

ONE MORE CHANCE LORD

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"A PLAY IN ONE ACT"

"by"

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## Cast of Characters

<u>David Maske a.k.a. Old Man:</u>	Elderly bitter man
<u>Mr. Grace:</u>	Defense Attorney
<u>Mr. Malice:</u>	The Prosecuting Attorney
<u>Percy Cution:</u>	The Judge
<u>The Old Wrecking Crew:</u>	Neighborhood gossiping committee
Sister Mary	
Sister Betty	
Sister Lee	
<u>Selfishness:</u>	Witnesses #1
<u>Arrogance:</u>	Witnesses #2
<u>Stubbornness</u>	Witnesses #3
<u>Ms. Ford:</u>	Block Captain
<u>Jessie:</u>	Neighbor
<u>Johnny:</u>	Neighbor
<u>Kaelem:</u>	Neighbor
<u>Antonio:</u>	son
<u>Jahmar:</u>	Son
<u>Kellen:</u>	Son
<u>Aunt Ruby:</u>	

### Scene

The scenes take in place on 1923 69<sup>th</sup> street, Brimstone County Courthouse and then the hospital room.

### Time

The time is the present.

ACT IScene 1

SETTING:

Red and white stage lights hit center stage and rest upon the table covered with a white linen table cloth. Red linen placemats and napkins along with silver champagne flutes, wine and water goblets accent the table. A crystal vase houses red and white carnations. Two cherry wood chairs are tucked neatly under the table.

AT THE RISE:

MR. MALICE, wearing a red sweat suit enters stage left, and MR. GRACE, wearing a white sweat suit, enters stage right. As they take their seats, Mr. Malice gestures for the waiter. The formally dressed waiter brings a pitcher of spring water to fill the water goblets and champagne for the flutes. Mr. Malice and Mr. Grace toast.

MR. MALICE

(wiping his brow with towel)

You know Grace, one day you may actually beat me either on the track or in the courtroom.

(pumps up sneaker, smirks  
then chuckles arrogantly)

I love luring you into the that false sense of winning then watching you wallow in defeat.

(clenches fists towards  
the sky)

MR. GRACE  
(laughing while stretching)  
One day you're going down, my brother.

MR. MALICE  
(inquisitively)  
Have you seen the trial docket today?

MR. GRACE  
(sips quickly then places  
flute on table)  
Yes, the David Maske case.

MR. MALICE  
After reviewing his life tapes, we may need to build a new  
level in Hell.

MR. GRACE  
(assuredly)  
We'll all burn together no matter what level we occupy now.  
But I think I can get him sentenced to level 5 until  
Judgment.

MR. MALICE:  
(surprised)  
Are you reviewing the same case I am? This was a nasty,  
arrogant, angry individual. His words and actions were more  
fatal than a bullet.

MR. GRACE  
But he never physically killed anyone.

MR. MALICE  
(gets up and places hand  
on GRACE'S shoulders)  
He did worse. He murdered people's souls, hopes and dreams.

MR. GRACE  
(strongly)  
If he was shown more love he would've exhibited more love.

MR. MALICE  
(passionately)  
You've got to allow people in to love and be loved.

MR. GRACE

(pounds fist into open  
hand)

I truly believe he can be reached. I know he can be changed.

MR. MALICE

(exasperated, walks towards  
center stage and the audience)

When will you learn? Mankind is only getting worse.

(walks to stage left places  
hands in a praying manner)

And they only respect God if He's doing something for them.  
Any other time the worship alcohol, gluttony, sex, and their  
other vices.

MR. GRACE

(walks stage left and  
faces MALICE)

But just suppose, *just suppose* he could change? He would be  
a living testimony for God.

MR. MALICE

Jesus Christ Himself was here in the flesh, and they still  
didn't listen.

MR. GRACE

He's the one. He represents change. I can feel in my bones.

MR. MALICE

(walks back and drinks  
from flute)

You won't get any brownie points if you get him off. We're  
already condemned.

MR. GRACE

(joins Malice center stage)

I don't want any brownie points. And of course we'll wager  
our customary 30 pieces of silver.

MR. MALICE

(shakes head the walks  
stage left)

Of all the cases, why this one?

MR. GRACE

(arrogantly, walks stage  
left to Malice)

Wait a minute? Are you turning chicken? Two biscuits and  
some fries and you'd be a chicken dinner.

MR. MALICE

(laughing loudly)

You've already lost over 18000 pieces of silver to me over  
the centuries.

(pauses, shows concern)

Besides, you've already made 4 attempts. If you lose the 5<sup>th</sup>,  
Satan will require your soul immediately.

MR. GRACE

(imitates a chicken and  
begins to cluck across the stage)

Chicken.

MR. MALICE

(pleading)

I'm going to miss you my friend. Throw in steak dinner and  
you've got a deal.

(They stand, shake hands  
and exit)

(FADE TO BLACK)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT ISCENE 2

SETTING: On the block of MR. MASKE showing frontal views of row homes 1917, 1919 and 1921. MR. MASKE resides at 1923. He has a small garden beneath his window. The living room of MR. MASKE'S home can be viewed by the audience. There's an entertainment center, grandfather clock, sofa, rocking chair and fan. MR. MASKE is currently sleeping.

AT THE RISE: MS. FORD, the block captain, is going door to door checking on the elderly to make sure they're keeping cool because of the extreme heat. She visits the more pleasant and cooperative folks before visiting MR. MASKE.

MS. FORD  
(knocking on 1917)  
Hello. Hello. Jessie? Are you home?  
(knocks again)

JESSIE  
(opening the door)  
Hey there Ms. Ford. What can I do for you?

MS. FORD  
I just want to make sure you're keep cool.

JESSIE  
My fan is a working fine. It's sure kind of you to check up on us old folks. You're like the guardian angel of the ghetto.

(comes out on steps)

MS. FORD

(wipes forehead with a  
handkerchief)

Well we don't want to be making any 911 calls, do we.

JOHNNIE

(peeks out window from  
next door, comes out  
licking his lips)

Huh, my temperature just shot up twenty degrees. Them long  
legs remind me of a straw in a tall glass and I'm just  
fumbling around trying to get my lips on it.

(smacks lips)

JESSIE

Sit your old ass down before you need an oxygen mask.

JOHNNIE

Girl, if I was ten years younger I'd give you a run for  
your money.

JESSIE

If you were ten years younger you would've run in the first  
Olympics. Them lions would've had dark meat that day.

(mimics a growling lion)

MS. FORD

(playfully)

Now Jessie, you know I don't pay Johnnie no never mind. Has  
anyone seen Ms. Hazel?

JOHNNIE

Hazel went South yesterday to see her people. And I checked  
on KAELEM a few minutes ago cause his Daddy at work.

MS. FORD

(hands on hips)

That's great. Has anyone seen old evil ass?

JESSIE

No, I can't say I have.

MS. FORD

Do you mind knocking on his door? He's the nastiest person  
I ever met.

JOHNNIE

(lustfully)

Well if you me give a little taste of that...

MS. FORD

You old dog. I'll do it myself.

(Knock, Knock, Knock)

Mr. Maske, I know you're in there. I can hear the radio.  
Will you please come to the door?

(Inside MR. MASKE's house)

Radio DJ

Here's the #1 Smooth tune in country, *My Darling Teegsa*  
(song plays in the  
background)

MR. MASKE

(dreaming he's on a  
date with Lena Horne)

Ahh Lena baby, you know you knock to my knees.  
(chuckles lightly)

Such beautiful eyes and lips. And way that dress hugs your  
body.

(rubs his chest in  
circular motion)

Harry Belafonte' ain't got a damn thang on me. Yeah, he's  
tall, good lookin' and rich. But I'm tall too.

(puckers lips)

But once you taste of...

(The knocking interrupts  
the dream)

MR. MASKE

(awakens, mumbles to himself)

Who the hell is disturbing me and Lena? Just when we were  
getting ready to...

(gets out of rocking chair  
and peers out peek whole)

MS. FORD

(screaming and banging  
on the door)

Mr. Maske, are you in there? Are you alright?  
(Mr. Maske opens the door then  
takes a deep breath)

MR. MASKE

(calmly at first)

Is there a fire?

(Ms. Ford tries to respond  
but MR. MASKE interrupts)

Did the Eagles Win the Super Bowl?

(voice raises a few decibels)

Did we run out of chicken?

MS. FORD

(puzzled)

No, I just wanted to..

MR. MASKE

(boiling)

Then why the hell are you knocking on my door like you  
crazy? You crazy?

MS. FORD

(losing patience, places  
hands on her hips)

Look, I was just wanted to make sure you were all right.  
It's hot and I was concerned that...

(interrupted)

MR. MASKE

(aggravated)

Didn't you ask me the same damn question last year? Yes,  
it's working. Anything else, Sherlock?

MS. FORD

(perplexed)

Why am I even talking to you. You gonna make me lose the  
last little bit of religion I have.

(mumbling as she walks away)

MR. MASKE

(frustrated from encounter)

Get on my damn nerves. Whew, it's sure hot out here.

(wipes brow)

I'd still be cool if that fool hadn't knocked on my door.

(walks down the steps  
into garden with pride)

Looks like my tomatoes and string beans are ready to be  
picked. Them damn birds keep eating my strawberries. Let me  
go get a basket.

(walks towards the steps,  
Kaelem comes outside)

MR. MASKE

Kaelem, ask your Daddy if you can go to the store for me.

KAELEM

(pulling a piece of candy  
out of his pocket)

As soon as he gets home in about ten minutes. Can I ask you  
a question?

(sits on steps)

MR. MASKE

(curiously)

Go ahead, Kaelem. You've always been respectful to me.

KAELEM

(nervously)

My parents say you have relatives but then never come  
around. I could play with your grandchildren.

MR. MASKE

(pats Kaelem on the head)

Your parents should be minding their own damn business.  
Yes, I have relatives but I don't speak to them.

KAELEM

Why not?

MR. MASKE

(sits next to KAELEM)

They've done things I can't forgive them for. Besides,  
they're jealous that I've got money, property, stocks and  
bonds.

KAELEM

(pulls out a yoyo and  
plays)

So I'll never play with your grandkids. Don't you ever get  
lonely?

MR. MASKE

(turns away and starts walking  
up the steps angrily)

I don't need nobody.

(grabs his heart, falls,  
hitting his head on the steps.  
Kaelem's Dad enters)

KAELEM

(scared)

Daddy, Mr. Maske just fell and hit his head.

DADDY

(calmly)

Don't worry son, he'll be fine. The doctors will take very  
good care of him.

(pulls out cell phone)

Hello, 911? Our neighbor fell and hit his head. He's  
unconscious but breathing.

911

(off stage)

Don't attempt to move him. What's your address?

DADDY

1923 69<sup>TH</sup> avenue.

911

(off stage)

There's an ambulance in route, Sir.

KAELEM

(sadly walks over to DADDY)

Daddy, is he going to be okay?

DADDY

(encouraging, hugs son)

Sure he will. He'll be back home fussing at everyone in no  
time.

(The OLD WRECKING CREW appears.  
There are sirens in the distance.  
MR. MASKE'S unconscious but can  
hear)

MS. FORD

(curiously)

Does anyone know how to contact his relatives?

SISTER MARY

He stopped them from coming around.

SISTER LEE

(disgusted)

He talked to those kids badly. They probably wouldn't come if you did call.

SISTER BETTY

He fell for messing with GOD'S children's.

SISTERS BETTY/MARY

(joyfully and raising  
their arms towards heaven)

Hallelujah. Amen. Preach God's message.

SISTER MARY

(scornfully, both hands

Why the fool got on a shirt and tie in 99-degree weather anyway? It ain't like he ever go anywhere.

(peering at the unattended  
garden, SISTER BETTY taps  
SISTER LEE)

SISTER BETTY

Didn't you ask him for some vegetables and he wouldn't even give you one, lousy tomato?

SISTER LEE

(angrily)

Sho wouldn't. Told me to get some food stamps and go buy my own.

SISTER BETTY

(jokingly)

He damn sure won't need 'em where he's a going.

SISTER MARY

Unless he's gonna have some fried green tomatoes.

(They laugh)

SISTER BETTY

(animated)

All I know is the Lord moves in mysterious ways. We all needed some vegetables, and the Lord provided them.

SISTER MARY

(rejoicing)

Praise the Lord.

SISTER LEE

Amen. Amen.

(they raid his garden)

MR. MASKE

(offstage)

Hey, get away from my garden. Wait 'til I

(frightened)

Oh no. I can't move. Am I dead? If I am I'm gonna haunt the hell out of those evil witches.

(The siren gets louder and louder)

(FADE TO BLACK)

(END OF SCENE)



MR. MASKE (CONT'D)

With all the murderers, thieves, terrorists, and politicians in the world...I'm on trial? .

MR. GRACE

(lecturing)

A sin is a sin.

MR. MASKE

(confused)

Whose side are you on?

MR. GRACE

(non chalantly)

You were next in line to be defended. This is strictly business, nothing personal.

MR. MASKE

(angrily)

This has got to be a nightmare. I'm on my way to the hospital. Somebody please pinch me.

(pinches self)

Ouch.

MR. GRACE

(facing MR. MASKE)

This is the real deal.

(pulls papers out of briefcase)

This trial will decide where you'll spend your time until judgement Day.

BAILIFF

(loud, baritone voice)

All rise, court is now in session.

MR. MASKE

(curiously)

Levels? I didn't realize there was a pit stop.

BAILIFF

(forcefully)

I said order in the court. Now entering the Honorable JUDGE PERCY CUTION

(The judge enters, does split and then camel walks to his seat)

BAILIFF

Please be seated. Judge, this is case 13,245,457,326 and a half, Hell versus David Maske.

JUDGE

Please be seated. I see he was summoned via heart attack.

MR. MASKE

I thought I just fainted.  
(interrupted)

JUDGE

(irritated)

Order in the court. Mr. Maske, tell your client how I roll. Poppa don't take no mess.

BALIFF

You tellem Judge.

JUDGE

This seems to be an airtight, open and shut case. We should be outta here way before lunch. Is the stenographer ready?

STENOGRAPHER

Yes, sir.

JUDGE

One moment please.

(pulls out cell phone  
and dials)

Chart House...It's Judge Percy. Move my reservation up to 1 o'clock.

(hangs cell up phone)

I'd like to hear the opening statements. Mr. Malice.

MR. MALICE

(confidently strolls across  
the floor and back)

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, we have here before us one Mr. David Maske. He's spent a lifetime worshipping himself and hating everyone else.

(winks at female juror,  
jesters her to call him)  
He was a selfish, bitter, nasty old mother..

JURY  
(simultaneously)  
Shut yo mouth.

MR. MALICE  
(places shoe on banister  
and shines tip)  
Once we present the evidence, I'm sure you'll sentence him  
to Level 7, the maximum.  
(walks to his seat, pops  
collar and sits down)

JUDGE  
Mr. Grace, may we have your opening statement please?

MR. GRACE  
(humbly, facing the  
audience)  
Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. You've all lived above  
ground. Following the Commandments isn't easy. Hell,  
that's why we're all here.

JURY BOX  
  
Amen.

MR. GRACE  
I'm hoping after hearing this case, you'll show mercy on  
the defendant. Thank you very much.

MR. MASKE  
(shocked and appalled,  
leans back then places face  
in hands)  
That weak ass plea is going save me? You sure you're not  
the assistant prosecutor.

MR. GRACE  
(flustered)  
Shut up and listen. I know you've never done that before.  
Here, you are not assigned another lawyer. If I walk,  
you're done. Have I made myself clear?

MR. MASKE  
(angry and dejected)  
Yes, I understand.

JUDGE

Okay gentlemen, let the games began. Mr. Malice, proceed.

MR. MALICE

(in the center of the  
courtroom)

Your Honor, can the three witnesses be escorted into the  
courtroom?

JUDGE

Bailiff.

(The BAILIFF goes through the  
doors and comes back with the  
hooded witnesses. Mumbling  
and unrest fill the courtroom.  
They sit behind the Prosecutor's  
table and the bailiff)

MR. MALICE

(animated)

Your Honor, Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury; These next  
three individuals have tumble individuals and entire  
empires. Yet they have no power unless we give it to them.

(pulls gun out of his  
briefcase)

Just like this gun. Unless you pick it up and pull the  
trigger, it's harmless. I'd first like to call SELFISHNESS  
to the stand.

(SELFISHNESS stares MR. MASKE  
directly in the eyes)

SELFISHNESS

(laughing hysterically)

Dave, what's happening? I'm surprised it took you this long  
to get here.

MR. MASKE

(perplexed)

What's he talking about? He told me I could do whatever I  
wanted without answering to anyone.

(interrupted)

JUDGE

Mr. Grace, last warning. One more interruption and I'll be  
teeing off at the golf course.

MR. GRACE

(humbly)

Yes, your Honor.

(angrily turns to MR. MASKE)

One more outburst and you're on your own, sucker.

MR. MALICE

(inquisitively)

Selfishness, how are you acquainted with the defendant?

SELFISHNESS

(ponders a moment)

He was a liar and a thief at a very early age. He got what he wanted by any means necessary. He didn't give a damn if the rest of the family went without.

(SELFISHNESS begins to laugh  
in a loud and haunting manner)

MR. MALICE

(smugly)

Can you give us an clear-cut example?

SELFISHNESS

Yes, on a few occasions he stole the family's grocery and bill money. He watched his parents tear the house a part and never uttered a word.

Mr. MALICE

Anything else you can give us?

SELFISHNESS

(cheerfully)

The drug addiction was his ultimate act of selfishness.

MR. MASKE

What you mean?

SELFISHNESS

He wouldn't pay the rent, show for his children's birthday parties, school events, buy groceries, clothing and even took back class trip money. He even sold the kid's Christmas gifts on Christmas Eve, Your Honor.

MR. MASKE

(faking being in shock)

Hold on, wait a minute. He sold the kids Christmas gifts on Christmas Eve?

(pulls out handkerchief and fakes wiping tears from his eyes)

SELFISHNESS

And this was right after helping wrap them earlier.

MR. MASKE

Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

SELFISHNESS

No, I rest my case.

JUDGE

(with an attitude)

Excuse me, I rest the cases 'round here boy. You'd better check yourself, bro. Mr. Malice, anything else for this witness?

MR. MALICE

(very nonchalant)

No Your Honor. Mr. Grace, you may cross-examine the witness.

MR. GRACE

(solemnly)

Not at this time, Your Honor. But I would like to reserve the right to recall the witness at a later time.

JUDGE

Very well. You may step down.

(strolls back over to the bench)

MR. MASKE

(heated, grabs Mr. Grace's hand.)

You're not going to say anything? The only drugs I'm using now are Viagra, hemorrhoid cream and my glaucoma medicine.

(pulls joint out of pocket)

Got a light?

MR. GRACE

(restrained)

Put that away, fool.

(knocks joint out of hand,  
(MR. MASKE tries to retrieve  
it.)

MR. MASKE

(finds joint on the floor,  
stands and smiles)

This is the good shi..

JUDGE

(authoritatively)

Bailiff, please confiscate the contraband. Court is in  
recess for three minutes.

(JUDGE PERCY judge bangs his  
gavel. BALIFF follows him  
to his chambers. Most of the  
courtroom audience stand and  
stretch their limbs. A few light  
cigarettes while others discuss  
the case. MR. GRACE confers  
with MR. MASKE.)

MR. MASKE

(frightened and panicked)

I didn't know, I mean...

(interrupted)

MR. MALICE

(unsympathetic)

Oh, you knew. At the time, you were willing to pay any  
price to do what you wanted to.

MR. MASKE

I never looked at it liked that.

MR. GRACE

There's no other way to see it.

(BALIFF reenters the courtroom  
followed by JUDGE PERCY)

BAILIFF

(loudly)

Order in the court. Order in the Court.

JUDGE

(animated)

Bailiff, where's my liquid refreshment?

BALIFF

I'm sorry, Your Honor. I'll send for that pitcher of water .

JUDGE

(with an attitude)

Make it Gin and Juice.

(a staffer bring the drink

and JUDGE PERCY takes a sip)

Now that's what I'm talkin' 'bout. Mr. Malice, you may call your next witness to the stand.

MR. MALICE

(proudly)

I would now like to call Arrogance to the stand.

(ARROGANCE walks over to

the stand. His nose is

slightly raised as he scans

the jurors)

Are you comfortable sir?

ARROGANCE

(snobbishly)

As comfortable as I can be for these horrific conditions.

I'm usually in the South of France this time of the year,

you know.

MR. MALICE

(investigative)

What's your association with Mr. Maske?

ARROGANCE

(pulls out cigarette holder,

places cigarette and lights)

I convinced him that everyone was beneath him. And that he was smarter and better than anyone, including his parents.

MR. MALICE

Anything else?

ARROGANCE

No one else's opinion mattered or was relevant. It was his way or the hell with you.

MR. MALICE

How did this affect his relationships over the years?

ARROGANCE

(hysterical)

Relationships?

(plucks ash from cigarette  
and grinds into the floor)

He was too in love with himself to have meaningful relationships. He kept everyone at arm's distance.

MR. MASKE

(confidently walks over  
to the jurors)

Is there anything else you'd like add before leaving the stand?

ARROGANCE

(a smirk, then chuckles)

Yes, You're wasting my time. He's guilty.

MR. MALICE

(still laughing)

Mr. Grace, would may cross examine the witness.

MR. GRACE.

No your honor. But I would like to...

(interrupted)

JUDGE

(mockingly)

Yeah, yeah, we know. I'm *sho* glad you ain't my damn lawyer. Mr. Malice, your next witness please.

MR. MALICE

I would like to call Stubbornness to the stand.

(STUBBORNESS strolls slowly  
to the stand.)

(casually)

Stubbornness, tell us about Mr. Maske.

STUBBORNESS

(bitterly)

He's pig headed, never wrong and never apologizes for anything.

MR. MALICE

Please continue...

STUBBORNESS

(sits up in the box)

Once his mind was made up, you couldn't change it. Even if he knows he's wrong, he'll never admit it. He wouldn't give you the satisfaction.

MR. MALICE

Anything else?

STUBBORNESS

He's still angry at his siblings for things that happened during their childhood. He can't even recall the events. But he won't let it go.

(MR. MALICE sits and begins  
to write notes)

Mr. Grace, you may cross-examine the witness.

MR. GRACE

No questions at this time. But I reserve the right...

JUDGE

What kind of defense attorney are you? Let's take a brief recess then have closing arguments.

(The stage darkens and  
the lights on MR. GRACE  
and MR. MASKE)

MR. MASKE

(sad and dejected, gets up and  
walks towards the audience)

I never thought it'd be like this. I thought I'd get to  
clean up my act before this happened.

MR. GRACE

(with certainty)

There's no two minute warning so you can repent. No one  
knows the minute you'll be summoned by God.

MR. MASKE

(frightened, grabs Mr. Grace)

What can I do? How can I get out of this?

MR. GRACE

You're at the mercy of the court.

BAILIFF

(lights come back on)

All rise. Court is back in session

JUDGE

We'll now hear the closing arguments. Mr. Malice, do your  
thang.

MR. MALICE

(stands next to the stenographer,  
then walks towards to jurors)

Thank you, Your Honor. Ladies and Gentlemen. This case  
doesn't require a lot of deliberation.

(judge, jurors and audience  
look at their watches)

He was a nasty, cantankerous, evil and obnoxious man who  
spewed his venom on everyone. He had no compassion and  
showed no love to anyone. He assassinated peoples hopes and  
dreams. He was a serpent under a rock waiting to strike  
anyone how came into his reach. Banish him to L7, where he  
belongs, until Judgement day. I rest my case.

(MR. MALICE slowly walks to  
his seat. The audience becomes  
restless.)

BAILIFF

Order in the court. Everyone sit down and please be quiet until the trial is over.

JUDGE

Mr. Grace, may we have your closing argument? You do have one, correct?

MR. GRACE

(approaches the bench)

Yes, Your Honor. The defendant acknowledges the part he played in his spiral to hell. He admits to all the harm he's caused on everyone throughout his lifetime. He's not throwing himself on the mercy of the court nor asking for a retrial. He's truly sorry and accepts full responsibility.

(spins around faces JUDGE PERCY)

He's only asking for mercy for his sons when their time comes. No other defendant has ever made such an unselfish request before.

(the entire courtroom is at awe.)

JUDGE

It is very unusual. For what reason?

MR. GRACE

He wasn't there to guide his sons from boys to men. That's his biggest regret. He should've been there to tell them right from wrong and lead them to a path of righteousness.

JUDGE

Let's allow the jury a chance to deliberate.

(The lights dim. MR. MASKE gets on his knees to pray)

MR. MASKE

Lord, I have no excuses. But if you could just give me one more chance, I promise I'll serve you and only you...I will place no other god before you. I'll be your obedient and humble servant... I've seen the light and the errors of my ways...

(FADE TO BLACK)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1

SCENE 4

SETTING: Hospital room at Johnson Memorial Hospital.

AT THE RISE: MR. MASKE'S three sons and sister are in the room. RUBY wipes his forehead with a damp towel. ANTONIO'S looking out a window. KELLEN'S on the phone and Jahmar's saying a silent prayer. The monitors become very active and the doctors rush into the room. MR. MASKE regains consciousness.

DOCTOR 1

(checking vital signs)

Mr. Maske, welcome back amongst the living. It was a very close call.

MR. MASKE

(sitting up and looking around the room)

I dreamed I died and was on trial in hell. It was so vivid, so real, I could feel the heat of the fire.

(rubs body)

DOCTOR 2

(reading the monitors)

People dream of heaven, hell, and even worse, ex-spouses.

MR. MASKE

So when do I get out of here?

(tries to get out of bed)

DOCTOR 1

(holds him down)

Now so down partner. You're going to be on bed rest for a couple of days.

DOCTOR 2

If everything checks out, you'll be a free man very soon.

MR. MASKE

(curiously)

How long was I out?

DOCTOR 2

Total time, about two weeks. Your family can visit for about fifteen minutes and then they'll have to leave, okay?

(the family members shake the doctors' hands as they exit the room)

AUNT RUBY

(straightening covers and fluffing pillows)

Now you know you need five pillows to support your big ass head. So what happened? You overdose on that Viagra?

MR. MASKE

(dazed, feels head for lumps)

Ha ha, very funny.

(pauses)

I'm surprised you're all here considering how I've treated you over the years. How'd you find out I was in the hospital?

JAHMAR

Your neighbors told us as we were driving down your block to check on you, as usual.

MR. MASKE

And how long have you been doing that?

RYAN

Since forever. We do drive by just to make sure you're okay.

ANTONIO

By the way, didn't you used to have a garden in front of your house?

MR. MASKE

(sits straight up in bed)

You mean those old bats really did....never mind.

KELLEN

(concerned)

Pops, you've got to let your family back into your life.

JAHMAR

You've definitely gotta get rid of that nasty attitude and disposition.

ANTONINO

This *I don't need nobody* crap has played out.

JAHMAR

True dat. You missed your brother's funeral and your daughter's wedding because of your ways.

(Tears stream from MR. MASKE's eyes. He wipes his eyes with his sister's shirt. She comforts him)

ANTONIO

And you're missing your grandchildren grow up, too.

MR. MASKE

(sobbing)

I am so sorry. I'm going to apologize to each and every one in the family. I'm going to call a...

(nurse bursts into the room room smacking her chewing gum and checks MR. MASKE's vitals.)

NURSE

(sarcastically, one hand on hip)

I hate to break up this family reunion or whatever, but y'all gotta go. I'm sure doctor told you that, I mean, dang.

(turns, mumbles under breath)

You think they have some kinda sense

(rolls neck and walks towards the door)

Come back in the morning, okay?

(places hand on hips)

AUNT RUBY

(runs towards the nurse flinging hands in the air)

Who the hell you talkin' to? Girl, I'll snatch that dog hair weave outta your hair with the quickness.

(Kellen tries to grab Aunt  
Ruby whose chasing the nurse  
around the room)

I'll cut you so many ways they won't know your asshole from  
your mouth. Where's my blade?

(while searching pocket book  
pulls out vibrator, hot sauce  
carjack, bottle of Vodka, nurse.  
quickly runs out of the room)

ANTONIO

Calm down Aunt Ruby, she's gone.

AUNT RUBY

(picking up items off the floor)

You gonna respect me or it's gonna be some drama up in  
here.

ANTONIO

Dad, you do really need to get some rest. We'll bring  
everyone with us tomorrow.

JAHMAR

Yeah, goodnight Dad. It has a nice ring to it. I like  
saying it. Good night, Dad.

AUNT RUBY

(tucking him in)

Good night, you ol'dog.

(tries to balance his head,  
she hugs and kisses him,  
then exits.)

MR. MASKE

(sits up in bed)

Good night. Thanks for coming by. I love you all.

(insincerely waves until the  
door closes, lets out a deep sigh)

Thought those Negroes would never leave...Getting on my damn  
nerves. And don't bring those folks here. Probably mad now

## MR. MASKE (CONT-D)

they can't split up my stuff.

(gets out of bed and stretches,  
looks in mirror and combs remaining  
hairs)

I guess I *should* thank God for bringing me through that mess. That's if it was *really* real. Hell, I'll throw it in with grace at breakfast.

(with ungratefulness)

Besides' HE's God should know I'm grateful.

(phone rings three times)

They probably calling me 'bout the damn bill. If the heart attack didn't kill me, the bill damn sure will.

(picks up the phone)

Hello? Uh huh...yes...okay...Why thank you Pastor. You too, bye.

(slams the phone down on the  
receiver)

He just wants my tithes. But I ain't payin' for his new Mercedes and his chick on the side.

(picks up paper and pencil  
off of the dresser, sits on  
the bed, stares in space)

That big head boy in the Sunday School class looks just like him. He's probably their love child.

(pauses)

I've got to get those old hags back for raiding my garden. And that damn Ms. Ford for disturbing my sleep. And the rest of those nosey ass neighbors, too.

(glances over at the clock on  
the wall)

I need to call my stock broker. Where's the remote so I can turn down the volume?

(locates remote and pushes on  
button. He hears a loud, grinding  
noise. He checks the TV but  
realizes the sound is coming from  
the closet. He opens the doors  
open and two masked individuals  
are there.

MR. MASKE screams.)

## MR. MASKE

Oh no, I'm dreaming again.

(picks up a vase to defend

himself)  
 Maybe it's the medication.

(The figures remove their  
 helmets)

MR. MASKE

Mr. Grace, Mr. Malice, why are you here?

(MR. GRACE returns MR. MALICE's  
 30 pieces of silver. MR. MALICE  
 consoles MR. GRACE)

MR. MALICE

Now your soul will be required for vouching for this fool.

MR. MASKE

(approaches MR. MALICE and  
 MR. GRACE)

Now, now wait a minute. I haven't even left the room yet. I  
 haven't had a chance to change.

(walking back and forth)

You're here about those little comments that I made? I  
 really didn't mean them. I was just talkin' out loud to  
 myself.

MR. MALICE

It's your heart. And it is truly how you feel. You can't be  
 changed.

MR. GRACE

(angrily)

You'll thank God tomorrow with your breakfast? HE'S God and  
 should know how you feel?

(faces audience)

God wants you to exalt HIS name. Shout it from the roof  
 tops and in front of anyone without shame.

(faces MR. MASKE)

HE wants you to root for HIM like you root for the Eagles.  
 God gave you everything and you've given him nothing in  
 return.

MR. MALICE

Exacting vengeance on your neighbors, isolating yourself  
 from your family? Disrespecting your Pastor? That's how  
 you show your gratitude to God? Nothing has changed,  
 nothing.

MR. MASKE

Listen. I haven't had a fair chance. It takes time to change. I've been this way all of my life and I'm supposed to change in an instant?

MR. GRACE

(shaking his head)

Here you are with those same excuses. There will be no justification this time.

MR. MALICE

(solemnly)

What you didn't know is Mr. Grace wagered his own existence for you. He's now going to be cast into the lake of fire prior to his time.

MR. MASKE

But I didn't ask him to do it. He's a fool. That ain't my fault. But what about me? Oh Jesus, Oh Lord.

(drops to his knees)

Lord, I'm sorry. I was just joking. I'm gonna' pray right now. See, I'm getting on my knees, Lord. Dear Lord.

(lays face flat on the floor  
and begins to cry aloud)

MR. GRACE

It's too late baby, it's too late. Your soul is required right now.

MR. MASKE

(gets up, runs towards MR. MALICE  
and grabs him begging desperately)

No. No. Please don't do this. I promise I've learned my lesson. Just give me one more chance.

(runs over to the dresser and  
picks up Bible)

I still got time to repent, right? What's that prayer?...the sinner's prayer, right?

(fumbles through chapters)

Where is that damn prayer? If I get it in before my last breath that counts, right?

(begins shedding tears as he  
accepts the inevitable. He  
walks over to the bed, lies  
down and dies. The doctors  
nurses rush in to revive him  
but to no avail. MR. MALICE and  
MR. GRACE escort him to the  
closet. The doors close.)

(FADE TO BLACK)

(END SCENE)