

THE PASSAGE

By

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PLACE

Town House

TIME

Some time in the not too distant future

SETTING:

Single-unit set with areas for a bedroom, artist studio, second-floor porch. The studio has many pictures on the wall, mostly of sunsets.

CHARACTERS

ANGUS.....A strong-willed, outspoken artist in his 60s

SUSAN.....Angus' devoted wife, in her 60s

EILEEN.....Their high spirited, melodramatic daughter, in her 20s

NICHOLAS.....Their writer-turned-businessman prodigal son, in his 30s

FRANK.....Angus's brother, upbeat businessman./lawyer type, in his 60s

MR. MORTON.....An end-of-life specialist from the HMO, 30s

SETTING: A bedroom that has been turned into a sickroom, an artist studio and a porch.

The sickroom is dark. ANGUS, a frail man in his late 60s, is lying in a bed. Near the bed are an oxygen tank and an IV pole with bags of medicine and fluids. Angus is attached to some of these devices with wires and tubes. A shaft of light penetrates the room. SUSAN, an artsy woman in her 60s, peeks in.

SUSAN

Are you awake, dear?

Getting no response, Susan starts to shut the door.

ANGUS

Yes.

SUSAN

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you.

ANGUS

It's so dark. Oh my God. The sunset.

SUSAN

It's all right, Angus. The sunset hasn't begun yet.

ANGUS

But it's so dark.

SUSAN

The blinds are drawn.

ANGUS

They are?

SUSAN

I wouldn't have let you miss the sunset.

She raises the blinds.

ANGUS

That's better.

SUSAN

It's going to be a beautiful sunset.

ANGUS

Any problems with the party?

SUSAN

The caterers brought a lot of flowers and balloons. I don't think the balloons are appropriate. Balloons make it too much like a party.

ANGUS

Well, it is a party, of sorts.

SUSAN

I can't think of it that way.

ANGUS

Did you get the snapdragons?

SUSAN

Everywhere will be snapdragons, just like you want.

ANGUS

I don't hear any music. Where are the musicians?

SUSAN

It's too early for the musicians.

ANGUS

They should be here playing when the first person arrives.

SUSAN

They will be Angus. They will be.

ANGUS

The Passage must be done correctly. In good taste. But not dull.

SUSAN

It won't be dull.

ANGUS

(Becoming agitated)

I wish the musicians were here.

She goes to him, sits on the edge of the bed and takes his hand in hers.

SUSAN

It's going to be all right.

ANGUS

I'm sorry. I didn't think it would be like this.

SUSAN

They said this would be the hardest part.

ANGUS

I'm fine, Susan.

SUSAN

We'll be here with you.

ANGUS

I told you. I'm fine.

SUSAN

Frank and I have taken care of everything. We're doing the Passage exactly the way you wanted. I remember the first time you handed me a great big bouquet of snapdragons. Do you remember what you said?

Preoccupied, Angus doesn't respond.

SUSAN

I don't want you to make any snap decisions, but would you marry me?

ANGUS

Yeah.

SUSAN

The start of a tradition. We celebrated all the big things in our life with snapdragons.

ANGUS

What time is the man from the HMO arriving?

SUSAN

Ten o'clock, like you wanted.

ANGUS

What time is it now?

SUSAN

Almost eight.

ANGUS

I didn't realize it was so late. So, what did you want to tell me?

SUSAN

What makes you think I want to tell you something?

ANGUS

I know what you're going to do before you do it. We've been married 30 years.

SUSAN

Nicky's downstairs.

ANGUS

He's here? Already?

SUSAN

He got an earlier flight.

ANGUS

I don't want to see him.

SUSAN

Angus.

ANGUS

We'll just end up fighting. I don't want that. Not now. Not tonight.

SUSAN

He came to say good-bye.

ANGUS

He could have done that on the telephone. We live in different worlds.

SUSAN

He's your son, Angus.

ANGUS

He's been gone for five years. And how many times have we seen him? Twice. We hardly know our grandchildren.

SUSAN

He lives three thousand miles away.

ANGUS

He didn't have to choose that kind of life and move so far away.

SUSAN

Stop it, Angus. Already you're fighting with him.

ANGUS

See what I mean.

SUSAN

His restaurant is doing well.

ANGUS

That doesn't surprise me. That boy knows how to cook.

SUSAN

He's a wonderful cook.

ANGUS

Our best times were spent cooking together.

SUSAN

You two made some wonderful meals. You loved being in the kitchen together. These are the memories he should be left with. Not the fighting. Reach out to him. What he did is not so awful.

ANGUS

I know.

SUSAN

You do?

ANGUS

Lying here, waiting, you realize that a lot of the things you thought were important weren't important at all. I've been so stupid.

SUSAN

He's come all the way from California to be with you tonight. Tell Nicky that you love him.

ANGUS

I can't.

SUSAN

Why?

ANGUS

I don't know. Maybe because I'm afraid of opening a door and being overwhelmed by what comes out.

SUSAN

Open the door, Angus. For me. For you. For all of us. Angus?

ANGUS

I'll try.

She kisses him.

ANGUS

What time is it?

SUSAN

Only a few minutes later than the last time you asked me.

ANGUS

Get your ouija board.

She gets the ouija board, and they both put their hands on a heart-shaped piece of wood that moves about, touching letters written on the board.

SUSAN

None of the letters are spelling out anything that makes sense.

ANGUS

Because I'm still here. My earthly presence is washing out the faint signals trying to get through. It's like trying to listen to music in the living room when the dishwasher is on.

SUSAN

Is that what you've become -- a noisy dishwasher?

ANGUS

Don't make fun of my analogies. I take great pride in them. Maybe we can pick up a signal if we use a lighter touch. That's better.

They work the board.

SUSAN

L.

ANGUS

O.

SUSAN

V.

ANGUS

Love.

SUSAN

You made it do that.

I did not. ANGUS

The alarm in her I-Phone goes off.

What's that? ANGUS

The sunset. SUSAN

You set an alarm for the sunset?

I wasn't going to let you miss it. SUSAN

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 2

The studio, a little while later. It's dark. The sun has set and it's night now. FRANK, a fit man in his early 70s, dressed in a business suit and tie, enters.

FRANK

Susan, are you up here?

He snaps on the light.

FRANK

It's getting crazy down there. Susan?

Susan enters from the sickroom, carrying the ouija board. She collapses on a chair, exhausted.

FRANK

Is everything all right?

SUSAN

He's writing his farewell address.

FRANK

He still hasn't done that?

SUSAN

We were talking about sunsets. Can you believe that. He's trying to be so brave.

FRANK

He must be terrified.

SUSAN

I think he is.

FRANK

(Indicating the ouija board)

You two really think you'll be able to stay in contact with that thing?

SUSAN

He thinks it's possible.

FRANK

And you do, too?

SUSAN

No, of course not. But it's important to him. Were you able to get the snapdragons?

FRANK

They didn't have any.

SUSAN

God Damn it, Frank. We've got to have snapdragons.

FRANK

Susan, it's all right.

SUSAN

It's not all right.

FRANK

We've got a lot of other kinds of flowers.

SUSAN

We must have snapdragons. Some flower shop must have them. Did you call around? The Internet. Did you try the Internet? I'll do it, God damn it.

He takes her in his arms.

FRANK

You've been working around the clock. It's time to start taking care of yourself.

SUSAN

There's still so much to do.

She gets a big box of photographs and desperately searches through photographs, sticking them into an album.

FRANK

The pictures aren't important now.

SUSAN

I promised him I would do it.

FRANK

You can't do anything more for him.

SUSAN

What's happening downstairs?

FRANK

Everything has been taken care of. The facilitator from the HMO will be here soon. The memorial services should begin shortly after he is through. We were able to get the video man.

SUSAN

Balloons. Musicians. Now television. I'm not sure about this television business, Frank.

FRANK

You'll be glad you have the DVDs when this is all over. You'll need them for the nostalgia parties. Trust me. I know what I'm talking about.

SUSAN

Angus is very tense about Nicky being here. I think he wants to apologize.

FRANK

For what?

SUSAN

For not being a better father.

FRANK

Nicky should apologize. He's the one who ran off to California.

EILEEN (Off Stage)

Mother, I'm home. Are you upstairs?

SUSAN

Yes, dear, in the studio.

FRANK

Maria Callas has arrived.

EILEEN rushes in. She's a woman in her late 20s or early 30s, dressed very dramatically. Eileen goes to her mother with melodramatic emotion.

EILEEN

Oh mother, I can't believe this is happening. It's so sad.

They hug for several seconds. She sees Frank.

EILEEN

Uncle Frank. You're here. But of course you're here. Loyal, faithful Uncle Frank, who's always here when mother is in need.

She hugs him. She turns to her mother.

EILEEN

All through your life, you prepare for this day, or at least try to prepare. But all you can do is dread the phone call that says the time has come for your father's Passage.

VOICE (Off Stage)

[Calling from downstairs]

Mrs. Dewart.

SUSAN

Yes, what is it?

VOICE (Off Stage)

What plates do you want us to use?

SUSAN

I'll be right down.

EILEEN

Mother, who are those people downstairs?

SUSAN

The caterers.

EILEEN

Caterers?

SUSAN

They specialize in Passages. They know just what to do.

Susan exits.

FRANK

Your father told me about Milan. He said you're going to be studying with a famous singer.

EILEEN

Yes, Ricardo Goldberg.

FRANK

That's a joke.

EILEEN

People who know opera do not think Ricardo Goldberg is a joke.

FRANK

I thought all the famous opera singers in Milan were Italian.

EILEEN

Ricardo Goldberg is Italian. He changed his name so it would stand out.

FRANK

Your father is very proud that you won the competition.

Susan enters.

SUSAN

What difference does it make what dishes we use? I told them to use our best dishes.

FRANK

What did you and Angus finally decide to serve?

SUSAN

Roast beef, French fries and chocolate sundaes with whipped cream. Cigars and cigarettes would have been offered if they were still legal. It's your father's way of rebelling against a healthy life style that failed him.

[Seeing Eileen is close to tears]

They say this is the worst part, dear.

EILEEN

I'm doing the best I can, mother. I know I should be happy. After all, we're having a party and we're using our best plates.

FRANK

[Reproachful]

Eileen.

Eileen starts crying. Susan goes to her, but is melodramatically waved off.

SUSAN

Maybe it would be better if you freshened up a bit, before you went in to see your father. Your make-up is a little smeared from your crying.

EILEEN

Yes, of course. We wouldn't want father to think that any of this is upsetting.

Eileen exits to the bathroom.

FRANK

She's turning this into an opera. I keep expecting her to break out in an aria.

ANGUS (O.S.)

Frank. I need you.

Frank exits to the sickroom. Susan prepares a drink and takes a big swallow. NICKY appears in the doorway. He is an athletic, trim man, in his 30s, wearing a leather, bomber's jacket and pants with cargo pockets.

NICKY

Well, how did he take it? Me being here.

SUSAN

He was very touched.

NICKY

Yeah. Sure.

SUSAN

Can I get you something? A drink?

NICKY

No. I'm driving.

SUSAN

You're driving?

NICKY

(Indicating Angus' room)

A lot of people coming for this thing?

SUSAN

From all over the country.

NICKY

Everything is smaller than I remember. The street. The house. This room. I live on a mountain now, more or less. I'm used to a lot of space. It feels funny being here. A lot has changed. But not the front lawn. Still no flowers.

SUSAN

You know your father.

NICKY

Yes, I know my father. How's he doing?

SUSAN

He's doing his best.

NICKY

I didn't know he was that sick.

SUSAN

We all pretended that he was holding his own. But all our friends suspected. They never said anything, of course. We talked about everything but what was on our minds. Your father kept talking about going to California one last time, to see your restaurant. I don't know if he was saying that for me or if he really believed he would be strong enough to do it.

NICKY

I have a photograph of the restaurant.

SUSAN

Your father will love to see that.

He takes photographs from his wallet and hands one of them to Susan.

SUSAN

(Looking at the picture with shock and then disappointment)
It's a McDonald's.

NICKY

Open 24 hours a day.

SUSAN

Maybe it would be better if you didn't show your father this photograph. I wouldn't mention that your restaurant is a McDonald's.

NICKY

You want me to lie to him?

SUSAN

There's no need to tire him with a lot of details. You know how he has this thing about people who only want to make a lot of money.

NICKY

Well, he doesn't have to be ashamed of me. I'm almost as broke as he is.

SUSAN

You don't live on a mountainside?

NICKY

Yeah, I live on a mountainside -- in an old trailer.

SUSAN

How can you be broke? You have a McDonald's franchise.

NICKY

I have this knack of not making money.

SUSAN

Your father will be so proud of you.

NICKY

That'll be the day. I do have some pictures that you will like.

He hands them to her.

SUSAN

[Devouring the photographs]
Oh, my. Nicky, they're just beautiful. Jayson is looking more and more like you, and a little bit like your father.

NICKY

I think Alexandra is looking a lot like you.

SUSAN

Do you think so? She is such a darling.

Eileen enters.

EILEEN

Nicky.

NICKY

Eileen. Wow. Look at you. The glamorous prima donna.

EILEEN

And look at you. My...
(Indicating his leather clothing)
...millionaire brother?

NICKY

I'm off duty.

They hug.

EILEEN

It's so strange. Seeing you here in this house.

NICKY

It's been a long time.

EILEEN

So how have you been. And Brenda and the kids.

NICKY

We're all fine.

SUSAN

He brought photographs of Jayson and Alexandra.

She hands them to Eileen, who looks at them.

EILEEN

Yeah, I saw these. Nicky emailed them to me. And a lot others. A whole slideshow.

NICKY

See what you're missing, not owning a computer.

EILEEN

If I had a computer we'd never talk on the phone.

NICKY

We could do both.

EILEEN

When was the last time we spoke on the phone?

SUSAN

Father wasn't even happy when we got cell phones.

NICKY

I guess twitering is out of the question.

EILEEN

Can we see daddy now?

SUSAN

It would be better if you went in separately. Too much excitement is not good for him.

EILEEN

You can go first.

NICKY

You want to make a grand entrance, befitting the diva.

EILEEN

I'm just trying to be nice, Nicky.

He heads for the door to the sickroom.

NICKY

I don't think I'll be very long.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE 3

The sickroom. Angus is sitting up in bed, gamely trying to write on a yellow legal pad, as Frank waits.

ANGUS

What do you think of this?

(Reading from the legal pad)

I want to thank all of you, my very good friends and my family, for coming here tonight and attending my last supper.

FRANK

I don't think so.

ANGUS

(Turning to another page)

Friends, family, countrymen. You have come to bury Angus, not praise him.

FRANK

This is your last shot, Angus. It's not the time to be clever.

ANGUS

I don't want people to think that this is any big deal for me.

FRANK

Come on, Angus.

ANGUS

All right. I'll try to get in touch with my feelings.

(Scribbling on the pad)

My good friends. I wanted to say something clever or amusing, but I couldn't think of anything. I didn't want to be maudlin, but what the hell.

FRANK

That's better.

Angus scribbles. Frank waits.

FRANK

(Finally)

The Phillies lost last night.

ANGUS

(Still focussed on his writing)

Shouldn't have brought in a left-handed pitcher.

FRANK

The Eagles sure had one lousy season. They should get rid of the whole coaching staff.

Angus stops writing and looks at Frank.

ANGUS

You know something, Frank?

FRANK

What?

ANGUS

I don't give a damn about that stuff.

FRANK

I guess it's not very important. Under the circumstances.

ANGUS

All we ever did was talk about that stuff.

FRANK

That's not true.

ANGUS

Most of the time.

FRANK

Maybe most of the time.

ANGUS

Women find out a lot more about each other than men do.

FRANK

What's to know?

ANGUS

You're my brother and there are a lot of things I don't know about you.

FRANK

Like what?

ANGUS

Like whether you believe in an after-life. Do you?

FRANK

Why are you asking me about that now?

ANGUS

Isn't it obvious?

FRANK

I don't know if there's an after-life.

ANGUS

I'm surprised we never talked about important things like that.

FRANK

We've talked about a lot of important things.

ANGUS

There's something I've been wanting to say to you. I should have told you this a long time ago.

Frank waits. Angus is having trouble saying it.

FRANK

(Finally)

What did you want to say?

ANGUS

You're my best friend.

Frank is caught off guard by the comment. He can't handle the emotion.

FRANK

I'm your brother.

ANGUS

But this is more important. You're my best friend.

FRANK

Keep it all in the family.

ANGUS

Not many brothers can say that.

Frank is unable to avoid the building emotion any more. He realizes that Angus is scared.

FRANK

You're my best friend, too.

They hug.

ANGUS

Yeah. Remember when we discovered girls?

FRANK

You were the one who discovered them and told me about it.

ANGUS

I was a little ahead of you on that one.

Angus motions for the oxygen mask. Frank puts it over his face. Angus takes a few puffs and hands the mask back to Frank.

ANGUS

My mind keeps going back to Susan. I worry about her.

FRANK

She will be taken care of.

ANGUS

So many things I've wanted to do for that woman. So many promises. So many disappointments.

FRANK

You're doing her proud with this Passage. It's not everyone who has musicians.

ANGUS

It's going to be a good Passage.

FRANK

The best.

ANGUS

Isn't that something. The meaning of life has come to be an impressive Passage. Angus Dewart didn't amount to much in life, but he had one hell of a Passage.

FRANK

You amounted to something.

ANGUS

Eileen wanted to go to that music school in New York. But I couldn't get the money together.

FRANK

She got a scholarship to the best school in the country.

ANGUS

She did it on her own. I didn't help her.

FRANK

She's going to Milan. You made that possible for her.

ANGUS

Yeah. But look what I'm having to do to make it possible.

FRANK

It's a very good thing that you're doing.

The sound of a string quartet rehearsing Mozart offstage is heard.

ANGUS

Ah, the musicians have arrived.

FRANK

That's a nice touch. Having musicians.

ANGUS

Money was never important to me.

FRANK

Money was never important to YOU.

ANGUS

What are you saying? That it was important to Susan?

FRANK

She's your wife. You know what's important to her.

ANGUS

Money was never important to her, either.

FRANK

You're lucky she has a job with health insurance. What would you have done without that?

ANGUS

I would have survived.

FRANK

Someone had to pay the medical bills.

ANGUS

Even on my death bed my brother lectures me. All my life you've done that. All my God damn life.

FRANK

I don't want you to take this personally. But you are one hell of a stupid, stubborn son of a bitch.

ANGUS

Is that any way to talk to your best friend?

Frank doesn't respond.

FRANK

Is this any way to talk to your doomed brother.

FRANK

You're right. That's no way to talk to my best friend.

ANGUS

No one cares about art. Not in this country.

FRANK

You should have changed with the times. And marketed yourself.

ANGUS

I was an artist. Not a salesman.

FRANK

You should have painted what people wanted.

ANGUS

I said what I had to say with my paintings.

FRANK

There's more to life than sunsets.

ANGUS

I painted more than sunsets.

FRANK

People want paintings that make their homes look good.

ANGUS

Art is to be respected, not color coordinated.

FRANK

Art is to be sold. Not put on a pedestal.

ANGUS

Is that what I'm doing?

FRANK

You've always done that.

ANGUS

Maybe I should have painted pictures that sold. Or become a doctor. Or a lawyer.

FRANK

You're acting like a tourist at the end of the trip, wondering if he missed any good museums.

ANGUS

Or a dentist or investment banker.

FRANK

You're playing with me.

ANGUS

I feel sorry for you, Frank. You have no idea what it's like to create something. To see beauty where others see nothing and recreate it so now everyone sees it. It's exciting. Much more exciting than making money.

FRANK

Who needs money if you've got someone like Susan to make it for you?

ANGUS

I am very lucky to have Susan. Why didn't you ever get married?

FRANK

Maybe I would have, if I'd met another Susan.

ANGUS

You're not still mad at me because I...

FRANK

All of that is dead and buried.

ANGUS

I don't want to die thinking that you...

FRANK

We settled that a long time ago.

ANGUS

You're sure?

FRANK

Yes, damn it. I'm sure.

ANGUS

Good.

FRANK

Susan is my best friend.

ANGUS

I thought I was your best friend.

FRANK

You're both my best friend. I'm sure going to miss you, you son of a bitch.

ANGUS

I'll contact you as soon as I get there.

FRANK

You really think you can do that with that board of yours?

ANGUS

No, of course not. But Susan does. It's something she can hang on to until all of this is more of a memory.

FRANK

How's your speech going?

ANGUS

Not very well.

FRANK

Why not?

ANGUS

Because you're here gabbing. I can't concentrate.

FRANK

I'm trying to help you pass the time.

ANGUS

I don't have that much time left to pass. I should concentrate.

FRANK

I'll leave you. Remember. Don't be clever.

Frank exits. Angus resumes scribbling on the pad, stopping now and then to read what he has written and not liking it. Nicky appears in the doorway.

ANGUS

Nicky.

NICKY

Dad.

ANGUS

Your mother told me that you were here.

NICKY

I was downstairs looking at the preparations.

ANGUS

I'm glad you could make it.

NICKY

Sure.

Nicky starts to sit on the edge of the bed but thinks better of this idea and remains standing.

NICKY

How are you doing?

ANGUS

How am I doing?

NICKY

That was a dumb question. Under the circumstances.

ANGUS

I'm doing fine. Under the circumstances. You're looking well.

NICKY

I try to keep in shape. I work out a lot.

ANGUS

You never liked exercising.

NICKY

A lot of things change in five years.

ANGUS

So what are you doing to keep in shape?

NICKY

Is that important?

ANGUS

No, it's not important.

NICKY

I do a lot of rock climbing. And parachuting.

ANGUS

You used to be afraid of roller coasters.

NICKY

I used to be afraid of a lot of things. Jayson's on a pre-Little League team.

ANGUS

They've got pre-Little League now?

NICKY

They've got everything in California.

ANGUS

When I was a kid, that kind of stuff wasn't so organized. No adults. It was better that way. How's your restaurant doing? Business is good?

NICKY

We sell thousands of meals a week.

ANGUS

(With suspicion)
Is that possible?

NICKY

It's possible.

ANGUS

It must be a very big restaurant. Is it as large as Ralph's? Remember Ralph's?

NICKY

My restaurant doesn't have a second floor like Ralph's. But it has a special area for children.

ANGUS

(With even more suspicion)
A special area for children?

NICKY

Is this what you want to be talking about, dad? My restaurant?

ANGUS

I've never much cared for family restaurants.

Nicky waits.

ANGUS

Or Kosher restaurants. It's good to see you, Nicky.

Nicky nods.

ANGUS

What I want to say is...

Nicky waits, but Angus is having trouble putting it into words.

NICKY

What you want to say is what?

ANGUS

I should have talked to you about this a long time ago.

NICKY

(Finally)
OK.

ANGUS

It's good to see you.

NICKY

That's what you said.

ANGUS

Have you ever seen a sunrise?

NICKY

What?

ANGUS

Have you seen one?

NICKY

I've seen hundreds of sunrises. They can be pretty spectacular.

ANGUS

(Disappointed)
They can be?

NICKY

Haven't you ever seen a sunrise?

ANGUS

No. What do they look like?

NICKY

Is this a joke?

ANGUS

No.

NICKY

At first there's nothing. Just night. You can't even see the horizon. But then you begin to make out this glow. And then the brightness of the sun begins to peek above the edge of the earth. The sky gets brighter. If there are clouds, they get red and orange. It's magnificent.

ANGUS

Shit.

NICKY

But sunrises don't compare to sunsets.

ANGUS

They don't?

NICKY

The sunsets you've painted are much more spectacular than any of the sunrises I've seen.

ANGUS

They are?

NICKY

I far prefer a sunset over a sunrise.

ANGUS

You don't know how happy you've made me. I'm glad you're doing well, with your restaurant. It's been a long time since you've left home.

NICKY

Almost five years.

ANGUS

Almost six. I'm sorry you moved to California.

NICKY

I didn't want to be poor, dad.

ANGUS

You had so much talent as a writer. You should have stayed with it. .

NICKY

The poor struggling artist is not a romantic image for me.

ANGUS

It would have been different for you.

NICKY

We didn't have anything when I was growing up. Eileen and I had none of the things the other kids had. And they weren't even rich.

ANGUS

You never went hungry.

NICKY

We did eat well.

ANGUS

People were always coming around the studio at dinner time. You know why? Because they couldn't get better food anywhere. Anywhere, I say.

NICKY

Dad, I'm not complaining about what I didn't have as a kid. What I'm trying to do is explain why I couldn't be a writer, like you wanted me to.

ANGUS

Don't talk to me about not having anything.

NICKY

This is stupid. We're starting the fight all over again.

He goes to the window and looks out. Angus studies him, disappointed about the flare up.

ANGUS

Your mother tells me you've started writing again.

NICKY

A novel.

ANGUS

That's a big commitment. You have time to write a novel? While you're running that big restaurant of yours?

NICKY

The restaurant kind of runs itself. It felt good, getting back to writing.

ANGUS

What's the novel about?

NICKY

What all first novels are about. Growing up.

ANGUS

I hope you're including the good times we had together. You and me, in the kitchen. That's why you were able to open that restaurant of yours, because you knew how to cook.

NICKY

Dad, my opening the restaurant had nothing to do with knowing how to cook. The reason I got the restaurant is....

Angus starts struggling for air.

NICKY

What's the matter, dad?

ANGUS

I can't...

NICKY

Should I get someone?

ANGUS

My mask.

Nicky fixes the oxygen mask over his face. Angus breathes in hungrily. Angus motions that he's OK. Nicky removes the mask.

ANGUS

Every now and then I kind of get short of breath.

NICKY

Are you in a lot of pain?

ANGUS

If I am, we've wasted an awful lot of money on pain drugs.

Nicky sits on the edge of the bed, wanting to hug his father but afraid to do it.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 4

Meanwhile in the studio. Frank and Susan are alone.

SUSAN

He's been in there a long time.

FRANK

What they're doing should have happened a long time ago.

SUSAN

I will miss him so much, Frank.

FRANK

We're all going to miss him.

SUSAN

I've never been alone. I went straight from my parents to Angus.

FRANK

You're not going to be alone.

SUSAN

You're sweet. You've been such a good friend through all this.

FRANK

I hope more than a friend.

SUSAN

The last few months have been so hard. I keep wanting to feel sorry for myself. But every time I do, I think of what Angus is dealing with and I just feel guilty.

FRANK

After this is all over, you should take a trip. Change your surroundings. You could take that cruise to Alaska you've always wanted to do.

SUSAN

I've never traveled alone.

FRANK

I've always wanted to go to Alaska.

SUSAN

Angus didn't like cruises. He had this thing about the type of people he thought went on cruises.

FRANK

I like cruises.

SUSAN

This isn't the right time for a cruise. It would feel like a celebration, which is too close to the truth. I want him to die. Does that shock you?

FRANK

It's time for him to find peace.

SUSAN

Not because of him. Because of me. I'm tired of tending to him day and night. I'm tired of the machines that are helping him breathe. I hate the smell of that room. And I'm beginning to hate him for being sick and doing this to me. Angus died in pieces. One by one the disease took away the things we loved until all that was left was that bed and me helping him to the commode. A great big piece of Angus died the day we sold the sailboat because he was too weak to sail. Another big piece died when they brought in the hospital bed. I remember how he looked at the bed and said, "So this is the bed I'm going to die in." I don't want to take a trip. I just want to stay home, by myself for a while. I want to plant flowers in the front yard. Everywhere. So many times in the past weeks I've pictured myself outside there, having my morning coffee and planting the flowers before it got too hot.

FRANK

And maybe get back to writing poetry?

SUSAN

That will take a while. I wonder if our friends will start coming by again, now that Angus won't be here to depress them with his dying. I want all this to be over. But then I ask myself. Is this the right time for his Passage?

FRANK

It is well past that time.

SUSAN

He doesn't look that sick.

FRANK

He needs oxygen all the time now.

SUSAN

When he gets excited or emotional.

FRANK

He's in pain.

SUSAN

The drugs are helping him with that. He's not in that much pain. He's alert.

FRANK

That's the beauty of Passages. You do them before the pain gets that bad. Before you're struggling for each breath you take. Before the pain gets too bad. Before you lose all your dignity.

SUSAN

Before it costs too much to keep you alive. Before you become a burden to your wife and children.

FRANK

Exactly.

SUSAN

If that's the reason we're doing this now, then I don't want to do it.

FRANK

This isn't the time to be having these doubts.

SUSAN

I can't help it, Frank. Now that it's about to happen, I'm asking myself these questions. Maybe we should put it off.

FRANK

Dragging this out is not good for anyone. It's not good for you. It's not good for our family. It's not good for him.

SUSAN

That's what I keep telling myself. But am I being honest.

FRANK

Angus wants it to be over. He doesn't want any delays. He made his decision and he's sticking to it. We should support him.

Nicky enters from the sickroom.

NICKY

He was having trouble breathing.

Susan jumps up to respond but Nicky stops her.

NICKY

It's all right. I gave him oxygen and he's breathing OK now.

(To Frank)

He wants to see you.

Frank exits to the sick room.

NICKY
He's doing OK, mom.

SUSAN
Did you...
(She's afraid to go there)

NICKY
We didn't fight. Much.

Eileen enters.

EILEEN
When can I go in and see him?

SUSAN
In a few minutes. Your uncle is in there now.

EILEEN
There's not much time left.

SUSAN
You'll have plenty of time to be with him. When you go in, try to talk about positive, happy little things.

EILEEN
Happy little things?

SUSAN
Try.

EILEEN
I'll talk about my trip home and the weather. Is that happy and little enough?

SUSAN
Damn it, Eileen, just be nice. This is not one of your operas.

EILEEN
Mother.

SUSAN
I'm sorry, dear. I guess I'm a little tense.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 5

Angus is terrified. He keeps taking gulps of oxygen from the mask, but is unable to calm himself. Frank enters.

FRANK

Nick said you wanted to see me.

ANGUS

Yeah.

He takes some more oxygen from the mask.

FRANK

He said you were having trouble breathing. Can I do something?

ANGUS

I'm OK now.

FRANK

Are you sure?

ANGUS

I'm OK I tell you.

FRANK

What did you want to see me about?

Angus puts the mask down and collects himself.

ANGUS

This is just between you and me.

FRANK

Of course.

ANGUS

None of this gets back to Susan.

FRANK

It's just between you and me.

ANGUS

I don't want to go through with this.

FRANK

This is the worst part. It'll soon be over.

ANGUS

That's what I'm scared about.

FRANK

You're doing the right thing.

ANGUS

Damnit. I know it's the right thing to do. I'm doing the best I can, Frank.

FRANK

I know you are.

ANGUS

I keep picturing what's about to happen. Everyone coming in here. Me saying goodbye. Watching the doctor filling the syringe with the drug that will kill me.

FRANK

Stop torturing yourself like this.

ANGUS

I see myself going to sleep. Knowing that I will never wake up.

FRANK

It's a very peaceful process. This I can assure you.

ANGUS

You know this from personal experience?

FRANK

I Googled it when you decided to do this. I knew everyone would be asking a lot of questions.

ANGUS

You always were well organized.

FRANK

It's because you don't know what's going to happen that you create these terrifying scenes. Scenes that won't happen the way you imagine them.

ANGUS

Like what's not going to happen?

FRANK

You're not going to see the doctor filling a syringe.

ANGUS

That makes me feel a lot better.

FRANK

When you sign the legal papers...

ANGUS

What legal papers?

FRANK

The papers authorizing what's about to happen. When you sign them, the doctor will give you some pills so you won't be anxious when he comes back later. They have thought of everything.

ANGUS

What you're saying is not making me calm.

FRANK

I'm trying to be reassuring.

ANGUS

Describing in detail how someone is going to kill me is not reassuring.

FRANK

The HMO facilitators are highly trained professionals.

ANGUS

What if this facilitator is clumsy and does something stupid?

FRANK

Their clients never suffer.

ANGUS

The clients give personal testimonies afterwards?

FRANK

The first injection will put you into a deep sleep. It takes only a few seconds, not even that, and you're asleep. It's very peaceful.

ANGUS

Peaceful for the people who watch.

FRANK

And then he gives the final injection. There's no need to be afraid.

ANGUS

You're kidding me.

FRANK

Why should you be afraid?

ANGUS

Because tomorrow I'll be dead.

FRANK

You atheists think there's nothing after death. It's illogical to be afraid of nothing.

ANGUS

Think about it, Frank. What it means not to exist. Try to imagine it. Poof. You don't exist.

FRANK

I'm thinking.

ANGUS

And?

FRANK

It's no big deal.

ANGUS

Think harder. You don't exist. The past doesn't exist. The future doesn't exist. Nothing exists. Emptiness. A void. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

Frank tries hard to imagine this.

FRANK

Nope. Sorry.

ANGUS

Your imagination isn't worth a damn.

FRANK

Your imagination is the problem.

ANGUS

I'm not afraid of dying. I just don't want to be there when it happens.

FRANK

That was very good. You just make that up?

ANGUS

Woody Allen. He's always been scared of dying.

FRANK

It's religious people like me who should be scared.

ANGUS

You've got heaven.

FRANK

We've also got hell.

ANGUS

That does juice things up a bit.

FRANK

It keeps you on your toes.

ANGUS

If you're right about this after-life business, I'm hoping He isn't a vain God and doesn't hold it against me for not believing in Him. He'll know I tried to lead a good life. I wasn't perfect, but I tried. I really did try, Frank.

FRANK

You're not a very good atheist if you're thinking like this.

ANGUS

I'm just speculating. On all the possibilities.

FRANK

All right, so maybe you weren't perfect. But if perfection is the criterion for getting up there, it'll be empty. I certainly won't be there.

ANGUS

That's true.

FRANK

Susan might make it.

ANGUS

What do you mean might?

FRANK

No one can be sure about these things. Even the Pope can't be sure.

ANGUS

Especially the Pope.

FRANK

This isn't the time to be putting organized religion down.

ANGUS

Suddenly my brother is a theologian?

FRANK

I'm just trying to think this out with you.

ANGUS

I'll be leaving so many things behind. Like the sunsets. And the theater. And good food. All the people I love. And my art. I've been thinking a lot about this. I've been thinking a lot about what I'm going to lose tonight.

FRANK

I'm sure you have.

ANGUS

What harm would there be in delaying this a bit?

FRANK

The Passage?

ANGUS

A few weeks. Maybe a month or two.

FRANK

You've got to go through with this, Angus.

ANGUS

Why?

FRANK

It will only be harder if you put it off. You will have to live with the thought that you panicked at the last moment. And then have to confront these fears all over again.

ANGUS

I'm not panicking.

FRANK

All your friends are downstairs. They've come to say goodbye.

ANGUS

So I disappoint them.

FRANK

This is how people will remember you. Do you want them to remember you as someone who called off his Passage at the last moment? Someone who was more concerned about his own fears than the emotional welfare of his family and friends?

ANGUS

What emotional welfare?

FRANK

We've all worked hard to prepare ourselves for this to happen. Tonight.

ANGUS

Not as much as I have.

FRANK

You'll be asking everyone to go through the grieving process all over again.

ANGUS

Already people are grieving? I'm still here.

FRANK

But you won't be tomorrow.

ANGUS

That's what I'm trying to tell you. I want to be here tomorrow. I know it'll be hard on some of my friends. A few people will laugh at me. Maybe pity me. Think I'm selfish. A coward. But I can handle that.

FRANK

If there was a good reason to postpone your Passage, I'd be right there with you calling it off. If you were doing it because it was important to Susan or Eileen or someone else. I'd be right there with you calling it off. But being scared? That's not a good reason. Everyone is scared when the time comes.

FRANK

Delaying the Passage now would be hard on Susan.

ANGUS

She doesn't want this to happen tonight.

FRANK

She told you that?

ANGUS

No. But I can tell.

FRANK

She doesn't want to put any pressure on you.

ANGUS

You think she wants me to go ahead with the Passage?

FRANK

I know she does. This is making you very tense and she wants you to find peace.

ANGUS

A delay would help me relax.

FRANK

Not as much as going through with this would.

ANGUS

I don't want to make this any more difficult than it is for Susan.

FRANK

Then you shouldn't postpone it

ANGUS

I'll do what is best for Susan.

FRANK

I knew you'd do the right thing.

Susan enters.

SUSAN

Eileen is dying to...is eager to see you, Angus.

ANGUS

She's here?

SUSAN

She's right outside.

FRANK

I'll go get her.

Frank exits.

SUSAN

How did it go? With Nicky.

He shrugs his shoulders with disappointment.

SUSAN

You didn't tell him? That you loved him?

ANGUS

It happened again. We ended up squabbling.

SUSAN

You're running out of time.

ANGUS

I know. I know.

Eileen enters.

EILEEN

Father.

ANGUS

(Getting rid of the mask)
Eileen.

She rushes to him. They hug. She is crying but tries to hide it.

SUSAN

I'll leave you two alone.

Susan exits.

EILEEN

I came as fast as I could.

ANGUS

My, don't you look lovely.

EILEEN

I came in on the new magnetic monorail. Best super-speed, cross-country railroad in the world, they say. Your tax dollars at work.

ANGUS

Suddenly my daughter is a railroad buff?

EILEEN

It's a shame you can't get outside. The days have been beautiful.

ANGUS

Enough already with your mother's happy talk. It's all right to talk about the elephant in the room.

EILEEN

This is so awful.

ANGUS

(Not convincing)
I'm doing fine, dear.

EILEEN

You're just saying that because you don't want to worry me.

ANGUS

I've been getting a lot of support from everyone.

EILEEN

This time tomorrow you'll be dead and gone forever.

ANGUS

Thank you, dear. I almost forgot.

EILEEN

Existing only in the memories of the people who love you. Memories that will slowly fade. Unless you have a building named after you. Is there anything I can do for you?

ANGUS

I think you're doing more than enough. So, are you all packed and ready for Milan?

EILEEN

I'm not leaving for two months.

ANGUS

I wish I was going with you. I've always wanted to go to Italy, and then a short train ride to Salzburg.

The doorbell rings and the muffled sound of people being welcomed downstairs is heard.

EILEEN

Why Salzburg?

ANGUS

Mozart. For a man to make such beautiful music, there must be something special about where he grew up. Like fine wine and the soil the grapes grow in. I wanted to see for myself the soil that gave us Mozart.

EILEEN

And the Sound of Music.

ANGUS

Rodgers and Hammerstein grew up in Salzburg?

They laugh.

ANGUS

It's good to see someone around here laughing.

The doorbell rings and the sound of more people being welcomed is heard.

ANGUS

A lot of people seem to be coming to this thing.

EILEEN

I was hoping you'd be at my graduation. When mom told me about the Passage, that was my first thought. Daddy won't get to see me graduate.

ANGUS

It was that important, that I be there?

EILEEN

My fantasy was celebrating with dinner at Victor's. We were going to pay the singing waiters to do only Mozart in your honor.

ANGUS

I hate disappointing you.

EILEEN

I feel strange, talking to you like this, knowing what's going to happen tonight. It's like talking to the guest of honor at a wake.

ANGUS

What?

EILEEN

I'm sorry. That wasn't very appropriate.

ANGUS

No, that was very funny.

Angus laughs and Eileen joins in with uneasiness.

EILEEN

If there was ever a time for black humor, I guess this is it.

ANGUS

The best thing about this party is that I won't have to clean up afterwards.

EILEEN

Easy for you to say.

Momentarily stunned by what they're saying, they start laughing uncontrollably.

ANGUS

We haven't laughed so hard since my bypass operation.

EILEEN

Or my root canal.

ANGUS

So you're going to become an opera singer.

EILEEN

A famous opera singer.

ANGUS

That's the right attitude. An artist must have faith in herself. Selfish. Nothing can be more important than the art -- not money, not fame, not even family.

EILEEN

I know.

ANGUS

You do?

EILEEN

From your example. When you were painting, you never let us play music in th house. You said it distracted you. That's how we always knew when you were finished painting for the day. You'd put on opera and get a drink. And then the whole house would come alive again.

ANGUS

I was that mean?

EILEEN

Nothing was more important than art.

ANGUS

You had to grow up with none of the nice things your friends had.

EILEEN

I didn't care about that stuff.

ANGUS

It bothered your brother a lot.

EILEEN

I remember our camping trips. Sitting by the fire and listening to your scary stories.

ANGUS

I loved being out there with you. But my fondest memory is of you tucking me into bed when I was a little girl.

ANGUS

And reading stories to you?

EILEEN

No, singing. Well kind of singing. You'd hum that aria. Marriage of Figaro.

He hums some of Voi che sapete.

EILEEN

You'd sit on the edge of my bed and we'd talk about all the good things that happened during the day. I'd pick out a book and you'd read to me. Then you'd hum the aria. And I'd know that there was no more reading, no more talking. It was time for me to close my eyes. It made me feel so safe.

ANGUS

And when I thought you were asleep, I'd kiss you on the forehead, get up very quietly, and tip toe out of your room.

EILEEN

I think that's why I became an opera singer.

ANGUS

Your beautiful voice. That's why you're a singer.

EILEEN

I sang Voi che sapete for the Milan competition.

ANGUS

I know. Could there be anything more beautiful than that aria? They were going to do only Mozart at Victor's for me?

EILEEN

Everything was arranged.

They look at each other with deep love, unable to hold back their tears.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 6

The porch. Frank is with Susan. Eileen enters. She is trying hard not to cry.

EILEEN

(To Susan)
He wants to see you.

Susan exits to the sickroom. Eileen looks out from the porch, trying to hold back the tears.

FRANK

It's a lovely night.

EILEEN

Yeah.

FRANK

I've never seen so many fireflies. I remember how you used to catch them in a bottle.

She grabs for some fireflies without success.

EILEEN

Isn't suicide a sin against God?

FRANK

Since when did you start believing in God?

EILEEN

I don't mean God in the religious sense.

FRANK

The church has reclassified suicide as moral. Church leaders reasoned that since God started the dying process, suicide was a way of helping God finish the work He started.

EILEEN

I don't want to help God. I want to help my father. I want to help him fight this disease.

FRANK

He did fight it and lost.

EILEEN

We should make him comfortable and keep him alive as long as possible.

FRANK

Today he can die with dignity. Tomorrow it's not so sure.

EILEEN

It doesn't seem right that someone should decide to stop living. He doesn't have to die today.

FRANK

Then when should he die?

EILEEN

It's not for us to say.

FRANK

Then who should say?

EILEEN

It was better the old way, when death just happened to us. This is wrong. These aren't decisions we should be making.

FRANK

Don't you remember how your grandfather died. Attached to machines that kept his heart beating long after it served any purpose. It's better this way.

EILEEN

Even after his heart attack and the surgery, I thought daddy had more time than this. This isn't a good time to go to Milan.

FRANK

You owe it to your father to move on with your life.

EILEEN

Mother needs me.

FRANK

I'll be here for her. You should be thinking about the future. This is such an exciting time for you. Soon you'll be a college graduate and can pick whatever career you want.

EILEEN

I'm going to be an opera singer.

FRANK

I mean the career you're going to make a living from.

EILEEN

That's the career I'm going to make my living from. You don't think I'm good enough?

FRANK

What do I know about opera? You have a pretty voice. I didn't intend to get into a discussion about this now.

EILEEN

But you did intend to get into a discussion about it later.

FRANK

What do I know. I'm not a music lover. I'm your uncle and I want what's best for you.

EILEEN

You're not acting like an uncle. You're acting like a father. I hope that's not what you're trying to be, Uncle Frank.

FRANK

I want to be more than just an uncle. I want to be your friend.

A firefly flies by and Eileen catches it between her cupped hands.

EILEEN

Oh, dear.

She slowly opens her hands. There's nothing there.

EILEEN

Oh good. I was afraid I'd killed it.

Susan enters.

SUSAN

(To Frank)

He wants to see you, too.

They exit and Eileen tries to resume her firefly hunt but can't hold it back anymore. She starts crying openly.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 7

The sickroom. Angus is alone, breathing heavily from the oxygen mask. Frank and Susan enter. Susan goes to assist him, but Angus waves her off. He puts the oxygen mask down.

ANGUS

Eileen has become a lovely, young woman.

FRANK

You should be very proud of her.

ANGUS

She wants to celebrate her graduation with a dinner in my honor at Victor's.

SUSAN

It was going to be a surprise.

ANGUS

I feel like I'm letting her down.

SUSAN

You're not letting her down.

ANGUS

She was disappointed.

SUSAN

She understands why you can't be there.

ANGUS

She was in here, crying her heart out.

FRANK

Because you're dying, Angus. That's why she was crying. Not because you're going to miss her damn graduation party.

ANGUS

I thought it'd be better to get the Passage out of the way so she wouldn't be thinking about it. But maybe I was wrong. It's going to be harder on her than I thought. My Passage happening just before her graduation.

SUSAN

You going to her party won't make it any easier for her.

FRANK

It'll make it harder -- everyone trying to enjoy the party but knowing you were...

(Looking for the word)

...departing.

ANGUS

They were going to sing Mozart in my honor. Did you know that?

SUSAN

Yes.

ANGUS

I thought I'd be a lot sicker by the time I reached this point.

FRANK

You can hardly sit up in bed anymore, for God's sake.

ANGUS

I'm not in that much pain.

FRANK

You were in a lot of pain yesterday.

ANGUS

Victor's is a family tradition.

SUSAN

Eileen will miss you terribly. But she'll be OK.

ANGUS

I worry about her.

SUSAN

She's strong.

ANGUS

She's in pain.

SUSAN

She will be OK. We will all be OK.

ANGUS

We always used to celebrate our victories together at Victor's. Remember the party we had when your book of poetry was published. And when I got that commission for the mural. And when Eileen was accepted at Juilliard. Oh, that was a party. All the singers in Victor's toasted her. Now she's graduating and wants to continue the tradition.

SUSAN

The party is that important to you?

ANGUS

It's important to Eileen.

SUSAN

She knows that...

ANGUS

I want to be there, Susan. We're only talking about a couple of weeks.

SUSAN

All right. If that's what you want.

FRANK

(Disapproving)
Susan.

ANGUS

This is what Angus wants.

FRANK

What are we going to tell all those people downstairs?

SUSAN

We'll go ahead as planned. We just won't complete The Passage for a couple of weeks.

FRANK

You're suppose to do it during the party, before anyone leaves. That's the whole reason for a Passage. So people can be there and say goodbye when the dearly beloved departs. You can't say goodbye to someone who has no intention of departing.

Eileen appears in the doorway. They don't see her. She overhears the conversation.

SUSAN

We have no choice.

FRANK

You can't afford to do this. The drugs are costing a thousand dollars a week.

SUSAN

The insurance company is paying for that.

FRANK

The coverage ends tonight.

SUSAN

It can't.

FRANK

That's what Angus agreed to when he signed up for the life-termination plan.

EILEEN

We can pay for it.

They're surprised to see her there.

FRANK

With what, Eileen?

EILEEN

We'll find a way.

FRANK

How? By putting another mortgage on the house?

EILEEN

If we have to.

ANGUS

This isn't something Eileen has to worry about

FRANK

And then what, after your father is gone? How will your mother live?

EILEEN

I don't know.

FRANK

Well, think about it. Think about what your mother needs.

ANGUS

I said this doesn't concern Eileen.

EILEEN

We'll use my money.

FRANK

You don't have any money.

EILEEN

I have the money for Milan.

FRANK

You'd be willing to give up your career?

ANGUS

For God's sake, Frank.

EILEEN

I wouldn't be giving up my career. I'd just be giving up Milan.

FRANK

It means that much to you. A few weeks, a months or two at most?

SUSAN

This isn't the time or place to be talking about this, Frank.

EILEEN

I want to have my father with me as long as possible. I don't want you to die, daddy.

ANGUS

I know, dear.

FRANK

You went months without coming down here to see him. One whole semester you never came. Now suddenly a few extra weeks with him is so important?

EILEEN

That's how I want to use that money.

FRANK

It's not your money to use.

ANGUS

Have you gone out of your mind?

EILEEN

It's daddy's money and he's giving it to me for Milan.

FRANK

He doesn't have it to give.

EILEEN

What do you mean he doesn't have it?

FRANK

Not yet, at least.

ANGUS

No, Frank.

FRANK

The money's a bonus from Bountiful Health.

EILEEN
A bonus?

ANGUS
Damn it, Frank.

FRANK
For his euthanasia.

EILEEN
I don't understand.

FRANK
The bonus won't be paid until after his death.

EILEEN
I think I'm going to throw up.

She rushes out of the room.

ANGUS
Why the hell did you do that?

FRANK
She has to know the truth.

SUSAN
It's been decided, Frank.

FRANK
Do what you want.

He exits angrily.

ANGUS
I don't like the idea of you borrowing all that money.

SUSAN
He worries too much.

ANGUS
I should have been thinking about the medical costs. I don't want you to waste the bonus on me.

SUSAN
There'll be more than enough money. We shouldn't be arguing about this.

ANGUS
It is a big bonus.

SUSAN
We'll be fine.

ANGUS
Come here.

They hug.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

CURTAIN ACT I

ACT II

The studio. Susan and Frank are alone. Susan can see that Frank is fuming.

SUSAN

What else could I do? We can't force him.

FRANK

We can support him in his decision.

SUSAN

You think it was his decision? It was our decision.

FRANK

That's crazy.

SUSAN

We decided that a Passage was the best thing for everyone. And he agreed because he didn't want to be a burden.

FRANK

He wanted to die with dignity. Now he might not be able to.

SUSAN

He's only asking for a few more weeks.

FRANK

And when the few more weeks are over, will he find the resolve again to do this? Or will he delay it again? The HMO man warned us about this. He said hesitating at the last moment is common. That families have to pull together You know what I think, Susan? You're glad he decided to postpone it.

SUSAN

This time tomorrow, I thought it would all be over. Now I'm feeling guilty for being disappointed that it won't be. I'm so tired of dealing with death. I feel raw from it all. And you think I want to drag this out even longer?

FRANK

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that.

SUSAN

We're all doing the best we can.

FRANK

It's hard on everyone.

SUSAN

We better go downstairs and tell our guests that there has been a change in plans.

FRANK

Let's wait a bit.

SUSAN

Why?

FRANK

The doctor from the HMO will be here in an hour. Angus might feel differently after they talk.

SUSAN

I don't want Angus to be bullied into doing this.

FRANK

The facilitator is not going to bully Angus. He has a lot of experience with these things. They'll just talk things out.

SUSAN

I don't know.

FRANK

We can trust the man from the HMO.

SUSAN

All right we'll wait.

SUSAN

I'm beginning to think that putting this off might work out for the best.

(Responding to Frank's skeptical look)

It might, Frank. It really might. Angus will go downstairs and see all the people who have come from all over the country to be here tonight. And he will feel loved. He'll be able to relive the night over and over in the extra time he now has left.

FRANK

I don't think...

SUSAN

He couldn't have done that before. There wouldn't have been time.

FRANK

Oh Susan, Susan, Susan.

He takes her in his arms. Angus calls out from the sick room.

ANGUS (O. S.)

Susan. I need you.
(Waiting)
Susan.

Susan comes in, brushing back tears.

ANGUS
You're crying.

SUSAN
It's nothing. What's wrong?

ANGUS
Nothing's wrong.

SUSAN
Why did you call?

FRANK
Are you OK?

SUSAN
You frightened me.

ANGUS
I'm sorry.

SUSAN
What did you want?

ANGUS
Nothing important. I just felt like talking Did you know that we've been together almost all of our adult lives.

SUSAN
Thirty years.

ANGUS
Thirty-two years.

SUSAN
Thirty-two years. And three months.

ANGUS
Thirty-two years, three months and two days.

SUSAN

You couldn't possibly remember the exact day we met.

(Checking the calendar on her I-Phone)

It is two days.

ANGUS

(Sigh of relief)

Yes.

SUSAN

You seem to be doing better.

ANGUS

Settling this thing with Eileen's party has taken a load off of my mind. I've been thinking. Maybe we were too quick to schedule my Passage.

SUSAN

You think so?

ANGUS

When we were planning it, I thought I'd be far worse off by now.

SUSAN

You picked the date.

ANGUS

I thought it was best for everyone to get it over with.

SUSAN

You did?

ANGUS

But I'm not feeling that bad.

SUSAN

You seem to have rallied.

ANGUS

I think I could go a few more months.

SUSAN

Is this what you want to do? Go a few more months?

ANGUS

I really think I could.

SUSAN

We'll do what you want.

ANGUS

We can go one day at a time. Do it when things are really bad. We don't need a long lead time to make plans for a Passage because we will have already had it.

SUSAN

Whatever you decide.

ANGUS

Hell, there's no need to rush into things.

SUSAN

(Very upset)

No, of course not. There's no need to rush into things.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 9

Meanwhile, the porch. Eileen is looking out into the night. Nicky enters. They stand silently watching the night, without looking at each other. Nicky takes her hand.

EILEEN

Are you and daddy still fighting?

NICKY

We're both on our good behavior. He seemed happy about the restaurant. I guess all this death stuff has softened him up.

EILEEN

I've missed you, Nicky.

NICKY

I've missed you.

EILEEN

Why did you move so far away?

NICKY

I wanted to get as far away as possible.

EILEEN

From daddy?

NICKY

Yes.

EILEEN

You were always so angry when you were living here.

NICKY

It was either anger or feeling guilty all the time. Anger hurts a lot less than guilt.

EILEEN

He wanted what was best for you.

NICKY

I didn't want to starve.

EILEEN

So now you're making a lot of money. Are you happy?

NICKY

I'm an oxymoron.

EILEEN

What's that?

FRANK

An impoverished financier.

EILEEN

You didn't make a fortune?

NICKY

I wasn't cut out for the corporate world. That's why they pay you the big buck. You have to do work you hate. All the time I was gone, did he ever care what I was doing?

EILEEN

Whenever we talked about you, he got quiet and sort of went somewhere inside his head.

NICKY

Well that's something, I guess. He was always proud of you. Soon you'll be graduating. Next stop -- the Metropolitan Opera.

EILEEN

I don't know if it's going to be that easy.

NICKY

Let me hear you sing something.

EILEEN

I can't do that. Not here.

NICKY

Sure you can. Sing me your favorite aria. Whisper it, like I'm the only one in the audience.

She hums part of Voi che sapete. He claps when she finishes.

EILEEN

I really wasn't singing.

NICKY

What is it?

EILEEN

An aria from Marriage of Figaro.

NICKY

It sounded pretty good. I envy you.

EILEEN
Good Lord, why?

NICKY
You're doing what you've always wanted to do. Do you remember that cat next door and the bird calls we used to torment it?

EILEEN
Oh, yes, Mrs. Klibanoff's cat. We were terrible.

NICKY
We were wonderful.

He does a bird call.

EILEEN
You remember.

MR. MORTON, a somber looking man in his 30s or 40s, dressed in a conservative suit and carrying an attache case, appears in the doorway to the porch.

MR. MORTON
Excuse me. I was told Mrs. Dewart was up here.

EILEEN
She's with my father.

MR. MORTON
Do you mind if I wait?

EILEEN
Would you like me to get her?

MR. MORTON
I would appreciate that.

Eileen exits. Mr. Morton goes back into the studio, inspects the paintings on the wall and sits down, with his attache case on his lap. Susan enters.

SUSAN
Hello, I'm Mrs. Dewart.

MR. MORTON
I'm Mr. Morton.

SUSAN
You're here for The Passage?

MR. MORTON

Yes.

SUSAN

You're a friend of my husband?

MR. MORTON

No.

SUSAN

Then how do you know him?

MR. MORTON

I'm with Boutiful Health, your husband's HMO.

SUSAN

You're his doctor?

MR. MORTON

There are a lot of people downstairs. It looks like it's going to be a very nice Passage.

SUSAN

I guess so. I've never been to one before.

MR. MORTON

I go to three or four a week.

SUSAN

Oh, my God. You're the man who... You're here to...
(It's too distasteful to say)

MR. MORTON

I'm the facilitator.

SUSAN

You're not a doctor?

MR. MORTON

Doctors don't like to do this work. Some of our clients -- and their families -- find it disturbing that we're not doctors. But we're all very well trained in what we do. I personally feel that the preparation materials sent to families should explain who we are and what kind of training we have received, to avoid these awkward moments. But our marketing people feel that the details are not -- how do they put it -- necessary. How is Mr. Dewart doing?

SUSAN

He's scared.

MR. MORTON

I have medicine that will help him.

SUSAN

Aren't you a little early?

MR. MORTON

I don't think so.

[He checks his I-phone.]

No, it's scheduled for 10 PM. I have it right here.

SUSAN

It's only 8.

MR. MORTON

Your husband has to sign the papers at least one hour beforehand. I'm afraid it's a legal requirement.

SUSAN

I didn't know.

MR. MORTON

All this is explained in the preparation materials that we sent you. You did get them, didn't you?

SUSAN

I don't know. Yes, I guess we did. Everything has been happening so fast that I'm losing track.

MR. MORTON

The law requires that the client sign a document acknowledging and authorizing the procedure, at least one hour beforehand and then again when he is treated.

(Susan nods that she understands)

I apologize for all these technicalities, but you know politicians and how skittish they are about these things. If we were as careful about conception as we are about death -- requiring lovers to sign a paper one-hour before intercourse and then just as it's about to happen -- I suspect we could stop worrying about the over-population problem.

SUSAN

Let me go in and tell my husband that you're here.

Susan exits. Mr. Morton inspects the pictures on the wall.

EILEEN

My father painted that.

MR. MORTON

You're father is an artist?

EILEEN

My father is many things.

MR. MORTON

It's a blessing to be an artist. I think of myself as an artist.

EILEEN

You paint?

MR. MORTON

I'm an artist in my work. I take a great deal of pride in that.

EILEEN

That's nice.

Susan enters.

SUSAN

He's ready to see you, Mr. Morton.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 10

The sickroom. Angus is tensely staring at the door. Frank is waiting with him. Mr. Morton enters with Susan.

SUSAN

This is Mr. Morton.

MR. MORTON

How do you do, Mr. Dewart. I'm Mr. Morton from Bountiful Health.

ANGUS

Mister?

MR. MORTON

Yes.

ANGUS

They don't even bother to send a doctor?

FRANK

It's not necessary.

ANGUS

This is my brother, Frank.

MR. MORTON

It's a very impressive gathering downstairs. It's nice to see such an outpouring of love at times like these. And on such a beautiful day.

[Awkward silence]

If you don't mind, I would like to speak to Mr. Dewart privately, for a few minutes. It's just a formality.

SUSAN

Yes, of course.

Susan and Frank exit.

MR. MORTON

Your wife said she doesn't remember receiving the preparatory materials we sent you.

ANGUS

What preparatory materials?

MR. MORTON

I'm quite sure that we sent them. We are very careful about that. We don't want our clients or their families to be surprised by any of the things we have to do. Perhaps there was a mix-up in the post office.

(Taking two sheets of paper from his attache case -- one red and one green)

These are the two authorizations you must sign.

[He hands them to Angus who looks at them.]

I'm required to ask you this question. You are doing this of your own free will?

ANGUS

Yes.

MR. MORTON

You are not doing this for the emotional or financial benefit of others?

ANGUS

Well, you know...

MR. MORTON

Other than that.

ANGUS

No, other than that no one benefits from this.

MR. MORTON

Then everything is in order.

He hands Angus a pen.

ANGUS

I'm not ready to sign anything, Mr. Morton.

MR. MORTON

I beg your pardon.

ANGUS

Not right now.

MR. MORTON

I can't proceed unless you sign this authorization.

ANGUS

My daughter is graduating from college in a few weeks. It's very important to her that I be there. I'll sign your paper after her graduation.

MR. MORTON

No one said anything to me about this.

ANGUS

I didn't realize until today how important it is for my daughter.

MR. MORTON

This is very awkward.

ANGUS

I'm sure you can work it out.

MR. MORTON

You are quite sure that you want to cancel?

ANGUS

Not cancel. Postpone.

MR. MORTON

Then there are some things I am obliged to point out to you at this time.

ANGUS

All right.

MR. MORTON

It's not uncommon for people to postpone and later regret that they did. It's very hard to find the resolve again.

ANGUS

I said I'm quite sure of my decision, Mr. Morton.

MR. MORTON

All right, as you wish.

Mr. Morton brings out a yellow sheet of paper from his attache case and hands it to Angus.

ANGUS

I'm sorry that you had to come out like this.

MR. MORTON

If you would just sign this paper.

ANGUS

What's that?

MR. MORTON

Your acknowledgment.

ANGUS

What am I acknowledging?

MR. MORTON

Your forfeiture of the bonus.

ANGUS

I'm not forfeiting the bonus. I'm still going to do this, Mr. Morton, but not just now.

MR. MORTON

Any delay results in forfeiture. You will lose the entire...

(Consulting a document)

\$250,000 provided for in your policy.

ANGUS

I'm asking for only a few weeks.

MR. MORTON

Extensions aren't given.

ANGUS

Why not?

MR. MORTON

Isn't that obvious, Mr. Dewart?

ANGUS

This isn't right.

MR. MORTON

It was your choice, Mr. Dewart. You could have purchased policies with provisions for heroic or hospice care. But you chose euthanasia at a considerable savings in premiums with a bonus payment -- in your case \$250,000.

ANGUS

I didn't see that requirement in the policy.

MR. MORTON

It's in small type. I've suggested making that particular type larger, to avoid situations like this, but the marketing people think otherwise.

ANGUS

I'll appeal for recertification.

MR. MORTON

There is no appeal.

ANGUS

How long do I have to consider this?

MR. MORTON

The bonus is automatically and irrevocably canceled if euthanasia isn't completed tonight. Because of the client's natural tendency to hesitate at the final moment, it's really in his or her interest that we are very strict. If you should change your mind again, we would be glad to assist you in your euthanasia, but there would be no bonus.

ANGUS

I can't afford to lose that bonus.

MR. MORTON

This is a decision that only you can make.

ANGUS

I'm using the money to send my daughter to Milan, Italy, for a year.

MR. MORTON

That's very nice.

ANGUS

She's an opera singer. She'll be studying with a very famous singer. And part of the money will be for my wife. I'm not leaving them with much.

MR. MORTON

I'm sure they're counting on it.

ANGUS

The money's not for me. I mean, it's not for debts or to pay off bills for things I got.

MR. MORTON

Your intentions are very generous.

ANGUS

I don't want to disappoint them.

MR. MORTON

Perhaps you'd like to reconsider your decision. I'd be glad to wait for a few hours. Now that everything has been clarified, you can review your options and decide what's most important to you.

ANGUS

You've been pushing this very hard, Mr. Morton.

MR. MORTON

I am not pushing, Mr. Dewart. I am advising.

ANGUS

Do you get a commission?

MR. MORTON

I don't understand.

ANGUS

Do you lose money if your clients don't go through with their Passages?

MR. MORTON

I'm salaried, Mr. Dewart. My only interest at this moment is serving you. Regardless of the decision you make.

ANGUS

I didn't mean to suggest an ulterior motive.

MR. MORTON

Your daughter's party will be very expensive for you.

ANGUS

I'm not as far gone as expected I would be. I have a lot more life left than I thought I would have. I could live forever.

MR. MORTON

You will live a few weeks.

ANGUS

It could be longer.

MR. MORTON

At the very most, five more months, most of which will not be worth living.

ANGUS

Where do you get a figure like that?

Mr. Morton consults papers in his attache case..

MR. MORTON

One month ago, two ending life specialists from Bountiful Health, as required by law, independently classified your condition as terminal extremist. A terminal extremist classification is given only to subscribers whose death will occur within six months. Since your expected death was classified one month ago, you have, at most, five months to live.

ANGUS

The doctors were guessing. It's not a science.

MR. MORTON

It is very much a science, Mr. Dewart. Doctors specializing in death prediction have perfected the art into a very precise science. Regardless of what you decide today, you will be dead within five months.

ANGUS

So what difference does a delay of only a month or two make to Bountiful Health?

MR. MORTON

You are entering the most expensive phase of your treatment. Though medical science has failed badly in finding cures for diseases, it has been very successful in finding costly ways to extend the dying process. In cases such as yours, the median cost of care for the last six months of life is surpassing \$1 million dollars.

ANGUS

It's obscene to put a dollars and cents figure on the cost of life.

MR. MORTON

You mean the cost of death. Society has decided that it cannot afford to spend \$1 million dollars to extend life six months. Now you must decide if extending your life is worth \$250,000.

ANGUS

It was never spelled out that a delay would forfeit my bonus.

MR. MORTON

I'm sorry about that. I wish the marketing research people could come with us on one of our jobs and see the problems their short-sighted policies create.

ANGUS

I'm very confused. I would like a little time to think about this. If I could be alone.

MR. MORTON

Certainly.

Mr. Morton starts to collect his papers.

ANGUS

Leave them.

Mr. Morton exits. Angus is hit with another breathing spasm and puts the oxygen mask over his mouth. He breathes heavily and is finally able to calm himself. He reads the red and green papers with anxiety.

He reads the yellow paper with sadness, crumples it up
and starts to cry.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 11

The studio, where Frank, Eileen, Nicky and Susan are waiting anxiously. Mr. Morton enters from the sickroom and sits down, with his attache case on his lap. They look at him. He says nothing.

FRANK

We would have called and told you not to come, but the decision to delay the Passage was just made.

Mr. Morton nods, but says nothing.

SUSAN

We're sorry to inconvenience you.

FRANK

I suppose this happens a lot. It does happen a lot, doesn't it, Mr. Morton?

MR. MORTON

Some of my clients have had doubts. But we talk things out and ultimately everything works out for the best.

SUSAN

You're staying?

FRANK

You're not leaving?

SUSAN

I hope you're not staying for the Passage, because we're not quite sure we're going to have one under the circumstances.

FRANK

Yes. Maybe you could advise us, Mr. Morton. What is the right thing to do in situations like this? Is it proper to have a Passage if everything isn't completed that night?

MR. MORTON

I really wouldn't know. It's never happened before.

SUSAN

But you just said some of your clients have had doubts.

MR. MORTON

And I also said we talked it out and everything eventually worked out for the best.

FRANK

You are always successful in talking things out?

MR. MORTON

We are very well trained, Mr. Dewart.

SUSAN

Is that why you're not leaving?

MR. MORTON

Mr. Dewart wants me to wait here.

SUSAN

Why?

MR. MORTON

Sitting downstairs with the guests wouldn't be appropriate. And waiting in the bedroom would be intrusive, if not premature. Would you prefer that I sat outside in my car, Mrs. Dewart?

SUSAN

Why did he ask you to wait?

MR. MORTON

I think that is a question for your husband to answer.

SUSAN

All right. I'll ask him.

Susan exits to the sickroom.

EILEEN

Why is Friday the traditional day for Passages, Mr. Morton?

NICKY

[Facetiously]

So people can sleep in on Saturday if the observance should run over.

EILEEN

That's a terrible thing to say. That's not why they pick Fridays.

[She looks at Mr. Morton, who is staring ahead again.]

Is it, Mr. Morton?

MR. MORTON

Holding your Passage on Friday does take pressure off of the guests, if the ceremony gets delayed.

EILEEN

That's awful.

Mr. Morton continues his silent pose, taking care not to intrude with eye contact. Eileen studies him.

EILEEN

I assume you don't mind me asking you these questions.

MR. MORTON

I try to serve family members as well as my clients.

FRANK

(After an awkward pause)

You have been doing this a long time?

MR. MORTON

Eight years.

FRANK

Why'd you pick a job like this?

MR. MORTON

I wanted to make a difference.

FRANK

You could have been a doctor.

MR. MORTON

I couldn't tolerate the ambiguity of providing medical care. Some times doctors help their patients. Some times they hurt them. In my senior year in college, the Supreme Court made its ruling and I realized what I must do. In its wisdom, the Supreme Court created a profession with absolutely no ambiguity. When I minister to my clients, there's never any question whether the treatment will be successful. I provide definitive care.

NICKY

At least your clients never complained.

MR. MORTON

People used to suffer horribly. But euthanasia was considered murder, punishable by death. An amusing irony, don't you think? It was death's most confusing hour. Society was slow to realize that suicide was its only defense against the medical profession's obsession for prolonging the dying process. I consider it a privilege to serve the dying. Nowadays people suffer only if they're foolish and wait too long. But no one takes a chance on a painful death when a peaceful departure awaits them. That's what I offer my clients, Ms. Dewart, beautiful, peaceful departures.

EILEEN

It still seems like a very depressing job, Mr. Morton.

MR. MORTON

I find it uplifting. I don't see death as an affront to my high-technology skills, like doctors do. I don't turn away from my clients at the hour of their greatest need. You're very lucky, Ms. Dewart, to be living at a time when dying is so good. People forget what it was like before. They forget how inconvenient it was, having loved ones dying at odd hours of the night or on days when there were other pressing obligations. Nowadays euthanasia is scheduled to avoid conflicts with important personal events and religious holidays. My most enlightened clients even schedule it before special occasions, rather than hanging on and spoiling everything with everyone anticipating their death. In this modern society, only selfish people linger, taxing their family's emotional and financial resources.

Susan enters.

EILEEN

He wants to see all of us.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 12

The sickroom. Angus is sitting up in bed as everyone but Mr. Morton enter.

ANGUS

I want to tell you about the discussion I just had with Mr. Morton. He is a very thoughtful and considerate man. A true professional. And the company he works for, Bountiful Health, is a wonderful company.

EILEEN

Did you tell him you don't want to continue the Passage?

ANGUS

I certainly did. I told him that I was feeling a lot stronger than I thought I would be at this time. And I told him I wanted to attend your graduation.

EILEEN

He could see how important that was?

ANGUS

He understood perfectly. He said he would accommodate me in any way I wanted.

SUSAN

Then there are no restrictions about delaying the Passage.

ANGUS

None at all.

EILEEN

That's wonderful.

ANGUS

Organizations like Bountiful Health have only one goal in mind -- to serve their subscribers in every way.

NICKY

If everything is so wonderful, why is that creepy little guy still sitting out there, waiting?

ANGUS

I asked him to wait.

NICKY

Why?

ANGUS

Mr. Morton said some of his clients have had doubts when the time came for their Passage but then they realized that a delay would hurt everyone. That what promised to be a peaceful, perhaps even beautiful departure for the family, would become awful and ugly. I don't want that. For any of us.

EILEEN

What are you saying, daddy?

ANGUS

I want to go ahead with the Passage.

EILEEN

No.

ANGUS

It wouldn't be fair to you or your mother or Frank.

EILEEN

It doesn't matter about us.

ANGUS

And it wouldn't be fair to me. We will go ahead as planned.

EILEEN

Please, daddy.

ANGUS

Come here.

(Taking her in his arms)

This is the right thing to do. I know that now.

SUSAN

You're sure you want to go ahead?

ANGUS

I'm sure. Now, if you'll excuse me, I want to go over my farewell one last time. And if you would ask Mr. Morton to come in.

Everyone exits. Angus gets the clipboard with the green and red sheets Mr. Morton had left and reads them. He gets a pen and starts to sign the red paper as Mr. Morton enters.

MR. MORTON

No, Mr. Dewart.

ANGUS

What?

MR. MORTON

The green authorization. You must sign the green page. The red page is the final authorization signed just before the treatment.

Angus signs the green paper.

ANGUS

There. Is that it?

MR. MORTON

That's it.

(Takes a small vial of pills from his case)

Here. You should take these. They will relax you.

ANGUS

I'm not tense.

MR. MORTON

They will keep you from becoming tense.

ANGUS

I don't intend to become tense.

MR. MORTON

I'll leave the pills here by the bedside in case you should change your mind.

Mr. Morton gathers his papers, puts them in his attache case, closes it and goes to the door.

MR. MORTON

I will return in one hour. I realize that this has been very difficult. But you must take comfort in knowing that you have made the right decision.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 13

The porch. The muffled and indistinguishable sound of someone giving a speech can be heard, with intermittent clapping, cheering and laughing. Eileen is alone, looking out into the darkness. Frank rushes in.

FRANK

Ah, here you are. I was looking all over for you. Don't you want to hear your father's farewell?

EILEEN

It's too sad to be down there.

FRANK

You should be downstairs. It'll help later with the grieving process.

The sound clapping and people laughing is heard.

FRANK

You really should be downstairs with your father.

EILEEN

I can't do it.

FRANK

But you will be here later, when we say good-bye.

EILEEN

No.

FRANK

You must.

EILEEN

It's too painful.

FRANK

Too painful for you. But what about your father? He's counting on all of us being with him when he...

(Looking for a neutral word)
...goes.

EILEEN

I'm sorry, Uncle Frank. I just can't do it.

The sound of people downstairs singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" is heard.

FRANK

He's finishing. I better get down there.

Frank exits. Nicky enters.

NICKY

What's the matter.

EILEEN

You've got to be kidding.

NICKY

I have to hand it to him. It's an impressive farewell. Everyone's down there, laughing and crying at the same time.

EILEEN

Daddy was so worried he wouldn't say the right thing.

NICKY

The way people are feeling down there, he could be reading the phone book to them and they'd still cheer.

EILEEN

I'm surprised you're up here. Everyone else is down there with dad. Everyone but that little man who kills people.

EILEEN

You do have a way with words.

NICKY

He's still out there waiting.

EILEEN

We're all waiting.

NICKY

This whole business gives me the creeps. Why do we need this big party? If he wants to kill himself...

(Revising in response to her critical look)

...If he wants to depart, then he should do it and be done with it. Don't make a spectacle of it.

EILEEN

It's not right that daddy decided on his own to do this tonight.

NICKY

Who else should decide?

EILEEN

The family. We should have discussed it and then agree, like we always did with major decisions.

NICKY

Like purchasing major appliances? I never thought of him as a refrigerator or TV set. But it's an interesting concept.

Susan and Frank enter, helping Angus. They take him to the bed.

ANGUS

It didn't sound too maudlin, did it?

SUSAN

I think everyone was very taken by what you said.

ANGUS

There were so much more that I wanted to say. I had it all in my mind, but the words weren't there.

(Trying to catch his breath)

Oh, those stairs.

(Settling himself in bed)

Did you take care of the musicians? Did you tell them what they had to do now?

SUSAN

It's been taken care of. There's nothing more to do. The time that's left is for you.

ANGUS

Yes.

FRANK

Should I ask everyone to come in?

ANGUS

What is this? Again you're in a hurry? All night long you've been pushing me to get this over with. You've got another engagement?

FRANK

I just thought...

ANGUS

I was making a joke. There's still time to make jokes, isn't there?

FRANK

You have all the time you want. I'll go downstairs and tell our guests that it will be a while.

Frank exits.

ANGUS

I think Frank was impressed with the turnout, don't you? For some reason, this goddamn thing was very important to him.

SUSAN

I think he was very impressed.

ANGUS

One month from tomorrow, after all this crazy Passage business dies down, take the ouija board outside and sit under the big tree. I'll come to you at 8. No. Up there time might not even exist. The sunset. That will be our clock. Sit under the big tree and start working the board as the sun is setting. That's when I will come to you.

SUSAN

Why not at sunrise?

ANGUS

Why sunrise?

SUSAN

We'll be beginning something new. And that's what sunrises are all about.

ANGUS

We'll meet under the tree at sunrise.

SUSAN

Then you can tell me what it's like up there. I've always wanted to know.

ANGUS

I might not be allowed to reveal that. Security. Besides, I'll want to talk about us, reminiscing about all the good times we have shared.

SUSAN

So many good times.

ANGUS

Remember. One month from tomorrow, under the big tree. At sunrise.

SUSAN

Just as the light is filling the eastern sky.

They hug for several seconds.

ANGUS

Would you ask NicFky to come in?

She exits. Nicky enters. He sits down on the end of the bed and waits for his father to speak.

ANGUS

Hi.

NICKY

It was a good farewell speech.

ANGUS

I want to tell you something.
(Still has trouble finding the words)

Nicky waits.

ANGUS

(Finally)
What I wanted to say...is that....
(He can't say it)

NICKY

Yes.

ANGUS

I'm glad you came.

NICKY

I'm glad I came, too, dad.

ANGUS

Frank and your mother did a nice job with The Passage.

NICKY

Yes.

ANGUS

Frank thinks it's important...

NICKY

Dad, I have a confession.

ANGUS

A confession?

NICKY

Not really a confession. A clarification. About my restaurant. It's not the type of restaurant you're thinking of. It's a McDonald's.

ANGUS

I know.

NICKY

You knew it was a McDonald's?

ANGUS

Or Wendy's.

NICKY

Mom told you.

ANGUS

You told me. When you said you sold thousands of meals a week.

NICKY

You knew all this time?

They laugh.

ANGUS

My mouth is dry from all this talking. Could you get me some water.

NICKY

Sure, dad.

He turns away to get the water.

ANGUS

(Mumbling)
I love you.

NICKY

What did you say?

He doesn't respond.

NICKY

Did you say something?

Her turns to look at his father, who is looking at him.

ANGUS
I love you.

NICKY
You do?

ANGUS
I'm sorry for all those wasted years.

NICKY
I'm sorry I couldn't be the person you wanted me to be.

ANGUS
Just being my son should have been enough.

Nicky is close to tears. Angus is fighting to keep from crying.

NICKY
I love you, too.

ANGUS
Well, I guess we should get everyone in here.

NICKY
Sure.

Nicky starts to leave, but comes back. Angus reaches out with one hand. Nicky takes it and holds it tight. Nicky exits. Angus reaches for his oxygen mask, takes a couple of deep breaths and throws the mask away with contempt. He can't hold it back anymore and starts to cry. Susan enters and sees he is crying. He gets control of himself. Frank and Nicky enter.

ANGUS
It was a hell of a send-off, Frank.

FRANK
The best.

ANGUS
I want you to handle all of my Passages from now on.

FRANK
They loved your farewell speech.

Angus opens his arms and Frank bends into his embrace. He hugs Nicky. He hugs Susan.

ANGUS

Where's Eileen?

No one answers.

ANGUS

It's OK. We've already said our good-byes. OK, let's get on with this. We're already behind schedule.

(Responding to critical looks from everyone)

I was only joking. There's still time to make jokes, isn't there?

Mr. Morton appears in the doorway.

MR. MORTON

Are you ready, Mr. Dewart?

ANGUS

I'm ready.

Mr. Morton hands the red authorization form to Angus, who signs without reading it. Mr. Morton takes the paper back, signs it, puts it in a folder, which he puts in his attache case. He disconnects the many lines coming from Angus' body. Off stage is heard the music from the Marriage of Figaro. Mr. Morton goes to the head of the bed, where Angus can't see, and brings out a syringe from his attache case. He starts filling it. Eileen enters. She is crying, but finally gets control of herself. She softly starts singing *Voi che sapete*. Angus is surprised. He looks at her and smiles. Mr. Morton sticks the needle of the syringe into the IV line and prepares to press the plunger.

Lights slowly fade on the tableau of Angus and his family gathered around him. The aria continues in total darkness. Then silence.

CURTAIN

END OF PLAY