

Teardown
By
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(Revised 1/12/08)

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Characters:

Ben and Jenny An elderly couple. He's maybe 80. She's a bit younger
Gustafarro A contractor.
Davey and Emily Their grown children.

Time: Late Spring of the very recent past.

Place: The front porch and yard of a lived-in suburban home.

Scene Breakdown

Prologue - Late at night.

Scene One - Saturday morning.

Scene Two – A day or so later. Very early in the morning

Scene Three - The next day. Midday.

Scene Four - A day later. Late in the evening.

Scene Five - Very early the next morning.

Note: The set as I have described it in the script is based on my desire to make the story clear on the page. The extent to which the set needs to be real or only suggested in production should be based on making the story clear on the stage.

Prologue

(In the evening. Ben is alone asleep in a chair on the porch in front of an old black and white tv. The ballgame is on. We hear the noise of the crowd and the tv announcer.)

TV

Pitcher looking in for the sign. The rookie steps up to the plate and boy is he digging in. You don't see that too much anymore. He is right up against the plate, he gets any closer he'll be batting lefty. Kinda like he's daring that guy to come inside on him. Let's see is he gonna let him set up like that or is he gonna brush him back.

(Ben stirs. He watches the tv a moment.)

BEN

Hey that's... Hey that looks like... Jenny come out here, that's... it's... it looks like...I know who that is. It's... Oh Jesus who the hell is that?

TV

Big cut from the rookie. Fooled him on that one.

BEN

I know who that is. That's... It looks like, looks like....looks like... somebody....

(He closes his eyes, goes back to sleep. Lights and sounds fade.)

Scene One

: (Morning. Ben is on the porch with a box of tulip bulbs. He hears a rumbling sound in the distance. He listens. Sound fades away. He mutters something indistinct. He puts the box down. He takes a couple of bulbs out of the box. He examines them. The rumbling sound again. He listens. He goes up to the wall of the house, puts his palms on the wall and his ear to the wall. He listens. Sound fades away. He mutters something indistinct. He goes back to the bulbs.)

BEN

How much did you pay for these? Jenny? Hey Jen? Where are you? Jenny. I am not going to do this all by myself so you can criticize my work the moment I get done. Jenny! Oh to hell with it.

(There is a rumbling sound. Jenny comes out of the house. She listens.)

JENNY

You hear that? What is that?

BEN

Beats me. I got your bulbs. I got your trowel and your kneeling stand. And I got your watering can. Jen? Jenny?

(Sound stops.)

JENNY

What are these bulbs doing here?

BEN

You said bring them out, it's time to plant.

JENNY

Those are my bulbs?

BEN

No these are some other bulbs. These are some other bulbs I found in the basement.

JENNY

All right.

BEN

No, I'm sorry, these are Girl Scout bulbs. It was either these or the cookies.

JENNY

Oh please

BEN

No that's not right, what happened was, two little ladies from Jehovah's Witness walked up to the door and told me to buy these bulbs or I will go to hell.

JENNY

Wouldn't surprise me one bit.

BEN

No wait, now I remember, these bulbs fell from the sky with this screwy instruction manual in a language no one's ever seen before.

JENNY

You want to shut up so we can get started.

BEN

I can't even begin to get started. I can't bend over to save my life. I bend over now I'll be bent over till the day I die. They'll have to build a special kind of coffin so they can stuff me in it.

JENNY

I thought you favored cremation.

BEN

I don't have a favorite in that category.

(There is a rumbling in the distance again, but closer this time.)

JENNY

What on earth is that noise? Saturday morning is supposed to be peace and quiet. That's the whole point of it. Who is making that noise?

BEN

Sounds like the Army is what it sounds like to me.

JENNY

Well that's just ridiculous. What do you know about being in the Army?

BEN

I was in the Army. Wasn't I?

JENNY

You certainly were not. Were you?

BEN

Seems like I must have been. Seems like we used to sit in those damn trenches all day, and all you heard was the sound of the earth rumbling all around you. Like the world was coming apart, breaking up on the edges, in the distance, out by the horizon.

JENNY

Which war was that?

BEN

I don't know. Could have been any one of 'em. They're all alike. Tanks, trenches, sitting around, smoking cigarettes.

JENNY

It stopped.

BEN

Then it must not be the Army.

(He goes up to the house, puts his head to the wall and listens.)

I thought it was the house.

JENNY

It's not the house. It's out there.

BEN

You want some ice cream?

JENNY

Yes. No. Just a little. Oh just bring the box. Well go on.

BEN

Ok ok.

(Ben goes inside. There is a rumbling sound in the distance. Jenny listens.)

What in God's name is going on? Ben? Can you hear that?

BEN (inside)

What?

JENNY

Can you hear that?

BEN (inside)

I can't hear you.

JENNY

Ben, come out here.

I'm getting the ice cream.

BEN (inside)

Don't you hear that?

JENNY

I can't hear you.

BEN (inside)

Well come out here and listen.

JENNY

I'm getting the ice cream.

BEN (inside)

Ben!

JENNY

(Ben comes out with the box of ice cream, dishes and spoons, but something has happened inside. He listens to the rumbling. It stops.)

Did I ever tell you how much I love this house?

BEN

No you never did.

JENNY

This is my house.

BEN

It happens to be my house too.

JENNY

Yes. I mean. Our house.

BEN

So? So? You going to stand there till it melts?

JENNY

No. No. Sorry.

BEN

(Ben dishes out the ice cream. They eat. The rumbling sound again. Very close this time. Ben and Jenny see something on the street.)

Oh my god. What is it, Ben? What is that thing?

JENNY

BEN

It's a wrecking ball.

JENNY

That is not possible. We don't have wrecking balls on Elm Street

BEN

Well I think I would know a wrecking ball when I see one. It's a fairly recognizable thing.

JENNY

It's huge. It's just enormous.

BEN

Lord that thing is big.

(They watch the wrecking ball go right past the front of the house. The noise is tremendous. They have to shout.)

JENNY

Jesus christ almighty, the whole house is shaking. Ben, that thing is a menace. HEY! What the hell are you doing with that thing? It is Saturday morning and you are making enough noise to wake the dead. Hey I'm talking to you.

BEN

He can't hear you, Jen. He's probably stone deaf from driving that thing.

JENNY

Well where on earth is he going so high and mighty like that?

(The noise stops. The engine misfires a couple of times.)

Oh. Oh no. Oh Ben, he's right in front of the Barrymore's. Ben, go get the phone and call them. We have to warn them. They're probably still asleep.

BEN

How could they possibly sleep through that?

JENNY

Ben, go get the phone and call them up right now. You don't let people sleep when there's a wrecking ball outside their house.

BEN

All right. Ok. I'll get the phone.

(Ben goes inside.)

JENNY

(To Ben in the house.) You aren't the only one who lived in this house. I lived here too.
(To herself.) Seems to me I had some very special things happen to me in this house.

BEN (inside.)

Where the hell is the phone?

JENNY

(To Ben.) This house is just as much mine as it is yours. I had some very special memories in this house too. (To herself.) If I could just remember what they are. (To Ben.) Ben, where are you?

BEN (inside.)

Oh for crying out loud, where is it?

JENNY

Seems to me... Seems to me all kind of things used to happen....all kinds of things...

(A pager goes off in the house.)

Something.... Anything! Jesus Christ all mighty, why can't I remember what the hell happened in this goddamn house? Didn't I live here?

(Jenny looks through the window on the porch into the living room)

What are these pictures all over the place? They all look familiar.

BEN (inside)

Dammit.

JENNY

(She reaches through the window and grabs framed pictures.)

Who is that little girl with dirty hair? Who is that classy broad in the cocktail dress?

BEN (inside)

Oh for the love of mike.

JENNY

Who is that bored housewife in capri pants? (Oh god, whose idea was that?) And who is that tired old lady in a housecoat? How the hell did they get there?

BEN

(Ben comes out of the house with the cordless phone beeping.)

How do you turn this thing off? Jenny.

JENNY

What?

BEN

This pager thing. Where is the off button on this thing?

JENNY

It doesn't have an off button. It's a telephone.

BEN

Oh just turn it off please.

(Ben tries to give Jenny the phone.)

I hate that noise. Why did I ever get this thing?

JENNY

Well I don't know what to do with it. Just press some buttons. That's what I do. I don't know.

BEN

I am just totally befuddled by this thing, utterly and totally flummoxed and befuddled.

(The pager stops.)

What'd I do? I don't even know what I did.

JENNY

Did you call them?

BEN

How could I --

JENNY

Well call them, Ben. That thing is just hanging over their house like a sword of Damocles.

(He phones. She shouts.)

Wake up, Fred. Wake up in there.

BEN

No answer.

JENNY

What? Well I'm going over there.

(Jenny steps off the porch. The engine turns on and revs up. She stops.)

Oh it woke up. What's it doing, Ben? I have to go over there.

BEN

No, Jenny. You are not going over there. That is out of the question.

(A scraping creaking metallic sound.)

JENNY

It's starting to move. It's starting to swivel. What does that mean? Oh my god, it can't be.... Give me that phone.

(She dials. She shouts into the phone.)

Ginger. Fred. Wake up. Wake up and answer the phone. There's a huge crane in front of your house with a wrecking ball. Fred! Ginger! Answer the goddamn phone. Ben, it's starting to move back and forth.

BEN

It's a pendulum. It has to overcome inertia.

JENNY

Well of course it has to overcome inertia. How dumb do I look? Ben, it's going to hit the house. It's aiming right for the house. I have to go over there and warn them.

BEN

You are not going over there with a ten ton ball of steel waving around like christ all mighty. That thing would turn you into pulp.

JENNY

Let go of me. It's going to hit the front door. That beautiful front door with the antique finish, it's made of oak. That door is a hundred years old. Oh my god I can't watch this.

BEN

See how the cab swivels back and forth? It's transferring its kinetic energy to the the chain with the ball on the the end and with each swivel the swing of the ball gets wider and wider.

JENNY

It's going to blow a hole right through the center of the house, right into the entrance hall where's she's got all the tiffany glass and that lovely Picasso ceramic, I would give my right arm for that Picasso ceramic, the face of a woman with one big tear coming down her cheek and her chin is resting on her hands, it's just so lovely and they are going to smash it into a million tiny pieces. Offer him money, Ben. Give him a bribe.

BEN

It's too late, Jenny. You couldn't stop it now if you tried. Don't look, hon. Don't look.

(Ben takes Jenny in his arms and puts her head against his chest. There is a huge booming sound and the sound of wood cracking and splintering.)

JEN

Oh my god. He killed it. He killed the house.

BEN

Jenny.

JENNY

He took a gun and shot its brains out. It's murder. You vicious bastard. You killer.

BEN

Honey, shhh. Come inside.

JENNY

You murderer. What is the matter with you people? You can't be serious. Call the police. Call in the cavalry. General MacArthur. This is an outrage, it's horrible.

BEN

Jenny, come on inside before the neighbors hear you

JENNY

I will not come inside. I will not turn a blind eye.

BEN

Please Jenny. Please.

JENNY

(Ben tries to lead her into the house.)

I'm going to get my gun and blow his brains out. Eye for an eye.

BEN

No, it's not. It's not the same thing. That is a house.

JENNY

Not anymore.

BEN

He is a construction worker.

JENNY

He is a killer.

BEN

Come on, we'll have some tea. Some jasmine tea. You have to calm yourself down, so you can think straight. You're not thinking straight. You're being emotional.

JENNY

Well of course I'm being emotional.

BEN

Yes yes, it's entirely appropriate, but now we have to go inside and drink some tea and think about this rationally.

(A man appears in the yard. He wears a hard hat and a construction worker's canvas jumpsuit. He is covered in mud and dust.)

GUSTAFERRO

Hey, what a little beauty you folks got here. If you don't mind my saying so, jeez louise, what a little honey of a house, must be, what, 1920's? Oh yeah, I could tell the minute I laid eyes on it, look at that, I said, what a little honey, not a line out of place, not a sag, not a crack. This house got bones, if you know what I mean. Yessiree. My name's Gustaferro, Dominick Gustaferro, pleased to meet you folks. What a lovely morning, don't you think? Kind of a morning you can really set your ass down into if you got half a mind to.

JENNY

What do you want?

GUSTAFERRO

Me? Oh I don't know. Nothing really, just taking a break. Just stretching my legs is all, taking in the neighborhood, never been out this way before, I do most of my work over on the Island. Across the river out in Jersey. Up in the boonies. Never been down here. This is nice. Real pretty town. Little piece of heaven.

BEN

We like it.

GUSTAFERRO

Me too. Me too.

JENNY

No you don't. You don't give a good goddamn about this town or anything in it. You just come traipsing in and knocking down houses, you just come rolling up and smack 'em down, that's all you do. You better have a damn good story mister cause I already called the cops. They'll be down on you like a hive of bees.

GUSTAFERRO

Hey hey hey, hold on, hold the phone. You did what? You called who?

JENNY

I called the police department and I told them that someone is wreaking havoc, someone is causing mayhem, civil commotion and riot.

BEN

You did no such thing. She did no such thing.

JENNY

Well I'd like to. I still have a half a mind to. So don't mess with me, mister. I saw what you did. I saw it with my own eyes.

GUSTAFERRO

Look at that roofline. Isn't that something. Eighty years old if she's a day and not a shingle out of place. That is really something.

JENNY

You just keep your mitts off it. That wrecking ball gets one step closer I will get my gun.

BEN

Jenny, you will do no such thing. Stop making idle threats. You sound like a loon.

JENNY

I am not a loon. I know trouble when I see it.

GUSTAFERRO

Hey missus. I have no intention whatsoever. I got a job to do and I do it. They told me to put a hole in her, so I put a hole in her. I'm done. I'm through. I'm out of here. Going home and watch a little baseball. Cubs and Mets, Yanks and Sox, hell I don't care. Don't make a damn bit of difference to me. I was watching Kansas City the other day. Couldn't have cared less.

JENNY

Why did you do that? Why did you ruin that beautiful old house?

GUSTAFERRO

Now ma'am, missus, that old house is a teardown. Y'undertand? We are going to tear it down and put up a new house where it stood. Now the thing of it is, the first step is the hardest, most folks got an old house like that and they get cold feet, they change their minds, you draw up a whole set of plans and you get them just right and all of a sudden they start hemming and hawing, so what I do is I get the signature on the page and as soon as the ink is dry I come over and punch a hole right through her so there's no going back. Yep. That's my modus operandi. Punch a hole. No going back.

JENNY

Where are Fred and Ginger?

GUSTAFERRO

Fred and Ginger? Aren't they're in those old movies, those black and white ones, with the singing and the dancing?

JENNY

No, the Barrymore's. Where are the Barrymore's?

GUSTAFERRO

The Barrymore's? Jesus ma'am, missus, those folks are long gone. They been dead a million years. They're all buried out there in Forest Lawn in Hollywood with them other movie stars.

JENNY

Oh for crying out loud, Fred and Ginger Barrymore who live in that house. Where are they? Or don't you give a good goddamn?

GUSTAFERRO

Ma'am, the folks who lived in that house are down in Tampa/St. Pete. They cleared out, lock stock and barrel. Packed up and took the auto-train. Nothing left in that house but some halfassed sculpture looks like it melted in the entrance hall. You don't think I would of punched that hole in there if there was anything in there?

JENNY

I wouldn't be a bit surprised. That beautiful old house.

GUSTAFERRO

Listen, ma'am it ain't my place to say and I don't like talking out of school, but that old house was just a crying shame. Dry rot in the timbers....

JENNY

What?

GUSTAFERRO

Termites in the foundation....

JENNY

No.

GUSTAFERRO

Yes, water damage, mold and mildew....

JENNY

Oh no.

GUSTAFERRO

Yes ma'am, cracked oil tank seeping into the ground water. That's an environmental disaster right there.

BEN

That beautiful old house?

GUSTAFERRO

That beautiful old house was on its deathbed.

JENNY

That lovely old center hall colonial?

GUSTAFERRO

Sir, I came here to put that house out of its misery, I came here to end it's suffering

BEN

That magnificent old thing?

GUSTAFERRO

Mission of mercy is what it was.

JENNY

No I don't believe it. I can't listen to this. This is coarse and vulgar talk. You have no manners, no sense of decency.

GUSTAFERRO

Pardon me ma'am, it's just a fact, it's common sense, it ain't a bit like this house here, why anyone could see how fine and sturdy this house is, you wouldn't even have to step inside and look around. Wouldn't even have to bound up the steps two at a time tell everybody, Rise and shine, breakfast is ready. It's plain as the nose on your face. You wouldn't have to fling open the back door and shout, Hey kids it's dinnertime, sun is going down. This house is rock solid and then some.

BEN

You're damn right it is.

GUSTAFERRO

I know it is. You probably couldn't knock her down if you tried. She'd rear up and knock you down is what she'd do.

JENNY

You're damn right she would.

GUSTAFERRO

Still if you ever have a mind to sell, well here's my card. I'll make you an offer and we'll talk a little turkey.

(Gustafarro gives Ben his business card.)

JENNY

You get out of here. You leave this instant. Just turn around and walk away or I will get my gun and blow you to kingdom come.

BEN

Jenny! Stop it.

JENNY

Go on, get off of this property. Tear it up. Tear it up, Ben.

BEN

You better leave mister... uh, Gustafarro. I think you've done enough damage for one day.

GUSTAFERRO

Suit yourself. Nice to meet you folks. Real pretty house.

(Gustafarro leaves. They look at the demolished door of the house across the street.)

BEN

What does that remind me of. What is it?

JENNY

What?

BEN

Where have I seen that before? Inchon? Was it Anzio? Was I at Anzio? There was a church. Big beautiful church. It was a wedding, a Sunday, everybody all dressed up, Was it Italy? North Africa? All the men were in black and it was hot hot hot. Okinawa? And we drove by in the jeep and everybody was waving and the bride was just so gorgeous it made my teeth hurt, standing on the steps right in front of the church by the big wooden doors and I said, "Guys, come on, let's go kiss the bride, I wanna kiss that bride, she is so goddamn gorgeous." Those local girls were my oh my, and so we drove right up to the church with our candy bars and our cigarettes and everybody was going "Hey GI, Hello GI," and there was so much noise I didn't hear it coming and it was just like boom and all hell broke loose, screaming yelling, everybody yelling like chickens in the barnyard, and blood and screaming, hysterical screaming, and I looked up and there was a huge crater where the front door of the church had been, and I thought, the bride and the groom. That beautiful bride. I never got a good look at the groom. Gone. Gone off of God's green earth in one fell swoop. And I looked down inside that crater. Nothing. Just the smell of gundpowder.

JENNY

That's awful, just awful. I never heard anything so sad in all my life.

BEN

Now where did that come from? See I was in that war.

JENNY

Which war?

BEN

I don't know. One of the big ones, one of those world wars. I was in the army.

JENNY

Really?

BEN

Well how could I have been at Anzio if I wasn't in the army?

JENNY

Where's Anzio?

BEN

I don't know. The Phillipines?

JENNY

Huh! Maybe it was Dien Bien Phu.

BEN

It doesn't matter. That isn't the point.

JENNY

What is the point?

BEN

The point is that now I look at this house, this front door we got here, we stained it ourselves, remember? Right here on this porch, I said red and you said blue so we stained it instead. They could have dropped a bomb right here on this very spot on the day we were married, the day I carried you up these steps and it could have wiped us out just like that.

JENNY

But it didn't, Ben. It didn't, and we lived a whole life in this house.

BEN

What does that mean, Jenny? A bomb on your wedding day or a life in this house? It just doesn't make any sense to me.

JENNY

Now after all these years it suddenly doesn't make any sense to you? How can you say that to me? What about the children?

BEN

What children?

JENNY

Our children.

BEN

We didn't have any children.

JENNY
We most certainly did.

BEN
We did not.

JENNY
Yes we did.

BEN
We had children?

JENNY
Yes.

BEN
Well where are they?

JENNY
I don't know.

BEN
Well why not if you're so sure we had them.

JENNY
Hey, I kept track of those kids for twenty some odd years and I would say that was just about enough.

BEN
You did?

JENNY
Well of course I did. I was their mother.

BEN
Well what were their names?

JENNY
What kind of a question is that? I don't remember their names. You expect me to remember everything?

BEN
Seems to me their mother would remember their names.

JENNY
I don't care to remember their names. They don't seem to remember mine.

BEN

You are making this up.

JENNY

Oh enough already. Enough. I don't want to argue with you.

BEN

I love this house, Jen. Everything I have in the world is in this house.

JENNY

Is that right.

BEN

I wouldn't sell this house if I was down to my last dime. I would rather go beg on the streets. I would rather die. This is my house. Everything that ever happened to me happened in this house.

JENNY

Like what?

BEN

What difference does it make?

JENNY

You don't remember.

BEN

What difference does that make? That doesn't mean it didn't happen. Doesn't mean I didn't live it.

JENNY

Oh what do you know?

BEN

I know about this house..

JENNY

Yes, I know you do.

BEN

Do you?

JENNY

Yes, Ben, I do.

BEN

Because that was the last of the ice cream we just ate.

JENNY

What??!!

BEN

There's none left. I looked everywhere. I hunted high and low and that was it. What we just ate. It's all gone.

JENNY

What about the chocolate?

BEN

Ate it.

JENNY

What about the vanilla?

BEN

Ate it.

JENNY

What about the ---

BEN

That was the last of the strawberry right there. That was it.

JENNY

What about the Neopolitan?

BEN

Threw it out. That isn't ice cream.

JENNY

Ben? What are we going to do?

BEN

I don't know.

JENNY

What about all the money we had in the bank. The stock and bonds. The hedge fund.

BEN

We spent it.

JENNY

All of it?

BEN

Every last penny.

JENNY

But you said it would be enough. You said we had enough to retire and live in comfort. You said we deserve it.

BEN

Yes I did.

JENNY

Well what happened?

BEN

We lived too long.

(Jenny smacks him.)

If it makes you feel any better.

JENNY

No it doesn't.

(She smacks him again.)

No.

(A moment.)

Blind as a bat.

BEN

Who is?

JENNY

Your friend there. This place is getting away from us. It needs attention. Look at this rail. It's coming loose again.

BEN

(Ben goes up to the wall of the house.)

Yes Jenny I know I know. Hardly know where to start anymore.

JENNY

And that door needs looking after.

BEN

Yes I know.

JENNY

Hundred other things.

BEN

Jenny, what is going on in there? What's in there?

JENNY

In the house? Ben, there is no one in there. We're out here. So who could be in there?

BEN

Not who. What. Something's in there. Don't you feel it everytime you look at it? I want to rip into and see what's hiding. I want to press my face right into the clapboard and listen as hard as I can, because there's something in there. I feel it. I know it.

(They look hard at the house. Ben goes right up to the front door, puts his head to the door and listens. Jenny grips the porch rail and looks out. It's as if an electric charge goes through them.)

JENNY

He came to me in the middle of the night, right out here in the middle of the night. It was so quiet you could hear the freight trains rumble and creak out there in the dark.

BEN

I come roaring up in the old Buick. I am covered in muck and crud from the road. I've been driving three days, radio blasting, windshield wipers beating, road humming, singing my lungs out. I'm home, baby, I'm home. The smell of the porch. Something's frying on the stove.

JENNY

And the air was so still, you could catch fireflies on a spoon, hear them buzz, and he leaned me over *and lifted up my cotton dress* and whispered in my ear, shhhh, he went, shhhh, Jenny, don't make a sound. Oh my god, right here on the porch. Who on earth *was* that?

BEN

And I knocked one time. Just once, and I heard her call my name. I heard a bowl go crash on the floor and she came out covered in gravy. All over her dress. Her hands dripping with juice.

JENNY

And he sliced his way in like a knife through butter and he shivered and shook and I moaned and he whispered and nobody saw, nobody knew, nobody guessed. And I couldn't see him. He couldn't see me.

BEN

And she wiped her hands on her face and kissed me, and she tasted like a porterhouse steak. Made me so hungry I wanted to eat her up. God almighty. And I pinned her up

against this wall, this wall right here and I wanted to bang her like a backdoor till she was halfway off her hinges.

JENNY

You were off fighting. Saving the world. Building bridges, launching rockets, cutting down forests, putting up cities. How could you possibly know I was here on the porch gripping this rail, staring up at the stars and begging him please. Don't ever stop. Don't leave me alone, alone in that bed, alone on this porch, alone all night, just me and the stars and the kids up there sleeping and dreaming like they'll never come back.

BEN

But she said, wait, no wait, you're a filthy mess, and Benny, the kids, they missed you so much and your dinner's ready, help them with their homework, there's bills to pay and the house the house, the yard is a mess, the ceiling is crumbling, the faucets are broken, the drains are clogged. Later, Ben, later we'll get all cozy and it'll be so nice.

JENNY

I can't see his face. I can't hear his voice. I don't know his name. I just feel him all over me. Over and over me. Out here on the porch, out here in the night.

BEN

And I've already got one foot out the door, I'm hardly home and I'm half way out. I don't want to make love. I don't want to be nice. I want to fuck broads in their penthouse beds. I want to build skyscrapers that blot out the sun. I want to raise armies and conquer the world. And she's crying, Why am I like this? Why am I doing this? Why can't I be happy here. This is my house, my home, my life. Why can't I stay, just stay and be happy? And I hop in the car and I'm gone in a flash. I'm gone like a dream when you open your eyes.

(A moment.)

JENNY

What?

BEN

Huh?

JENNY

You say something?

BEN

No just listening.

JENNY

Yeah me too.

(Lights fade.)

Scene Two

(In the darkness. Crickets. Sound of an engine, then the beeping of a truck backing up. Silence. Then a huge booming splintering crack. Silence. The engine starts. The beeping. The engine fades. Crickets. Lights up. There is a huge gaping hole where the front door used to be. Jenny appears in the ruins of the door.)

JENNY

Ben! Ben! Ben, where are you? Ben! The door's gone. Where's the front door. Ben! Where are you? Ben! I'll kill him, so help me I'll strangle that man with my bare hands. This better be a joke.

(Ben wanders up from the street.)

BEN

Holy christ! Holy christ on a crutch! Jenny, the house, the thing, the door, there's a hole. It's gone.

JENNY

I can see that. I'm standing in it.

BEN

It looks like a hole in the world.

JENNY

My beautiful house. Did you do this? Did you let that man do this? Ben, answer me. Did you sell this house?

BEN

Looks like you could step right through it into another world. Come out of there, Jen, before it swallows you up and takes you away from me.

JENNY

You miserable old fool. Are you drunk? Have you been drinking?

BEN

Jenny listen. We stand on a carpet of joy. He yanks it out from under our feet. He laughs when we fall on our ass and cry.

JENNY

You are loaded, you damn fool.

BEN

There ain't enough booze in the whole wide world. I could drink from now till doomsday and it wouldn't be enough.

JENNY

Enough what?

(Ben wobbles and sits on the ground.)

BEN

I can't get up. Help me, Jen. I can't get up.

JENNY

You sold this house? You sold it to that skunk? You traitor. Get out of my sight.

BEN

I can't get up.

JENNY

Then crawl. Just crawl away and don't come back. You drunk old man.

BEN

Jenny, Jen, Jennifer. I had to do it. I had no choice. We had no choice. No money, no food, no kids,

JENNY

We do too have kids.

BEN

Well where are they when you need them?

JENNY

How the hell should I know?

BEN

No chance, Jen. No way out. I tried. I made him promise. Not to tear it down. I made him swear on a bible, on his mother's grave, he wouldn't harm a hair on its head. He said... he said... he said.... AND I KNEW HE WAS LYING. Lying through his teeth. I knew he was laughing at me. I couldn't help it. I couldn't let you starve. I did what I had to.

JENNY

Throw me out on the street? Rip me right out of my home? That's how you save me?

BEN

Look look, look what I got.

(Ben stumbles to his feet. He comes back with a little red wagon full of ice cream.)

Ice cream, Jen. Look at this. Klondike bars. Fudgesicles. French vanilla, you're favorite, tutti frutti, push-up pops. I haven't seen these since I don't know when. Come on, aren't you hungry? Look at this. Rocky Road. Mocha Almond Fudge. Oh Jesus.

JENNY

You eat it. You eat it all. Just stuff it right down your gullet. I am not hungry. I have lost my appetite.

BEN

Don't say that, Jen. Don't be like that.

JENNY

This is it, Ben. This is the last straw. I am leaving. I am taking the ice cream scoop and I am not looking back.

BEN

YOU ARE NOT TAKING THE ICE CREAM SCOOP!!

JENNY

Why don't you try and stop me.
(Jenny goes into the house.)

BEN

Don't go back in there. You don't know what's on the other side. It could be anything.
(Jenny comes to the door with a bright bangled dress in her hands.)

JENNY

It was lying on the floor. Just lying there like it fell from somewhere. I almost tripped right over it.

BEN

Is that one of yours?

JENNY

No, it's not mine. It's Emily's.

BEN

Emily? I don't remember any Emily.

JENNY

I know what this is. It's that awful hippie thing she wore, she never took it off, she just about lived in it. I said I was going to burn it. I thought I did burn it. I burned it with the leaves one day in the fall. Emily, honey, where is she? Where did she go? Ben, will we ever see her face again? Look at this old thing. It smells just like her.

BEN

(Ben examines the hole in the wall where the door used to be. Something falls and lands on the porch.)

This is just what I was talking about. There are things in these walls.

JENNY

Well of course there are. And you sold it, you bastard, for a handful of coins.

BEN

You can't live on memories. You'll starve and die

JENNY

Then I'll starve and die. In my own house. In my own kitchen.

BEN

Hey what's this? Where'd this come from?

(Ben picks something off the porch.)

Will you look at that. That is a major league baseball. Autographed. Where the hell did that come from?

(He looks up in the rafters of the porch roof.)

I know this. I know what this is. I haven't seen this.... How did this get here? Davey? Davey?

JENNY

Oh my goodness yes. Davey.

BEN

Davey? Davey? Where is he?

JENNY

Hush Ben hush.

BEN

Davey!

JENNY

Hush now.

BEN

But this is his baseball. Look at that. That's Mickey Mantle. That's Roger Maris. This is his ball. I took him to the game. We sat on the first base side. Box seats. Must have cost me ten bucks if it cost me a nickel. He caught that ball barehanded. It was a foul pop. Kid could catch anything. He begged me to get it autographed. I said, Hey no way, these are the Yankees, they don't autograph baseballs. He said, Please please please. He kept on pestering me. Just like he always did. Never give up. Never say die. I said, Don't hold your breath, Dave. And then what happened? Oh I know. I hung him right over the top of the dugout. I held his ankles and Mantle looked up and there he was dangling right over his head with that baseball in his hands. Yeah. I dangled him. Moment of inspiration. You should have seen the look on his face. What a great kid he was. He could catch anything. Centerfield written all over him. Where is he, Jen?

JENNY

Gone?

BEN

Those goddamn minor leagues. Bus ride to nowhere.

JENNY

They're long gone, both of them.

BEN

Disappeared off the face of the earth. Not a word. Send up a flare, Davey. Nothing. What the hell did I fight in that war I got a kid won't even show me his face.

JENNY

Well we better get this wagon into the house before it all melts away.

(Jenny tries to get the wagon up the steps.)

Come on give me a hand.

BEN

There's more in here. I know there is. A whole lot more.

JENNY

Come on, Ben. Give me a hand.

(Ben feels along the wall of the house. He works the clapboard loose and pulls it away from the wall. Something falls out.)

BEN

See there's more. There's more here. If I could just....

(Ben rips away a piece of clapboard.)

I could figure it all out. I could hold it in my hand.

(We hear snatches of family life. A dinner bell, someone calling, the strum of a guitar, the crack of a bat, laughter.)

JENNY

Oh Ben just listen. It sounds so lovely.

(Children laughing, the dinner bell.)

See I told you we had kids. Right here in this house.

(She listens.)

I can't leave, Ben. I can't leave it all like this. I am not leaving.

(Ben goes inside.)

Listen to me. You listen to me. I am not leaving this house.

(Sounds and lights fade. Sounds of demolition.)