being kind.

GRACE
Oh no Sir, not at all, it really is quite lovely. You really have a lot of talent, Sir. Why this is good enough to be published. With a little effort, and the right support, you could go very far.

MICHAEL
But I can't even spell.

GRACE

But I could correct that. And GOD knows that you're slow
as molasses with a keyboard.

MICHAEL

That's why I have you, Grace.

GRACE

(Uncomfortable and Concerned)

Excuse me Sir, I've got to get back to work, I've still got
to finish up that Henderson account. And if I'm lucky,
I'll get some filing done.

(She pushes past him
and returns to her desk.
MICHAEL sits at his desk,
looking at his homework.
He ponders)

(END OF SCENE)

-SCENE SIX -

Setting

Wednesday, morning one
Week later.
Adjoining Offices
Fargo, North Dakota

AT RISE

A DHL deliveryman
Enters GRACE's office
GRACE is at her desk
And MICHAEL is at his.

DHL MAN

- Good morning ma'am!

GRACE -

Oh! Good morning, may I help you?

DHL MAN -
Yes Ma'am, is this radio promotions?

GRACE -
Why yes, it is.

DHL MAN -
Then this is for you.

GRACE -
OH!

DHL MAN-
Careful, this end up. And would you sign here please?

GRACE -
Yes Sir. Thank you!

DHL MAN -
You're welcome, have a good day!

(Deliveryman Exits)

GRACE -
Michael?

MICHAEL -
Yes?

GRACE -
There's a package out here for you.

MICHAEL -
Are you sure it's for me Grace?

GRACE -
My word! It's addressed to me; I wonder what could it be?

(She opens the package, and lifts out a small birthday cake with sixteen candles in it. Michael enters her office and stands in the doorway.)

MICHAEL -
Happy Birthday!!!

GRACE -
Why Mr. Egan, how did you know?

MICHAEL -

Oh, I have my ways. I made it myself, from scratch. First time I've ever tried anything like that. How is it?

(Grace tastes the cake, and it is obviously tastes bad.)

GRACE -

Oh! Delicious

MICHAEL -

I thought you'd like it.

(Short Pause)

GRACE -

But do you really think that you should have? I mean what if Mr. Martin (He cuts her off)

MICHAEL -

WALKS IN? Why must you always say that?

GRACE -

Say what?

MICHAEL -

Say: what if Mr. Martin walks in? Are you keeping time with Mr. Martin? So that you expect him to drop in at any moment, unexpected.

GRACE -

NO! I AM NOT! And what business is it of yours, anyway?

MICHAEL -

It's just that I hate to see a beautiful exotic bird that graces the sky with freedom and with charm, get caught and captured.

GRACE -

Like you haven't done some catching yourself?

MICHAEL -

Well, unlike Mr. Martin, when I catch something, I get captured with it.

(Grace tries to ease the situation)

GRACE -
Your cake is really rather sweet, Michael. But why only
sixteen candles? I'm fifty two today Sir

MICHAEL -
You'll always be sixteen to me.

GRACE -
Mr. Egan, you do say the sweetest things sometimes.

MICHAEL -
Well, sweets for the sweet. But, we've got work to do. I
hate to crack a whip, but JAM wants to add another
\$10,000.00 to its promotion, lets get to it.

GRACE -
Yes, Sir.

(They both go back to their desks, and get back to work)

(End of Scene)

-SCENE SIX-

Setting:

Adjoining offices in
Fargo North Dakota

At Rise:

Mr. Martin enters
GRACE's office and speaks.

GRACE -
Oh! Mr. Martin, how do you do Sir?

MR. MARTIN -
Very well Grace, very well. How are you?

GRACE - I'm just fine Sir, should I tell Mr. Egan that
you're here?

MR. MARTIN -

No, I didn't come to see Egan. I was just passing through the building enjoying the feeling of contentment and family that Martin Advertising offers its employees, like you Grace.

GRACE -
Yes Sir.

MARTIN -
How long have you been with me now, Grace?

GRACE -
Twenty-three years, Sir.

MARTIN -
And not a word of discontent.

GRACE -
No, Sir.

MARTIN -
I hold a lot of loyalty towards my employees that are loyal to me. Like you Grace. You'd never leave me like she did, would you Grace?

GRACE -
Oh, no Sir.... have you heard from your daughter Sir?

MARTIN -
Not since she ran off with that Billings boy from accounting. I had big plans for him; he was a fine accountant. They almost ruined the balance and equilibrium that I try to establish here. The workplace is for work, not for holding hands. And if I ever see it again, I'll nip it in the bud, and put both of them out on the street. I've worked too hard to achieve this sense of harmony with us. To allow two starry eyed lovers to put thoughts into people's heads.

GRACE -
Yes, Sir.

MARTIN -
You know Grace, if I may be candid, I have always been fond of you, and I admire your work. You have always been one of my favorite clerical workers. You have a strong work

ethic like she did. I even think you, ...you, ...you even look a little like Sarah. But you have one thing that she didn't, loyalty. You'd never let me down Grace, would you?

GRACE -

Not unless I developed a stronger loyalty, Sir.

MARTIN -

That's what I thought. Tell Egan he's doing a bang-up job on that JAM account. Now he's another one that I can trust. Take care, Grace.

GRACE -

Good-bye Mr. Martin.

(Mr. Martin exits)

(End of Scene)

-SCENE EIGHT-

SETTING -

Monday morning,
adjoining Offices. Fargo,
North Dakota, July 10.

At Rise -

Lights come up on Michael at
his desk, it is late at night
And he is hard at work.

(A noise is heard)

MICHAEL -

Who's there?

(Grace enters, carrying two shopping bags)

GRACE -

It's only me, Michael.

MICHAEL -

Why Grace, what are you doing here? I thought that you left hours ago.

GRACE -

I did, soon after you left for class..... I figured you'd be back after class to finish up that Jenkins account since it starts airing tomorrow.

MICHAEL -

That was very astute of you Grace, I'm afraid that you're getting to know me a little too well. But didn't you go home?

GRACE -

Yes..... Just long enough to cook you dinner, Sir.

MICHAEL -

Dinner! For me? Grace you really shouldn't have.

GRACE -

Oh Yes I should have, after all the things that you shouldn't have done for me that you did.

MICHAEL -

Well, I'm hungry. What'd you fix?

GRACE -

Meat loaf, mashed potatoes, and green beans.

MICHAEL -

That's my favorite! How'd you know?

GRACE -

A woman knows these things, Michael.

(Grace starts to set a place for them at the desk.)

MICHAEL -

Well, all I can say is: thank GOD for women.

(They sit at the desk; Michael bows his head to pray, Grace bows hers.)

MICHAEL -

Dear LORD, Thank you for this food that we are about to receive, thank you for all the wonderful things that we have, and thank you for all the wonderful things to come.

GRACE -
 (Loudly) AMEN!

(They begin to eat)

MICHAEL -
 Grace?

GRACE -
 Yes, Michael.

MICHAEL -
 Don't you ever get tired of this old nine to five? I mean
 don't you ever want to try something different.

GRACE -
 Like what?

MICHAEL -
 I don't know. Like live in an igloo, travel down the Nile
 by camel, live in a garret in France, farm wheat in Kansas.
 Whatever makes you feel alive!

GRACE -
 Oh I wouldn't care where I lived Sir, as long as it's with
 the right person. That's what would make me feel alive.

MICHAEL -
 That's what all you women say at first. Then you start
 dropping hints about man's intuitive need to be domestic,
 and the current mortgage rates at the local bank.

GRACE -
 OH NO SIR, Not Me, really..... That's why I never married,
 I never really found anyone who really wanted to do those
 things. I never met anyone, before you that is, that had
 the courage. (Then fearfully, to herself.) This can't be
 true.

(Pause)
 (Michael is finishing his dinner)

MICHAEL -
 Grace, that was delicious. I'll have to have you cook for
 me again sometime.

(Grace is shocked by his attitude)

(Short Pause)

MICHAEL -

Would you clean this mess up? I still have a lot of work to do on this Jenkin's account. It starts airing at 6:53 this morning.

(Grace rises and starts to pick up, she is obviously disappointed and hurt by his attitude. Michael goes back to work.)

(Grace is standing by the office door, dressed to leave. Michael is still working.)

GRACE -

But Michael, what about the wheat fields of Kansas?

MICHAEL -

Can't think about that now, I've got a client to please. Thanks again Grace, Good night.

-GRACE-

(Coldly) Good night Mr.Egan.

(She turns and exits)

(End of Scene)

-SCENE NINE-

Setting

**Monday, early
morning,
Adjoining Offices,
Fargo North Dakota,
July 10, Present Day.**

At Rise -

Grace is behind her desk
working at her computer.

Michael enters from the
hallway, carrying a small
bouquet of fresh flowers.)

MICHAEL

- Top of the mornin' to you Lassie.

GRACE -

Why Michael, and the rest of the day to you sir.

MICHAEL -

Here, these are for you. (He hands her the flowers)

GRACE -

FOR ME? But why, better yet, from where?

MICHAEL -

They're my way of saying I'm sorry.

GRACE -

Sorry for what?

MICHAEL -

For being such a bastard last Friday night. Especially
after you had cooked dinner for me..... Will you forgive
me?

GRACE -

Michael, I understand, I understood the night it happened.

MICHAEL -

I know that Grace, but do you forgive me?

GRACE -

Why, Yes Michael, I forgive you. But where did you get the
flowers from?

MICHAEL -

From in front of the building. Flowers and butterflies are
free, aren't they?

GRACE -

Michael Egan, Mr. Martin takes great pride in the landscaping of this building, and he goes to great expense too. If he found out, you would be on the first plane back to Atlanta, and I would loose eh, eh, eh.

MICHAEL -

There you go with Martin again, why don't the two of you just get married. And then YOU can tend his flowerbeds.

(Michael realizes what he has said)

MICHAEL -

I'm sorry Grace, I did it again. I'm so sorry..... It's the pressure Grace; I'm being pushed in seventeen different directions.

GRACE -

I understand Michael, it's all right.

MICHAEL -

First, there's this job. I've got copy coming out of my ears. Then my class makes me realize that there is so much more to me than this job can ever express. I'm getting ready to explode, and I can't be held responsible for where the pieces land.

GRACE -

But someday, you'll find a good woman, your own age, who'll help you bring all that out of you.

MICHAEL -

I know Grace, but someday can be a long time. And a good woman can be hard to find.

GRACE -

Don't give up hope, Sir.

(Grace starts arranging the flowers, turning her attention from him.)

(Short Pause)

MICHAEL -

(Looking very intently at her) But a man can be wrong.

(Pause)

MICHAEL -

And there's something else that's been bothering me.....
Something that I haven't told anyone.

GRACE -

Michael, I think of you as more than just a boss. To me,
you're a friend, and a very close one at that..... What is
it?

MICHAEL -

Thank you Grace, I feel the same way about you. But, I
don't know.

GRACE -

You can tell me Michael. I want to help..... (Jokingly)
but, you better do it before Mr. Martin walks in.

(She starts to laugh)

MICHAEL -

GRACE!,
I am very serious!

GRACE -

I know you are, I'm sorry, now tell me what's on your mind.

MICHAEL -

Well, I thought that leaving Atlanta would put an end to
it.

-GRACE -

You mean Sally?

MICHAEL -

Yes, Sally.

(Short Pause)

MICHAEL -

I thought moving away to Fargo would end it all. Moving
away from the Metropolitan Opera, she so loved the opera.
The Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Coffee Company.....
Rita's. That was a little bar that we used to go to when we

first met. She was in remission then. We'd push back a couple of tables, move a chair or two, and make our own dance floor. Then we'd dance the night away.

GRACE -

Be easy on yourself Michael. It's only been three years. Things take time.

(Short Pause)

GRACE -

You must have Loved her very much.

MICHAEL -

I did..... I gave that woman mind, body, heart, and soul.

(Short Pause)

MICHAEL -

And now I'm Paying the price.

GRACE -

(Quickly) Don't talk like that Michael, you're a better man than that!

MICHAEL -

Thanks Grace, I'm sorry. But you know what? That's exactly what Sally would have said.

(Short Pause)

MICHAEL -

But we're wasting sunshine Grace, get me a copy from the Henderson campaign of the summer of '97. When you get a chance that is, and bring it into me.

GRACE -

Yes Sir!

(Michael exits into his office, and closes the door. Sobs of crying can be heard coming from Michael's office. Grace tries to be nonchalant, but it is obvious that this is hurting her very deeply.)

(End of Scene)

-SCENE TEN-

Setting - Later that day. Offices in Fargo, North Dakota

At Rise - Grace is dressed to leave as she knocks on
Michael's door)

MICHAEL -
Yes?

GRACE -
Mr. Egan?

MICHAEL -
Grace, is that you?

GRACE -
Yes Sir. Are you all right Sir? May I come in?

MICHAEL -
I guess so.

(She opens the door and enters)

MICHAEL -
What can I do for you Grace?

GRACE -
Would you mind if I left a little early tonight Sir?

MICHAEL -
Got a hot date tonight Grace? I might get jealous.

GRACE -
No Sir, I have my meeting.

MICHAEL -
Meeting? What meeting?

GRACE -
My AA meeting, Sir.

(Michael is a little disappointed at first,

then he tries to accept the reality)

MICHAEL -

Well, I see. I didn't realize that you went to AA.

GRACE -

Yes Sir, I've been sober for eight years, and four months tonight. They're throwing me a party after the meeting....
This makes one hundred months.

MICHAEL -

Well, I never would have guessed. Of course you can go.
Have a good time!

GRACE -

Oh, thank you sir, good night.

(She turns to leave)

MICHAEL -

Grace?

(She turns back)

GRACE -

Yes Michael?

MICHAEL -

A hundred months, huh? That took a lot of will power didn't it?

GRACE -

Yes Sir.

MICHAEL -

Funny, you don't strike me as the type.

GRACE -

Well Sir, I was really rather a wanton young woman Sir.
That's one of the reasons that I didn't think you'd be interested in woman like...OH! I mean un, un, un,

MICHAEL -

(Somewhat upset) Well, you just let me worry about what I'm interested in. (Calmer) Now get out of here before you miss your meeting.

GRACE -

Thank you, Michael.

(She turns to leave, and starts to exit)

MICHAEL -

(Softly) Anything, for a good woman.

(Grace exits, Michael just sits at his desk, thinking)

(End of Scene)

-SCENE ELEVEN-

Setting -The offices at
 Fargo, North Dakota,
 It is noon.

At Rise - Grace is opening up
 her bag lunch.

Michael enters carrying a
 Large picnic basket.

GRACE -

And just what is this?

MICHAEL -

Haven't you ever seen a picnic basket before?

GRACE -

Why yes, but just what do you intend to do with it Mr.
 Egan?

MICHAEL -

(To himself) Oh, it's Mr. Egan again. I'm in trouble now.
 (To Grace) Well, I intend to have lunch, won't you join me?

(He exits, then immediately returns with a large potted plant, and a blanket. He places the plant in the middle of the office floor, and spreads the blanket on the floor. He kneels to straighten the blanket.)

GRACE -
Michael, just what are you doing!

MICHAEL -
I'm having a picnic, urban style.

GRACE -
You have become quite the romantic, haven't you? Are you sure that these classes of yours are healthy?

MICHAEL -
(He stands, and looks very intently at her) I'm as healthy as I've ever been.

(She turns away, embarrassed. He goes back to preparing his picnic.)

GRACE -
But, what if Mr. Martin should walk in?

MICHAEL -
I checked, Old Man Martin is in Anchorage laying the groundwork for a campaign by a Settle based mail order firm.

(He produces a bottle)
So, may I pour you a glass of non-alcoholic wine?

GRACE -
Well, since you competition is out of town, I think I will.

MICHAEL -
Just like a woman.

GRACE -
Don't you know it?

(Short Pause)

GRACE -

But, just what is this all about? Or is this just your poetic spirit coming out? We could have just gone to DeMetrio"s like we always do.

MICHAEL -

That's just it Grace. Like we always do. This office can't hold me any more. I'm bustin' out! Life is short, too short! And I want a piece of it before I die! I'm cashing in my chips Grace, and I want you to come with me!

GRACE -

Why Mr. Egan, just what could you be possibly talking about?

MICHAEL -

Don't play coy with me Grace. Push has come to shove, and crunch has come to grind. It's time to let the cat out of the bag. It's you and me Grace, you and me against the world!

GRACE -

Why Mr. Egan, I hold the highest regard and respect for you, but I don't think..(He cuts her off)

MICHAEL -

You don't think... you don't think what Grace? That you could live free!

GRACE -

OH! MICHAEL!

(They Embrace)

GRACE -

Oh Michael! I thought you'd never come 'round. I didn't know if you would ever see it my way.

MICHAEL -

I didn't know if I could count on you to be there.

(They embrace again)

GRACE -

But what about Sally?

MICHAEL -
What about her?

GRACE -
I don't know if I can share you with another woman.

MICHAEL -
There's room enough in this heart for both of you.

GRACE -
Oh, Michael!

(They embrace again)

GRACE -
But where would we go? When?

MICHAEL -
France, now. I've dropped my classes at NDS, my house is on
the market, and this envelope contains my resignation for
Old Man Martin!

GRACE -
No! It too soon! I can't leave now! Michael it's too soon!

MICHAEL -
Well, what do you absolutely have to do?

GRACE -
No, my seniority, I'll lose my pension, my friends, what
will I wear?

MICHAEL -
Grace, we can do it (Beat) but you have got to let go!

(Pause)

GRACE -
You're right, there's only one thing. My son's wedding.

MICHAEL -
I didn't know you had a son.

GRACE -

His name is David, he's twenty-five, and he's the joy of my life. He's the one that sobered me up, and started me in AA. I have to see my little boy take his bride, I HAVE TO!

MICHAEL -

OK, OK, we'll meet. I'll go ahead and get things ready. Then in.. When is the wedding?

GRACE -

In five months.

MICHAEL -

In six months, we'll meet in France.

GRACE -

Where in France?

MICHAEL -

Paris, the Champ de Mars, at the foot of the Eiffel Tower.

GRACE -

What will you do if I stand you up?

MICHAEL -

You won't stand me up. I know you all too well by now by now Grace.

GRACE -

What did I ever do to deserve you?

MICHAEL -

No, the real question is what did I ever do to deserve you?

(They Embrace)

(BLACKOUT)

-SCENE TWELVE-

(Five Years Later)
(It is Monday)

Setting -Lights come up on the interior of a small farmhouse in western Illinois. Down center is a fireplace. Up left is a desk with a computer on it, with a filing cabinet left of it. Left of the desk and filing cabinet is a stairway leading upstairs. Up right is an open casement leading to a kitchen. Down right is the exterior door. At center stage are two armchairs with a small table, and a floor lamp next to them.

At Rise - Michael enters through the exterior door and sits in one of the armchairs.

GRACE -
(From the kitchen) Michael darling, is that you?

MICHAEL -
Yes, dear.

(Grace enters from kitchen)

GRACE -
Your agent called while you were out.

MICHAEL -
And?

GRACE -
She said that there's a minor movie company looking at making "Anatole and Titus" into a screenplay. She was very excited. She said that this might be your break into film.

MICHAEL -
I don't need film! I got you!

GRACE -
WELL, don't you know how to make an old woman feel young.

MICHAEL -
Grace?

GRACE -
Yes?

MICHAEL -
You'll always be sixteen to me.

GRACE -
I Love you too, Michael. But she said she was driving out
Thursday, to go over the basic stipulations they want.

MICHAEL -
Grace?

GRACE -
Yes, Michael?

MICHAEL -
Would you call her tomorrow and ask her to come next week.
You see, I've got reservations at the Kansas City Hilton
Thursday. Me and my girl are going to dinner and dancing
that night, and I do not wish to be disturbed. Or had you
forgotten?

GRACE -
Oh yeah, it'll be five years Thursday, won't it?

MICHAEL -
Five years, you and be babe. Five years of the happiest
years of my life.

GRACE -
For you and me both.

MICHAEL -
Yeah, Thursday we celebrate just you, me, and the local
priest, on the shores of the Adriatic Sea.

GRACE -
With the sea as our witness.

MICHAEL -
And with an Italian wedding license you finally became Mrs.
Michael Richard Egan, and I breathed a sigh of relief
because you were mine.

GRACE -

But, doesn't it just feel like yesterday Michael?

MICHAEL -

That it does..... then two years of hostelling across Europe. Quite a honeymoon, wouldn't you say?

GRACE -

QUITE! You'd do day labor and I'd take on some cleaning, or find some babysitting to make ends meet. Let's do it again!

MICHAEL -

I don't know if you've noticed, but your husband is getting old Mrs. Egan.

GRACE -

Oh Tosh! You're the youngest man I know.

MICHAEL -

Well, maybe emotionally and spiritually, but this old body has seen better days.

GRACE -

But, those were the days, weren't they Michael?

MICHAEL -

That they were Grace, that they were.

GRACE -

Camping on the banks of the Po. While you recited the rich poets of the world to me, by firelight. Like Chaucer, Shelly, Longfellow, and Egan.

MICHAEL -

You only like him because you're married to him.

GRACE -

I know, but that's beside the point..... Rock climbing in Greece.

MICHAEL -
Walking the Northern Lowlands of Germany. I wish we could
go back.

GRACE -
I don't, not really. I'm happy right here.

MICHAEL -
Why thank you, Mrs. Egan.

GRACE -
You are quite welcome Mr. Egan.

(They watch the fire, quietly, for a while)

MICHAEL -
I sure do enjoy the sound of peace and quiet.

GRACE -
How would you enjoy the sound of the pitter-patter of
little feet?

MICHAEL -
Grace, are you..... but how...you can't be...can you?

GRACE -
No Michael, calm down, not me. The sound of little adopted
feet.

MICHAEL -
Now Grace, we've talked about this before, but I don't
know, I'm just not ready.

GRACE -
But Michael, I got a call today from the Kansas City
Adoption Agency, and they had some interesting prospects.
It's just that David and his family live so far away, and
they only visit about once a year. I so miss the feeling
that little Jessica brings when she's here.

MICHAEL -
I know, I know that you want to be a mother again. And you
know that I've always wanted to be a father.

GRACE -

(Quickly) You'd make a wonderful father, Michael.

MICHAEL -

Thank you, but I just don't think it's fair.

GRACE -

Fair? Fair for who? You or me?

MICHAEL -

Fair for whatever child we would adopt..... I would be hard on a boy, and I would spoil a girl to death.

GRACE -

You mean, like you spoil me?

MICHAEL -

That's different, you ask for it.

GRACE -

Well, you can hold a contest and see. Kansas City has two three year olds that they're having trouble placing together. They thought we would be good candidates. They're twins, a boy and a girl. The woman said that they have found a possible home for the boy, but they are having trouble placing them together, and in six months, they will have to go ahead and place them separately.

MICHAEL -

You're breakin' my heart.

GRACE -

Meanie! ...She said that the boy is as smart as a whip, but a little overactive. She thought that the farm might calm him down.

(Pause)

MICHAEL -

And what about the girl?

GRACE -

She said that she's as cute as a button, but....

(Short Pause)

MICHAEL -
But what?

GRACE -
She suffers from a rare spinal defect, and although she walks some, she sometimes needs the help of a wheelchair.

MICHAEL -
A farm's no place for a wheelchair.

GRACE -
You could make it one.

MICHAEL -
Not me! I've got too much work to do.

GRACE -
I guess so, now that you've started your film career.

MICHAEL -
(Upset)
That was dirty!

GRACE -
I apologize, it was..... but, would you think about it?

MICHAEL -
I'll think about it..... for you.

(Michael stares into the fire.)

(Pause)

GRACE -
Well, I've got a roast in the oven, I'd better get to dinner.

MICHAEL -
(quietly)
Smells good.

GRACE -
Why thank you, Mr. Egan.

MICHAEL -

(With a cross between tenderness and anger in his voice.)
You really know how to push my buttons, don't you?

(Grace exits into the kitchen, smiling widely.)

(End of Scene)

-SCENE THIRTEEN-

Setting - Thursday, three days later.
At the Farm House.

At Rise - There is a dim preset on stage; the sound of a car is heard pulling up. Grace and Michael enter through the exterior door, well dressed. They turn the lights on. Grace is carrying a box of roses.)

MICHAEL -

Well Grace, you sure wore me out. That's it for me. I guess you'll have to find you another fellow for the next five years.

GRACE -

You're not getting out of it that easy Michael Richard Egan. I don't throw my men away 'till I've worn them into the ground.

MICHAEL -

Well, I can think of worse ways to go.

(Pause)

GRACE -

But Michael, wasn't the evening just fabulous?

MICHAEL -

Any evening with you is fabulous.

GRACE -

Thank you, dear. But don't you think that the flowers were a bit much?

MICHAEL -

No, beautiful women deserve beautiful flowers.

GRACE -

But, did you have to have them delivered to the table?
People were looking.

MICHAEL -

That's what I wanted 'em to do. I want 'em to see who I've got swinging on my arm!

GRACE -

You're so sweet.

MICHAEL -

Not a bad meal, eh? I haven't seen a steak like that since I was in Chicago at that publisher's convention two or three years ago.

GRACE -

Well, you sure woofed it down, I can say that!

MICHAEL -

Yeah, maybe (Beat) but, they didn't have what I really wanted on the menu.

GRACE -

And what, pray-tell, was that?

MICHAEL -

Meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and green beans.

GRACE -

Just what am I going to do with you?

MICHAEL -

Want a hint?

GRACE -

NO!

(Pause)

GRACE -
Michael?

MICHAEL -
Yes?

GRACE -
Do you remember those families we saw in the lobby of the
Hilton, when we first got there?

MICHAEL -
Yes.

GRACE -
Michael, we could be a family, a whole family. If you
would only (He cuts her off)

MICHAEL -
Don't go there Grace! Don't ruin the evening!

GRACE -
Yes Sir.

(Tense Pause)

MICHAEL -
But you can still cut a rug, can't you, Grace?

GRACE -
Look who's talkin'. Dancing with you is like dancing with
Cupid himself.

MICHAEL -
If that's the truth, why'd you let that fellow cut in on
me?

GRACE -
Are you still upset about that? He was really rather nice.
He had just broken up with his girlfriend, and was just
looking for a dance partner, that's all.

MICHAEL -

What's he think this is? A high-school reunion or something? Those were men with their wives and girlfriends out there! They don't want anybody cutting in on them! If I was five years younger, I would have taken him outside and shown him what for!

GRACE -

WHY, Michael! I do believe that you're jealous.

MICHAEL -

I am not jealous! It's a matter of principle! That's all!

(Pause)

GRACE -

But I came home to you, didn't I?

(Michael looks up at Grace and smiles)

MICHAEL -

Grace, I know you're tried and true. It's just that (She cuts him off)

GRACE -

Don't start thinking that I'm stupid Mr. Egan. I know when I've got a good thing goin'..... and you sure know how to treat a girl right!

MICHAEL -

Girl? What girl?..... All I see is one hundred percent woman.

GRACE -

Talk like that will get you into big trouble Mr. Egan.

MICHAEL -

I know.

(End of Scene)

-SCENE THIRTEEN-

Setting - (Monday, one month later.)

At Rise - Lights come up on the farmhouse again. There is no one on stage. It is obviously early morning. Grace enters from the upstairs, and exits into the kitchen.

(Pause)

(Michael enters from upstairs and stands in the living room.

(Short pause)

MICHAEL -
Grace!

GRACE -
Yes dear?

MICHAEL -
Good morning.

(Grace enters from the kitchen carrying a bucket.)

GRACE -
Why, good morning dear. You're up a bit early this morning, aren't you? Usually I have breakfast on the table by the time you come down.

MICHAEL -
Well, there's fields to be plowed, seed to be sown, and it's 'a time for milkin'.

GRACE -
So you decided to watch, huh?

MICHAEL -
That's what I Love about you Grace. You're the only woman I know, that can put me in my place.... but how did you sleep dear?

GRACE -
Very well, I always sleep well with you.

MICHAEL -
I bet you say that to all the fellows don't you?

GRACE -
Wouldn't you like to know?

MICHAEL -
When I want to know something, I find out myself, first
hand.

(He reaches out for her, takes her in his arms, and kisses
her.)

GRACE -
Well, my, my, my, aren't we the inquisitive one this
morning?

MICHAEL -
There's nothing that I can't figure out!

GRACE -
Well, you'll have to figure it out, without me. I can't
start breakfast without getting some milk.

MICHAEL -
Well, why don't you just drive down to the local
convenience store, and pick up a gallon or two?

GRACE -
Michael, the nearest convenience store is twenty miles from
here. It's much easier to just go out in the barn and milk
old Maude.

MICHAEL -
I know dear, just trying to make light.

GRACE -
I know dear.

(She starts towards the kitchen.)

MICHAEL -
Oh!, Grace.

GRACE -
Yes?

MICHAEL -
Since you have become my self-appointed, manager, advisor,
secretary, and fulfiller of all my worldly desires.....
what am I suppose to do today?

GRACE -
Let's see, you need to call your agent about the proofs of
that publication of your early poetry. You need
to...eh?...eh?...oh! Call Drew Hospital and tell them that
you won't be able to make the next board meeting, because
you're spending the evening at home with your adoring wife,
for once.

MICHAEL -
OK! You made your point, what else?

GRACE -
I need you to shovel some horse manure, from that nag you
call a horse, and put it on the garden.

MICHAEL -
HEY! That's no way to talk about Blank Pages, all my life
I've wanted a horse.

GRACE -
Well, you got one. And if you go into town for any reason,
stop at the hardware and pick up five pounds of roofing
nails. There still seems to be a leak in that back bedroom.

MICHAEL -
(Very Militarily) YES **MA'AM!**..... IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE
MA'AM?

GRACE -
(Very seductively) Bring yourself back home to me or....
I'll never forgive you.

(She gives him a peck on the lip. Then exits into the
kitchen.)

(Michael just stands there, alone in the living room;
breathing very deeply, and staring off into space.)

(End of Scene)

-SCENE FIFTEEN-**(Later that evening)**

(Michael and Grace are sitting together watching the fire.)

GRACE -
Michael?

MICHAEL -
Yes?

GRACE -
Did you do everything that I told you to do today? Like a
good boy?

MICHAEL -
Yes ma'am.

GRACE -
What about the roofing nails?

MICHAEL -
I got them too. They're out on the porch.

GRACE -
I'm so glad that I can depend on you.

MICHAEL -
I know that tone. What do you want?

GRACE -
Well, I need the car tomorrow at two o'clock. Would you
mind terribly?

MICHAEL -
Its not that I mind, its just that I have that speech
tomorrow in Minneapolis, at their Writer's Guild. And I
really can't renege on this one. I don't expect to be back
until four.

(Short Pause)

MICHAEL -
What's this all about?

GRACE -
Oh, nothing.....PLEASE!

MICHAEL -
Well, (Beat) if I ask them to put me first, and I don't
stay for the entire program.

GRACE -
YES!

MICHAEL -
And if I put the pedal to the medal coming back, I think I
could be back by two.

GRACE -
Thank you, Michael, thank you!

MICHAEL -
But, what is it Grace? What is it?

GRACE -
OH! It's just an errand that I need to run, that's all
dear.

MICHAEL -
Whatever!

(End of Scene)

-SCENE SIXTEEN-

Setting - One month later, on a Thursday)

At Rise - Lights come up on Michael sitting in the living
room of the farmhouse; Grace enters through the exterior door.

MICHAEL -

Do you know what time it is!

GRACE -

I'm sorry I'm late Michael, I apologize. It's just that my appointment ran a little late.

MICHAEL -

Appointment? What appointment?

GRACE -

OH! My hair appointment.

MICHAEL -

Your hair doesn't look any different Grace.

GRACE -

Well, that's the wonder of this new treatment. It enriches without making your hair look different.

MICHAEL -

But this is the third time this month I've had to cook for myself. Now, I'm not complaining, I know you work hard. It's just that not even Old Man Hasty's hog would eat my cooking.

GRACE -

I'm sorry Michael, I really am.

(Long Uneasy Pause)

MICHAEL -

There isn't someone else is there Grace?.....

GRACE -

No Michael, there is no one else.

MICHAEL -

Well then, I wish you would feed me a little better (Beat) but what's going on Grace? Coming home late in the evening, needing the car at odd hours, what's going on darling, please tell me?

GRACE -

All right, you deserve to know. I found a lump in my right breast. I've been going to doctors about it (Beat). They don't think it looks good (Beat) they want to do a biopsy.

(Michael is stunned)

(Pause)

MICHAEL -
When?

GRACE -
Wednesday...at the Kansas City General Hospital.

(Michael starts for the stairs.)

GRACE -
MICHAEL! Where are you going? Don't Leave Me!! Not now!!!

(He turns to her at the foot of the stairs.)

MICHAEL -
I'm going to saddle up Blank Pages, and head up to Burnet Pond for a couple of days. I'm gonna' build me a fire.

GRACE -
But Michael, will you be back?

MICHAEL -
I don't know Grace, I honestly don't know.

(She sits down, looking worried.)
(He starts to climb the stairs.)

(End of Scene)

-SEVENTEEN-

Setting -

Two days later, it is Saturday at the farmhouse.

At Rise - Lights come up on the farmhouse; there is no one on stage. Grace can be heard in the kitchen; Michael comes through the exterior door. He is carrying a saddle, and a sleeping bag. He drops them by the door.

GRACE -

(From the kitchen.) - Michael? Is that you?

MICHAEL -

Yes Grace, it's me.

(Grace comes running into the living room.)

(They stare at one another for a few moments.)

GRACE -

How are you?

MICHAEL -

I'll live.

(Grace begins to get excited.)

GRACE -

But Michael, you came back...you didn't leave me!

MICHAEL -

Oh yes I did, Grace (Beat) Oh yes I did.

(Pause)

GRACE -

What do you mean?

MICHAEL -

I left you long enough to know that it was MY decision to come back.

GRACE -

I would have understood if you hadn't had.

MICHAEL -

I know that Grace..... I did a lot of thinking up there Grace, and a lot of remembering.

GRACE -

It must have been awful painful.

MICHAEL -

It was..... (Beat) it's not the disease in and of itself, it living with death knocking on your door (Beat) its everyday hoping and praying for some new doctor, or some new technique, or some new medication to come along. Its every day praying for just one more day, knowing that one day, your prayer won't be answered. It's learning to live in what looks like a hospital, trying to call it home. It's praying for someone to live, even though in the back of your mind, way deep down in your heart, you're hoping that they'd die. For your sake, as well as theirs.

(Uneasy Pause)

MICHAEL -

Grace?

GRACE -

Yes Michael?

MICHAEL -

I came to some kind of conclusion while I was up there.

GRACE -

And?

MICHAEL -

There are only two constants in life Grace. (Beat) One is change, and the other is that times get tough.

GRACE -

But Michael, you came back!

MICHAEL -

I made a promise to death do us part, and when Michael Richard Egan makes a promise; he keeps it, Come Hell, Or High Water!

GRACE -

Oh! Michael..... Thank You!

(They Embrace)

(End of Scene)

-SCENE EIGHTEEN-

Setting - Four days later, it is Wednesday

At Rise -Lights come up on Michael and
Grace sitting on the living room
floor, watching the fire.

GRACE -
Thank you for coming with me today.

MICHAEL -
It was the least I could do.

GRACE -
I was so thrilled when the oncologist said it was benign.

MICHAEL -
So was I!

GRACE -
Oh Michael!, I never could have made it through this
without you.

MICHAEL -
Sure you would! You don't need me. Maybe to hammer a few
nails
hang up a little wash, or put horse manure on that
precious little garden of yours.

GRACE -
Well, what else are men for?

MICHAEL -
Oh, I don't know. Very little really.

(Pause)

MICHAEL -
Oh, by the way Grace.

GRACE -
Yes?

MICHAEL -
What are the names of those two kids that you want to take
on board?

GRACE -
Peter and Nancy, why?

MICHAEL -
Well, while I was up at Burrnet Pond I did a little
thinking about them too.

GRACE -
(Hopefully) And?

MICHAEL -
Well, I found room in this old heart of mine for Sally, and
then you. I guess that I can make room for Peter and Nancy
too.

(Grace kisses Michael on the cheek, then lays her head in
his lap)

(Lights dim to Black)

-CURTAIN-