

ACCORDING TO GOLDMAN

ACT ONE

*Curtain music: As the audience is being seated ideally we should hear Fred Astaire singing those great songs from the RKO musicals of the thirties. *Simplicity is best with this set. The main areas: Gavin's classroom, the Miller home, and Jeremiah's room should have minimal furniture. Other areas, such as Melania's garden, should be suggested by lighting. The action should flow from one area to another with no black-outs. Gavin can speak to his class from anywhere on the stage. The music continues to play as the flickering black-and-white image of a movie appears announcing "THE END." This should be a generic, forties style, end card — we should not know what the film was. Into the image steps Gavin Miller, 53, in his college class room. There is a blackboard behind the desk. Although his clothes are casual and comfortable, the man underneath them has the intensity of a person who has strong opinions on absolutely everything. This, and the fact that he loves to hear himself talk, makes him a pretty good teacher, despite his occasional barbed sense of humor. Music fades, and lights rise as the movie image disappears. Gavin looks directly at his "students" — the audience.*

GAVIN. Yeah, I know. Black and white. Get over it. (*He leans on his desk.*) Now, why did he show us scenes from this old movie, you're asking. Well, it's the first class and it eats up a lot of time, but

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

more important — it's because movies were better built in the old days. Writers knew structure back then, first act, second act, third act — it's all there — better than any textbook. Until I write mine, of course. *(He looks out at them for a moment.)* Okay, let's see hands — and be honest! How many of you think that your life would make a helluva movie? Come on ... *(He zeroes in on one student.)* Be honest. *(The hand goes up, and he nods, satisfied.)* Much better. Just about everybody I've ever met thinks his or her life would make a great movie. How do I know? Very simple. Every time someone hears what I do for a living they proceed to tell me that their lives would make a helluva movie. Oh, the wild and zany adventures you've had — the fascinating people you're related to ... *(He smiles.)* Guess what? I hate to break it to you, but nobody gives a damn about your life's story let alone wants to pay nine bucks on a Saturday night to sit through it. Unless, of course, your traumatic childhood memories included explosions, brief nudity, and a part for Brad Pitt. *(He turns to the board and in big capital letters writes: FANTASY?)* Fantasy! This is what the movies are all about. People in the movies are better looking than we are ... drive nicer cars ... have better sex and are braver than any of us will ever be. That's why we pay good money to spend time with them and not you or your relatives. Now, I can do two things in here: I can teach you how to write a good script, or I can teach you how to write a script that gets made into a movie. The two are not necessarily the same thing. *(As the lights fade on Gavin they rise on his wife, Melanie Miller. Although the same age as her husband her natural enthusiasm makes her appear a bit younger. She holds a bunch of flowers and a basket. When nervous or angry a very slight stutter intrudes her speech.)*

MELANIE. Hi, welcome to the n-neighborhood. I'm Melanie Miller ... we're in the gray house up the hill — with the big hedge — I know you're busy, I just wanted to drop off some — Oh, thank you — they're from my garden ... and some tomatoes and peppers — there's some hot ones in there, I wrapped them separately so you didn't — you know — get a surprise or anything ... well, I just wanted to say — oh, sure — as long as you're not busy. *(She heads into the neighbor's "house" as the lights rise back on Gavin with a handful of papers that he leafs through.)*

GAVIN. Okay ... favorite films. *(Reading.)* *Citizen Kane.* Ahh, you had Dr. Greene last semester, right. Well, I feel I should warn you, Dr. Greene has an unnatural obsession with Orson Welles.

(Back to the questionnaires.) *Wizard of Oz. The Godfather.* *(As he continues to speak to the students lights rise on Melanie, now on a chair with a cup of coffee in the neighbor's house.)* One or two?

MELANIE. Two years. Three in the spring —

GAVIN. *(Nodding.)* Long as you didn't mean three —

MELANIE. Don't know anything about the schools, I'm afraid —

GAVIN. *The Matrix?*

MELANIE. But I hear they're excellent —

GAVIN. You flunk.

MELANIE. *(Shrugging.)* We don't have any kids so ...

GAVIN. *Pulp Fiction.* Not bad.

MELANIE. My husband's a writer. I have him to raise —

GAVIN. "Anything with Bela Lugosi."

MELANIE. You wouldn't recognize the name —

GAVIN. What's your name?

MELANIE. Gavin Miller. He writes movies —

GAVIN. You might do very well in here Mr. Devlin —

MELANIE. *Family Dragon.*

GAVIN. *(Reading.)* *Family Dragon.*

MELANIE. One, two and three —

GAVIN. I do believe my ass is being kissed here —

MELANIE. Oh, that's nice ...

GAVIN. Guilty as charged —

MELANIE. How old is your niece?

GAVIN. I am the author of the *Family Dragon* movies —

MELANIE. He's thrilled when kids like his movies —

GAVIN. They're all crap —

MELANIE. He did Disney's *The Children's Crusade* too.

GAVIN. Two hundred and forty-five million domestic for the three of them —

MELANIE. The animated one —

GAVIN. And they were all crap.

MELANIE. Oh, he just decided to take a shot at teaching.

GAVIN. But that was a long time ago ... *(He tosses the questionnaires.)*

MELANIE. You know, your side yard gets the sun all day. You could have a wonderful garden out there.

GAVIN. Okay, since you're all familiar with *Family Dragon* —

MELANIE. Are you a gardener?

GAVIN. Let's use it.