

Fade To Black

by

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Cast of Characters

<u>GRAM:</u>	60's
<u>GILL:</u>	20's
<u>BEAUFORD:</u>	30's
<u>LUELLA BEANS:</u>	20

Place
Cape May

Time
Evening

2.

Setting: An 1880's house in contemporary time on a large wooden porch somewhere on Columbia Avenue.

At Rise: You can hear the waves crashing in the distance. Gram appears older than what he is, he stammers, shakes and coughs regularly with consistency. His youngest son Gill sits beside him.

GRAM rocks in his chair,
coughing and muttering.

GILL passes him a beer from
a case on the porch floor.

GRAM: ...Your brother, when's he gonna get his ass back here?

GILL: Want me to go out and find him?

GRAM: Nao, nao, juss let me rot.

GILL: I'll go out and get him then.

GRAM: I could turn blue in the face before anyone reads my mind.

GILL: You want me to go get him or not?

GRAM: I want you to stay right here.

GILL: I'm here, I'm here. (beat) Sure is taking him a long ass
time though.

GRAM: That's a man who will never die of a heart attack, that's for
damn sure...everything he does is so methodical, so slow, so
careful...I'd much rather throw a bunch of paint on the wall and see
how it sticks. Beauford is the son of a bastard and I'm the bastard.

GILL: He just don't like you.

GRAM: I can't *stand* him!

GILL: Why you send him out to get you medicine?

GRAM: I don't know!

GILL: I would have gone fer ya.

GRAM: Shut up! You're lazy. Don't do shit. Got one son that's
slow and another that's lazy.

GILL: Then why'd you have us in the first place?

GRAM: Your mother forced me into it.

GILL: She did?

GRAM: Sure she did. I never wanted to have two little snout nose
kids grown into snout nosed men. I like my freedom. I like the smell
of fresh air in the morning near the ocean, I like to drink and pass
out under the boardwalk, I like to walk around the house in my

GRAM (cont'd): underwear and sometimes with my wang out, blowing in the wind and not giving a damn about anyone else but myself. You two dipshits were born and I had to get serious about responsibility. Got that stupid job as a mechanic, not knowing the first damn thing about cars, changing tires led to changing the oil, to changing the tailpipe, broken windows, fender benders, transmission and eventually the inner workings of the engine and I hated every waking minute of that lousy ass job. Hated you and your brother more though and your mother. All she thought about was you two boys. Completely forgot about me. I'd come home exhausted, filthy and hungry and I never got a decent meal out of that woman...shit was always burnt or like rubber, night after night, then it hit me, it all dawned on me like the plague, that we are fucked, this whole dream, this whole concept is dead. I became a ghost of my forefathers, when they had it good, when they had to figure out the combination of putting a life together for themselves, and for a while there it worked, didn't it? Shit. It worked for a time but people change, we evolve, we keep transforming into something else, little by little, but we are stuck with the old values of family, this old school way of thinking, while our hearts beat full of passion for innovation...and so we are imprisoned within our own skin. I ain't never wanted you or that other dipshit for a son, like you even less after I got to know you. But here you are sitting on my porch waiting for me to drop dead. I ain't going nowhere fast, you'll be waiting an eternity before I croak. Bet you can't wait to take this house out from under me. You and your dumbass brother have been plotting against me for years. Don't I know it. You two shitheads couldn't shine my shoes when it comes to being clever. Ha! Ha! (coughs) They say two minds are better than one but in you and your brothers case that don't add up to more than half a brain. Ha! Ha! (coughs) Shiiit. The three hundred dollar question is which one of you is dumber than the other. Hmmm. What you wanna do anyway? I heard the whispers. Wanna turn my house into some Goddamn bed and breakfast. Can't even scramble eggs or make toast, just like your mother. You expect to make this house a B&B? Ha! Heard you call it a BREAD and breakfast. Ha! Ha! (coughs) Good luck with that! There's only two billion other B&B's on this damn block alone. Pffff! (shakes his head) Jackass.

GILL: I thought you like having me around.

GRAM: A man needs something' to punch, don't he?

GILL: And am I your stupid punching bag?

GRAM: Exactly. (quickly) But I'll tell ya...there was a month or so there that you really got to me, I opened something inside myself, like a rusty old valve and it nearly broke me, but I was able to get myself open enough to allow you in and I was caught. It was something special, so I thought, when all it was, was something different. And when that different thing became usual, I looked passed it and saw the truth.

GILL: What truth?

GRAM: That we're all just a bunch of assholes.

GILL: I'm not an asshole.

GRAM: Yes, you are.

GILL: Why you sayin' that?

GRAM: We search to give meaning in our lives, but how do we know if it really has a purpose? Let's say you found something that you love to do---

GILL: Milking cows!

GRAM: Alright, milking cows, let's say you go through your whole life milking cows cause it makes you happy...then what? (beat) You die and we bury you and you were the guy who loved to milk cows, good for you! How does that change a Goddamn thing for anybody?

GILL: Maybe there was a cow named Stephanie who suffered from chronic stomach pain and the only time she ever felt comfort was when I milked her. It was then that she felt safe, happy and fearless. Maybe just by my special way of milking her, she was relieved and maybe in those moments I meant something to her cause we were alive at the same time and maybe there's some destiny in that and maybe we both gave each other meaning because I was helping her, which brought me happiness and she was being helped, which brought her happiness and maybe that's all any of us even needs. Maybe we just complicate everything, instead of carrying out our simple everyday lives.

BEAUFORD enters.

BEAUFORD: What's up you two bastards?

BEAUFORD tosses a brown paper bag at
GRAM.

GRAM: Is this both prescriptions?

BEAUFORD: You can tell by the weight of it that it is. Ain't that what you told me last time?

GRAM: Why don't you go slower next time?

BEAUFORD: You told me that too and so I did.

GRAM: You know how you're gonna die?

BEAUFORD: How?

GRAM: One night you are going to go out and get my medication and you will fall asleep at the wheel and bash into a tree.

BEAUFORD: I know it.

GRAM (statement): You do.

BEAUFORD: It's happened to me many times before...same old same. Is that why you keep asking me and not Gill to get you your meds?

GRAM: It's possible.

BEAUFORD: It would be nice if for once we can just be a family unit, like when mom was alive.

GILL: Mom is dead.

GRAM: Don't you go bringing up your mother you bastard! This is your *real* family now, the way it was, the way it always should have been. No more fake smiles and terrible dinners, that's for sure.

BEAUFORD: What then? What is there instead of effort?

GRAM: The truth of reality.

BEAUFORD: And what is your truth of reality?

GRAM: Quiet. Alcohol. Prescription drugs. The heat, the cold and hating the both of you.

BEAUFORD: You can hate us all you want, but that's your reality, it don't have to be mine and Gills.

GRAM: But it is, we can't control it, things are as they are.

BEAUFORD: I can't get your drugs no more.

GRAM: What did you say to me?

BEAUFORD: I'm not getting your drugs anymore.

GRAM: You have to.

BEAUFORD: No, I don't. Send Gill.

GRAM: I can't send Gill.

BEAUFORD: Then don't.

GRAM: If I don't get my medicine, I will die.

BEAUFORD: And if I keep going for you, I will die and I'm tired of dying.

GRAM: You have to get my pills!

BEAUFORD: Get them yourself!

GRAM: I can't drive or else I would!

BEAUFORD: Take a taxi!

GRAM: You are a replica of your mother!

BEAUFORD: Good!

BEAUFORD goes into the house.

GRAM (to BEAUFORD): Hey! You come back here you little bastard! (to HIMSELF) I'm taking all these Goddamn pills. The hell with it. Go on my own turns.

GRAM pours the pills from the bottle
in his mouth and drinks them down with
bottle of vodka.

GILL: Beauford! Beauford! Dad's gone and done it! He's done it!

BEAUFORD runs onto the porch and sits
calmly across from GRAM.

He's swallowed every last one of them pills!

BEAUFORD: Calm down, Gill. It's better this way.

GILL: He's gonna die!

BEAUFORD: If that's what he wants.

GRAM: That's what I want!

BEAUFORD (calmly): Why?

GRAM: Things get altered and when you're spun in a different direction, you gotta walk the plank.

GILL: You can vomit it all back up!

GRAM: Shut up already, would ya?! I want you two boys to know I never loved either of ya. I hated you both my entire life, including your mother. All I ever known was hatred, anger and disease and I don't care one bit. You hear me! I don't care one bit!!!

GRAM (cont'd): Now let me die alone. You both go back inside the house and let me die alone on this porch. This ain't no happy ending.

BEAUFORD goes into the house. GILL is more hesitant, he stops and looks at GRAM, but then goes into the house.

How can it be? How can any of it be? Maybe the greatest thing about my life is that I can die.

GRAM winces in pain, falls to his knees.

That's it. That's it. Take me you bastard...take me.

GRAM falls to his side.

GRAM coughs.

GRAM dies.

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO BLACK.

A PAUSE of 10 seconds.

LIGHTS SLOWLY RISE.

Out comes GILL.

GILL: ...Bea, Beaford, he went all the way he did...he's gone.

Enter BEAUFORD.

BEAUFORD (annoyed): Let me see!

BEAUFORD check GRAM'S pulse.

Greatest performance I ever saw.

GILL: He's dead!!

BEAUFORD: He ain't dead.

GILL: He stopped breathing.

BEAUFORD: He's breathing just fine. (to GRAM) Get up Gram.

GILL: Stop whatever it is you're doing Beauford.

BEAUFORD: I ain't doing a damn thing.

GILL: Can't a man die in peace?

BEAUFORD: I sure hope so, so long as he's really dead.

GILL: He's lying dead right in front of ya!

BEAUFORD: He ain't dead and he ain't dead cause he didn't take no real pills.

GILL: Real pills?

BEAUFORD: I been switching them pills for months now. It's called a placebo. Buddy of mine makes 'em all the time. It's why I take so damn long, cause we always get caught up and by the time I make it back here, old Gram here is furious. Good for the heart! Ain't that right Gram?

GRAM: I'm dead you bastard.

BEAUFORD (to GILL): See?

GILL: Those are fake pills?

GRAM gets up and sits back in his
rocking chair.

GRAM: I took real pills, what the hell you talking about?!

BEAUFORD: There ain't nothin' wrong with ya. Your as healthy as a man half your age.

GRAM: Bullshit! I get headaches, chills, can't breathe, my heart shakes and I foam from the mouth.

BEAUFORD: That's all in your mind.

GRAM: I need my pills or I'll die!

BEAUFORD: Pop, you haven't had any real pills for months. If you needed them, you would be dead by now.

GRAM: Who the hell are you to play doctor with me?! It's my life! This is my life! This is why I haven't felt right, cause I don't have my pills!

GILL: Bea, give him his pills---

BEAUFORD: You ain't getting' no pills.

GRAM (to GILL): Whiskey! Get me some whiskey!

GILL enters house.

BEAUFORD: I know you're pissed but this is how things ought to be.

GRAM: You are an evil assassin!

BEAUFORD: I'm lookin' out fer ya.

GILL comes back with whiskey bottle.

GRAM jugs some of it down.

GRAM: There...now that's good relief...ahhh, damn...you can take my pills but you can't take my whiskey.

BEAUFORD: You can keep your whiskey, so long as you allow Gill and me to make this house a business.

GRAM: I knew it! I knew it! Over my dead body!

BEAUFORD: Listen old man, I could have just as easily let you take them real pills so you can die and we'd win over this house anyway and do what we want.

GRAM: HA! You can't.

BEAUFORD: Sure we can!

GRAM: No, you can't. It's in my will.

BEAUFORD: What is?

GRAM: Think I'm stupid like you two morons? It's in my will!

BEAUFORD: What you put in your will?

GRAM: This house goes to Luella Beans.

BEAUFORD: Who??

GRAM: That young flower that strolls up here every now and again.

BEAUFORD: Who the hell are you talking about?

GRAM: That's right. She's an angel if I ever saw one. Gotten to know her well. Them days when I'm out there sweating on the beach, making sure everybody's got their beach passes, well, we get talking and she always bakes me cookies and drops them off to me and well, I like her, if I was a young man...boy, I was born too soon, that's my trouble, I was born in the wrong era, should have been born around the time of you two bozos.

BEAUFORD: Let me get this right...you are giving some young woman we ain't ever met our family home?

GRAM: When I die, she gets it all.

BEAUFORD: That's illegal!

GRAM: No it ain't. It's correct.

GILL: Why her?!

GRAM: She's kind to me. She never tells me what to do, she's always polite and sweet and gentle. I like her smile. She comes from nothing, works as a helper at one of them damn B&B's nearby and she doesn't make much, so I decided to give her what she needs so she can get on in life...least I can do.

GILL: What about us?!

GRAM: Two grown up men like yourselves shouldn't have any problems finding work and making a life for yourselves.

BEAUFORD: You are a real piece of shit, ain't ya?

GRAM: Call me what you will.

BEAUFORD: This house is our birth right.

GRAM: Says who?

GILL: Heritage!

GRAM: Nope!

BEAUFORD: Mom owned half this house and she wouldn't allow this to happen. We're gonna take you to court!

GRAM: I own it and I have the right to do as I see fit with my property when I am deceased.

BEAUFORD grabs GRAM by the shirt and hoists him out of his chair.

BEAUFORD slams GRAM into the house door.

GILL: Beauford don't!

BEAUFORD: I'm gonna kill ya you ruthless monster! You're doing this to spite our mother! She was nothing but good to you. She tried! Her whole life she tried to keep this family straight but you were a relentless anchor that would never come up for air. You sick fuck!!

BEAUFORD lets go of GRAM.

She tolerated your drinking, your physical and verbal abuse, your cheating, your gambling...you're a disgusting human being who only sees the wrong narrative, not the least bit of truth!

GRAM: Truth! What truth?! What else do we have but to believe our own narrative? Isn't that our truth? Isn't that how we see, how we live, how we survive? I survived your mother and you two squirts the only way I could. I'm a hero. You see me, all of this, I'm what you call a champion of men because I survived the black abyss.

BEAUFORD takes off. We hear his car screech off.

GILL sits and drinks his beer.

GRAM slowly makes his way back to his rocking chair.

GILL: Don't sit. If you sit down I'm gonna to kill you.

GRAM defiantly sits.

GILL enters the house.

Enter LUELLA. She stands and remains standing outside the home's front yard fence.

GRAM begins rocking in his chair...

LUELLA: ...Hi Gram. How you doin' this fine evening?

GRAM: I'm doing fine now that you showed up.

LUELLA: Don't be silly.

GRAM: It's true. I have two worthless sons making my life a living hell.

LUELLA: That ain't good.

GRAM: But it will all be over soon anyway. I want to thank you.

LUELLA: Thank me for what?

GRAM: Oh, I want to thank you for being my friend. Can't say I ever had a friend, a real friend before, someone who could truly listen to me and just by listening, make me feel a helluva lot better about myself. Never had that till you showed up.

LUELLA: That's just about the sweetest thing anyone's ever said to me.

GRAM: It's true. Can I tell you a secret?

LUELLA nods.

GRAM (cont'd): You're just about the prettiest young lady I ever did see.

LUELLA laughs shyly.

It's true. If I were a few light years younger, I'd a married you.
Ha Ha! (he coughs)

LUELLA: That's so kind of you to say Gram.

GRAM: Can I tell you another secret?

LUELLA: Yes.

GRAM: I don't hate my sons. Sure, they're a pair of nitwits, but it was never about hating them or their mother, they were just targets for my hatred, for this mounting anger I have heaving in my chest. Truth is, I hate myself. I despise who I am as a person. I've never been able to take a step beyond myself and be the person I always imagined myself being. How do people do that? You ever wonder? Use yourself for example, you never frown, always cheerful and good natured, it boggles my mind that someone like you actually exists on this planet and yet, I couldn't come close to be in a place where you are naturally. Why is that? Why am I so unfit to be happy? It's like I have two people living inside this relic of a shell...there's the man I'd like to be and the man I actually am...I can never aspire enough to be that other guy, but damn it I know he's in there somewhere cause he won't let me breathe. Not a day goes by where he isn't shouting inside of me to be allowed to come out...I want him to, I want him to so badly Luella...if I can be strong enough, even for a minute, to say the things I really wish I could say, to, to, to speak out my feelings, the one's that get pushed so far down...maybe I can be free...what do you think?

GILL enters the porch holding a handgun.

LUELLA: I believe in you.

GRAM (to LUELLA): What's that?

GILL: It's a gun!

GILL holds up the gun and aims it at his father.

LUELLA: I said, I believe in you Gram.

GRAM: No one's ever said those words to me.

GILL: What words? I said, I got a gun!

LUELLA: Close your eyes Gram.

GRAM: I'm afraid to close my eyes.

GILL: Who the hell are you talking to?

GILL looks around erratically.

LUELLA: Close your eyes and be free.

GRAM: I'm scared.

LUELLA: There is nothing to fear.

GRAM closes his eyes.

GILL fires three shots into his father's chest.

LUELLA walks off into the night.

GILL sits back down and drinks his beer.

GILL: I told ya. Told you I was gonna kill ya. You didn't believe me? Eh? Bet you didn't believe me...

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO BLACK

END OF PLAY