

JOHN DUFRESNE

ACT 1

SCENE 1

*(Trailerville Mobile Home Park, Ouachita Parish, Louisiana. Early Saturday evening, late summer. The exterior of two aluminum-sided trailers with Christmas lights strung along the roof lines. Silver duct tape frames the windows. A row of mailboxes on a stand is downstage left; downstage right is a pay phone beneath a streetlamp. The common yard is cluttered: a child's plastic swimming pool leaning against a trailer; a swan planter with daisies; a plastic lawn gnome; a barbecue grill; a bag of briquettes; a clothesline stage right, hung with flannel shirts. Near the clothesline, a table with chairs. Bobby, late-sixties, wearing pajamas, stands holding a suitcase. He looks left and right, like maybe he's waiting for a bus. He sits on one of three lawn chairs, notices a doll on the side table between the chairs. He picks it up. Each time he pulls its string, the doll speaks.)*

DOLL: Let's play!

BOBBY: What do you have in mind?

DOLL: Hello, my name is Judy!

BOBBY: I'm Bobby.

DOLL: What's your name?

BOBBY: I told them she had honey in her mouth, but knives in her heart.

DOLL: I love you!

BOBBY: They said dead men tell no tales. I said there'd be tidal waves of fire if she were not punished. She did this to me.

TRAILERVILLE

*(Bobby points to his head.)*

DOLL: Good night!

BOBBY: You just got here.

*(Bobby's wife, Merdelle, wearing a print dress and sensible shoes, comes out of her trailer, sets two glasses of iced tea on the side table between the chairs. Bobby hides the doll under the chair.)*

MERDELLE: Bobby, you're talking alone again. People will think you don't have but one oar in the water.

*(She kisses him on top of his head, arranges his tousled hair, and sits.)*

MERDELLE: One more Saturday night together, sugar.

*(pause)*

You look so handsome, Bobby.

BOBBY: Where's my . . . contraption?

MERDELLE: Your music, you mean? Honey, you can't always hide behind your music.

*(She lifts the cool glass to her forehead and holds it there.)*

MERDELLE: Robert Mitchum. That's who you favor.

*(pause)*

All our talk this morning about remembering got me to thinking about Grammy's kitchen. Sunday morning. Grits and sorghum. The blue linoleum, worn of its color by the stove. The coal bucket by the door, the Sears catalogue I sat on to reach the table. Our buggy ride to the church. The white picket fence along the Stuarts' property, azaleas in the churchyard, the congregation singing "There Is a Fountain."

*(sings)*

E'er since by faith I saw the stream . . .

JOHN DUFRESNE

*(speaks)*

Come on, Bobby, you know this one. Sing with me.

*(sings)*

Thy flowing wounds supply. Redeeming love has been my theme. And shall be till I die.

*(speaks)*

Help me, Bobby.

*(sings)*

And shall be till I die.

*(speaks)*

Sometimes I think you're happy to disremember. Happy as a hog in new slop.

BOBBY: I want my damn machine, Merdelle.

MERDELLE: Your tape player. All right then, I'll get it if it makes you happy.

*(Merdelle exits to her trailer, taking the suitcase with her. Bobby reaches for the doll.)*

BOBBY: Good-bye, Judy.

*(Bobby walks to the mailboxes, opens one, puts the doll inside. Arlis, sixty-something, opens the door to his trailer. We hear the sound of a teletthon coming from the TV inside. The ebullient announcer asks for a tally of the money raised so far; the orchestra plays a flourish; the announcer quotes a figure in the millions; an audience applause, phones ring. Arlis shuts the door, silencing the broadcast. He wears a vintage bowling shirt and gray slacks.)*

ARLIS: Bobby, what do you know?

*(pause)*

Look kind of lost. This one of your bad days, is it?

*(Arlis leads Bobby back to the chairs.)*