

quality about her, an aura of calm. . . . She is six-and-a-half to seven months pregnant." Carla looks up to Marlene as the only person she knows who seems truly happy. Marlene tells her the secret of her marriage.

MARLENE

This one time, before the kids were born, Big Jim was workin' construction before goin' to work for the company. And we were rentin' a little furnished house. I worked all day gettin' the house all cleaned up. Baked cookies. Did the wash. It was one of those days. I use to do a lot more of that stuff than I do now. Anyway, I was beat. So, I sit down on the couch and propped my feet up on the coffee table and started readin' my magazines. Well, Big Jim comes home from work mad as hell at this young, cocky foreman he's workin' for. So he takes it out on me. He had stopped and had a few beers and picked up a six-pack on his way home. And he walks in and wants to know why I've got my feet propped up on the good coffee table. I told him not to worry about it. It was rented. And he said, "Don't talk back. Take your feet down off the table." I said no. And he said you better. And I said you take them down for me. And he said, "Like hell!" And he yanked that table out from under my feet, went to the front door and threw the coffee table right out into the middle of the front yard. I didn't say a word. I got up, grabbed his six-pack and walked over and threw it right out in the front yard. Big Jim didn't say nothin'. He walked over, unplugged the floor lamp and tossed it out. So I grabbed the two wedding pictures off the wall and threw them out. He threw out the chair and I threw out all the toss pillows off the couch. We just kept throwin'. Never said a word. More we threw out, the madder we got. Finally, we got to the couch and it took both of us to throw it out. By the time we emptied the living room, we were both so tired we just stood there on the

front porch tryin' to catch our breath. Then we looked at one another and I laughed. And he laughed. We both started laughin', said to hell with it. Left everything in the yard and went up to bed. And that's the secret.

[CARLA. What?]

Don't ever go to bed angry.

Birdbath

Leonard Melfi

Premiere: Theatre Genesis, New York City, 1965

Setting: New York City: a midtown cafeteria, the streets outside, and Frankie's basement apartment

It's the night before Valentine's Day. Frankie Basta, an aspiring poet, is the new cashier at the midtown cafeteria where Velma Sparrow works clearing off tables. They are attracted to each other and Velma comes over to talk. "A nervous and troubled young lady who is a rapid speaker and sometimes trembles," she tells Frankie she lives in the Bronx with her domineering mother. We will later find out that she killed her mother today with a kitchen knife that she still has in her purse.

VELMA

Well, I used to be real skinny, you know what I mean? I used to be all bones, almost like one of them skeletons. But since I been workin' here for Mr. Quincy, well, I've been puttin' on some weight. (*She pauses.*) That's why, in a way, this job isn't really that bad—because of the free meal they let you have. My mother said to me, "Velma, you take advantage of that free meal. You eat as much as you can . . . when something's free you make use of

it . . . take as much as they let you have." And so, I've been eating pretty good lately, and Mr. Quincy, he's a nice man, he never tells me that I'm eating too much. In fact, I think he's a real nice man, because he hired me without my having any experience at all. This is the first time I've ever had a job where I cleaned off the tables and everything when the people were through eating. Boy, at first I was real scared about this job. I didn't think I was gonna be able to do it right . . . you know?

[FRANKIE: You're doing okay . . .]
Although, you know what? *(She starts to bite her fingernails.)*

[FRANKIE: What's that, Velma?]
Well, sometimes Mr. Quincy says things to me . . . or he gives me certain kinds of looks . . . like for instance . . . *(Embarrassed)* I was his . . . girlfriend, maybe. *(She looks at FRANKIE, waiting hopefully for him to agree with her. FRANKIE gives her a slight smile of comfort, but it is not a smile of agreement.)* I told my mother about the way Mr. Quincy is to me sometimes, and right away she wanted to come down and meet him. She asked me how old he was and she wanted to know how he looked, and after I told her everything she wanted to know, she said that some night she would get all dressed up and then come down here and wait for me until I got off, and while she was waiting I could introduce her to Mr. Quincy. *(She walks away and begins to wipe the same table top over again.)* You know what she said to me, my mother? She said that it was all up in my mind that Mr. Quincy might just be . . . interested . . . in me. She said that it wasn't true and that I should just concentrate on my job and forget about all those pipe dreams, otherwise I would be gettin' fired. *(She pauses.)* Sometimes . . . sometimes it's so hard for me to figure my mother out . . . because right afterwards she's tellin' me that maybe I shouldn't eat so much after all because then I would be goin' from one extreme to the other. She said when I was real skinny I couldn't

find a nice boy, and, well, if I kept on eating the way I've been doing lately I'd get real fat, and so it would still be the same old story for me. *(She laughs a desperate, frantic sort of laugh.)* My mother . . . changes her mind so much sometimes . . . that it gives me a headache.

The Blood Knot

Athol Fugard

Premiere: The Rehearsal Room, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1961

Setting: One-room shack in the Non-white location of Korsten, near Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Morris and Zachariah are brothers, sons of the same Coloured mother and different fathers. Zachariah is dark-skinned, while Morris is light-skinned enough to be able to "pass." Years before, Morris left home and went out in the world to pursue his education. Now he's returned to keep house for Zachariah, preparing his foot baths and reading each night from the Bible.

Morris is a planner. He gets through each day with the help of an alarm clock, which he sets to go off for each meal, activity, or bedtime. He is saving their money to buy a small farm. Zachariah, who works as a guard, is a man of much simpler appetites. Before Morris came back, he spent Friday nights dancing and drinking with a neighbor named Minnie. Now he and Morris spend every night talking: "A whole year of spending tonights talking, talking. I'm sick of talking. I'm sick of this room . . . I want woman." Morris comes up with a plan to find Zach a pen-pal. They choose Ethel Lange, from a newspaper ad ("I am eighteen years old and well-developed. . . . My interests are nature, rock-and-roll, swimming, and a happy future.") The two brothers send off a letter; Ethel writes back, and everything seems

