

Our Experience Has Taught Us
A Sensational History of Our Twelve Traditions

by Jackie B.

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PREFACE

This is a work of historical fiction. Notable alterations in historical accuracy for dramatic purposes have been footnoted.

In the spirit of Tradition Eleven and Tradition Twelve of Alcoholics Anonymous, and after consulting with Public Information at the General Service Office in New York, the author chose to include only the last names of deceased AA members, such as Bill Wilson and Marty Mann, who while living broke their anonymity at the level of press, radio or film.

This publication is dedicated with gratitude to Glenn, Ernie, Mike, Mitchell and all the guardians who diligently research and share the history of Alcoholics Anonymous with reverence and in the spirit of love and service.

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FOREWORD

By Glenn Chesnut

My story is my message. The recovery community in which I live was formed and is maintained by the living power of the collective storyline composed of all the shared experiences that created us as a group. That is what provides the shape to all the underlying energy flowing through the Twelve Step program.

On December 11, 1934 Bill Wilson had his last drink and checked himself into Towns Hospital in New York City. Then on December 14, he had a profound spiritual experience and the next day two Oxford Group members, Ebby Thacher and Shep Cornell, visited him and brought him two books to read: William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*. The first was in fact a book of stories, stories about hundreds of people. The second was a book telling the story of one extraordinary spiritual figure.

The reason for doing this came from the teaching of the Oxford Group's "Five C's" – the basis of A.A.'s Twelve Steps – which they had taken from H. A. Walter's book *Soul-Surgery*. "Conversion is a matter both of the heart and the will, and if there is anything we can do to assist him ... it is, first of all, to give him autobiographical writings," Walter said, containing the stories of men and women who had undergone real psychic change at the deepest level. So that is what Ebby and Shep did, they brought Bill Wilson stories that would show him the way to turn his life around.

Jackie B. is one of the best A.A. historians of the new generation and a master storyteller. She burst onto the scene in 2010 with her first play, *In Our Own Words*. Performed to standing room only audiences at the A.A. International Convention in San Antonio, the play had the people in the audience laughing, crying, standing on their feet and applauding, and being totally pulled into the vivid tales that she spun. This play, her second one — *Our Experience Has Taught Us* — is equally powerful and moving, and explains how the Twelve Traditions arose from the real life experiences of early A.A. members.

The Twelve Traditions are a Bill of Rights for a great spiritual movement, committing it to standards even higher than those of the U.S. Bill of Rights or the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen. But they are not just a set of intellectualized political theories about how human beings ought to behave. They answer important questions about issues which we must still deal with today: How did early A.A. avoid being torn apart by all the powerful alcoholic egos and what St. Augustine called the *libido dominandi*, the out-of-control lust to dominate and boss around and control and criticize everyone else around us? How did they learn to start replacing pride with humility, perfectionism with tolerance, condemnation with compassion, and selfishness with generosity?

It is not only a matter of how I structure my own personal life, but how we agree as a group to structure the community we live in. That is the story of *Our Experience Has Taught Us*.

So please enjoy yourself fully as you read or watch this marvelous play — let yourself laugh wholeheartedly and wonder and marvel, and even shed a quiet tear at the most moving parts. And listen to the stories, for the people in this play are *real* people, A.A. members who lived and breathed, laughed and wept too, and let their stories produce change in the way you see your life. That will be *real* too, it will not be a figment of your imagination. God bless you all.

Glenn Chesnut has written a number of important books on the history of Alcoholics Anonymous and the spirituality of the Twelve Step program. His recent books include *The Higher Power of the Twelve-Step Program: For Believers & Non-Believers* and *Changed By Grace: V.C. Kitchen, the Oxford Group, and A.A.* (which is included in Bishop's List of the Fifty Most Important Books tracing A.A.'s history from the last hundred years). He did his doctorate at Oxford University, and then served as Professor of History and Religious Studies at Indiana University in South Bend for 33 years, where he was one of their most popular teachers. After his retirement, he became Director of the Hindsfoot Foundation, which publishes books on the moral and spiritual dimensions of recovery, and has been devoting his full time to working with alcoholics and addicts. He is also a moderator for the AA History Lovers Yahoo Group.

THE FELLOWSHIP

Sybil C., first woman to get sober in A.A. on the West Coast

Young Sybil, 1941

June, a 13 year old newcomer in 1972

Older June, present day

Bob C., Sybil's fifth husband

Young Bob C., 1950

Eddie, young newcomer, present day

Bill W., co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous

Lois, Bill's wife, co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups

Dr. Bob, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous

Anne, Dr. Bob's wife

Bill D., A.A. #3, early Akron member

Ernie G., 30 years old, early Akron member

Clarence Snyder, early Cleveland member

Sister Ignatia Gavin, petite, head of admissions at St. Thomas Hospital

Hank P., early New York member

Fitz M., early New York member

Jimmy B., early New York member

Ruth Hock, A.A.'s first secretary and office manager, non-alcoholic

Mort J., early Los Angeles member

Cliff W., early Los Angeles member

Frank R., early Los Angeles member

Tex A., Sybil's brother, early Los Angeles member

Jim W., Sybil's fourth husband

Irma L., Sybil's sponsee

Nelson Rockefeller, son of John Rockefeller, Jr., philanthropist and social reformer

Jack Alexander, Saturday Evening Post journalist, non-alcoholic

Marty Mann, first woman in A.A. to obtain long-term sobriety and the founder of the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism

Rollie Hemsley, catcher for the Cleveland Indians

Lillian Roth, movie starlet

Burt M., Lillian's husband and manager

Earl T., founded A.A. in Chicago

And an ensemble of Old-timers, Newcomers, Bleeding Deacons, Derelicts, "Queers, Crackpots and Fallen Women"!

PLEASE NOTE:

In the script, the narration of the stories is shared by Sybil and various members of ensemble, described as "The Fellowship." It is up to each individual production how to distribute the dialogue of "The Fellowship," though a different narrator or rotating group of narrators is suggested for each scene. Within each scene, the lines of "The Fellowship" can be performed by one actor or multiple.

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE

Lights rise on SYBIL and BOB outside an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Sybil puts up an A.A. sign.

THE FELLOWSHIP. A Wednesday night in Los Angeles. 1972.

Lights rise on the inside of the meeting room, which is awash in a fog of cigarette smoke. A group congregates around the coffee and sweeties table, while elsewhere phone numbers are being exchanged and 2nd Edition Big Books are handed out. Bob and Sybil enter the meeting room.

GREETER. Sybil, Bob, it's good to see you.

SYBIL. It's good to be seen!

AA #1. Hey Syb, we missed you at the chip meeting last week.

SYBIL. Bob and I were home nursing one of the new cats. Poor little puss, mangy little thing got stuck in a hole in a neighbor's fence.

CHAIR. Welcome to the Wednesday night "Hole in the Ground" meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is [ACTOR'S NAME] and I am your chair. Please join me in a moment of silence followed by the serenity prayer.

ALL. "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

CHAIR. Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

June, a newcomer, 13 years old going on 30 enters. She is covered in bruises, shaky and very very angry.

CHAIR. Are there any newcomers here tonight?

Everyone turns to June.

JUNE. June.

OLD-TIMER (*under his breath, to his friend*). I've spilled more booze than that kid will ever drink.

JUNE. You got a problem, pops?!

CHAIR. Welcome June, welcome to you all. This meeting is a speaker step study and discussion. Today is the last Thursday of the month, when we read from the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and discuss one of the Traditions.

Groans. A row of A.A.'s simultaneously open newspapers and begin to read. Two members exit.

CHAIR. This month we are on Tradition One.

AA #2. Alano Club?

AA #3. Nah, Cantor's. (*They exit pas June.*)

CHAIR. I'll start by reading the short and then long-form ... "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity."
(*June begins to leave.*)

SYBIL. Rushing off? Join me outside for a cigarette? *(June shrugs.)*

CHAIR *(lights fade out on the meeting and come up on the porch outside).*

"Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward."

They walk outside. Sybil hands June a cigarette.

JUNE. Man, I need a real meeting tonight, I'm crawling out of my skin. *(Sybil smiles.)* Aren't you going to have one?

SYBIL. I sneak one now and then. Having a pack around just comes in handy at A.A. meetings. Your name is June, right?

JUNE. Yeah.

SYBIL. I'm Sybil. It's nice to meet you.

JUNE. I've seen you around, you've got a lot of time, right?

SYBIL. I've got a few 24 hours under my belt. But you know what they say, whoever woke up the earliest has the most sobriety today. What time did you wake up, June?

JUNE. I haven't slept in two days.

SYBIL. Well you've got me beat then. *(Laughs.)* Are you sober right now?

JUNE. Hell yeah, and it sucks.

SYBIL. That's alright. It gets better.

JUNE. For real, how long you been sober?

SYBIL. 32 years.

JUNE. Crazy man, that's longer than my mom's been alive!

SYBIL. The only reason I've stayed sober that long is because I found A.A. before most other people did. I was the first woman to join A.A. on the West Coast, and there was only one other woman active in A.A. at the time, and that was Marty Mann in New York and she came in nine months before me. (*Studies June for a moment.*) How old are you June?

JUNE. 15. (*Sybil raises her eyebrows.*) 13. I'm probably the youngest person to ever come into A.A., huh?

SYBIL. Who knows. Maybe you are, maybe you aren't. All that matters is whether or not you want to stop drinking. Do you, June? Do you have an honest desire to stop drinking?

JUNE. I guess so, my life's a mess. I'm 13 and my life's a freakin' mess cause I can't stop drinking.

SYBIL. You want to stop drinking and I want to stay stopped, so that makes us both members of A.A., no matter what anyone else says. Thanks to our Traditions. (*June shifts uncomfortably on the porch bench.*) Not crazy about the Traditions, huh?

JUNE. I dunno, I just wanted to go to a real meeting tonight, but I don't have any more bus fare, so I dunno, maybe I'll just ... I dunno, head to the beach and –

SYBIL. Find your dealer? Take the long way so you happen to pass by the liquor store. Park your butt down sweetheart, it won't kill you to listen to an old

crackpot for a little while longer. *(June hesitates, then shrugs and slumps on the bench.)* You know, when I came into A.A. in 1941, we didn't have the Traditions, we didn't know what we were doing because A.A. was new in Los Angeles. Heck, it was just plain new!

JUNE. Really? They didn't have rules back then?

SYBIL. Rules! Oh my, yes! We had all sorts of rules and regulations and protocols! But darling, that's not what the Traditions are, they're not just a string of can and can't do's, oh my, not at all!

JUNE. What are they then?

SYBIL. Principles! Spiritual principles, just like those Twelve Steps of ours, and they weren't written in ink, June, oh no. They were written in sweat and tears and fistfights and blood. I can tell you've been in a few scraps yourself recently.

JUNE. I'm a tough broad, no one messes with me. See. *(She puts out her cigarette with her bare feet.)*

SYBIL *(stunned momentarily, she bursts into laughter).* That is impressive! Sit down here with me, you tough old broad, and I'll tell you a few stories about those golden covered-wagon days in Alcoholics Anonymous, just to pass the time. Before you know it, the meeting will be over, we'll get you a hot meal, a ride to another meeting, and you'll be sober for one more night, God willing.

JUNE. I guess I've got nothing better to do.

SYBIL. That's the spirit! Right when we left, they were reading Tradition One in there. The first time I read Tradition One was in a Grapevine article –

JUNE. What's the Grapevine?

SYBIL. An international journal, our A.A. magazine, like a meeting in print. It's been around almost as long as I have! In 1946, Bill W. wrote an article in The Grapevine, called –

The meeting members rise one by one and transform into The Fellowship.

BILL. Twelve Points to Assure A.A.'s Future

SYBIL. And in it he wrote,

BOB. Our Experience has Taught Us That.

THE FELLOWSHIP.

Nobody invented Alcoholics Anonymous.

It grew.

Trial and error has produced a rich experience.

Little by little –

We have been adopting the lessons of that experience.

First as policy.

And then as tradition.

JUNE. I keep hearing about that guy, Bill W, who's Bill W? (*The fellowship gasp and turn to each other in surprise.*)

ALL. WHO'S BILL W.?

SYBIL. Who's Bill W? Have you read Chapter One in the Big Book?

THE FELLOWSHIP. "Bill's Story." 1st through 4th Editions (*Music.*)

BILL. "War fever ran high in the New England town to which we new young officers from Plattsburg were assigned ..."

JUNE. Yeah, see this lady who called herself my sponsor told me to read it last week, and I was gonna get to it this week, but I've got a hard time concentrating you know, so I just fired her.

SYBIL. You don't need to explain yourself to me. And what about Dr. Bob? First story in the back of the book ...

THE FELLOWSHIP. "Doctor Bob's Nightmare." 1st through 4th Editions. (*Music.*)

BOB. "I was born in a small New England village of about seven thousand souls."

JUNE. I probably heard his name in a meeting – Hey can I get another smoke?

SYBIL. You better take the whole pack, honey, we've got some ground to cover!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE ONE

THE FELLOWSHIP. Act One. Flying Blind.

SYBIL. This whole thing started back in the 1930's, in a town called Akron, Ohio, when two drunks, like you and me, started talking to each other. The first was a stockbroker from New York –

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bill Wilson.

BILL. My name is Bill and I'm an alcoholic.

SYBIL. And the second –

THE FELLOWSHIP. Dr. Robert Smith.

BOB. Bob, alcoholic.

SYBIL. A drunken proctologist from Akron.

JUNE. Gnarly!

SYBIL. Yep, a proctologist! They say Bob knew an asshole when he saw one ... *(Bob nods knowingly.)* What? That nugget's been around for years. You don't think I've used my fair share of colorful language? I was a bootlegger, a taxi dancer, a chambermaid and I even operated wrestling ring with my brother Tex for a spell! Bill and Bob both happened to be members of the Oxford Group.

JUNE. Oxford Group?

SYBIL. A spiritual movement in the early part of the century, that's where A.A. laid its roots, before there was an A.A. You see, A.A. didn't start in a vacuum –

THE FELLOWSHIP. But the real spark got going when these two hopeless alcoholics met.

Bill and Bob shake hands. Beat.

THE FELLOWSHIP. May 11, 1935. Lobby of the Mayflower Hotel. Akron, Ohio.

Two young attractive and inebriated women giggle their way past Bill. On the other side of the stage, Anne helps Bob with his tie, as his hands shake terribly.

BILL *(on the telephone)*. You see, Mrs. Seiberling, I'm an Oxford Group member like you, here in Akron on business. Ha, business, more like a disaster. The whole thing fell apart before it even started. Let me put it to you straight, m'am, I'm a rumhound from New York, I've been sober for 6 months – And I need to talk to another drunk like me, or by God, I'm going to drink. *(Pause.)* You do? Yes, yes! What's the name again, Robert Smith, ah, Doctor Robert Smith. Is he desperate? Fantastic! I'll be right over! God bless you Mrs. Seiberling ... alright, Henri, God bless you Henrietta Seiberling. I'll be right there!

THE FELLOWSHIP. May 12, 1935. The Home of Dr. Bob and Anne Smith. Ardmore Avenue. Akron, Ohio.

BOB *(attempting to tie a Windsor knot in the mirror but his hands are shaking terribly)*. Ah Annie, I don't feel so hot. You know how I adore Henri, but I don't know who this fellow is or see what he could possibly do for me that our Oxford meetings can't ...

ANNE. Lord, save me from being angry. My husband is a sick man –

BOB. Damn this tie! Annie, my hands!

ANNE. A sick, sick man. Amen. (*She ties Bob's necktie.*)

BOB. You believe me, don't you my dear? That I've tried every which way I can think of to stop drinking, I've taken every suggestion those good people in the Oxford Group have told me.

ANNE. I believe you are trying to surrender, but you're complicating it all. Keep it simple, Robert.

BOB. Simple, ha! How does that work?

ANNE. Be willing to live a day at a time, an hour at a time.

BOB. That's very well and good, but how Annie? Tell me how!

ANNE. You hear me say it every morning before our quiet time. Oh Lord, manage me –

BOB. For I cannot manage myself! Mush! (*Bob takes in his reflection in the mirror, disgusted with himself.*) Maybe I'm just one of those want to want to guys. I can't imagine any human being wanting to do something as badly as I want to stop drinking and be such a total failure.

ANNE (*sighs and finishes his tie*). There now Robert, all done and Henri is waiting!

BOB. Alright, Annie, alright, I'm coming ... Spending Mother's Day with a complete stranger, the things you'll put up with –

ANNE (*good naturedly*). Thank you dear Lord, he knows what day it is! (*About to exit.*)

BOB. Now, hold it! I'm not stepping one foot out of this house until you swear to me that we stay for fifteen minutes and not a second longer.

ANNE. Don't be ridiculous.

BOB. I'm putting my foot down, I don't want to speak to this mug or anyone else. 15 minutes, Annie.

ANNE. Lord, manage me, for I cannot manage myself. Very well, you poor bedeviled man, 15 minutes. But please, Bob, come along now.

BOB. Alright then, let's make this snappy.

Beat.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The same afternoon. The Gatehouse of the Seiberling Estate. Akron, Ohio.

BILL. Bill Wilson, I can't tell you how good it is to meet you Bob, you don't mind if I call you Bob, do you?

BOB. Mr. Wilson. I'm afraid that my wife and I are only dropping in because Henri insisted we meet. (*Checking his wrist watch, his hands still visibly shake.*) I can only stay for a few minutes –

BILL. Boy, you sure look like you need a drink!

BOB. Pardon?

BILL. A stiff one too! You look like a Scotch man, I know a Scotch man when I see one. As for me, bathtub gin! Just awful stuff it was, my last drink, December 10, 1934.

BOB. That's all very good for you, I'm sure –

BILL. Yessir, that bathtub hooch – that was my poison and my medicine. Gin, two bottles and then – oblivion.

BOB. Oblivion.

BILL. Followed by the horror and the remorse of the next morning. (*Bob nods, a small barely perceptible movement.*) Sometimes I would steal from my wife's purse to get that first morning drink. That first drink! You wouldn't think it to look at me now, but why only 6 months ago, my people, they feared for my sanity! One night I dragged my mattress down to the first floor – I was sure I would throw myself out the window. A doctor prescribed some sedatives, and sure enough, the next day, I was drinking both, gin and sedatives –

BOB. Goofballs. A couple of goofballs and a bottle or two of beer in the morning before – to calm my nerves before – (*Holds up his shaking hands*) – before surgery. (*Ashamed, he sits and covers his face with his hands. He looks up for Bill's reaction. Bill smiles.*)

BILL (*kindly, with gentle humor*). John Barleycorn and his gang of goofballs – now that combo there, that landed me on the rocks. How dark it is before the dawn. But the dawn, she did come for me, Bob, and what a beautiful day it has turned out to be.

They study each other.

BOB. Mr. Wilson –

BILL. Bill ...

BOB. Bill. (*He gives Bill a final look-over.*) It sounds like you know something about this drinking business after all. (*Anne enters putting on her coat.*) Oh what the hell! Annie, take off that coat. We're staying for dinner.

Beat.

THE FELLOWSHIP. That same evening. Just past Eleven-Thirty. The Gatehouse of the Seiberling Estate. Akron, Ohio.

BOB. You've given me a lot to chew on here, Bill, but hot damn, it feels good not to be alone. We've got the same thing, you and I,

BILL. The same problem ...

BOB. Yes, the same disease, that Dr. Silkworth hit it right on the head. An allergy of the body –

BILL. Coupled with an obsession of the mind. Don't forget that queer mental twist, it'll get you every time –

BOB. It's so clear to me now, Bill, a two-fold problem! The other Oxford members, God bless them, this whole time they've had the solution –

BILL. Get honest, clean house, help others.

BOB. A spiritual way of life. All these years, I've had the solution but I couldn't apply it without first understanding the problem! I feel like I've finally got a chance ... but Bill, if I'm going to keep this thing, I've got to give it away –

BILL. No, Bob. We have to give it away, we're in this together now, partners. We'll help hundreds of alcoholics, thousands!

BOB. Let's start with just one.

BILL. Of course, you're right, first things first. Hey, I like the ring of that! When you get back from that medical convention, we'll hunt down a rummy or two to work on. *(Claps.)* Doctor's orders for the doctor himself! Get some rest, keep some sweets near the bed and in your jacket pockets, and call for me tonight if you get a notion to pay John Barleycorn one last visit.

BOB *(putting on his coat, walking tall, his hand tremors are barely noticeable and there seems to be a spring in his step).* I think he's overstayed his welcome for long enough – much like us two louts, keeping our excellent hostess and my dear wife up to midnight. Come over tomorrow Bill, you can stay with Annie and me for the rest of your visit. We've got a lot of work to do.

BILL. Looking forward to it. See you tomorrow Doc ... *(As Dr. Bob exits)* We can talk about those amends you're trying to wiggle out of ...!

Beat.

JUNE. And Dr. Bob never drank again, we all live soberly ever after, the end ...

SYBIL. Ha, not quite how the story goes. See Dr. Bob still held on to a little bit of his self-will. You ever hear the saying "You can't save your face and your ass at the same time?" Well, Dr. Bob learned that the hard way.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bob left for a medical convention in Atlantic City where he suddenly developed a terrific thirst for –

BILL. Knowledge?

ANNE (*enters with a drunk and remorseful Bob leaning on her for support*).
Scotch!

BILL (*takes over from Anne*). There you go, Doc. Easy does it ... Hey! I like the ring of that! (*They talk quietly and Bob exits.*)

THE FELLOWSHIP. Humbled, Bob was at last willing to make all his amends on June 10, 1935.

SYBIL. Founders Day! The day of his very last drink.

ANNE. A bottle of beer!

BILL. To calm his nerves ...

ANNE. Before surgery!

BOB (*re-entering with a telephone*). Well the patient survived, didn't he!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bill and Bob immediately set out to help others.

BOB. As my Annie always says –

ANNE. Faith without works is dead!

BOB (*to the operator*). Akron City Hospital. (*Nods to Bill, a nurse picks up.*) Say Sally, do you have drunk over there you can scare up? I've got this fellow here from New York and we've got a cure for alcoholism. (*Beat.*) As a matter of fact I have tried it on myself and it's working just fine!

SYBIL. And that's when they met Bill D, a lawyer and Akron city councilman –

THE FELLOWSHIP. "Anonymous Number Three." 2nd, 3rd and 4th Editions.
(*Music.*)

BILL D (*enters*). "One of five children, I was born on a Kentucky Farm in Carlyle County. My parents were well-to-do people..."

SYBIL. It wasn't long until a fourth turned up –

THE FELLOWSHIP. "The Seventh Month Slip." 1st Edition. (*Music.*)

ERNIE. "At fourteen years of age, when I should have been at home under the supervision of my parents, I was in the United States army serving a one year enlistment. I found myself with a bunch of men none too good for a fourteen year old kid who passed easily for eighteen."

SYBIL. Ernie, G. AA #4

THE FELLOWSHIP. And Akron Group One was born.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

SYBIL. Once the Akron group had started to take shape, Bill returned to New York –

THE FELLOWSHIP. Like Bob, Bill first recruited prospects through a hospital. (*Moans and groans from the patients on the ward.*) Towns Hospital, where Bill had dried up three times, where he had learned from the physician chief of staff, Dr. William Silkworth, that alcohol was –

BILL. A disease! An allergy of the body and an obsession of the mind. I don't think anyone knows why drunks like us have lost all power of choice in taking a drink. Look fellas, I have a will of iron when it comes to business, education, athletics -- heck, when I was a kid I whittled a boomerang out of my Grandfather's headboard, it took me almost two years to get it right, but I stuck with it and did that beauty fly, right back, into this hand here! I've got will power I tell you, except when it comes to booze, then my will power is practically non-existent. I just can't remember the suffering –

THE FELLOWSHIP. The humiliation –

BILL. Of the last drink, whether I took it a month ago, a week –

SYBIL. Even a day!

BILL. I just kept putting my hand on that damn stove – (*He gestures a hand as if to a hot flame.*) Ouch – again and again – OUCH! Well, what do you know, I keep getting burned. That's what I call plumb insanity.

SYBIL. In those days when you were working with a prospect, you made it loud and clear, that without help –

BILL. We're doomed.

HANK. Doomed.

FITZ. Doomed.

JUNE. Doomed.

JIMMY. Momma!

BILL. Don't despair just yet. I've got good news, boys! THERE IS A SOLUTION. The great fact is this and nothing less. I have had a deep and effective spiritual experience – *(The drunks groan and lose interest, Bill struggles to win back their attention)* – that has revolutionized my whole attitude towards life, towards my fellows and towards God's universe! *(He deflates.)*

SYBIL. Doesn't sound like good news at first, does it?

JUNE. Yeah, all this God stuff creeps me out, man.

SYBIL. Well most of the New York rummies felt that way too at first. For example, Bill's first sponsee in New York was Hank P. –

THE FELLOWSHIP. "The Unbeliever." 1st Edition. *(Music.)*

HANK. "Never am I going to be such a cowardly low down dog as to acknowledge God. The two faced, gossiping Babbitts can go around with their sanctimonious mouthings, their miserable worshipping, their Bible quotations, their holier-than-thou attitudes, their nicey-nice, Sunday-worshipping, Monday-robbing actions, but never will they find me acknowledging God ..." *(Laughs shrilly, cries, falls to his knees.)* God have mercy on my soul.

Bill goes to him and helps him on his feet.

SYBIL. Then there was a minister's son who had soured on religion, Fitz M.

THE FELLOWSHIP. "Our Southern Friend." 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Editions.
(*Music.*)

FITZ. "It is a cold bleak day in November. I have fought hard to stop drinking. Each battle has ended in defeat. I tell my wife I cannot stop drinking. She sends me to a hospital for alcoholics. I wish I were dead, but I'm too yellow to kill myself."

Hank and Bill comfort Fitz and shake his hand.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Fitz too had a spiritual awakening and never drank again.

SYBIL. But of all the early New York members, I am the most grateful for Jimmy B. I don't think A.A. would have made it without the help of Jimmy, a traveling salesman and an –

THE FELLOWSHIP. Atheist.

HANK AND FRITZ. ATHIEST?!

SYBIL. That's right, an atheist.

JIMMY. Did someone call for an atheist?

THE FELLOWSHIP. Jimmy joined A.A. on –

JIMMY. January 8, 1938. That was my D-Day.

THE FELLOWSHIP. "A Vicious Cycle." 2nd, 3rd and 4th Editions. (*Music.*)

JIMMY. "The place, Washington, D.C. Circumstances -- losing my wife, my apartment and my job -- had finally made me willing to listen on January 8th."

THE FELLOWSHIP. By May of 1939, exactly four years after Bill and Bob met, our membership was somewhere near one-hundred. Bill and his wife Lois held regular meetings at their Brooklyn brownstone at --

Lois enters.

LOIS. 182 Clinton Street. *(Recites.)*

"Once there was a funny man
Who lived at 182.
He had so many drunks around
Who didn't know what to do.
He nursed some, he razzed some,
He taxied some to Bellevue.
But the funniest thing about him was,
He really 'fixed' a few."

BILL. Did you say something, darling?

LOIS. Nothing dear.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The New York Group had no real formula and no name. When people asked who they were --

BILL. I told him, well, we're this nameless group, just an anonymous bunch of alcoholics. *(Musing)* Anonymous ... anonymous alcoholics ... Hey! *(Dismisses the idea.)* Nope, I don't like it.

THE FELLOWSHIP. They would follow one man's ideas for a while, decide he was wrong and switch to another's method.

HANK. But the miracle is, we're staying sober!

FITZ. As long as we keep together and talk together.

BILL. That's right. If we keep going the way we're going, a hell of a lot of good will be done, but we're only scratching the surface of the problem here. The question is, boys, how are we going to present to others all that has been given to us?

HANK. How about a book?

SYBIL (*pulls out her big book*). This book.

BILL. An anonymous volume!

FITZ. I can see it now!

HANK. Lining bookshelves across the country –

FITZ. In every hospital ward –

BILL. Circulating the halls of academia –

HANK. And Congress too!

JIMMY. Now, slow down there, fellas. We haven't even got a decent title picked out yet.

BILL (*light bulb*). Alcoholics ... Alcoholics Anonymous! Hey –

LOIS. He likes the ring of that!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bill began writing the book in late 1938 with the help of Hank's non-alcoholic secretary –

RUTH. Ruth Hock. Hey Marlboro, where can I park my Royal Deluxe?

HANK (*to Fitz*). I'd like to take her for a drive a couple of times around the block, if you know what I mean.

RUTH. There's a speed limit in this state, Hank. Forty-five miles an hour.¹

HANK. How fast was I going, officer?

RUTH. I'd say around 90.

HANK. Suppose you get down off your motorcycle and give me a ticket.

RUTH. Suppose I let you off with a warning this time.

HANK. Suppose it doesn't take.

RUTH. Suppose I have to whack you over the knuckles.

HANK. Suppose I bust out crying and put my head on your shoulder.

RUTH. Suppose you try putting it on your sponsor's shoulder.

HANK (*surrenders*). That tears it.

¹ AUTHORS NOTE: This exchange between Ruth and Hank is a direct homage to the noir film *Double Indemnity* (1944).

RUTH. What's the story, morning glory? Shoot!

BILL. "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to follow directions."

HANK and FITZ. Directions.

BILL. "At some of these you may balk. You may think you can find an easier, softer way. We doubt if you can."

HANK and FITZ. We doubt it.

BILL. "With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Remember that you are dealing with alcohol."

HANK. Yes, you are!

BILL. "Cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for you."

FITZ. For you! For you!

BILL. "But there is One who has all power – That One is God. You must find Him now!"

HANK AND FITZ. You must! You must!

JUNE. Woah, woah, woah. Hold it!

SYBIL. You notice something different, don't you?

JUNE. Yeah, what's with all the "you"" and "musts"? You must do this, you must do that? (*Referring to Sybil's Big Book*) See this book says "we" and "may you find him now!" What gives?

SYBIL. That's the version we know, the one that was printed in the book when it was published. But when Bill sat down to write "How It Works," his first draft was more ... aggressive. And that's where Jimmy stepped in.

BILL. Half measures will avail YOU nothing. You stand at the turning point. Throw yourself under His protection and care with complete abandon!

JIMMY. Woah, woah, woah. Hold it! What we're telling folks is "Do as I do and believe as I believe, or else!" Where's those pages, the foreword for the book. Here it is! "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." So fellows, when you wrote that sentence, did you mean it, or didn't you?

BILL. Alright Jimmy, we're listening.

JIMMY. I'm willing to set aside some of my own ideas about this God stuff. On my own I know I'm powerless, and I admit that if there is some Higher Power, well I'm convinced today that it's here, in the power of this group.

SYBIL. G.O.D. Group of --

THE FELLOWSHIP. Drunks.

JUNE. Group of Drunks? I guess that doesn't totally make me want to upchuck.

SYBIL. Well that's a start!

Bill nods, claps Jimmy on the back.

BILL. And all it takes to make a beginning. Point well taken, Jimmy old boy.
(Claps his hands, and dictates to Ruth) Here are the steps WE took, which are suggested as a Program of Recovery.

HANK. One.

BILL. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

FITZ. Two.

BILL. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

JIMMY. Three –

SYBIL. One of the greatest contributions to Alcoholics Anonymous.

BILL. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care and direction of God –

JIMMY. As we understood Him.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE THREE

SYBIL. Back in Ohio, Akron Group One was growing up fast.

THE FELLOWSHIP. In Year Two, one poor devil showed up at Dr. Bob's door, desperate to get well.

BOB. Then we'll help you of course.

POOR DEVIL. There's something I have to tell you first and you may not want me around after your hear it. I'm a sex deviate –

JUNE. Deviate?

BOB. Come again?

POOR DEVIL. A homosexual.

SYBIL. A gay man.

THE FELLOWSHIP. In 1939. *(Beat.)* In Ohio.

SYBIL. Imagine his desperation, to reveal himself like that to a group of very straight and very Christian men.

POOR DEVIL. Will you still let me join your group?

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bob turned to the group conscience.

ERNIE. If we let him in, God knows what kind of trouble he'll brew.

BILL D. Look at him! If we turn him away, the poor devil will be dead as a doornail in a month!

ERNIE. Who's going to join us if we let him in?

CLARENCE. So what we're really afraid of is our reputation, about what people might say about us?

ERNIE. Yes! Shouldn't we sacrifice this one for the sake of the many?

BILL D. Doc? What do you think?

BOB. What do I think? I don't believe it matters what I think. Gentlemen, isn't it time we ask ourselves – What would the Master do? Would he turn this man away?

BOB. If you have an honest desire to stop drinking, come in and we'll help you.
(They shake hands.)

SYBIL. That's how this thing works, one alcoholic working with another.
Regardless of your age –

THE FELLOWSHIP. The color of your skin –

SYBIL. Or who you bring home to your bed at night, the only requirement for membership –

POOR DEVIL. Is a desire to stop drinking.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Word of the group spread to neighboring cities. Folks began sending their “hardest cases” up to Akron.

SYBIL. Now Akron is about a 70-mile round trip drive from Cleveland, and one of the first Clevelanders to join the group in Akron was a hot-headed alcoholic with a quick wit and a sharp tongue.

THE FELLOWSHIP. “The Home Brewmeister” 1st, 2nd and 3rd Editions.

CLARENCE. “My wife became pregnant and the doctor recommended the use of Porter Ale ... so ... I bought a six gallon crock and a few bottles, listened to advice from amateur brewmeisters, and was off on my beer manufacturing career. Somehow or another, I must have misunderstood the doctor's instructions, for I not only made beer for my wife, I also drank it for her.”

SYBIL. Clarence S.

CLARENCE. It’s Snyder, Clarence Snyder! Any press or radio in the audience? How about a blogger. I know there must be a blogger here tonight. [Searching out the audience. AD LIBS.] You? Ok, let me spell it out for you, Clarence Snyder, S-N-Y-D-E-R. Criminey, we can’t be so anonymous that no-one can find us!

SYBIL. Clarence was what we call a personality,

THE FELLOWSHIP. You either loved him ...

SYBIL. Or you hated him. (*Bill and Clarence size each other up.*)

BILL. Clarence ...

CLARENCE. Bill ...

SYBIL. Next to Dr. Bob, Clarence was one of the greatest 12 steppers that ever lived. He was what they called a “pigeon-pusher” in those days – that’s what they used to call newcomer prospects back east, pigeons. In LA, we called them “babies.”

JUNE. If anybody tries to call me a pigeon or a baby – *(She cracks her knuckles.)*
It is going down.

SYBIL: Without Clarence, there might not have been an Alcoholics Anonymous. If he had been a little more likable, we may have even called him a co-founder too –

CLARENCE. Co-founder? I’m the FATHER of Alcoholics Anonymous. That’s right. Who’s your daddy?

SYBIL. “Alcoholics Anonymous” only existed as a book title those days because –

JUNE. They were still part of the Oxford Group!

SYBIL. Right! One day in 1939, all hell broke loose when Clarence wanted to bring –

CLARENCE. Come on boys!

Catholics enter.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Catholics!

AKRON AA’s. Catholics?

SYBIL. Catholics.

JIMMY (*pops his head in*). Did someone call for an atheist?

ALL. NO!

SYBIL. Catholics to the Oxford Group meetings. Clarence and Dr. Bob really got into it.

CLARENCE. Doc, as long as we are part of the Oxford Group, these fellows can't come. They're being threatened with excommunication for joining a Protestant group. We don't need all this folderol. We can eliminate all these divisions. We have a book now, with these Twelve Steps! We can branch out on our own!

BOB. No, Clarence, you can't break this thing up.

CLARENCE. We gotta do something!

ERNIE. Like what?

CLARENCE. Like what? You'll see like what! Fellows, we're gonna start our own meeting in Cleveland, not an Oxford Group meeting, but one just for drunks! We'll call ourselves Alcoholics Anonymous after the book we're writing!

BILL D. You can't do that!

CLARENCE. Try and stop us!

They rage and exit.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous was held the very next evening in the home of two Cleveland members.

SYBIL. And everyone from Akron came down and barged into the house.

THE FELLOWSHIP. May 11, 1939. Cleveland Ohio.

ERNIE. Cleveland, come out to play-ayyyyy!

CLARENCE. A little far from home tonight, aren't you, Akronites? Come on in, pour yourself a steaming cup of Joe, and have a seat. We were just about to start OUR meeting and any drunk is welcome, even you kiddo. Isn't that maximum!

BILL D. You're a lowdown Yankee liar –

ERNIE. I've got this!

High Noon. Clarence and Bill D. face off. Clarence knocks out Bill D. with the coffee pot. A boxing bell sounds.

SYBIL. That's all it took –

CLARENCE. A coffee pot and a resentment!

SYBIL. And the apron strings were cut.

THE FELLOWSHIP. By the end of the 1939, all the groups, in Akron, New York and Chicago now too, divorced themselves from the Oxford Group.

HANK. Is this a private dance, Ohio, or can anyone play? (They circle each other.) Let's do this!

Pages are rolled up and tossed at each other. A snowball fight with the attitude of an old west saloon fight.

JUNE. What's the deal-yo?

SYBIL. Oh, the New York and Ohio groups got in a tizzy over what would go into the book, the arguments lasted for months.

JUNE. Now I know what they mean by self-will run riot!

BILL W. *(trying to break it up).* Now hold on! There's no need for raised voices. Bill, leave Fitz alone. I see you Clarence! *(Everyone throws their paper balls at Bill W.)* Oh for Heaven's sake!

RUTH *(whistles loudly).* Clam it! *(She has their attention.)* Look at yourselves, I'd say you're all wet but I know you're bone dry. I typed up the last of your notes, Marlboro.

THE FELLOWSHIP. By the end of 1938 Bill had finished the manuscript.

SYBIL. Now came the hard part –

THE FELLOWSHIP. Getting the book published. And that would take a whole lot of –

RUTH. Mazuma. Megabucks. Cabbage. Dough. Rhino. Scratch!

The members pull out their pockets to reveal nothing but lint. A tumbleweed rolls by.

SYBIL. Money!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FOUR

SYBIL. In the early days, A.A.'s money problems were simple – we didn't have any!

LOIS (*crying, runs into his arms*). Bill!

BILL. What is it, what happened?

LOIS. The bank called again. They won't extend the mortgage any longer.

BILL. It'll be alright 'Lo. We'll work it out. Don't lose heart, sweetheart. The bank will let us stay on and rent until ... until we find a new place.

LOIS. The brownstone's been in my family for years, I was born here!

BILL (*turns away, disgusted with himself*). This is my fault! I spent too much time working with alcoholics. I should have gotten back to business, been out there looking for a job!

LOIS. No. (*Pulls herself together to comfort him.*) No. Without this group, you would be dead, and I'd rather live in the streets than live without you, Willie. No matter what, don't give up on this thing. Focus on what you can do, and then do it with all your heart.

THE FELLOWSHIP. In those days, Bill did most of the talking, but Lois did most of the work, and the cooking and the loving of those early folks and their families.

LOIS (*speaking to another wife*). I was just as powerless over my husband's alcoholism as he was. I tried in every way I knew to control his drinking. I was forced into doing and being things that I did not want to do or be. I tried to manage his life as well as my own. I wanted to get inside

his brain and turn the screws in what I thought was the right direction. But now I see how mistaken I was, how truly unmanageable my life had become! I, too, am powerless over alcohol. I have to live by these Twelve Steps as well, just as much as my husband.

SYBIL. Lois made great sacrifices for the sake of our fellowship –

LOIS. I believe that people are good if you give them half a chance and that good is more powerful than evil. The world seems to me excruciatingly, almost painfully beautiful at times. The goodness and kindness of people is greater than I could ever have expected. Look at the time. I've got to get to work, I have the late shift.

SYBIL. That's what our first tradition calls for, individual sacrifice for the survival of the group. And I doubt any one learned that lesson with more heartache than Bill and Lois.

LOIS. M'am, would you care to sample the latest Dior?

THE FELLOWSHIP. Back in 1936, Bill was finishing up a twelve-step call at Towns Hospital, when he was called into the office of the hospital's founder and director, Charles Towns.

CHARLES. Come in Bill. Have a seat. I think it's a shame that you are financially so hard up. All around you these drunks are getting well and making scratch. But you're giving this work full time, and you're broke. It isn't fair.

BILL. I'm being provided for, I have a roof over my head. For now ...

CHARLES. Nonsense, for all you've done you deserve more than just getting by! Look at this financial statement. This shows the kind of money the hospital used to make back in the 1920's. Good old Prohibition! It should be doing just as well now, and it would, if only you'd help me –

BILL. If I can help, of course I will, just tell me how.

CHARLES. I knew you would say that! Here's what I'm thinking, Bill. Why don't you focus all your work with other alcoholics here, inside Towns hospital. Join my staff, as a lay therapist. I tell you, you'll be more successful than anybody in the field!

BILL. Now, I wouldn't go that far ...

CHARLES. Enough with the modesty, Bill. What will it take? Name it! I'll give you an office, a decent drawing account –

BILL. Charlie ...

CHARLES. And a hefty slice of the profits! Look, three years ago when Silkworth began to tell me of the idea of helping drunks by spirituality, I thought this was crackpot stuff, but I've changed my mind. Some day this bunch of ex-drunks of yours will fill Madison Square Garden!

BILL. Madison Square Garden!

CHARLES. And I don't see why you and your wife should starve in the meanwhile!

LOIS. M'am? M'am, would you ... young miss?

BILL. I'd like to think on it.

TOWNS. Think fast. I have a board meeting tomorrow. I'll need an answer by the morning. *(He exits.)*

BILL. The laborer ... "The laborer is worthy of his hire!"

THE FELLOWSHIP. Racing back to Brooklyn, Bill was on fire.

BILL (*lifting Lois in the air excitedly*). "The laborer is worthy of his hire!" Right out of scripture Lo', right there in black and white, "The laborer is worthy of his hire"! How can we argue with that?

LOIS. What are you going on about? What has gotten into you?

THE FELLOWSHIP. He told her all about the meeting.

A speedy pantomime.

LOIS. That ... that's certainly news, it's an idea, I'll admit.

BILL. I thought you would be more excited. A regular paycheck, Lo! You wouldn't have to slave away at the store. I'm your husband. After all these years, it's time I take care of you!

LOIS. Shhh. Go on in, the meeting needs to start and I want to have dinner on the table as soon as it's over. Why don't you bring it up with the other members, and their families too ...

The meeting begins.

FITZ. Let's begin with a silent meditation. (*Barely a moment passes before Bill jumps up.*)

BILL. Friends, you won't believe what has happened. It's a miracle, our little group is on the verge of great things, we're moving up and out and big things are about to happen!

THE FELLOWSHIP. He told them his story.

A speedy pantomime.

BILL. And I told him I would sleep on it ... So whaddaya think? Well, someone say something, don't just look at me. What do you think? Out with it!

FITZ. We know how hard up you are Bill. It bothers us a lot.

HANK. It sure does.

FITZ. We've wondered what we could do about it. But I think I speak for everyone here when I say that what you're now proposing ... well, it bothers us an awful lot more.

BILL. What?

JIMMY. I think what Fitz is getting at is ... well, don't you see, you can never become a professional ... none of us can!

FITZ. As generous as Towns' been to us, we can't tie this thing up with his hospital or any other for that matter! You say that his offer is ethical –

BILL. Sure it is!

FITZ. That's right, it's ethical, but what we've got won't run on ethics only.

LOIS. It has to be better.

FITZ. His idea is good, but ... it isn't good enough. This is a matter of life and death, Bill, and nothing but the very best will do. Haven't you said, right here in this meeting, that sometimes the good is –

SYBIL. Is the enemy of the best.

FITZ. This is a plain case of it. Please don't do this to us.

BILL. Is this how everyone feels? "The laborer is worthy of his hire..." I was so certain I knew God's will for me in this matter, that the voice I heard all the way home was His voice but ... it must have been my own. If this is the conscience of our group, what greater direction can I ask for? I'll turn down the offer. My work with alcoholics will stay non-professional.

SYBIL. Bill listened to the group conscience and –

BILL. Thank God –

THE FELLOWSHIP. He obeyed.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FIVE

SYBIL. Imagine the sacrifice that took, to be flat broke, on the verge of homelessness and to turn down your dream job, all for the sake of your A.A. group.

JUNE. That's nuts. I look out for numero uno, man. If I don't take care of my business, nobody else will.

SYBIL. That's the kicker about Tradition One, when we put the group first, we get a life beyond our wildest dreams.

JUNE. That doesn't make sense. I don't get it.

SYBIL. You stick around, you will.

Bill and Hank sell stock to members of the audience. AD LIB.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Hank and Bill tried for months to raise funds by selling shares of stock in the book, first to other members. And then their families.

RUTH. Hank, stop trying to sell shares to my grandpa, he's on his death-bed for God's sake!

HANK. Hey, if he hangs on for another month, he'll be swimming in dough!

RUTH. You keep it up and you'll be swimming in the Hudson! Now blow!

THE FELLOWSHIP. They managed to pull together enough for a small printing of sample copies. Hank got a great deal on the paper from the printer, who was trying to unload an overstock of extra thick oversized paper.

RUTH. Jeepers, Hank, it's gigantic!

HANK. Ain't it the bee's knees?

RUTH. Sure, the cat's meow, the duck's quack and a flea's elbow all in one.

HANK. I tell you, books this big get taken seriously! It's bigger than a gosh darn Bible! And you know how those fly off the bookshelves!

RUTH. Well it sure is one big book.

BILL. Big book? The Big Book, hey I like the ring of that!

Beat.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Our fellowship caught another break, in the spring of 1940, when Bill was introduced through Lois' brother to one of the most important social reformers and philanthropists of their time –

ROCKEFELLER. A leader of industry! The great reformer and humanitarian!

THE FELLOWSHIP. And the most famous tea-totaler of that time –

ROCKERFELLER. My father!

SYBIL. John Rockefeller, Jr.

ROCKERFELLER. Nelson Rockefeller, pleased to meet you, Mr. Wilson, Mr...?

HANK (*shaking his hand enthusiastically*). Hank, Mr. Rockefeller, you can call me Hank!

ROCKEFELLER. I'll tell you Mr. Wilson, my father has with great interest read the reports about your group and the results you gentlemen are getting,

incredible. Unheard of really. As you know, my family's own efforts against John Barleycorn have been less than successful –

THE FELLOWSHIP. The Rockefellers were a driving force behind the 18th Amendment – Prohibition!

BILL. It's a great honor to meet you, sir, and for the introduction to your father.

ROCKERFELLER. Let's cut to the chase Mr. Wilson, what can my father and I do for you?

HANK. I've put together a prospectus –

BILL. All we really need, sir, is seed money to help with the printing and publication of our book.

ROCKEFELLER. I see...

BILL. Profits from the sales – we expect thousands –

HANK. Millions! As you can see here –

ROCKEFELLER (*interrupting*). Mr. Wilson –

SYBIL. What he said next was a big turning point for A.A.

JUNE. I bet, a big fat check fixes everything.

SYBIL. Does it? Nelson Rockefeller looked Bill and Hank dead in the eyes and said –

ROCKEFELLER. Won't money spoil this thing? After all a professional class would spoil the whole effect of working man-to-man.²

BILL. Well, we –

HANK. What Bill means –

ROCKEFELLER. No, no, the accumulation of property and prestige, this sort of thing it could be a fatal diversion to your work. It won't do for you fellows at all, not at all, it could only come to a sticky end.

BILL. Then what did you and your father have in mind ...?

ROCKERFELLER (*puts his arm around Bill's shoulder*). Tell me, Mr. Wilson, how do you feel about roast duck?

Ruth hands out invitations to the audience, ad libs with them.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The next week, 187 engraved dinner invitations were sent out to the friends of the Rockefeller dynasty.

Music. Dancing waiters weave on and off stage and set-up banquet tables, serving the A.A.'s courses in quick succession.

THE FELLOWSHIP. February 8, 1940. The Union Club. Park Avenue and 69th. New York City. The evening's menu included –

RUTH.

Stuffed Tomato with Crab Meat
Black Bean Soup

² In a 1954 talk in Fort Worth, Texas, Bill W. attributes this quote to John Rockefeller, Jr., who reportedly said this to Willard Richardson upon presentation of Frank Amos' report on Alcoholics Anonymous in 1937.

Roast Breast of Duckling

ROCKEFELLER. Mmmm, mmmm, to die for!

RUTH.

Apple Sauce

Lima Beans

Broiled Sweet Potatoes

And Bombe Union Club Cakes

JUNE. Oh dude, I'm getting hungry. You got any more candy?

A recorded montage of overlapping speeches from the Rockefeller dinner plays over a clockwork pantomime.

ROCKEFELLER (V.O.). *My father sends his regrets that he is unable to be present but wishes to express to his friends present how deeply he has been affected by his experience with the society of Alcoholics Anonymous. This will surely prove to be a highly interesting evening.*

BILL (V.O.). *Mr. Chairman, Mr. Rockefeller, friends and guests. If there is one thing that most people would like, it is to recover the good things they have lost. With us who have been alcoholics one of those good things is the regard of our fellow men. Therefore we are especially grateful to you gentlemen because your coming here is a mark of renewed confidence, and we want to thank you for the opportunity of presenting the little story of what has happened.*

FOSDICK (V.O.). *– the quietness, the anonymity with which this movement is carried on. Very small overhead financially, no big organization, nobody making anything out of it, no high-salaried staff, people for the love of it sharing with others the experience that has meant life to them - that is good*

work. No one is a prophet, but I suspect that there is a long road ahead of them.

ROCKEFELLER (*applauds energetically and takes the podium*). Well said Dr. Harry Emmerson Fosdick –

FOSDICK. Reverend Doctor!

ROCKEFELLER. Yes, yes, Reverend Doctor Harry Fosdick –

FOSDICK. Emerson. Reverend Doctor Harry Emerson Fosdick –

ROCKEFELLER. Doctor Reverend Emerald Henry Dickfloss, well said – Again, on behalf of my father, thank you all for coming. What an evening! And now, the question of how can we best support these gentlemen as they begin their long road to curing society's woes –

A glamorous model brings on an oversized check.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bill and the A.A.'s were on the edge of their seats, there were billions of dollars represented in that room –

ROCKEFELLER. Friends, you can all see that this is a work of good will. Its power lies in the fact that one member carries the good message to the next, without any thought of financial income or reward. Therefore, it is our belief that Alcoholics Anonymous – (*He rips the check into pieces to horror of the AA's*) – should be self-supporting so far as money is concerned. It needs only our good will, which we can offer them in abundance!

JUNE. Goodwill?

SYBIL. Pats on the shoulder, a few hand shakes and fare-thee-wells, and –

BILL. All that money –

HANK. Poof!

SYBIL. Walked right out the door.

JUNE. What a rip-off!

SYBIL. The Rockefeller dinner wasn't a total bust.

RUTH. Buck up boys, look at all the publicity we're getting! Say, another fifteen book orders came in today, we're almost to two-hundred!

HANK. Two-hundred. Swell.

BOB. It's a beginning.

HANK. Come on Clarence, I think you and I have some inventories we need to write. *(Everyone but Bill and Bob exit.)*

BILL. Rockefeller is on to something big Doc. It could be bad news if we're beholden to anyone but each other. It's our responsibility to carry on, with our own donations, members who can, putting a little money in the dish ...

BOB. Let's not forget, Sir William, that money never kept anyone sober. What will really count is giving of ourselves, each individual A.A. giving of his own effort and strength and time. Our Heavenly Father will provide everything we need, as long as we keep close to Him and perform His work well.

BILL. Well said, partner, as usual. Let's grab some chow, that roast duck wasn't very filling. *(They begin to exit.)*

LOIS *(enters in an excited state).* Bill!

JUNE. And the brownstone, were Bill and Lois able to keep their apartment?

SYBIL. No, 182 Clinton Street had been sold, it was gone for good. But Bill and Bob began to receive royalties from the book sales, they were our first special workers, and in 1941, something wonderful happened!

LOIS. Bill! We got it, we got it! I can't believe it! They're waiving the down payment and Helen is financing the property, all one-and-a-half acres!

BILL. The house in Bedford Hills with the stone fireplace? *(He lifts her and twirls her around.)* That's fantastic!

SYBIL. Stepping Stones.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Stepping Stones. A brown-shingled house, on a little hill surrounded by trees and bushes, with French doors overlooking a lush valley in upstate New York. A garden of hollyhocks, roses and Vermont rhubarb. Seven rooms including a small library, and a separate studio cabin Bill built behind the main house that became his private study –

BILL. Wit's End! Ain't that jazzy?

THE FELLOWSHIP. Wit's End, where Bill would write the Twelve and Twelve and three other books for A.A.. And in 1951, in the small library of Stepping Stones, Lois drafted a letter that would be mailed out to meetings and family members across the country –

SYBIL. Creating a separate 12 step organization for the wives, families and friends of alcoholics, with the help of her good friend, the wife of a chronic relapser –

ANNE B. (*enters*). My name is Anne B. and I am a grateful recovering member
of –

LOIS AND ANNE. Al-Anon Family Groups.

ANNE B. (*to Lois*). Welcome Home, Lois. (*They hug.*)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE SIX

A woman sits with the March 1941 Saturday Evening Post held in front of her face, mirroring the image on the magazine cover. Members of the Fellowship are scattered around the stage, socializing, drinking coffee and eating sweets.

SYBIL. Another incredible amazing simply wonderful thing happened in 1941. The book had been on shelves but the sales were, to say the least –

RUTH. Disappointing.

JUNE. What happened in 1941 ...

SYBIL. I was hoping you would ask that, glad to see your perking up! In 1941, a national magazine, the Saturday Evening Post published a glowing article with the title –

YOUNG SYBIL. “Alcoholics Anonymous”

JACK ALEXANDER (*enters*). By Jack Alexander. Non-alcoholic!

Letters begin to descend on the stage. Ruth struggles to collect and organize them.

JACK ALEXANDER. Ordinarily, diabetes isn't rated as one of the hazards of reporting, but the Alcoholics Anonymous article in the Saturday Evening Post came close to costing me my liver. In the course of my fact gathering, I drank enough Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, ginger ale, Moxie and Sweetie to float the Saratoga.

YOUNG SYBIL. Don't forget the cake!

AA #1: Cake? There's cake?

YOUNG SYBIL. And the candy!

ALL. Ooooh candy!

THE FELLOWSHIP.

Abba Zaba!
Baked Beans!
Chico-Sticks!
Laffy Taffy!
Licorice!
Laces!
Dots!
Dips!

ALL. Red hots!

JACK ALEXANDER. And of course, the heavily sweetened coffee so loved by alcoholics at their gatherings.

ALL. COFFEE! *(They toast.)*

THE FELLOWSHIP.

Prost!
Salud!
Cin cin!
Cheers!

ALL. L'Chaim! *(They chug the rest of their coffee and dance.)*

JUNE. I could go for some cake and coffee AND another cigarette!

SYBIL (*pulls out some candy from her purse, which June devours*). In 1941, the Saturday Evening Post had a circulation of over 3,000,000! Everyone read the Post, I mean everyone, all across the country – politicians, bankers, farmers and factory workers. Letters from around the country began to flood the Saturday Evening Post and New York offices.

BILL (*enters, reading the Post*). "In the larger cities, AA groups give big parties on New Year's and other holidays, at which gallons of coffee and soft drinks are consumed. All alcoholics, drunk or sober, like to gab. They are among the most society-loving people in the world, which may help to explain why they got to be alcoholics in the first place." He nailed it!

RUTH. Look at all these letters! And the Post just called and said they were sending us three more boxes! What are we going to do, pal?

BILL. Do? We're going to answer them, of course.

RUTH. All of them?

BILL. Do we have any other choice?

RUTH (*she grabs a stack*). I'll take the West Coast.

JACK ALEXANDER. I guess the letters will keep coming in for years because I know that every one of them springs from a mind of an alcoholic or someone close to him, undergoing a type of hell that Dante would have gagged at. And I know too that this victim is on the way to recovery, if he really wants to recover.

THE FELLOWSHIP (WOMEN). Or if SHE really wants to ...

SYBIL. See, one letter came from a gal in Los Angeles ...

YOUNG SYBIL. My name is Sybil and I'm an alcoholic!

BLACKOUT.

INTERMISSION.

ACT TWO

SCENE SEVEN

THE FELLOWSHIP. Act Two. Coming of Age

JUNE. Wake up Sybil! Sybil!

SYBIL (*eyes fly open*). Oh dear, did I just fall asleep?

JUNE. You've been out like a light for the last ten minutes.

SYBIL. Oh my god, do you know what this means? I don't need booze to pass out in public anymore!

JUNE. I got some coffee and a brownie. So ... what's the skinny? (*With a mouthful of brownies.*) What'd you write in the letter?

SYBIL. Oh it was a wonderfully pitiful letter! I had somehow found myself all the way up in San Francisco, in a Sultan Turkish Bath. I had bought a Saturday Evening Post – 5 cents! -- to have something to read while I sweated out my recent bender. Feeling hopeful for the first time in years, I asked the attendant for pen, paper and a stamp.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Los Angeles, California. March 1941

YOUNG SYBIL. "Dear Mr. A.A. –

"I read about your cure in the Post article. Please oh please will you send your A.A. ambulance to come take me away? I'm 32 years old and I've tried to stop drinking for seventeen years! I've tried with all my might, I swear – on the graves of my two dead husbands, and the life of my dear Dickie-boo – "

SYBIL. Hubby #3, Dick Maxwell

YOUNG SYBIL. "I've done everything I can think of to control this demon inside of me. I've switched from scotch to brandy to natural wines – "

SYBIL. I was a grape-picker in my twenties, I know my natural wines!

YOUNG SYBIL. "I've taken a trip, not taken a trip, sworn off forever – "

SYBIL. With AND without a solemn oath

YOUNG SYBIL. "And committed myself to an asylum. If anyone deserves to be rescued by a shiny white A.A. ambulance, it's poor old little me."

SYBIL. Signed, sealed and delivered. And three days later, back home in Los Angeles, I received a letter, special air-mail delivery from Ruth Hock, God Bless her!

RUTH. "Dear Sybil –

"You needn't come back to New York. There's a group now in Los Angeles. They're very small and they've had their struggles. They meet every Friday night at the Elks Temple. You'll be very welcomed I'm sure. They have no women alcoholics in California!"

JUNE. No women alcoholics in California?

SYBIL (*laughs*). Remember I was the first woman on the West Coast – oh my, how they made a fuss over me when they found out I was an alcoholic.

The Los Angeles "Founders", Mort J., Cliff W. and Frank R, enter.

FRANK. This is a regular meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in California. We're a band of ex-drunks who gather together to OBTAIN and MAINTAIN sobriety on a PERMANENT basis with NO – MENTAL – RESERVATIONS ... WHATSOEVER!

YOUNG SYBIL. What an order! I can't go through with it.

SYBIL. I was in a room with 10 or 12 men and a handful of women. I sat in the back row, with blood shot eyes, a nervous tic (*Young Sybil's eye and shoulder twitch*) and I didn't dare speak to or look at anyone.

FRANK. Now that the meeting has convened, as is our custom, ladies, please leave.

JUNE. What the hell?!

SYBIL. Remember, it was 1941 and Al-Anon hadn't been created yet. The wives of the alcoholics were perfectly used to leaving when the meeting started and waiting in the lobby. But I thought they cooked this up to kick me out, and it worked! I went into hysterics, got into my car, drove to the nearest bar and got very –

YOUNG SYBIL (*slurring*). Verrrryyy...

SYBIL. Drunk!

YOUNG SYBIL (*to someone in the audience*). Drunk? Who you calling drunk, who-da-ya think you're talking to? My sweet Dickie-boo, he made a respectable woman out of me! No more taxi hall – 10 cents a dance – sailors with their grubby little paws all over me. I'm respectable now, I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous ... Hey! Hey everybody! I'm in Alcoholics Anonymous! Drinks on me! (*She sings*) "Ten cents a dance, that's what they pay meeeee, gosh how they weighhhh me downnnn ..."

She passes out and is caught by her brother, Tex A.

JUNE. And I thought I was a messy drunk!

SYBIL. I had no intention of going back of course but my brother, Tex, convinced me to come back to the meeting the following week.

YOUNG SYBIL (*opening her eyes*). Tex, put me down!

Tex, a large and robust man in cowboy boots, sneaks a drink out of a flask.

TEX. Now listen here lil' sis, it all sounds like a crock of bull to me, but hell I want to see what these crackpots are up to ... I'll come with you to this meeting. What have we (*hiccups*) – you – what have you got to lose?

SYBIL. Tex was going through it himself. We showed up the following week at the meeting. There were more people there but the impact of the Saturday Evening Post hadn't yet hit. Cliff and his sponsor Mort were there, and Frank was handing out 12th Step calls from letters sent to New York about the Post article.

FRANK. I've been saving this stack here for the last because we now have a woman alcoholic. Her name is Sybil. Come up here. Sybil, I'm putting you in charge of all the women!

TEX. Kicked out the first week, now in charge the second! Sis, these guys are plumb crazy.

YOUNG SYBIL. Shhhh. (*To Frank*) I don't think that's a very good idea. How can I stay sober a whole week? I haven't even read the book yet. What could you possibly tell me that would make any difference when I leave here tonight?

FRANK. You're asking me how you can stay sober until next week, and I tell you, it's very simple. Somewhere in this book you haven't read, it says --

MORT. "When all other measures fail ..."

CLIFF. "— work with another alcoholic will save the day."

FRANK. You take these letters, and you go out and make these 12 step calls and bring these women back with you next week. Your brother will keep you company, won't you, Tex? *(Looks surprised, but nods.)*

SYBIL. Terrified as I was, I was desperate. Tex drove me all around LA to make those 12th Step calls –

Young Sybil and Tex argue. He pushes her towards a "door", she tries to run off, he won't let her and they get into a sibling scuffle. He rings the doorbell and hides behind her.

YOUNG SYBIL. Hello there. Did you write a letter to New York asking about a drinking problem? I wrote one just like it. I went down and I looked them over, and they look good. I don't know how they're doing it. But they're doing it alright. So if you want to quit drinking, as badly as I want to quit drinking, why don't you come with me next week, and we'll find out ... together.

SYBIL. And let me tell you, June, I know this program works, because I never again had a drink from that day on!

TEX. And neither have I.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE EIGHT

THE FELLOWSHIP. As AA membership and the number of groups grew around the country, cities began to form their own Central Offices to print schedules and man phone lines. Each one had their own set of rules and regulations affecting local groups.

JUNE. What kind of rules?

SYBIL. Well what sorts of rules do most societies and clubs have after-all? Regulations about who could and could NOT join, who was in charge and who most certainly was not. Let's stay right here in Los Angeles, for example, the Founders got up to a whole load of nonsense – though all well-intentioned, of course.

MORT. We should have a president.

CLIFF. A vice-president.

FRANK. And most importantly, a membership committee.

MORT, CLIFF AND FRANK. Yes, yes, most important!

TEX. If that don't take the rag off the bush. *(To the Founders)* This'll all come to cropper, if you blowhards keep it up. *(Storms off.)*

SYBIL. In 1942, my brother Tex got tired of the shenanigans, not to mention the long drive to downtown! He started a basement meeting in Huntington Park

–

TEX *(re-entering on a different part of the stage).* Hey there, my name is Tex and I want to welcome y'all to the "Hole in the Ground" meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in California.

TEX. Now ain't this a hog-killing time! Good to see so many of you made it tonight. I know our digs ain't fancy but what matters is that we're gathered together here tonight to help each other stay sober and carry the message to the suffering alcoholic. Any drunk is welcome and any drunk who's sober for the night can share.

MORT. What's all this nonsense about full participation?

CLIFF. He's calling it an open discussion, no speaker, everybody talks!

MORT. By God, gentleman, we must take action before this fool destroys A.A. in California!

SYBIL. So what did Mort, Frank and the rest of the old-timers do?

CLIFF. I've hired a lawyer! He says we can legally incorporate A.A. for the whole state of California!

FRANK. And if we legally own A.A. in California, then we can control the spread of meetings in the entire state, make sure they're doing meetings "right" –

CLIFF. Hand out charters to new groups –

MORT. With Chairs we have vetted and approved. Brilliant gentlemen, congratulations, we have saved A.A. in California!

MORT, FRANK AND CLIFF *(with childish glee)*. Yay!

FRANK *(To Tex)*. We're going to incorporate A.A. You keep up that renegade meeting, we'll sue you and shut you down!

CLIFF AND FRANK. Yeah!

TEX. Go ahead and try blue nose, and while you're at it, why don't you try to incorporate a sunrise too? You'll see, pretty soon there'll be hundreds of groups in Southern California! Thousands!

SYBIL. Was my brother right!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Membership skyrocketed and the executive committee's plan to incorporate A.A. failed miserably.

MORT. Horsefeathers!

FRANK. Baloney!

CLIFF. Ah applesauce!

The LA alkies start to argue again.

SYBIL. As A.A. grew bigger in Los Angeles, so did our troubles. There were now two meetings in Southern California –

MIKE (*enters*). Three!

CLIFF, FRANK AND MORT. THREE?! (*Mort faints.*)

SYBIL. The mother group downtown on Friday night.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Hole in the Ground in Huntington Park on Wednesday night –

SYBIL. And now a third meeting on –

MIKE. Wednesday night!

TEX AND YOUNG SYBIL. Wednesday?

CLIFF, MORT AND FRANK. Wednesday?

SYBIL. That's right Wednesday. The same night as Tex's meeting. And guess where?

MIKE. Huntington Park!

TEX AND SYBIL. Huntington Park?!

SYBIL. In Huntington Park!

JIMMY (*passing through*). Criminey, that's some echo in here.

SYBIL. Huntington Park. (*She points.*) Right over there across the street from the Hole in the Ground!

JUNE. Dude, not cool.

YOUNG SYBIL (*to Mike*). Listen here knucklehead –

They are interrupted as an argument breaks out among the LA AA's who are angrily waiving dollar bills at each other.

SYBIL. And then the money started rolling in! What a mess!

MORT. Now that the issue of Irma L. has been settled, we have one last order of business. We've got about \$500 tucked away in the bank. We can keep building this balance, but let's hear some ideas how this money can help the suffering alcoholic. Who wants to go first?

A storm of hands shoot up and the Los Angeles members rise to their feet and begin yelling and arguing amongst themselves again.

SYBIL. All hell broke loose again!

JUNE. Even I could see that coming!

SYBIL. For three Friday nights in a row, all a newcomer heard about was what to do with that damn \$500.

JUNE. Mo' money, mo' problems.

CLIFF. Everything is falling apart! What are we going to do?

FRANK. I know, I'll write a memorandum!

CLIFF. Enough with the memorandums and decrees, all these rules and divisions, we're tearing ourselves to shreds! Let's talk to New York, to Bill!

BILL (*answering a letter at Wit's End*). "Dear Cliff –

"I'm afraid I can't tell you what to do. Our experience has taught us that its best if each group manages its affairs exactly as it pleases. Take heart, we believe a group can survive any amount of battering as long as it has sobriety as its sole objective and they are careful not to do anything that would harm A.A. as a whole. Each group has the right to be wrong! That said, here in New York, we have found it best that A.A. ought to be poor, lest problems of money, wealth and prestige divert us from our primary purpose. I suggest that you do what every A.A. does during times of disturbance – "

MORT. We made a fearless and searching –

ALL. GROUP inventory.

CLIFF. We took stock and figured out –

TEX. That we're all chiefs and no Indians.

FRANK. Trusted servants and not leaders.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The mother group threw out all the titles and committees and created a system of rotating commitments. The next Friday night when Mort brought up the \$500 –

MORT. Returning to the issue of our bank balance – (*Fighting immediately breaks out again. Tex whistles.*) Shut the hell up, I've got the damn treasurer's report and here's what he says –

THE FELLOWSHIP. Aside from a small prudent reserve –

MORT. We're broke! We sent all the damn money to New York – no money, no problem! Now let's get back to the business of saving drunks, for God's sake!

Applause.

YOUNG SYBIL. Come on Tex, it's Wednesday and we've got to start our meeting.

TEX (*at Hole in the Ground*). My name is Tex and welcome to the Hole in the Ground meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in Southern California. Good to see so many of you made it ... (*He pauses.*) You know folks, tonight, I'd like to do something different. Most of you have heard by now about Mike's meeting being held tonight, right across the way there – (*Boos from the Hole in the Ground meeting members*). Now hold on, don't get your britches in a

bunch! The way I see it, well, we tosspots can either stick together or hang separately. In the spirit of unity, I say we mosey on over across the street and support our brand new meeting! Who's with me?

Everyone applauds and joins Tex in shaking Mike's hands.

SYBIL. As for the membership committee, we had the best in the world –

FRANK. John Barleycorn and Mama Fate.

CLIFF. They work 24 hours a day –

MORT. Double time on weekends!

TEX. Triple time on holidays.

YOUNG SYBIL. They'll send us all the drunks we need.

MIKE. Come on' Tex, I'm treating you to an ice cold root beer. *(They exit.)*

MALE VOICE (V.O.). Sybil! Where do you think you're going? Another meeting?
Do you have to keep going out all the time?

YOUNG SYBIL. Dickie-boo, I'm meeting with Irma tonight and –

MALE VOICE (V.O.). Can't we have any kind of home life? I liked you better
when you were drinking Sybil. It's either me or A.A.

YOUNG SYBIL. Goodbye Dick.

Tex enters with her suitcase.

SYBIL. I left that big beautiful house without a penny to my name and didn't look back once.

JUNE. Right on! Slap me some skin.

SYBIL. That was the end of my third marriage.

JUNE. And #4?

SYBIL. Dear old Jim ...

JIM. My name is Jim W. and I am an alcoholic – *(He takes her suitcase and kisses her hand, then turns to the audience)* – and a compulsive gambler.

SYBIL. He struggled for so many years.

JIM *(drops her hand and suitcase).* Come on' Red Rum, daddy needs a new pair of shoes! No! Get up you dumb mare –

YOUNG SYBIL. Jim, honey.

JIM. Lay off – No! Oh god! No no no no no. *(He drinks out of a flask and looks in his wallet. Turning to Sybil.)* Syb –

YOUNG SYBIL. Not another penny Jim. Goodbye.

Tex reaches to pick up her suitcase again.

YOUNG SYBIL. No Tex, I've got it this time. *(She carries her own suitcase off.)*

SYBIL. I don't regret a single thing. There were great works in store for Jim.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Sybil's ex-husband, Jim W., founded Gamblers Anonymous in 1957 in Los Angeles. A few years later Jim took a woman, who was neither an alcoholic nor a gambler, through the Twelve Steps to help solve her problem too.

ROZANNE O. My name is Rozanne and I am a compulsive overeater.

SYBIL. OA, GA, and don't you know, Narcotics Anonymous all started here in Los Angeles too!

JUNE. Cool beans.

THE FELLOWSHIP. In the last seven decades, AA and Al-Anon have inspired over one-hundred other Twelve Step organizations around the world!

THE OTHER FELLOWSHIPS *(may be played by one or multiple actors, or the actor playing Rozanne).*

I am – I am – I am –
An Addict
A Junkie,
A Pothead
A Smoker
A Debtor
A Co-dependent
A Sex – And Love! – Addict
A Survivor of Incest
An Underearner
A Clutterer
An Online Game Addict
A Food Addict –
In Recovery.

SYBIL. So many fellowships, so little time ...

THE FELLOWSHIP. And so we learned –

BILL (*cigarette in hand*). Shoemaker, stick to thy last! Better do one thing well, than many terribly.

Rozanne snatches the cigarette out of his mouth and admonishes him playfully. She exits.

THE FELLOWSHIP. An A.A. group's primary purpose is –

IRMA. To carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE NINE

SYBIL. Now back east ...

JUNE. Wait a second, who's Irma L.? You said something about Irma L.

SYBIL. Oh, that's a sad story, June, but an important one. Irma was one of my very first sponsees ...

IRMA. Queers, crackpots and fallen women, if there are any of you in the house tonight, raise your hand!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Irma, a fallen woman, just like Sybil Doris Adams –

JUNE. Stratton Hart Maxwell Willis Corwin, I got it Sybil.

THE FELLOWSHIP. This was during a time when ladies wore hats and gloves, and "respectable women" were not usually found in a bar or at a whoopie party.

SYBIL. And Irma had seen her share of whoopee parties.

IRMA. And how.

SYBIL. Homeless and penniless, I took her into my home. *(Young Sybil sit down with the Big Book, as Irma writes her Fourth Step inventory.)*

THE FELLOWSHIP. Like many alcoholic women at the time, Irma had burned all her bridges with family, her friends and employers –

IRMA. I'm resentful at Mrs. O'Neil, for kicking me out of the boarding house, just cause I had a couple of gentlemen callers –

SYBIL. We were looked down upon, even more so than male alcoholics. And not just by normies.

IRMA. I'm resentful at Frank's wife, cause she had the nerve to tell me to stay away from Frank and to go start my own meeting –

SYBIL. Many of the wives and family of the male A.A. members complained about us taking part in the meetings. They called us "tarts" and –

WIFE (*enters*). Nymphomaniacs!

SYBIL. That's the real reason women's meetings began to form in the 1940's. We had to start our own meetings because in most A.A. groups the men and their families didn't want any of us around. Same thing happened to early black members, they weren't allowed to attend regular A.A. meetings, or they'd be told to sit in the back, be quiet and not drink the coffee.

JUNE. Down with the Establishment! Power to the people!

WIFE. Remember, under every skirt –

CLIFF. There's a slip! Yes dear ...

JUNE. Men suck.

SYBIL. Save it for your fourth step, sweetheart. So here comes Irma L. –

THE FELLOWSHIP. Low-class, uneducated –

IRMA. I'm resentful at my third grade teacher for making fun of me when I couldn't recite my letters right –

SYBIL. Irma with that questionable reputation.

IRMA. I'm resentful at –

YOUNG SYBIL. I think that's enough for now. Now tell me, what do you think YOUR part is?

IRMA. My part? I don't know.

YOUNG SYBIL. The book says I'm self-centered, dishonest –

JUNE. Full of fear.

IRMA. And self-seeking too. Yeah, I can see all that Sybil. And I want to change.

SYBIL. Irma was serious as a heart attack when it came to sobriety.

IRMA (*reading*). "If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through."

SYBIL. I watched A.A. help Irma get cleaned up, get her first job in sobriety, and then I watched A.A. help Irma get her first apartment.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The promises were starting to come true for her ...

IRMA. "They are being fulfilled among us-sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize – "

JUNE. If we work for them. (*Sybil looks surprised.*) What? I listen ... sometimes. Does it actually work, Sybil? I mean the Steps.

SYBIL. All I know is that it worked for me and for every woman I've sponsored who stayed and gave it their best college try. The only wrong way to do the steps is to not do them at all.

JUNE. I guess it doesn't hurt to try. I mean if I'm coming to these fruity meetings anyway, I might as well do the steps. It's not like I've got anything else going on.

SYBIL. That sounds like a very good idea. When Irma got to Step Twelve, she threw herself into service work.

IRMA. Right! I'm going to visit the women's jail, there'll be a ton of fallen women there I can help! Thank you, Sybil.

YOUNG SYBIL. I'm only passing on what I've been shown. Now go save some nymphomaniacs, you old tart!

IRMA. Takes one to know one!

YOUNG SYBIL. You're darn tooting!

SYBIL. Irma had a deep and honest desire to stay sober and to work with other alcoholic women. But in those days, before the Third Tradition was written, that wasn't enough.

JUNE. Why not?

THE FELLOWSHIP. There were no guidelines to protect us from the protectors of A.A.

MORT. Gentleman, you know the matter at hand. You've heard the complaints. Now how do you vote? All in favor of the motion? *(They all raise their hands.)*
Passed.

SYBIL. A few days later a letter arrived in Irma's mailbox. The date was –

HISTORICAL RECORDING OF ROOSEVELT (V.O.). *December 7, 1941. A date which will live in infamy.*

THE FELLOWSHIP. The U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor had suffered a devastating attack by the Japanese military. The United States was now at war.

SYBIL. That Sunday night everyone in Los Angeles was afraid that the city would also be attacked and bombed. There was a citywide blackout; we were all so terrified.

THE FELLOWSHIP. That was the very same day Irma opened and read this letter.

MORT, CLIFF, FRANK. "Dear Mrs. Livoni – "

MORT. "At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Los Angeles Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, it was decided that your attendance at group meetings was no longer desired."

CLIFF. "This action has been taken for reasons which should be most apparent to yourself."

FRANK. "It was decided that, should you so desire, you may appear before members of this committee and state your attitude."

CLIFF. "We shall consider the matter closed and that your membership is terminated."

MORT. Signed, "Alcoholics Anonymous."

CLIFF. Alcoholics Anonymous.

FRANK. Alcoholics Anonymous.

IRMA. Signed Alcoholics Anonymous (*Irma folds up the letter and calmly puts it in her purse.*)

JUNE. No way, did that really happen?

SYBIL. This was back in 1941, when there was only one meeting in the entire state of California.

IRMA. If we are painstaking about this phase of our development ...

SYBIL. Irma had nowhere else to go, no one else to turn to. No other group in California that she could ask for help. It was Christmas time, the stores were decorated and now poor Irma was all alone in a city preparing for war.

IRMA. We will be amazed before we are ... we are ...

SYBIL. Imagine being shunned by your family, and by society, and by the only group of people who were on your side, your A.A. group. Imagine them shutting the door on you and sending you such a letter.

IRMA. Are these extravagant promises ... we think ... we think ... Oh God what am I going to do? (*She runs off.*)

SYBIL. I never saw Irma again. She never came back to another meeting. She left A.A. and this disease killed her. (*Tex consoles Young Sybil.*)

JUNE. How could that have happened?

SYBIL. In the early years, people did all sorts of things, thinking they were protecting the fellowship. Many groups made many mistakes with the best of intentions.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Years later in the Twelve and Twelve, Bill would write –

BILL (*at his desk at Wit's End*). "At last experience taught us that to take away any alcoholic's full chance was sometimes to pronounce his death sentence, and often to condemn him to endless misery. Who dared to be – "

MORT. JUDGE

FRANK. JURY

CLIFF. EXECUTIONER

BILL. "Of his own sick brother?"

YOUNG SYBIL. Or sister. (*The Founders exit.*)

TEX (*he kisses Young Sybil's forehead and then turns to Older Sybil*). Sis, I've got to leave the story now too.

YOUNG SYBIL. Tex?

SYBIL (*turns to Tex*). Tex. No, don't go. Not yet.

He leaves.

JUNE. Sybil?

SYBIL (*clearing up, she turns to June again*). My brother Tex, he passed away in 1952. Why am I ... oh yes, of course. (*Rummages through her purse.*) Now where is it?

JUNE. What are you looking for? (*Sybil finds and pulls out a sheet of paper.*)

SYBIL. I knew I had a copy, I always carry one around. Here, take a look at this.

JUNE. What is it? A letter.

SYBIL. From Bill. I wrote him when Tex died. I keep a copy of his reply in my purse, in case I meet someone who's lost a loved one too.

BILL. "My dear Sybil –

"Your letter has stirred me more than anything in recent years. The real test of our way of life is how it works when the chips are down. Though I've sometimes seen A.A.'s make rather a mess of living, I've never seen a sober one make a bad job of dying.

"In God's house there are many mansions. And somehow or other, I see Tex sitting out on the porch in the sunlight of one of those mansions, talking with another drunk, and I believe that's okay. When my time comes, I wish to do the same.

"But I will tell you, Syb, that life is nothing but a long day in school, and some of our lessons are hard, and some of our lessons are easy. And it doesn't matter much what happens to us. It is what we do with our experience that counts. Keep on passing along what you have learned, for what more can one alcoholic ask of another?"

"Affectionately, Bill"

SYBIL (*making eye contact with Young Sybil*). It'll be okay. You'll be okay.

YOUNG SYBIL (*nods gratefully and smiles*). I know. So will you.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TEN

A bundled up AA, the ANONYMOUS CELEBRITY, disguised behind a hat, scarf and sunglasses, walks past Sybil and June, glancing around.

SYBIL. Hey there hon', you go right on in, no reporters buzzing around tonight.

ANONYMOUS CELEBRITY. Thanks Sybil. *(One last furtive glance before entering the meeting.)*

JUNE. Far-out, is that –

SYBIL. You got it.

JUNE. I didn't know she was in A.A. Right on.

SYBIL. Hurray for Hollywood.

JUNE. I loved the last one –

SYBIL. It was a good one –

JUNE. I heard on TV about a car accident –

SYBIL. No better wake-up call than a televised DWI.

JUNE. Whad-da-ya know. I mean I knew what's-his-name was in the rooms – with the mustache and the big –

SYBIL. Oh what's-his-name, right him! He chairs the underground Sunday Palisades breakfast meeting.

JUNE. Everyone knows about him, I mean he talks about A.A. in magazines and stuff. Isn't that against the rules?

SYBIL. Rules?

JUNE. Oh, Tradition, Tradition! You know what I mean –

SYBIL. There's a world of difference between a rule and a tradition. So, you want to talk about celebrities? Well, let me tell you, little sister, we have a long and juicy history of celebrities coming to A.A.. Not just in Los Angeles, but back in Ohio and New York.

Lights up on ROLLIE, MARTY and LILLIAN.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The very first case of an anonymity break at the national level happened in 1940 ...

The crack of bat and the roar of a crowd can be heard. Lights up on ROLLIE, a catcher for the Cleveland Indians.

THE FELLOWSHIP. "Rollickin' Rollie" Hemsley was a catcher for the Cleveland Indians. He was on the way out of the big leagues when the team's manager contacted Dr. Bob.

BOB (*on the phone*). A ball player or a bum, it makes no difference to us. Bring him right down and I'll have the good sister admit him.

Sister Ignatia ministers to Rollie in a wheelchair.

ROLLIE (*to Bob and Clarence*). I started drinking in Pickford, Maryland, that's where I started my baseball career in 1925. I've been playing in the majors now for 11 years. When I came over to the Indians, they trained us in New Orleans. What a place to train! And we're down on Bourbon Street, I got into

a fight. My right eye was closed and my left halfway closed, so I couldn't make it to practice. A photographer came up to my room, knocked on my door, and when I opened it, he had a camera, I tried to slam the door, but he pushed his way in and put me up against the wall to take a picture of my bad eye. So I grabbed a dresser drawer and I set it right down over his head. I broke his camera and boy, he flew down that hallway!

SISTER IGNATIA. Atta boy! *(The men turn to her in surprise.)* I mean – Lord have mercy!

ROLLIE. That's how I got the name "Rollickin' Rollie." I sure am glad you fellows know what you're talking about. You know, if someone gave me tips about baseball and I found out he never played, I wouldn't pay much attention to him. It's the same thing with alcohol. You know what you're talking about, that's clear, and you've got my attention. Just tell me what to do to get this monkey off my back. I'll do anything.

CLARENCE. Then let's get crackin'. On your knees Hemsley, it's time to jump ship.

ROLLIE. My knees? Are you kidding?

CLARENCE. You hit your knees to catch a wild pitch, don't you? *(Rollie kneels.)* Doc, you want to do the honor?

BOB. If you're truly ready, Rollie, repeat after me, Lord manage me –

CLARENCE AND ROLLIE. Lord manage me –

BOB. For I cannot manage myself.

CLARENCE AND ROLLIE. For I cannot manage myself. *(Rollie breathes in deeply. The sound of an organ charge and an excited crowd.)*

THE FELLOWSHIP. Rollie's first year sober was one of the best season's he played in the game. He caught an opening day no-hit game pitched by Bob Feller, against the Chicago White Sox. Rollie hit a triple to win the game 1-0, for the Indians. Headlines around the country rang out –

PAPARAZZO #1. Extra! Extra! Read all about it! "Hemsley Through Drinking Forever."

PAPARAZZO #2. Rollickin' Rollie "A Year Without a Drink!"

CLARENCE. Look at that! Cleveland membership has tripled, and letters are coming in from all across the country asking for the Book! This publicity is just what we needed!

BILL. I couldn't agree with Clarence more –

CLARENCE. Really? Maybe I've got to rethink this ...

BILL. This is fantastic, and it's given me some GREAT ideas.

CLARENCE. Oh hell.

PAPARAZZO #3. Give us a quote Roll's! We're running this story come hell or high water!

ROLLIE. I'm telling all this because I'm sure I can help somebody else who can't leave the bottle alone. I haven't had a drink in a year, so that proved the thing to me, and now I want others to know the reason why, so they can be helped. All thanks to – *(Bill steps in.)*

BILL. Alcoholics Anonymous! We know hundreds of men and women who were once just as hopeless as Rollie here. Nearly all have recovered, we have solved the drink problem!

PAPARAZZO #1. What's your name, pal?

BILL. Bill Wilson, Founder. That's Bill with a "B" –

PAPARAZZO #1. Yeah, I got that buddy.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Rollie's and Bill's full names and faces were printed in newspapers and magazines, and seen by thousands of fans. Bill went on the road, handing out personal interviews and pictures. He could hit the front pages, just like Rollie. In fact, Rollie was so busy training and playing ball he couldn't schedule as many interviews as Bill.

PAPARAZZO #3. Extra! Extra! Read all about it! "Bill the Broker Saving Drunks by the Thousands!"

SYBIL. Pretty soon Bill had outpaced our first big shot celebrity as A.A.'s #1 anonymity breaker.

CLARENCE. Look at this Doc, they're calling him "Bill the Broker!" showing his full name and picture. Doc, you've got to talk to him. He's hogging the big time, you're not getting your share ...

BOB. That's quite all right, I don't want my name or face in the press.

CLARENCE. But why should Bill speak for all of us! And what if all this publicity goes to his head and he gets drunk on us?

BILL (*to Lois*). Those damn fuddy-duddies and naysayers in Ohio, how can they persecute me when I'm doing so much good. It isn't fair Lo', don't they know I have the right to freedom of speech?

LOIS. Calm down Bill.

BILL. The public has a right to know who I am – I mean who we are – how else are all the rummies out there going to find us? Anonymity makes perfect sense for the average A.A., but Bob and I can be the exception ... can't we?

LOIS. I suppose the real question is. How many exceptions can we survive? How many other bold souls are going to feel like they need to be counted?

BILL. Wouldn't that kind of bravery do away with the stigma on alcoholics? The public will see what fine citizens we recovered drunks can make. Where's the harm in that?

Beat.

JUNE. Yeah, like why the hang up? Looking good, getting the word out ...

SYBIL. Listen to this, the next major anonymity break made A.A. look even rosier ... at first. Remember the woman I first mentioned, the one who came in nine months before me in New York? Her name was Marty, Mrs. Marty Mann.

THE FELLOWSHIP. "Women Suffer Too." 2nd, 3rd and 4th Editions. (*Music.*)

MARTY. "I entered a sanitarium for prolonged and intensive psychiatric treatment. My doctor gave me the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" to read. The first chapters were a revelation to me. I was a sick person. I was suffering from an actual disease that had a name and symptoms like diabetes or cancer or TB—and a disease was respectable, not a moral stigma!"

THE FELLOWSHIP. Marty's dream was to convince every man, woman and child in America of that simple fact. In 1944 Marty founded a national organization, the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism, to teach non-alcoholics the truth about alcoholism, emphasizing three simple concepts –

MARTY. One. Alcoholism is a disease and the alcoholic is a sick person. Two. the alcoholic can be helped and is worth helping. Three, alcoholism is a public health problem and therefore, a public responsibility. (*Applause. Paparazzi snap photos and try to ask questions. Her voice thunders over the applause.*) BUT! We must put not only moral support behind this effort but FINANCIAL support as well!

PAPARAZZI. Ms. Mann! Ms. Mann! Marty, over here, Marty!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Letters soliciting donations went out by the thousands. Letters identifying Marty Mann, not only as an alcoholic, but also as a member of –

MARTY (*on the phone*). Why Alcoholics Anonymous of course! (*Listens.*) All donations can be addressed to the Committee's new office in D.C. (*Laughs.*) The pleasure is all mine. Yes, you too! (*Hangs up.*) Bill, darling, I'm about to leave for an interview with Reader's Digest and then I'm off to lunch with Priscilla – did I tell you we found an adorable little love nest on Fire Island! If the press ever found out, my God! But enough of all that, what's on your mind?

JUNE. Love nest? Priscilla?

SYBIL. Oh yes, Priscilla P., a fashion editor for Vogue. Don't look so surprised June, they did have lesbians back in those days.

JUNE. Marty had a thing for chicks!

MARTY (*to the audience*). Big time.

BILL. That sounds splendid Marty, I'm happy for you, she's a great gal. We need to talk, my friend. The Committee's new fundraising letter arrived today at the New York office.

MARTY. Yes, we're hoping to exceed our goal for the second year in a row. The letter has a very elegant appeal, don't you agree? Emotional but not too frothy.

BILL. It's very compelling. The thing is, we can't have our name used to solicit funds, at this very moment, when we're trying to tell people that we don't want outside money, that we are self-supporting and no longer accepting donations from non-alcoholics. Something has to change.

MARTY. What are you asking, Bill?

BILL. You're doing a world of good, Marty, with your work at the public level, but A.A. can't be associated with any outside organization, no matter how wonderful. (*Gently.*) More importantly, my dear, you can't speak for A.A. and the Committee at the same time, you can't speak for A.A. at all. None of us can, not even the founder. (*Suddenly exhausted.*) Founder.

MARTY. Bill?

BILL. You know, Time Magazine called on us at Stepping Stones, they want me to be “Man of the Year.”

MARTY. That’s incredible!

BILL. “Man of the Year.” I used to dream about that sort of thing, sitting at the kitchen table drowning in a bottle of gin. That’s where I would still be if it wasn’t for A.A. I asked them, can’t you put Alcoholics Anonymous on the cover? Nope, they just wanted the founder. Founder. (*A tired laugh.*) I’m so tired of that word. I wish I could come and go at meetings like other people, without any special attention. Some days, I just want to stand up at group level and say, can’t I join A.A. too? I don’t know if Bob and I will ever have that luxury, but you still can. I realize it’s a sacrifice but one for the good of A.A. Do you understand what I’m asking Marty?

MARTY. I understand. From now on, I won’t reveal my membership and we’ll strike all language connecting the Committee to A.A. I couldn’t bear the idea of some action of mine tarnishing the name of Alcoholics Anonymous. It’s enough pressure being the voice of the Committee. Drunks like us could probably survive without the Committee, no matter how much good it does for alcohol education, but I know I can’t make it without A.A.

BILL. You’re a wonderful woman, Marty Mann.

MARTY. You old rumhound, I’m just another bozo on the bus. It wouldn’t take more than one drink to be back in the sanitarium.

BILL. Cheers to that lady lush. Let’s never forget it.

Beat.

JUNE. All right, I think I see where you’re going. But I’m still not convinced.

SYBIL. We needed more convincing too, before A.A. could really understand how vital anonymity is at the level of press, radio and ...

LILLIAN. Film! (*Staggers downstage into a spot light that keeps changing positions.*) There's drunks, and there's drunks. Me? I'm what you call an adorable drunk.

THE FELLOWSHIP. One of the most glamorous celebrity breaks in A.A. history was the story of the starlet and great torch singer, Lillian Roth.

LILLIAN (*using a chair to keep herself upright, she sings*)³.

*It seems like happiness is just a thing called Joe
He's got a smile that makes the lilacs want to grow
He's got a way that makes the angels heave a sigh
When they know little Joe's, passing by*

PAPARAZZO #2. Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

PAPARAZZO #1. "Songstress Sings then Sins!" "Lillian the Lush Loses It!"

THE FELLOWSHIP. In 1954, she wrote and published an autobiography chronicling her descent into alcoholism and how she sobered up in A.A.

SYBIL. "I'll Cry Tomorrow."

THE FELLOWSHIP. Chapter One.

³ "Happiness is a Thing Called Joe", music composed by Harold Arlen, with lyrics by Yip Harburg, from the musical *Cabin in the Sky* (1943). Reprinted with permission by EMI Music Publishing. Please contact the publishing company to obtain performance license: EMI Music Publishing, 550 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10022.

LILLIAN. "I have thought of many ways to start my story. I could begin it at a moment of triumph, when as a Hollywood star my escorts to a world premiere were Gary Cooper and Maurice Chevalier and I earned \$3,500 for an afternoon's work. That would be a glamorous beginning.

"I could begin it at an awful moment, when I stood before an open window about to leap to the pavement eleven stories below, behind me years of alcoholic horror and degradation. That would be a melodramatic beginning.

"Perhaps, as my husband suggests, the way to it is the way it happened. 'Tell it as it happened.'

"My life was never my own. It was charted before I was born."

THE FELLOWSHIP. Chapter 23.

LILLIAN. "I found myself standing before the headquarters of Alcoholics Anonymous. I hesitated, was this an evangelist society? Would people pray over me? Maybe they would teach me how to drink normally?"

BURT. Are you looking for a meeting, Miss? My name is Burt, why don't you come upstairs and have some coffee with us?

LILLIAN. What is this place? Who are these people?

BURT. These are all alcoholics. They've solved the drink problem and they're happy now. Someday you'll be happy too.

LILLIAN. Happiness ... *(To the audience)* It was there my answer came *(To Burt)* Burt, will you be my sponsor?

BURT. Sure, I'll sponsor you, baby.

SYBIL. Burt became Lillian's sponsor ...

JUNE. You jivin' me?

SYBIL. Then her business manager and not too long after that –

BURT (*taking her in his arms*). Ms. Roth, are you ready to go to any length?

LILLIAN. Half-measures avail me nothing!

BURT. Marry me, baby!

LILLIAN. Oh yes Burt, yes!

JUNE. Is that what you call the thirteenth step?

PAPARAZZI. Lillian! Show us the stone! Where will you honeymoon? Will there be champagne at the reception? Ms. Roth!

THE FELLOWSHIP. "I'll Cry Tomorrow" was an instant sensation.

BURT. Fantastic! (*Hangs up.*) Guess what baby? Your autobiography has sold 100,000 copies in the first month. It's being translated into 18 different languages!

LILLIAN. Mon Dieu! Wunderbar!

The phone rings, Burt answers.

BURT. Outstanding! Guess where we're going, baby! A concert tour! We're hitting the road and the high seas! All the way down under, baby! The great Outback!

LILLIAN (*sings*).

*Sometime the cabin's gloomy and the table bare
Then he'll kiss me and it's Christmas everywhere
Troubles fly away and life is easy go
Does he love me good?
That's all I need to know.*

Seems like happiness is just a thing called Joe.

The paparazzi snap more photos.

THE FELLOWSHIP. During her Australian tour, word of Lillian's membership in A.A. quickly spread. She was pivotal in the start of A.A. in Australia, where they say she held A.A. meetings backstage in her dressing room before concerts.

JUNE. That's what I'm talking about!

The phone rings, Burt answers.

BURT. Hot diggity dog! (*Hangs up.*) Guess who's calling, baby! MGM!

LILLIAN. No!

BURT. Yes, baby. I just sold the rights to your story! They have Susan Hayward lined up to play you!

LILLIAN. Susan Hayward! (*Beat.*) Can she even sing?

PAPARAZZI. Ms. Roth! What did you think of Susan's performance? Will you be singing together at the ceremony? Ms. Roth! What will you drink at the after-parties?

THE FELLOWSHIP. Susan Hayward was nominated for an Oscar for her portrayal of Lillian.

The phone rings, Burt answers.

BURT. Whoop-de — NOW WAIT A GOSH DARN MINUTE! (*Covering the receiver, he speaks to Lillian*) A studio exec is spreading a rumor that you've relapsed!

LILLIAN. A blatant lie!

BURT. But a dangerous one, baby.

LILLIAN. Oh Burt, what are we going to do?

BURT. Don't you worry, I know exactly what to do! (*On the phone*) Of course she's still sober and we can prove it. Alcoholics Anonymous is fully behind Lillian, and not one of us A.A.'s will hesitate to shout it to the rooftops! And you can quote me on that!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Headlines and radio broadcasts swept the nation.

PAPARAZZO #2. "A.A. Goes to Bat for One of it's Own!"

PAPARAZZO #3. "Drunks tell Hollywood to Lay Off Lillian!"

JUNE. Was it true? Did she relapse?

SYBIL. The lawsuit was dropped but the truth eventually came out that she drank again.

PAPARAZZI. Lillian! Lillian! Have you been drinking? Where did you spend the night? Where's your husband?

PAPARAZZO #1. "Starlet Boozes and Loses! Is A.A. at Fault?" Read all about it!
10 cents!

THE FELLOWSHIP. By 1964, Lillian's sober days and her marriage were over. She came home one day after a bender to find a note from Burt.

BURT. It's over ... baby.

Burt exits. The paparazzi lose interest in her.

LILLIAN (*sings*).

*Little Joe, my little Joe
Little Joe*

THE FELLOWSHIP. She died of a stroke at the age of 69. The inscription on her marker in Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Westchester County reads:

LILLIAN. "As bad as it was it was good".

Beat. Bill is slumped at his desk at Wit's End, depressed and lethargic.

LOIS (*enters*). Bill, take a walk with me in the garden. You've been hiding in here for days.

BILL. I just need to get through these letters, Lo'.

LOIS. You said that three days ago. How are you today?

BILL. I've had worse days. *(He kisses her hand.)* Tomorrow, darling, we'll take a walk tomorrow.

LOIS. The roses are finally blooming. We thought they wouldn't make it through the winter, but they did, Willie. Tomorrow you can see for yourself. *(She kisses his cheek before exiting.)*

BILL *(writing)*. "We alcoholics are the biggest rationalizers in the world; that fortified with the excuse that we are doing great things for A.A. we can, through broken anonymity, resume our old and disastrous pursuit of – "

Paparazzi snap photos of the celebrities.

ROLLIE. Personal power and –

LILLIAN. Prestige, public honors and

MARTY. Money.

SYBIL. In other words, anonymity helps keep those fool egos of ours from running hog wild after money and fame at A.A.'s expense.

JUNE. I think I get it now.

The paparazzi take off their cameras and hats and exit in silence.

BILL. Bill Wilson, Man of the Year. Greatest social architect of the 20th century. Co-Founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. *(Pulls out a page and reads.)*

"Anonymity at the level of public circulation protects us from ourselves. It is the guardian of all our traditions and the greatest symbol of self-sacrifice that we know."

(To the audience) My name is Bill. I'm an alcoholic. (He coughs violently.)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE ELEVEN

SYBIL. Look, the meetings almost over. And just in time for one last story. How the Traditions were written. It all started with those letters that Bill and Ruth answered.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Those letters together held the total experience of the groups around the country, about what practices worked, and more importantly, what didn't.

SYBIL. All the rules and schemes and well-intended nonsense.

THE FELLOWSHIP. An A.A. named Earl T, convinced Bill to share what they had learned with the fellowship at large. "He Sold Himself Short." 2nd, 3rd and 4th Editions. *(Music.)*

EARL *(enters smoking and drinking coffee).* "In 1930, I moved to Chicago. Shortly thereafter, aided by the Depression, I found that I had a great deal of spare time and that a little drink in the morning helped. By 1932, I was going on two or three day benders."

THE FELLOWSHIP. Earl founded A.A. in Chicago.

SYBIL. He's also the member described in the chapter "The Family Afterward" who relapsed after his wife nagged him about his smoking and drinking.

EARL. Easy does it, right Bill?

BILL. That's right. Live and let live! And – *(Hands Earl a little card.)*

EARL. Rule 62? *(He flips the card over.)*

BILL AND EARL. Don't take yourself too damn seriously!

EARL. That's a good one!

BILL: I wish I came up with it. A member sent that card to me in a letter, a real crackerjack! My friend, you won't believe what groups are getting up to out there. Why one member writes that they serve beer at their meetings! And just look at this list of rules we collected from meetings across the country. With so many rules, I don't think I would have qualified for membership!

EARL (*referring to Bill's written replies*). Hey, this is some good stuff! "Each group has the right to be wrong ... "Principles before personalities." Say, how about we set down some of these replies on paper, you know create a kind of safeguard, so new groups can avoid the mistakes we've made. Not rules but more like –

BILL. Tradition! And there can be twelve of them!

EARL. Twelve Traditions to go along with the Twelve Steps!

BILL. The Twelve Traditions, hey I like the ring of that!

EARL. You can write some articles, publish them in that new magazine, the one Marty and Barry started for our boys overseas, The Grapevine –

JUNE. What's the – nah, I'm just messing with you!

BILL. Now I've just got to convince the tosspots to care.

An A.A. pokes his head in.

AA. Traditions? (*Yawns loudly.*)

BILL. I'll ask Lois to dust off the old pin stripe ...

THE FELLOWSHIP. For the next five years, Bill wrote and campaigned for the adoption of the Twelve Traditions. And in 1950, he presented them for adoption at –

SYBIL. The First International Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous!

THE FELLOWSHIP. July 28 – 30, 1950.

CLARENCE (*enters smartly dressed, with a top hat*). In Cleveland! (*Sings.*)⁴

*I just got an invitation through the mails.
Your presence requested this evening, it's formal
A top hat, a white tie and tails
Nothing now could take the wind out of my sails –*

BILL (*slides in, wearing tux and tails, and snatches the hat from Clarence, singing*).

*Because I'm invited to step out this evening
With top hat, white tie and tails.*

Oh, I'm puttin' on my top hat –

CLARENCE. Hey!

BILL (*sings*). *Tyin' up my white tie*

CLARENCE. That's my hat!

⁴ "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails", music and lyrics by Irving Berlin for the film *Top Hat* (1935). Reprinted with permission by Williamson Music Company. Please contact the publishing company to obtain performance license: Williamson Music Company, 229 W. 28th Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10001.

BILL (*sings*). *Brushin' off my tails*

CLARENCE. Now that just ain't right! (*Exits in a storm.*)

BILL (*sings*).

*I'm dudein' up my shirt front
Puttin' in the shirt studs
Polishin' my nails*

(*Lois enters in a formal gown.*)

*I'm steppin' out, my dear
To breathe an atmosphere that simply reeks with class
And I trust that you'll excuse my dust when I step on the gas*

*For I'll be there
Puttin' down my top hat
Mussin' up my white tie
Dancin' in my tails.*

(*Lois and Bill dance, à la Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.*)

SYBIL. It was A.A.'s 15th Anniversary, oh what an amazing weekend it was. A.A. had finally grown up!

THE FELLOWSHIP. In attendance, members, families and friends.

BILL. Seven Thousand!

LOIS. William Griffith Wilson, you know that it's three!

BILL. I tell you Lo', it's seven!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Registration was \$1.50, \$5 if you included a ticket for the banquet.

ROLLIE (*passing through*). And for an extra two bucks, box seats for an Indians game!

SYBIL. On Saturday afternoon, thousands crowded into the Cleveland Music Hall for the Tradition meeting. I'll never forget what happened next.

THE FELLOWSHIP. July 29, 1950.

BILL. Ever reminding us we are always to place principles before personalities, that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all. Let's get down to it. Ladies and gentleman of Alcoholics Anonymous, I offer to you these twelve points to assure A.A.'s future for formal adoption. All in favor, say "Aye."

ALL. Aye!

BILL. The motion passes unanimously. I humbly present to you our Twelve Traditions! (*Cheers.*) In this fine hour, we of Alcoholics Anonymous take our destiny by the hand.

The attendees exit. Young Sybil and Jim W. get into a fight and Jim storms off, leaving Young Sybil alone.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The conference wasn't all meetings. There was a Saturday night banquet.

SYBIL. Banquets, two floors!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Two orchestras were hired, and the bands had to play their acts twice, both upstairs and down.

The Fellowship dance. Young Sybil stands glumly in a corner. She is approached by a Young Bob C.

YOUNG BOB: Miss, would you like to ...

Young Sybil and Young Bob bump into Bill and Lois and an energetic Charleston "dance-off" ensues. Everyone cheers. Waiters serve glasses of sparkling water.

THE FELLOWSHIP (*sing*).⁵

*Happy days are here again
The skies above are clear again
So let's sing a song of cheer again
Happy days are here again!*

BILL. To those on the frontiers, our internationalists, our boys in uniform!
(*Somberly*) To all our friends and members who passed before seeing us come of age in Cleveland, to Anne Smith, the mother of us all. And to Dr. Bob, who sends his regrets that he can't be here tonight to celebrate with us. Here's to Doc!

ALL. To Doc!

JUNE. Where were Dr. Bob and Anne?

⁵ "Happy Days Are Here Again", music composed by Milton Ager with lyrics by Jack Yellen. Reprinted with permission by EMI Music Publishing. Please contact the publishing company to obtain performance license: EMI Music Publishing, 550 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10022.

SYBIL. The year before, Anne had passed away. Not long after Dr. Bob was diagnosed with cancer. The first two days of the conference, he was terribly sick and couldn't leave his bed.

They drink. Lois takes Bill's hand and leads him to the dance floor. They waltz.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Gaiety soon took over.

SYBIL. We danced the night away.

BILL. Do you remember the dance in Manchester?

LOIS. You mean the one Roger tricked me into going to, and in the middle of a friendly brother-sister dance, I look over and there's my soldier, standing in the doorway grinning at me?

BILL. That's the one ...

LOIS. You said to me ... what were your exact words –

BILL. I said "I love to sail, but I hate to dance. Everyone starting at my two wooden legs. But if I could, I would ask you." And then on the veranda –

LOIS. When no one was looking ... *(She kisses him.)* I taught you to waltz! *(She leads him off stage.)*

Everyone but Young Sybil and Young Bob exit. The music ends and the lights rise but Sybil and Bob continue to dance for a couple of moments before sharing an awkwardly sweet moment when they realize the party is over.

YOUNG SYBIL. Thank you for the dance ...

YOUNG BOB. The pleasure was all mine, Miss ...?

YOUNG SYBIL (*awkwardly*). Mrs. ... Just call me Sybil. (*He reaches out his hand.*)

YOUNG BOB: Only if you call me Bob.

YOUNG SYBIL: Deal. (*They shake, and the hand-holding lingers.*) Thank you for the dance Bob.

YOUNG BOB: Anytime.

They exit, sneaking glances over their shoulders to see if the other is looking.

SYBIL. The big event was the appearance of Dr. Bob on Sunday afternoon. He had made it to the conference after all!

THE FELLOWSHIP. July 30, 1950.

BOB (*holding his side, hiding his discomfort*). I get a big thrill out of looking over a vast sea of faces like this with a feeling that possibly some small thing that I did a number of years ago, played an infinitely small part in making this meeting possible. I also get quite a thrill when I think that we all had the same problem. We all did the same things. We all get the same results in proportion to our zeal and enthusiasm and stick-to-itiveness.

If you will pardon the injection of a personal note at this time, let me say that I have been in bed five of the last seven months and my strength hasn't returned as I would like, so my remarks of necessity will be very brief.

None of us would be here today if somebody hadn't taken time to explain things to us, to give us a little pat on the back, to take us to a meeting or two, to have done numerous little kind and thoughtful acts in our behalf. So let us never get the degree of smug complacency so that we're not willing to

extend, or attempt to extend, to our less fortunate brothers, that help which has been so beneficial to us.

Thank you very much.

He nods and leaves the podium. Anne enters and takes his hand. The full ensemble enters to share in the final narration of the scene.

THE FELLOWSHIP. On Thursday, November 16, 1950, three months after the Convention, Dr. Bob passed away in his home on Ardmere Avenue.

BILL. Bob insisted that no monument or memorial be erected. He told us straight, "Annie and I plan to be buried like other folks."

THE FELLOWSHIP. At Akron's Mount Peace Cemetery, a single plain headstone identifies Dr. Bob and Anne.

BOB. Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith. 1879 – 1950.

ANNE. Anne Ripley Smith. 1881 – 1949.

BILL (*coughs*). I saw Bob a week before he died, to ask his final consent to calling our first General Service Conference. As he reflected I waited, and at last he looked up and said, "Bill, it has to be A.A.'s decision, not ours. Let's call that conference. It's fine with me." A few hours later, I went down the steps and then turned to look back. Bob stood in the doorway, tall and upright as ever. This was my partner, the man with whom I never had a hard word. The wonderful, old, broad smile was on his face as he said almost jokingly –

BOB. Remember, Bill, let's not louse this thing up. Let's keep it simple!

BILL. I turned away, unable to say a word. That was the last time I ever saw him.

SYBIL (*emotional*). Dear old Bill. Every year on the anniversary of Bill's last drink, the New York office throws a huge dinner celebration, a real black tie affair. I went last year. Bill was in the hospital, but he gave Lois a letter to read to us.

THE FELLOWSHIP. October 10, 1970. The Bill W. Anniversary Dinner. New York City.

LOIS (*elderly, reading from a letter*). "My dear friends –

"Recently an A.A. member sent me an unusual greeting which I would like to extend to you. It says, "I salute you and thank you for your life."

If I were asked which of these blessings I felt was most responsible for our growth as a fellowship and most vital to our continuity, I would say, the "Concept of Anonymity." (*She exits.*)

BILL (*sitting on the stage, speaking to the audience like old friends*). On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level, anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes. A.A. must and will continue to change with the passing years. We cannot, nor should we turn back the clock. However I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard. As long as we accept our sobriety in our traditional spirit of anonymity we will continue to receive God's Grace.

SYBIL (*choking up*). Bill passed away only a few months later. I miss him terribly.

For a brief moment, June touches her shoulder. Sybil takes her hand and squeezes it gently before June withdraws.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The Wilsons' gravestones like Bob and Anne's, bore only their names and the years of their birth and death.

BILL. William G. Wilson. 1895 – 1971.

LOIS (*re-enters, youthful once again, and takes Bill's hand*). Lois B. Wilson. 1891 – 1988.

SYBIL. You and I, June, we're alive and we're sober. We have today. What greater tribute is needed?

BLACKOUT.

EPILOGUE 1

The inside of the 1972 meeting room. The members stand in a circle and finish the Lord's Prayer.

ALL. "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen."

THE FELLOWSHIP. A Thursday night in Los Angeles, CA. 1972.

SYBIL. Look at that, the meeting's over and we're still sober. I want you to meet my husband, Bob, you'll like him.

Bob C. exits the meeting first.

SYBIL. Bob sweetheart, come meet June. June this is my husband –

BOB. Good to meet you June. Stick close to this spit fire, she knows her stuff.

SYBIL. But if you ever get in trouble with the law, talk to Bob. He knows all about it.

AA #1. Bob, Syb, some folks are heading to Cantor's for fellowship.

SYBIL. Bob and I are hitting the hay. But this is June and I'm sure she would love an egg cream.

AA #1. Sure, I'll find one of the gals to give you a ride.

JUNE. Thank you Sybil.

SYBIL. I'm the one who should be thanking you, you've kept me sober one more night. Will I see you next week?

JUNE. Yeah, why not ... Hey Sybil?

SYBIL. Yes?

JUNE. Are you going to a meeting tomorrow?

SYBIL. There's a seven a.m. Big Book study I just love in this building.

JUNE. Seven? Dude, wipe out. Well, maybe you'll see me there.

SYBIL. Fantastic. You keep coming back, June.

JUNE. I dunno ... I think I'll stay. For a little while longer. *(A car honks. Runs offstage)* Yo, check it out. I can put out a cigarette with my bare feet, check it out! *(She exits.)*

BOB *(holding Sybil's hand, under the A.A. sign).* Ready to go home beautiful?

SYBIL. We're already home.

BLACKOUT.

EPILOGUE 2

Lights rise on the same meeting room, present day. The Big Books on the literature table are the 4th Edition. A group of AA's huddle outside on the porch smoking and shivering. An AA member smoking an electronic cigarette walks by chuckling. Inside the meeting room, one AA is demonstrating yoga poses to a newcomer and offering a Reiki healing. OLDER JUNE, now in her 50's and over 40 years sober, is speaking with one of her sponsees about the Kombucha bottle the sponsee is holding. A couple takes a cell phone "selfie" of their tongues and uploads it to their Instagram.

THE FELLOWSHIP. A Wednesday night in Los Angeles, CA. Present Day.

CHAIR. Welcome to the Wednesday night "Hole in the Ground" meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is [ACTOR'S NAME], I am an alcoholic and your chair.

A row of alcoholics simultaneously crack open and chug energy drink, convulsing vigorously afterwards.

CHAIR. Please join me in a moment of silence followed by the serenity prayer.

Music. EDDIE, a young man, with a black eye and skinny jeans, enters texting. He reluctantly puts his phone away and stands by the doorway. June notices him.

SECRETARY. This meeting is a speaker step study and discussion. Today is the last Thursday of the month when we read from the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and discuss one of the Traditions.

Groans. Half the room pulls out their iphones and blackberries to check their email and text messages. The sound of text message chimes. The couple takes another selfie with their phones. One young person walks out making a call.

YOUNG PERSON (*brushing past Eddie as he leaves*). Hollywood Late night, see ya there ...

CHAIR. This month we're back to Tradition One. I'll start by reading the short and then long-form ... "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity."

Eddie makes a break for the door. Older June sneaks out after him.

OLDER JUNE. Hey, rushing off?

EDDIE. What, oh yeah, I think I'm in the wrong place.

OLDER JUNE. Were you looking for a meeting?

EDDIE. Uh, yeah but I don't think ... I'm not sure I'm a you know ...

OLDER JUNE. An alcoholic? That's alright, it's an open meeting. You're welcome to come in, listen to a few stories, maybe something will ring a bell. (*Reaches out her hand.*) My name's June.

EDDIE. Eddie. Thanks for saying hi, but I'm going to jet, these kind of things aren't my ... thing...

JUNE. What kind of things ...

EDDIE. People. (*June smiles.*) I mean groups of people. Look, I don't have any money and I haven't stepped inside a church since I got kicked out of Catholic school in eighth grade for kissing an altar boy. I really don't need someone telling me what to do or believe.

JUNE. Sounds like you fit in perfectly. Look, Eddie we don't need your money. You and I, we can believe whatever we want and we can leave at any time. We don't want anything from you, we just want to be helpful.

EDDIE. I find that hard to believe. I mean A.A.'s all around the world, right? How'd that happen without rules, money, people in charge?

JUNE (*sits on the bench*). Why don't you sit down and I'll tell you a few stories, if you like what you hear we'll go to another meeting, if not, the door will always be open if you change your mind. (*Eddie pauses, checks his phone, then shrugs and sits next to her.*) You ask how can A.A. work, how can it have lasted so long and spread so far without laws and leaders and wealth? (*Simply*) Because it has to or we'll die. Years of experience have taught us:

The meeting members once again rise and transform into The Fellowship.

THE FELLOWSHIP.

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place –

THE ACTORS PLAYING BILL AND BOB. Principles before personalities.

THE ACTOR PLAYING OLDER JUNE. These Twelve Traditions are to group survival and harmony what A.A.'s Twelve Steps are to each member's sobriety and peace of mind.

THE ACTOR PLAYING YOUNG JUNE. In other words, the Twelve Steps are what keep me from killing myself, and the Twelve Traditions are what keep me from killing all of you!

THE ACTOR PLAYING YOUNG SYBIL. Just as the Steps would make each individual A.A. whole and one with God –

THE ACTOR PLAYING OLDER SYBIL. The Twelve Traditions would make us one with each other and whole with world about us.

THE ACTOR PLAYING BILL. By faith and works we have been able to build upon the lessons of an incredible experience. They live today in the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, which – God willing – shall sustain us in Unity –

THE ACTOR PLAYING BOB. As long as He may need us.

The Fellowship reach their hands out first towards the audience and then to Eddie.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

CURTAIN CALL.

EXTENDED AND DELETED SCENES

These scenes were shortened or removed for the final version of the script. These scenes may be used in productions with written permission by the author.

**EXTENDED SCENE:
JUNE AND SYBIL (PROLOGUE)**

They walk outside. Sybil hands June a cigarette.

JUNE. Man, I need a *real* meeting tonight, I'm crawling out of my skin. *(Sybil smiles.)* Aren't you going to have one?

SYBIL. I sneak one now and then for myself. Having a pack around just comes in handy at AA meetings. Your name is June, right?

JUNE. Yeah.

SYBIL. I'm Sybil. It's nice to meet you.

JUNE. I've seen you around, you've got a lot of time, right?

SYBIL. I've got a few 24 hours under my belt. But you know what they say, whoever woke up the earliest has the most sobriety today. What time did you wake up, June?

JUNE. I haven't slept in two days.

SYBIL. Well you've got me beat then. *(Laughs.)* Are you sober right now?

JUNE. Hell yeah, and it sucks.

SYBIL. That's alright. It gets better. I've seen you too. I like your spunk. I wish I had your courage when I was a girl. My parents moved us from Texas to Los Angeles when I was eight or nine years old. I had trouble making friends in school and I thought I didn't belong anywhere.

JUNE. I stood out in school. That's why they kicked me out ... and the stabbing.

SYBIL. Well there you go, we've got something in common – not the stabbing my dear, though I'm a mean shot with a rifle – I stood out my whole life. In school I was called a nut, a misfit because I used to wear white powder all over my face and color my eyebrows black like the flappers I idolized in magazines. I never wanted to be just a little girl, never wanted to be plain old Sybil. A.A.'s the one place where I really fit in, where I could finally be myself.

JUNE. Yeah, well, I dunno ... *(A moment of silence passes between them.)*

SYBIL. When I was fifteen, I got drunk one night, passed out, and had to be carried home and put in my mother's bed. I cried the next day and promised that it would never happen again -- and I meant it. But I didn't know myself, I didn't know the disease of alcoholism. The next Saturday night the kids handed me a bottle and I drank it. And I stayed drunk through a couple of more semesters of high school, seventeen years of failed marriages, two botched suicides and more jobs than I can count. And what about you June? Why are you here?

JUNE. I dunno ... *(Pause, as Sybil waits for June to go on.)* I used to cut myself with razor blades when I was five. My mom ...man, that lady is a piece of work! I'd come home, find her passed out on the bathroom floor, or with some dude whose name she didn't know. Sometimes she would pass out after bringing them home and I'd be alone in the house with these guys she would pick up at the bars on Venice. Some of them were *messed up*. When I was nine, I was over it. I started spending as much time away from home as I could. Hanging out at Venice Beach, with the other street kids, beach bums, skateboarders. We drank, we smoked, we did other things ... and it made me feel good, like how I imagined normal

would feel, but then I started having ... what do you call them, when you can't remember doing stuff?

SYBIL (*nods*). Blackouts.

JUNE. Right, those! And I'd find myself in strange places, my dough gone, missing my shoes! I kept losing my shoes, so I just said, screw this, I won't wear them at all. I like to fight – a lot – I'll take on five, six kids from the other gangs, I don't care. But then I started brawling with my own gang and they beat the crap out of me and kicked me out. I tried to waste myself. It wasn't the first time. When I woke up in the hospital one of you people came to see me and took me to a meeting. And I just stick around cause, I dunno ...

SYBIL. You have nowhere else to go to?

JUNE. Yeah, that.

SYBIL. And well, now you're here. And that makes me very glad. (*Another moment of silence.*)

JUNE (*retreating*). How long have you been sober, Sybil?

SYBIL. 31 years.

JUNE. Crazy, man! You've been sober longer than my mom's been alive!

SYBIL. The only reason I've been sober so long is that I found A.A. before other people did. (*Leans in to whisper as if sharing a secret.*) I was the first woman to join A.A. on the West Coast. And there was only one other woman active in A.A. at the time, and that was Marty Mann, who came in nine months before me in New York. How old are you June?

JUNE. 15 (*Sybil raises her eyebrows.*) 13. I'm probably the youngest person to ever come into A.A., huh?

SYBIL. Who knows. Maybe you are, maybe you aren't. All that matters is whether or not you want to stop drinking. Do you, June? Do you have an honest desire to stop drinking?

JUNE. I guess so, my life's a mess. I'm 13 and my life's a freakin' mess cause I can't stop drinking.

SYBIL. You want to stop drinking and I want to stay stopped, so that makes us both members of A.A., no matter what anyone else says. Thanks to our Traditions. (*June shifts uncomfortably on the porch bench.*) Not crazy about the Traditions, huh?

JUNE. I dunno, I just wanted to go to a *real* meeting tonight, but I don't have any more bus fare, so I dunno, maybe I'll just head to the beach and –

SYBIL. Find your dealer? Take the long way so you happen to pass by the liquor store. Park your butt down sweetheart, it won't kill you to listen to an old crackpot for a little while longer. (*June hesitates before sitting and slumping down on the bench.*) You know, when I came into A.A., in 1941, we didn't have the Traditions, we didn't know what we were doing because A.A. was new in Los Angeles. Heck, it was just plain *new*!

JUNE. Really? They didn't have rules back then?

SYBIL. Rules! Oh my, yes! We had all sorts of rules and regulations and protocols! But darling, that's not what the Traditions are, they're not just a string of can and can't do's, oh my, not at all!

JUNE. Well, what are they then?

SYBIL. Principles! Spiritual principles, just like those Twelve Steps of ours, and they weren't written in ink, June, oh no. They were written in sweat and tears and fistfights and blood. I can tell you've been in a few scraps yourself recently.

JUNE. I'm a tough broad, no one messes with me. See. *(She puts out her cigarette with her bare feet.)*

SYBIL *(stunned momentarily, she bursts into laughter).* That is impressive! Sit down here with me, you tough old broad, and I'll tell you a few stories about those golden covered-wagon days in Alcoholics Anonymous, just to pass the time. Before you know it, the meeting will be over, we'll get you a hot meal, a ride to another meeting, and you'll be sober for one more night, God willing.

JUNE. I guess I've got nothing better to do.

SCENE CONTINUES.

**DELETED SCENE:
BILL AND LOIS (SCENE ONE)**

THE FELLOWSHIP. But the real spark got going when these two hopeless alcoholics met.

Beat.

THE FELLOWSHIP. May 4, 1935. The Home of Bill and Lois Wilson. 182 Clinton Street. Brooklyn, New York.

BILL (*packing*). Lo'! Where's the suit? Hey Lo'! The suit, where's my suit?

LOIS. Hanging in the closet.

BILL. Not the gray suit, Lois, the pinstripe.

LOIS. I'm still letting out the waist, Bill. You've put on some weight the last 6 months, thank goodness.

BILL. This is an important trip for us, for me, I've got to make an impression, to look the part!

LOIS. What part is that?

BILL. Hot shot Wall Street speculator. I can't wear the gray two-piece, then I'll look like a bum –

LOIS. Oh Bill ...

BILL. A no-good rummy who hasn't worked more than a day in the last three years!

LOIS. Or ... William Griffin Wilson, you'll impress them so much with your salesmanship and fast talk that the last thing they'll notice is what silly suit you are wearing –

BILL. Darling, that's not how these things work.

LOIS. Well maybe you should call the whole thing off then, stay home.

BILL. Now Lo, we've talked about this.

LOIS. Bill, you've been sober for six months and it's a miracle, a gift. But are you really ready to get back to business? It will be your first time travelling on your own, all alone in a strange city. Maybe Ebby should come along, I certainly wouldn't mind having the place to myself.

BILL. We can't afford Ebby's train ticket, and I don't need a chaperone like some kind of child! I'm sorry honey, but I can't hide away from the real world in this brownstone or at the Cavalry Mission forever. Nothing is more important to me than trying to help other alcoholics, but the reality is – I haven't dried up a single drunk in 6 months and we're flat broke!

LOIS. Trying to help those other alcoholics is keeping you sober, whether or not they dry up, somehow, someday, it's helping you. I've got my husband back after so many long years and I don't want to lose him again. All I ever wanted is a family and a home – you and this brownstone are all I have left!

BILL. I won't be alone, darling, God will be with me. *(She turns away.)* Look, I'll be back in a week, with a fat cash advance in my pocket and respected in the brokerage houses again. And maybe in a month, you can quit hocking perfume at that damned department store ... *(He embraces her passionately, and then whispers in her ear.)* Come on darling, can't you

jimmy the waist on the pinstripe? I've got two hours before my train for Akron leaves. *(She exits. An off-stage crash.)*

LOIS *(re-enters and throws a pair of pants at him)*. Damn you Bill Wilson and your Oxford meetings too! You do what you want, you always have, you always will! *(She storms out.)*

BILL. Aw, Lo' don't be mad. *(A shoe comes flying at Bill from offstage. Lois re-enters briefly.)*

LOIS. Damn all your meetings! *(Exits.)*

BILL *(sucking in his stomach to zip up the pants)*. You'll see honey, we'll be back on top, like the old times, only better! Sober, with all the cash and prizes we've got coming! *(Looking around)* Now where did she hide my jacket?

Beat.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The Oxford group had followers throughout the East Coast and branching out West. Including a city in Ohio where a well to-do heiress named Henrietta Seiberling was close friends with a hopeless alcoholic doctor –

JUNE. Proctologist!

THE FELLOWSHIP. May 11, 1935. Lobby of the Mayflower Hotel. Akron, Ohio.

SCENE CONTINUES.

**DELETED SCENE:
BILL, BOB AND ANNE (SCENE ONE)**

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bob left for a medical convention in Atlantic City where he suddenly developed a terrific thirst for –

BILL. Knowledge?

ANNE (*enters*). Scotch!

THE FELLOWSHIP. After three days, Bill found him at the home of a friend in a nearby town. Dr. Bob was going through a nasty withdrawal, the shakes, hand tremors –

SYBIL. Not the condition you want your surgeon in when you're having an operation the next day.

JUNE. Oh snap.

THE FELLOWSHIP. June 10, 1935. The Home of Dr. Bob and Anne Smith.

Bill paces, Anne attempts to calm him though she is anxious herself, agitated. Bob enters.

ANNE. Robert! Oh thank goodness!

BILL. Dammit, Doc, where have you been?

ANNE. How did the operation go? How is your patient?

BOB. Fine, fine. (*To Anne, who is fretting over him*) The surgery was a success.

ANNE. Oh thank you Lord, thank you!

BOB. My dear, would you mind if I have a few moments alone with Sir William here? *(She nods and exits.)*

ANNE. I'll check on the coffee.

BILL. Dear God, we never should have let you go through with it, the way your hands were shaking. Anne told me, she told me what a temptation those trips are for you, she knows us better than we know ourselves!

BOB. Abercrombie, relax, the surgery was a success, my hands – *(Looking to see if Anne can overhear)* well, that bottle of beer this morning did the trick. The operation was over in two hours, no complications.

BILL. Thank God ... two hours? Where the hell have you been all afternoon?

BOB. I am sorry to have worried you, but after I left the hospital, I had the overwhelming feeling that I would not live to see another sober morning unless I immediately swallowed my pride and made restitution for the harms I've done. I made my rounds about town before closing time, to all my creditors and associates, the other good folk in Akron I've been avoiding these past years. *(Anne re-enters.)* I told each and every one of them that I was a drunk and that I needed to make amends, to begin to set things right. If it means the end of my practice, my reputation in ruins, so be it. I am finally ready to go to any length, to go all the way for God's grace. *(He takes Anne's hand.)* And I have one more amends to make, many long years overdue.

Annie, my high school sweetheart, my best girl. I have subjected you to a torture I would not wish on my worst enemy, a twenty-year nightmare, day after day of smuggling liquor into the house – in my stocking tops, the upstairs window porch --

ANNE. The water tank behind the toilet –

BOB. That was an obvious one! Every night drunk, every morning, the jitters.

ANNE. The sedatives.

BOB. Popping those goofballs, and never a harsh word from you. I broke countless promises and oaths, to you and to our children. My drinking kept our friends away and brought us to the brink of financial ruin time and time again. I will do what I can, one day at a time, to make up for my past deficiencies as a provider and husband and friend! We alcoholics seem to have the gift of picking out the world's finest women, and you are my dear, the finest woman I will ever know. How you kept your faith and courage during all those years, I can't imagine.

ANNE. Surrender.

BOB (*nods*). Surrender. Lord manage me, for I cannot manage myself.
(*Pause.*) So have I left anything out?

ANNE. You're a stubborn mule, Robert Smith, and I love you. (*She touches his cheek, modest in front of Bill.*) The coffee's getting cold and you boys have a lot of work to do, so get to it! Faith without works is dead!

BILL (*moved, Bill is soon overcome with joy*). Atta boy, Doc! (*Takes a long look at him.*) How do you feel, Bob? Tell me, how do you feel right at this moment?

BOB. Free, Bill. I feel like a free man. (*Glows.*)

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE.

DELETED SCENE:

AKRON A.A. AND SISTER IGNATIA (PREVIOUSLY SCENE TWO)

JUNE. So Bob couldn't stay sober until he made amends. Man, there are some people I don't even want to think about talking to ...

SYBIL. You might want to work steps one through eight first, that's how I did it. But you're right, Bob's last drink was on June 10, 1935, the day he was finally willing to make his amends.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bill and Bob immediately set out to help others. Bob called up Akron City Hospital and asked the nurse if they had –

BOB. A drunk over there you can scare up? I've got this fellow here from New York and we have a cure for alcoholism. *(Pause.)* As a matter of fact, I have tried it on myself and it's working just fine!

SYBIL. And that's when they met Bill D.

THE FELLOWSHIP. "Anonymous Number Three." 2nd, 3rd and 4th Editions. *(Music.)*

BILL D. *(enters).* "One of five children, I was born on a Kentucky Farm in Caylyle County. My parents were well-to-do people..." *(Referring to Bill and Bob)* If these two can stay sober, then by God I can do it. If they can do it, then I can do it!

SYBIL. It wasn't long until a fourth turned up –

THE FELLOWSHIP. "The Seventh Month Slip." 1st Edition. *(Music.)*

ERNIE. "At fourteen years of age, when I should have been at home under the supervision of my parents, I was in the United States army serving a one year enlistment. I found myself with a bunch of men none too good for a fourteen year old kid who passed easily for eighteen."

THE FELLOWSHIP. Ernie, G. AA #4

SYBIL. And the first young person in Alcoholics Anonymous.

BOB. How old are you son?

ERNIE. 30 years old, sir.

JUNE. 30? Oh man I am screwed.

SYBIL. Well back then, 30 was considered young for an alkie!

BILL D. 30! I spilled more beer than you'll ever drink! Go out and do some more drinking, kid.

ERNIE. Listen here, pops. I've drank myself out of a military career, two wives and a kid. I've been drinking nonstop for the last ten days. For God's sake, I need help.

BILL W. Alright Ernie.

THE FELLOWSHIP. They offered him a spiritual toolkit of six steps they had adapted from the ideas of the Oxford Group –

BOB. Admit you are licked –

BILL D. Get honest with yourself, take stock of yourself and admit your shortcomings to another –

BILL W. Make restitution to those persons you have harmed –

BILL D. Live a life of prayer and giving with no thought of return –

ERNIE *(to the audience, cheerily)*. And carry this message on to the next!
Let's hit the ward, Doc!

They exit.

SYBIL. You know that pink can we pass around?

JUNE. For loose change.

SYBIL. That's it. The money in the pink can goes to support the Hospital & Institution committee. But in the 1930's there was no H&I committee. We were all H&I! A.A. in Akron grew, thanks to Dr. Bob's work in hospitals. Who knows what would have happened if Bob had been an accountant or teacher or salesman, like Bill. He was an incredible man and a great doctor –

JUNE. Proctologist!

SYBIL: But you know what they say, behind every great man ...

IGNATIA *(enters)*. I am woman, hear me roar! *(Then meekly)* God bless you.
(To Bob) Dr. Smith!

BOB. Ig! How are the boys on the ward?

IGNATIA. The new man has woken up, he's a terrible mess, feels absolutely hopeless ... it's just wonderful! *(Looking over the audience)* But my, isn't this a healthy lot! *(To an audience member)* How long have you been

sober, dear soul? God bless! Here's a medallion to honor that miracle. Remember, to thine own self be true!

SYBIL. Have you picked up your 24-hour chip yet?

JUNE. Those fruity little coins? I don't want to look like a dope standing up in front of the whole room.

SYBIL (*pulling out a chip from her purse*). This is the first 24-hour chip that my sponsee Matt ever picked up. He gave it to me on his 10-year anniversary.

JUNE. You want me to have it? But why? It's special to you.

SYBIL. Why so are you, June. And so is any newcomer who walks in the room with one day under their belt. You're the most important people in the room, next to the coffee maker! Believe me, if Matt can stay sober for 10 years, anyone can! He'd want you to have it!

JUNE. Alright, thanks I guess.

SYBIL. Now whenever you think about taking a drink, hold that coin in your hand and squeeze real hard ...

JUNE. Yeah?

SYBIL. And if it disappears than go ahead and take a drink!

JUNE. What a goof!

THE FELLOWSHIP. In 1940, Akron City Hospital couldn't handle the influx of drunks who had heard about Bob's "cure." One day in 1939, Bob walked into St. Thomas Hospital in Akron and told his story to the nurse in charge of Admissions, a petite no-nonsense nun –

SYBIL. Sister Mary Ignatia Gavin.

BOB. That's how I learned alcoholism was a disease, not just a form of gluttony, but an illness that can be treated with total abstinence and a spiritual way of life.

IGNATIA. This is it! Oh this is it! What can I do to help!

BOB. I have a patient at Akron City Hospital in the second day of delirium tremens, but there's not a single bed left.

IGNATIA. We've never admitted a patient with a diagnosis of alcoholism before, I don't think Mother Superior – Think sister, think! OH! *(She suddenly speaks very loudly)* You know, Dr. Smith, this sounds to me like a TERRIBLE case of INDIGESTION. *(She winks conspiratorially at Bob. He doesn't get it.)*

BOB. Indigestion? No, you misunderstood me ...

IGNATIA *(Loudly)*. No, no, I'm sure your friend must be very sick. With indigestion. *(She nods until he gets it.)*

BOB. Yes, yes! *(Loudly and theatrically)* His indigestion is most terrible. Terrible. Oh the humanity!

IGNATIA *(to Bob)*. Too much. *(Loudly)* Well then, why don't you bring him in right away!

THE FELLOWSHIP. The patient stayed sober. Ignatia came clean with her superiors and by January of 1940, she was put in charge of St. Thomas' newly minted "Alcoholism Ward."

IGNATIA. And let me be 100% clear on one point! St. Thomas is a Catholic institution. (*Looking everyone over, hands on her hips to drive the point home.*) But my ward is non-secretarian! Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Agnostic – if a patient is willing to admit their powerlessness and surrender, we'll help them! Does anyone have a problem with that? (*Then meekly*) Oh my dear sweet souls, God bless you all.

THE FELLOWSHIP. The ward stayed open to visiting AA's from surrounding groups who, morning to night, shared their stories of drinking and recovery.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Dr. Bob was a constant fixture.

SYBIL. They say that by the end of his life Bob had medically supervised and twelve-stepped over 5,000 alcoholics –

JUNE. Unreal!

Lights fade to a spot on Ignatia and Anne Smith.

SYBIL. June, let me tell you something about our history that most people don't know. Bill and Bob are called our founders, sure, but none of this would have come to pass without the women in their lives.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Ignatia tended to our wounds, but Anne Smith, she nourished our souls. During the summer of 1935 when Bill was living with the Smiths, she read spiritual literature to them every day before their morning "quiet time," and sometimes excerpts from her journal –

ANNE (*ending their meditation*). Amen.

BILL AND BOB. Amen.

Bill lights up a cigarette. Anne opens her journal and reads to them.

ANNE (*reading*). "Share with people – don't preach, don't argue. Don't talk up nor down to people. Talk to them, and share in terms of their own experiences, speak on their level. But we can't give away what we haven't got. We must surrender to God each and every day. How?" Oh Lord, manage me –

BILL AND BOB. For I cannot manage myself.

THE FELLOWSHIP. These women were the heart of A.A.'s spiritual ideas and program.

SYBIL. We owe our lives to them.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Sister Ignatia Gavin –

BOB. The Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous.

THE FELLOWSHIP. And Anne Ripley Smith –

BILL. The mother of us all.

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE.

**EXTENDED SCENE:
FLORENCE R. (SCENE TWO)**

THE FELLOWSHIP. They had no real formula and no name. When people asked who they were –

BILL. I told him, well, we're this nameless group, just an anonymous bunch of alcoholics. Hey! Anonymous Alcoholics – *(Stops himself, not sure if he likes the ring of it.)* Nope, I don't like it.

THE FELLOWSHIP. They would follow one man's ideas for a while, decide he was wrong and switch to another's method.

HANK. But the miracle is, we're staying sober!

FITZ. As long as we keep together and talk together.

BILL. That's right. If we keep going the way we're going, a hell of a lot of good will be done, but we're only scratching the surface of the problem here. The question is, boys, how are we going to present to others all that has been given to us?

HANK: How about a book?

SYBIL *(pulls out her big book).* This book.

BILL. An anonymous volume!

FITZ. I can see it now!

HANK. Lining bookshelves across the country –

FITZ. In every hospital ward –

BILL. Circulating the halls of academia –

HANK. And Congress too!

JIMMY. Now, slow down there, fellas. We haven't even got a decent title picked out yet.

A pause. They contemplate.

FITZ. The Empty Glass! (*Grumbles.*)

JIMMY. The Dry Life? (*More grumbles.*)

HANK. The Way Out. (*Peaking interest.*)

BILL. I've got it! One Hundred Men! (*Applause.*)

FLORENCE (*entering*). One Hundred Men? Gentlemen, the lady doth protest.

THE FELLOWSHIP. "A Feminine Victory." 1st Edition. (*Music.*)

FLORENCE. "To my lot falls the rather doubtful distinction of being the only 'lady' alcoholic in our particular section. When the idea was first presented to me that I was an alcoholic, my mind simply refused to accept it. Horrors! How disgraceful! What humiliation! How preposterous! Why, I loathed the taste of liquor – drinking was simply a means of escape when my sorrows became too great for me to endure."

SYBIL. Florence R. The first woman to get sober in Alcoholics Anonymous.

JUNE. Finally, a broad! I was starting to think that A.A. was just one big sausage factory back then –

FLORENCE. I'm no man, and I do believe I've been a part of this group and sober for a year, which is far longer, may I – humbly – point out than some of my dear brothers in arms.

BILL. Alcoholics ... Alcoholics Anonymous! Hey –

FLORENCE. I like the ring of that! All in favor? *(All the hands shoot up.)*
Maximum!

JUNE. Groovy. Hang on a sec, didn't you say you were the second woman in A.A., and that there just was one before you?

SYBIL. That's right, Marty Mann.

JUNE. What about Florence?

SYBIL. A few years later, Florence moved to Washington D.C. to help Fitz start A.A. there. She married a newcomer they were trying to bring into the program. A newcomer who would not stay sober.

MALE VOICE (V.O.). Florence, you look so thirsty. I'm your husband, have a drink with me. Just one beer.

FLORENCE. I shouldn't ... Just one? You won't let me have any more? No more than two. Promise me!

MALE VOICE (V.O.). You can depend on me.

FLORENCE. I can depend on you.

THE FELLOWSHIP. She disappeared. After a couple of months Fitz found her. In the morgue.

SYBIL. Florence drank herself to death⁶.

A moment of silence that weighs heavily on June, who then surprised by her own empathy, puts on a tough face again.

JUNE. So they called the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," man, so what? What does that have to do with anything?

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bill began writing the book in late 1938 with the help of Hank's non-alcoholic secretary –

SCENE CONTINUES.

⁶ A story that has been passed along about Florence R. is that she committed suicide. She did not in the direct sense. Her death certificate says that she died on April 19, 1943 at the age of 27 of pneumococcal meningitis. Her alcoholic drinking wore down her body to the point where she became more vulnerable to pneumonia.

EXTENDED SCENE:

JIMMY B. AND THE WRITING OF THE BIG BOOK (SCENE TWO)

BILL (*dictating to Ruth*). "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to follow directions."

HANK AND FITZ. Directions.

BILL. "At some of these you may balk. You may think you can find an easier, softer way. We doubt if you can."

HANK AND FITZ. We doubt it.

BILL. "With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Remember that you are dealing with alcohol."

HANK. You are! You are!

BILL. "Cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for you."

FITZ. For you! For you!

BILL. "But there is One who has all power – That One is God. You must find Him now!"

HANK AND FITZ. You must! You must!

JUNE. Woah, woah, woah. Hold it.

SYBIL. You notice something different, don't you?

JUNE. Yeah, what's with all the "you'" and "musts"? You must do this, you must do that? Let me see that book. See this book says "we" and "may you find him now!" What gives?

SYBIL. That's the version we know, the one that was printed in the book when it was published. But when Bill sat down to write "How It Works," his first draft was a little more ... *(Searching for the right words)* aggressive. Bill realized pretty quickly that alcoholics don't like to be told what to do.

JUNE. Damn straight. So, Jimmy, what did he do?

SYBIL. Go ahead and read those first three steps, June.

JUNE *(reading)*. "Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of Recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care and direction of God – “

SYBIL. Stop right there.

Lois enters serving cookies.

THE FELLOWSHIP. There was one meeting a week in Brooklyn and they all took turns there spouting off about how they had changed their lives overnight!

BILL. I cried out in despair!

JIMMY. Oh great, here comes the “God bit.”

THE FELLOWSHIP. Bill loved to go on and on about what they started calling his –

LOIS AND JIMMY. “Hot Flash.”

BILL. I cried out in despair, “If there is a God, show Yourself, I am ready to do anything, anything!”

HANK. Hallelujah!

BILL. God came to me, like the great clean wind of a mountaintop blowing through me!

FITZ *(with a mouthful of cookies).* Glory be!

JIMMY. Oh Criminey! I can't stand this God stuff! It's a lot of malarkey for weak folks. This is a bunch of banana oil, this group doesn't need it, and I won't have it! To hell with it!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Resentment swept over the New York group, bringing each member to the same resolve –

HANK AND FITZ. Out he goes!

BILL (*taking Jimmy aside*). Look here Jimmy old boy, you just can't talk like this around here.

FITZ. Quit it or get out!

HANK. Yeah, scram!

JIMMY. Now do tell! Is that so? Where's those pages, the foreword Bill's been writing for the book. Here it is! "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking." So fellows, when you wrote that sentence, did you mean it, or didn't you? (*Hank, Fitz and Bill look at each other.*)

HANK. Horsefeathers!

FITZ. Applesauce!

SYBIL. He had them cold.

JUNE. That's pretty boss.

SYBIL. So he stayed.

JIMMY. I stayed.

THE FELLOWSHIP. He not only stayed, he stayed sober.

HANK. Month after month. The longer he stays –

FITZ. The louder he talks!

JIMMY. Weak! Dependent! Instead of John Barleycorn, I'll make myself a slave to some hotsy-totsy "Higher Power". We don't need all this Supreme Being this, and Father of Light that ...

BILL. God grant me the serenity –

HANK. Not to punch his lights out. Let me at 'im! (*Bill and Fitz hold him back.*)

FITZ. When, oh when, will that guy get drunk!

THE FELLOWSHIP. On June 14, 1938, Jimmy went out of town for business.

JIMMY. My client ordered a round of beers for the table and I had completely forgotten the memory of January 8th when I found the fellowship here. I spent the next four days wandering around New England half drunk, by which I mean I couldn't get drunk and I couldn't get sober. But I'm back, boys –

FITZ. By the grace of God...

JIMMY. Now hold it! I don't know about all that, but I'm willing ... I'm willing to set aside some of my old ideas about this God stuff. On my own I know I'm powerless, and I'll admit that if there is some Higher Power, well I'm convinced today that it's here, in the power of this group.

SYBIL. G.O.D. Group of --

THE FELLOWSHIP. Drunks.

JUNE. Group of Drunks? I guess that doesn't totally make me want to upchuck.

SYBIL. Well that's a start!

BILL. And all it takes to make a beginning, Jim old boy.

THE FELLOWSHIP. It was also an ending, because from that day forward, Jimmy stayed sober, and in 1940 he started meetings in Philadelphia and later in Baltimore.

SYBIL. Imagine if they had actually succeeded in throwing Jimmy out? What would have happened to him and everyone he helped?

THE FELLOWSHIP. In 1939, the Big Book was printed, and right there in black and white –

SYBIL. On page 38 –

THE FELLOWSHIP. Was Jimmy B's suggestion to Bill when he wrote out Step Three –

SYBIL. One of the greatest contributions to Alcoholics Anonymous –

BILL. "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God" –

JIMMY. "As we understood Him."

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE.

**EXTENDED SCENE:
RULE 62 (SCENE ELEVEN)**

SYBIL. Look, the meeting's almost over and we have just enough time for the story of how the Traditions were written. It all started with those letters that Bill and Ruth answered.

THE FELLOWSHIP. Those letters together held the total experience of the groups around the country, about what practices worked, and more importantly, what didn't.

SYBIL. All the rules and schemes and well-intended nonsense.

THE FELLOWSHIP. An AA named Earl T., convinced Bill to share what they had learned with the fellowship at large. "He Sold Himself Short." 2nd, 3rd and 4th Editions. (*Music.*)

EARL (*enters smoking and drinking coffee*). "In 1930, I moved to Chicago. Shortly thereafter, aided by the Depression, I found that I had a great deal of spare time and that a little drink in the morning helped. By 1932, I was going on two or three day benders."

THE FELLOWSHIP. Earl founded A.A. in Chicago.

SYBIL. He's also the member described in the chapter "The Family Afterward" who relapsed after his wife nagged him about his smoking and drinking.

EARL. Easy does it, right Bill?

BILL. That's right. Live and let live! And ... (*Hands Earl a little card. Earl reads it and cracks up.*) I wish I came up with that one. A member who started

the first A.A. group in his town sent that to me in a letter! A real crackerjack!

Enter THE PROMOTER.

THE PROMOTER: Welcome to Middletown! Al's my name, sobriety's my game!

THE FELLOWSHIP. The townspeople of Middletown were as hot as firecrackers about A.A. and they were game to build A.A. a great big alcoholic center.

THE PROMOTER. Three floors will do for a start! Picture this! Ground floor, The Middletown A.A. Dry Club and Hootenanny. Floor 2, Marriage Counseling, Debt Consolidation and the Dry-Out Tank. And on the top floor, our revolutionary educational project –

BILL. Quite controversial of course.

EARL. Of course!

BILL. I wrote back and warned him that ventures which mixed an A.A. group with medication and education had come to sticky ends before.

EARL. And let me guess, he had a better idea!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Freshly painted, the new center opened its doors. (*Epic music swells. The Promoter cuts a ribbon and drunks line up out the door.*) Soon things began to hum.

MIDDLETON DRUNK #1. I'll sit in on one of your classes, but too hell with abstinence. You got a class on how to drink moderately?

SYBIL. "How to be a Normie 101."

MIDDLETON DRUNK #2. Look I know I can't take another drink, but how am I going to stay sober if I lose my wife and my house? You say service keeps you sober, well, mister, I need some cash and fast! What floor is the finance department on?

MIDDLETOWN DRUNK #3. What time is lindy-hop social? I gotta dance!

MIDDLETOWN DRUNKS. Yeah!

They dance. More drunks join in and it descends into chaos.

MIDDLETOWN DRUNKS. Teach me! Feed me! Cure me! Love me!

THE PROMOTER. Now hold on, everyone calm down, we're just a little understaffed at the moment ...

MIDDLETOWN DRUNKS. Teach me! Feed me! Cure me! Love me!

The Promoter pulls a lever and a siren goes off. Everyone freezes.

PROMOTER. We can't go on like this! It's time for a little Law and Order.
(Television Court-Procedural Theme Music.)

THE FELLOWSHIP. To insure foolproof, continuous operation, sixty-one rules and regulations were adopted.

THE PROMOTER *(unfurls and reads from a comically long list that covers the stage).*

Rule #1. A prospective member must express an honest desire to achieve sobriety.

Rule #2. The prospect must leave his work or position for at least two weeks.

Rule #3. Prospects are not considered full, active members until they have attended the mandatory four educational meetings.

Rule #4. In regards to proper attire, a member's dress code within the club and at work requires – (*Clock ticks, time zips by fast. He continues to read*) – for a period of five years, or his membership is terminated.

And Rule #61. On his first payday, he is expected to repay us for what we have spent. If not, his membership is terminated.

BILL (*to Earl*). With so many rules, I don't think I would have qualified for membership!

A drunk pushes up the lever and the dance music comes back on. Chaos returns.

MIDDLETOWN DRUNKS. Teach me! Feed me! Cure me! Love me! TEACH ME! FEED ME! CURE ME! LOVE ME!

THE PROMOTOR. Cease and Desist! You are in violation of Rules 23, 42 and 54, no, wait 55! 54 and 55! Why is no one listening to me!

EARL. Let me guess what happened next!

JUNE. Ka-pow!

An explosion. The Middletown drunks fall to the ground in exaggerated slow-motion. The Promoter remains standing in the "fall-out", breathing heavily and shell-shocked. Silence.

BILL. Something like the day the boiler burst in Wombly's Clapboard Factory!

JUNE. Woah. Woah. Woah. Who the hell is Wombly, and what the hell is a clapboard factory?

SYBIL. Ever hear of Wile E. Coyote?

JUNE. Like the Roadrunner cartoons?

SYBIL. You got it.

A homage to Looney Tunes. The Fellowship brings out an anvil, seemingly light, on one side it says Acme. They hand it to the Promoter, who immediately drops it. It's too heavy for him to pick it up.

SYBIL. You see, during the turn of the century, "Wombly" was like "Acme" in those old Warner Bros. cartoons.

With ease, The Fellowship picks it up and reveals the other side which reads "Wombly" and then tosses it off-stage.

SYBIL. Wombly was a fictional company name!⁷

THE FELLOWSHIP. Wombly's Widgets. Wombly's Wagons. Wombly's Waste Management. (*Mafia Movie Theme Music.*)

JUNE. And clapboards?

⁷ Some historians argue that a Wombly factory did exist in Bill's hometown of East Dorset, VT and was burned down, but as of the writing of this play, there is no indication it ever existed in public record and no remains have been found.

SYBIL. Light construction material, about yea wide and ½ inch thick. It was the American Thing, very New England.

JUNE. Okaaay...

THE FELLOWSHIP (*pulling out a chalkboard, making crazed and almost indecipherable sketches, or an animation can be projected on the stage*). In those days most factories ran on boilers, boilers that produced steam, getting hotter and hotter, and as a boiler gets hotter, it generates pressure. Pressure builds, the steam gets hotter and hotter, and more pressure builds, etc, etc.

SYBIL. They had this irritating habit of blowing their cool. Especially without someone keeping a close eye.

BILL: Boom!

THE FELLOWSHIP. Someone with the experience to know when things are getting out of hand and the boiler needs to cool down or shut off! The Boilermen.

SYBIL: And women! Us old-timers who made enough of a mess at the start of this thing to pass on what we learned, with the hope that the road to recovery will be less bumpy for new groups and their newcomers walking in the door. Not to mention the drunks who have not even been born yet! Just because A.A.'s been around for almost four decades, June, that doesn't mean it will be around for the next four!

You know, this seniority bit is a bunch of baloney. I don't have any special wisdom because I've been sober for 32 years. What I have is a responsibility though. I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. to always be there!

JUNE. That's heavy, man, but I dig it. So what happened in Middletown after the boom-chikka-boom-boom?

BILL *(to Earl)*. I have to say my friend, it sure seems like an A.A. group can survive almost any kind of battering as long as they keep sobriety their main aim.

EARL. And if they're careful not to do anything that would injure A.A. as a whole.

BILL *(anachronistically)*. True that! And true in Middletown too! Our crackerjack wrote back one more time with wonderful news!

THE PROMOTER. I sure wish I had paid attention to what you old-timers in New York told me about our A.A. experience. Live and learn! The alcohol center is now owned by a group of fellows running it as an outside enterprise. Not to be confused with an A.A. group, we started calling it our Alano Club. And as for the our A.A. membership rules, we decided to add one final rule and then toss out all the rest! In Love and Service, your friend, Al!

BILL *(takes the card from Earl, reading it out loud)*. "Middleton Group Rule Number 62."

THE PROMOTER. "Don't take yourself too damn seriously!" *(The Middletown Drunks pie him in the face, and they all exit with a funny little jig.)*

Beat.

EARL *(going through Bill's written replies)*. Hey, this is some good stuff! *(Reading)* "Each group has the right to be wrong ... "Principles before personalities." Say, how about we set down some of these replies on paper, you know create a kind of safeguard, a code –

BILL. Suggested code –

EARL. Of course, some principles based on experience, so future groups can avoid the mistakes we've made. Not rules but more like –

BILL. Tradition! And there can be Twelve of them!

EARL. Twelve Traditions to go along with the Twelve Steps!

BILL. The Twelve Traditions, hey I like the ring of that!

SCENE CONTINUES.

**EXTENDED SCENE:
EPILOGUE 1**

The inside of the 1972 meeting room. The members stand in a circle and finish the Lord's Prayer.

ALL. "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen."

THE ACTOR PLAYING YOUNG SYBIL. A Thursday night in Los Angeles, CA.
1972.

SYBIL. Look at that, the meeting's over and we're still sober.

Bob C. exits the meeting first.

SYBIL. Bob sweetheart, come meet June. June this is my husband –

BOB. #5

SYBIL. And a keeper!

BOB. Good to meet you June. Listen close to this spitfire, she knows her stuff.

SYBIL. But if you ever get in trouble with the law, talk to Bob, he's got loads of experience. When I met him in 1950 –

BOB. 1949.

SYBIL. We met in '50.

BOB. That's right, June, I laid eyes on my darling wife for the first time in 1950 – but when I had enough of drinking that first go around, I called the A.A. hotline in 1949, and who do you think picked up the phone?

JUNE. Unreal.

SYBIL (to June). Like I was saying, I met Bob in 1950, he was 14 years younger than me –

BOB. And still am!

SYBIL. Oh you! He was 14 years younger than me, I had eight years of sobriety at the time, but between us girls, he had the most beautiful set of pearly whites you've ever seen on an ex-con.

JUNE. Sybil!

SYBIL. What, a girl can look! I was still married to Jim at the time.

BOB. I was finally beaten down from my last relapse in 1963 –

SYBIL. We were both divorced by then –

BOB. For a couple of years we went to meetings together –

SYBIL. Just as friends –

BOB. Best friends! And six years ago –

SYBIL. Five.

BOB. Are you sure? *(She gives him a look.)* Well it was 1968, I'm sure of that, we were at a dance and someone yelled out – "Hey, Bob, when you gonna marry her?" And I said, "You know what, I think I will."

SYBIL. He proposed to me right then and there.

JUNE. Way cool. So you were in the big house, huh?

BOB. San Quentin, doesn't get any bigger than that! *(AA's start to exit the meeting room and gather outside. The roar of a motorcycle.)* Speaking of ex-cons ...

Paul enters, a grizzled leather-wearing ex-con biker. June jaw drops. He hugs Bob.

PAUL: Hello Brother. Syb.

SYBIL. Paul come meet –

PAUL. June. *(He picks her up in a big bear hug.)*

JUNE. Paul!

PAUL. Look at you, you little scrapper. I've been saving a seat for you.

BOB. You two know each other?

PAUL. I boozed it up with June's mom in my glory days on Venice Beach. Folks are heading to Cantor's for fellowship.

SYBIL. Bob and I are hitting the hay. But I'm sure June would love an egg cream.

PAUL. What do you say, killer? *(He flashes her his switchblade.)*

JUNE *(nods, in awe):* Bitchin'!

PAUL. I'll find one of the gals to give you a ride. *(He exits.)*

She begins to follow him but turns back.

JUNE. Thank you Sybil.

SYBIL. I'm the one who should be thanking you, you've kept me sober one more night. Will I see you next week?

JUNE. Yeah, why not ... Hey Sybil!

SYBIL. Yes?

JUNE. Are you going to a meeting tomorrow?

SYBIL. There's a seven a.m. Big Book study I just love in this building here.

JUNE. Seven? Dude, wipe out. Well maybe you'll see me there.

SYBIL. Fantastic. You keep coming back, June.

JUNE. I dunno ... I think, I'll stay. For a little while longer. *(Runs offstage.)*
Paul, my man, wait for me. Hey, I can put out a cigarette with my bare feet, check it out! *(Off-stage.)*

BOB. Ready to go home beautiful?

SYBIL. Home? We're already there.

They hold hands under the A.A. sign.

Beat. Two pools of light rise, one on June and OLDER JUNE, a graceful and professional woman in her 50's, and the other on Sybil and Young Sybil.

YOUNG SYBIL. June G stayed sober in Alcoholics Anonymous. She was taken under the wing by a loving and patient sponsor.

JUNE AND OLDER JUNE (*entering together*). Very patient!

YOUNG SYBIL. Her sponsor, and friends in the fellowship, encouraged her to go back to school and graduate. She went on to college and then law school.

JUNE. I'm going to be a lawyer? Like for the Man?

OLDER JUNE. A public defender!

JUNE. Do I still get to be a tough broad?

OLDER JUNE. The toughest broad in the City of Los Angeles court system.

YOUNG SYBIL. At the age of 21 and eight years sober, June spoke at the International Conference for Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous –

JUNE. ICY – ICY – ICY!

ALL (*a YPAA custom greeting for speakers, performed with hand gestures*).
PAA! PAA! PAA! Hi June! We love you June! Lots and lots and lots! Whole bunches! (*Standing and thrusting*) Ugh!

YOUNG SYBIL. May 1980. Tucson, Arizona.

OLDER JUNE. When I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, I didn't have any dreams. I didn't want to go anywhere, I didn't want to become anyone. And I went to lots and lots of meetings and Alcoholics Anonymous helped me find dreams and people like you helped them come true. My name is June G, and I am a grateful recovering alcoholic. Thank you.

YOUNG SYBIL. Today she is still sober and an active member of AA in Los Angeles.

OLDER JUNE. At the age of 77, Sybil was honored at the International Convention in Montreal. Alcoholics Anonymous was celebrating its 50th Anniversary. The convention drew more than 45,000 alcoholics, representing fifty-four countries. Sybil was the longest sober living woman in AA. July 1985. Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

SYBIL. You know, I have a wonderful life today, a fabulous life! I love everything about it. And if I could give it to you, I wouldn't! I wouldn't. Because I wouldn't want to rob you of the journey. See in A.A. you turn a new page and it's all new again. This seniority bit is a lot of baloney. We're all fledglings, learning to fly. Thank you. I love you all. I thank God for you all. *(She exits.)*

OLDER JUNE. On April 29, 1998 Sybil passed away. She was 90 years old and had been attending A.A. meetings regularly up until the end of her life.

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE.