

SCRIPT SAMPLE

SYD

A play in two acts
By Craig Houk



CHARACTERS

HELEN TRAHAN Female, Late 30s
SYDNEY (SYD) TRAHAN Female, 19 y/o
ROBERT (BUD) TRAHAN Male, Early 40s
BEVERLY LARSON Female, Early 40s
BEAUREGARD (BEAU) LARSON Male, Mid 40s

TIME

1973.

SETTING

The kitchen and back porch of the Trahan's single-family home in the Uptown neighborhood of New Orleans, somewhere along Highway 1 in Louisiana, and the Larson's living room.

SCENE BREAKDOWN

Act 1 Scene 1, June 24th, Afternoon, Kitchen & Porch
Act 1 Scene 2, June 24th, Before Sundown, Kitchen
Act 1 Scene 3, June 24th, Sundown, Porch
Act 1 Scene 4, June 24th, Before Midnight, Kitchen

Act 2 Scene 1, June 25th, Morning, Highway 1
Act 2 Scene 2, June 25th, Morning, Kitchen
Act 2 Scene 3, June 25th, Early Evening, Porch
Act 2 Scene 4, June 25th, Late Evening, Kitchen
Act 2 Scene 5, July 4th, Evening, Larson's living room
Act 2 Scene 6, July 17th, Early Evening, Kitchen

ACT 1**SCENE 1**

(June 24, 1973. Afternoon. A kitchen. We see Helen who has nearly finished setting the table for dinner. We hear a television playing off. Helen calls out.)

HELEN

Sydney. Sydney, dinner's ready. Call your Daddy, please. He's on the back porch.

(She takes the main course from the counter and sets it center on the table. She calls out again.)

Sydney, you hear me? Dinner's ready. Go get your Daddy.

(She stands quietly, waiting for a response. None comes. She crosses to the archway and calls off into the living room.)

Sydney!

SYD *(Off.)*

Yeah, Mama?

HELEN

Have you gone deaf? Now, listen to me. I've been slavin' away puttin' together a nice meal for the three of us. And I'd appreciate it if you and your Daddy would come to the table.

SYD *(Off.)*

Okay, Mama.

HELEN

And wash your hands. And turn off that TV.

SYD *(Off.)*

Yes, ma'am.

(Helen heads to the refrigerator to retrieve a pitcher of lemonade.)

Daddy!! Dinner's ready!!

(We hear the television turn off.)

HELEN

God give me strength.

(She retrieves three glasses from the cupboard, brings them to the table and begins to pour the lemonade. Bud enters.)

BUD

Somethin' smells real good in here.

(He kisses Helen on the cheek.)

HELEN

Thank you, Bud. That's very sweet. Now, sit down before everythin' gets cold.

(They both sit.)

BUD

Where's Syd?

HELEN

I sent her to wash up. And I've asked you to please stop callin' her that.

BUD

Oh, come on now. What's the harm in it? We've been callin' her that since she was in diapers.

HELEN

'Syd' sounds like a man's name. She's a grown woman. And it's time she started actin' like one.

BUD

She's nineteen. She's my little girl. She'll always be my little girl.

HELEN

(Calling off.)

Sydney!

(Sydney enters.)

SYD

I'm right here, Mama. Excuse me for not movin' at the speed of light.

HELEN

Please don't speak to me like that.

(Quick beat.)

Now, let me see your hands.

SYD

Oh, now come on, Mama. I think I know how to wash my hands.

HELEN

Let me see `em.

(Sydney extends her hands, palms up. She then turns them over, palms down.)

Sit down.

(Sydney sits. Helen stares intently at her.)

SYD

What? What'd I do now?

HELEN

I just wanna know what's gotten into you today?

SYD

What's gotten into me? Nothin's gotten into me. Except you've been all over my ass since church this mornin'...

BUD

(Overlapping.)

...Syd, please...

Syd by Craig Houk

HELEN

(Overlapping.)

...Well, I hardly think that danglin' your spit over the balcony and then repeatedly suckin' it back into your mouth was proper behavior for church...

SYD

(Overlapping.)

...You pinched me so hard, you broke the skin, Helen...

BUD

(Overlapping.)

...Don't be callin' your Mama by her first name...

SYD

(Overlapping.)

...She's always givin' me a rough time...

HELEN

(Overlapping.)

...I'm almost at my limit with you, young lady. Do you understand me...?

BUD

(Overlapping.)

...That's enough! Can we please just eat in peace? You said yourself, Helen. Food's gettin' cold.

HELEN

Yes, it is.

SYD

Fine with me. I'm starved.

(Sydney reaches for a bowl or a plate of something. Helen grabs Sydney's hand, perhaps a little too tightly.)

HELEN

Stop! You are tryin' to upset me on purpose, ain't you?

(Sydney pulls her hand away.)

BUD

Come on, Syd. You know better than that. Prayers first.

SYD

Right. Sorry.

(Helen extends both hands. Bud takes one, Sydney reluctantly takes the other. Helen starts the prayer and the other two chime in quickly.)

HELEN

Bless us, O Lord, and these, Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(They all make the sign of the cross, Sydney half-heartedly.)

Now, how about I make everyone's plate? Whatta you say, huh? Like old times?

SYD

I can make my own plate...

BUD

(Interrupting. To Helen.)

...Sounds like a real good idea, sweetheart. I'd like that very much. And I expect Syd would like that too. Wouldn't you, Syd?

SYD

Sure, Daddy.

(Bud hands his plate to Helen.)

HELEN

Thank you, Bud.

(Helen begins to put a plate of food together for Bud.)

BUD

Oh, and before I forget... I was readin' the paper out back, and I saw that the Dixie Roto Magazine insert was missin'. Have either of you two seen it?

HELEN

No. I'm sorry, Bud. I haven't.

SYD

Maybe it fell out when the paper boy tossed it onto the porch. I'll take a look out front...

(Sydney starts to rise out of her chair.)

HELEN

(Interrupting.)

...Stay right where you are. You can look for it after we've eaten. I expect it ain't urgent.

(Sydney returns to her chair.)

BUD

I suppose it ain't. But I tell you, of all days for that insert to go missin'. Hm...

(He takes a sip of his lemonade.)

HELEN

Well, what is it, Bud? Why are you actin' all coy?

BUD

Oh, never mind.

HELEN

Come on, now. Out with it.

BUD

No. No, I'm sure it can wait.

(He winks at Helen.)

HELEN

Fine. I've lost interest anyway. It can wait until the end of time now, for all I care.

SYD

Well, I don't wanna wait that long.

BUD

Hey, Syd.

SYD

Yeah, Daddy?

BUD

After dinner, if you can't find the insert, maybe you can run next door to the Larson's to see if they don't mind givin' us theirs. Whatta you say?

SYD

Sure.

(Helen hands Bud his plate.)

BUD

(To Helen.)

Thank you, dear.

(Helen smiles and then reaches for Sydney's plate.)

HELEN

Sydney.

(Sydney hands her plate to Helen.)

Go ahead and eat, Bud.

(Helen begins to put a plate of food together for Sydney. The portions will be conspicuously smaller.)

BUD

You sure you ladies don't mind if I start without you?

SYD

'Course not, Daddy.

BUD

Helen?

HELEN

Didn't I just say?

BUD

Well, all right then. Everythin' looks real good. Don't you agree, Syd?

SYD

Looks so good I can't wait to get it into my mouth.

HELEN

Oh, for goodness sake, Sydney. You'll have your food in just a second here.

(Bud has taken a bite.)

BUD

Mmmmmmm. Mm, Mm, Mm. So good. You have outdone yourself, Helen.

HELEN

Stop.

BUD

I am deadly serious. Best meal ever. It's like heaven on a biscuit.

HELEN

Thank you, Bud. Now, shut up and eat.

(She hands Sydney her plate.)

Here you go, Sydney.

SYD

Thanks, Mama.

*(Sydney eats. Bud continues to eat.
Helen begins to serve herself. A quiet
moment.)*

BUD

How're your studies comin', Syd?

SYD

Good. Real good.

BUD

And your grades?

SYD

I'm at 93%.

BUD

Wow, that's great. And what does that mean?

SYD

Well, anything at 93 or above is considered 'excellent'. Grade point value of 4.

BUD

Oh, boy. I see. And?

SYD

I got an 'A', Daddy.

BUD

Ah. Okay. All right. Well, that's just what I wanted to hear. That's real nice, Syd. That's my girl.

HELEN

She can do better.

BUD

Better than an 'A'?

HELEN

Just barely an 'A'. Maybe if she didn't spend so much time in front of that TV out there..

BUD

(Interrupting.)

...All right. Let's cut her some slack. I expect studyin' to be a nurse ain't easy. And she works hard too. How many hours you puttin' in at the hospital, Syd?

SYD

Twenty a week. Forty-five durin' vacation breaks. And excuse me, Mama, if once in a while, I like to plant myself in front of the TV. Sometimes it's nice to just sit down, relax a little, and not have to think about bed pans and bed sores for one hour while Kojak is on.

(We hear Henry Larson calling after his wife, Beverly Larson.)

BEAU *(Off.)*

Beverly! Beverly, get back here and leave 'em folks alone. It's Sunday, for Chrissake! Ain't nobody wants to be bothered on a Sunday...

BEVERLY *(Off.)*

(Interrupting.)

...Well, I'm sorry, Beau, but this cannot wait!

(Beverly appears at the kitchen door. She peers through the screen, perhaps knocks on the frame. She holds a copy of the Dixie Roto Magazine insert in her hand. She calls in.)

Hello.

(Beau appears just behind her. They are both a little out of breath. Helen and Bud rise out of their chairs. Helen moves to the door.)

HELEN

Well, hi, Beverly. What're you doin' here?

BEVERLY

Do you mind if we come in?

HELEN

Well, normally I wouldn't, but we were just...

BEAU

(Interrupting.)

...Aw, damn it. They're havin' dinner. I told you so. Sorry about that, folks. We can come back another time. Come on, Beverly. Let's go.

(Beau takes Beverly by the arm and starts off.)

BUD

(He moves past Helen to the door.)

No. No, it's okay, Beau. Why don't you two come on in?

(He opens the screen door.)

BEAU

You sure it's all right?

BUD

'Course it's all right.

(To Helen.)

Sweetheart?

(Beat.)

HELEN

Well, certainly. We're always happy to have you over.

BEVERLY

(She pushes past everyone and makes her way into the kitchen.)

Terrific. Because I've been desperate to talk to Bud about what I found in today's Times-Picayune. Hi, Sydney.

SYD

Hi, Mrs. Larson, Mr. Larson.

BEAU

(He has followed Beverly in.)

Hey, Sydney.

HELEN

That looks like the Dixie Roto Magazine insert in your hand, Beverly.

(Curious, Sydney rises out her chair.)

BEVERLY

It sure is.

HELEN

Funny that, we were just talkin' about it. Sydney was gonna stop by after dinner to see if you might share yours with us since we lost ours. Bud was askin' about it.

BEVERLY

Oh, my goodness. So, he hasn't told you yet? Bud, you haven't told 'em yet?

BUD

Not yet, no.

HELEN

But he's been hintin' at somethin'. Seemed pretty anxious to get his hands on that insert.

BEAU

Damn it, Beverly! See! Now you've gone and spoiled the surprise!

HELEN

What surprise? What is goin' on?

SYD

Oh, for fu...

(Sydney stops herself. She then crosses to Beverly and pulls the insert from her hand.)

I'll take that.

HELEN

Sydney!

(Sydney moves away a bit. Beverly, Beau and Helen huddle around, looking over Sydney's shoulder. Bud stays put. Sydney excitedly unfolds the insert to see what all the excitement is about. A big smile as she turns to Bud.)

SYD

Daddy.

HELEN

What? What is it?

(Helen reaches for the insert, but Sydney moves away.)

SYD

Well, guess who's on the cover of this week's installment of Dixie Roto Magazine?

(Helen turns to Bud. Bud smiles.)

HELEN

Oh, come on now. You've got to be yankin' my chain. Why in the world would Bud be...? All right, Sydney, hand it over. Let me take a look at that.

(Sydney, in jest, reluctantly hands the insert to Helen. Helen takes it and inspects the cover.)

Well, I'll be...

BEVERLY

That's a real nice picture of Bud, ain't it?

BEAU

And check out that headline. 'Big-City Blacksmith'.

HELEN

Looks like the Guidry farm in the background there.

BUD

S'right. Sydney used to go horseback ridin' there every weekend.

HELEN

What's this all about, Bud?

BUD

Well, read for yourself.

SYD

Says on the front that the article's on page six.

(Sydney grabs the insert from Helen and crosses to the kitchen table. She sits down and begins thumbing through the pages. The rest huddle around her. Sydney finds the article.)

BEVERLY

Well, go on, Sydney. Read it.

HELEN

Out loud. So everyone can hear.

SYD

(Sydney reads from the insert.)

"New Orleans resident, Robert 'Bud' Trahan, will be honored with the Metalist Award of Excellence for his extensive and lasting contributions to the blacksmithing community throughout the great state of Louisiana over the last two decades. The Metalist is the most prestigious award bestowed by the Pelican State Blacksmiths Association and will be presented to Mr. Trahan at Gallier Hall in Lafayette Square on Tuesday, July 17th, 1973 at 7:00 PM..."

HELEN

(Interrupting.)

(She looks to Bud.)

...Oh my God.

BEAU

Ain't that somethin'?

BEVERLY

And that's not all. Goes on to talk about how Bud fell into blacksmithin' after seein'... oh, darn it, what's that man's name, Bud? Famous blacksmith?

BUD

Alexander Winkler Bealer, III.

BEVERLY

That's the one.

BUD

I saw him at the North Georgia State Fair in 1943. Got my first anvil and hammer three years later at the age of sixteen. And I've been playin' with fire ever since.

BEAU

And you know, business is gonna pick up for sure, Bud. Not like you been strugglin' to find work otherwise, though.

BUD

No. No, we're doin' okay. And yeah, you're right. I expect I'll get a few more customers after this. Probably even some from out-of-state.

HELEN

You really think so, Bud?

BUD

'Course I think so. I mean, free advertisin', right?

HELEN

My God. I just don't know what to say. This is real good news. I'm so proud of you, Bud.

(Helen hugs Bud tightly. Bud reaches out to Sydney.)

BUD

Whatta you say, Syd? You gonna join us over here?

Syd by Craig Houk

SYD

If you got room for me.

BUD

We'll make room. Come on.

*(Sydney joins them for a group
embrace.)*

BEAU

Okay, Beverly. Let's get the hell outta here and let the Trahan's get back to their dinner. We've pestered 'em enough already.

BEVERLY

All right, all right.

(They start off.)

I'll see you at card club on Wednesday, Helen.

HELEN

Oh, now wait a minute you two. Why don't you stay and have a drink with us? Hm? To celebrate the good news?

BEVERLY

Well, that sounds real nice.

BUD

I'll make us a couple of Sazeracs, Beau.

HELEN

Oh, and a couple of Brandy Milk Punches for me and Beverly.

BUD

You got it.

BEAU

Now, hold on, hold on. While I hate to pass up one of Bud's Sazeracs, I think Beverly and I need to get out of y'all's hair.

HELEN

No, now listen. You make yourself a plate of food, Beau. Plenty left over. And then you and Bud can head out back. And talk about whatever worthless nonsense you men generally talk about. And Beverly'll stay with me here in the kitchen. You hungry, Beverly?

BEVERLY

Not especially, but I may pick a little.

BUD

Well, that's settled then. Syd, can you grab the milk outta the fridge? I'm gonna get started on those drinks.

(Bud exits through the archway.)

HELEN

And set up two tray tables for your Daddy and Mr. Larson on the porch.

SYD

Yes, Mama.

(Sydney goes to the refrigerator and retrieves the milk.)

HELEN

Go on, Beau. Help yourself. Plates are in the cupboard up there. Flatware in the drawer below.

BEAU

Yes, ma'am.

(Beau grabs a plate and then goes to the table to help himself.)

Have a seat, Beverly.

BEVERLY

Don't mind if I do.

(Beverly and Helen sit. As Sydney passes them with the milk...)

HELEN

And Sydney... When you're done doin' what I asked, I'd like you to come back and join me and Beverly here.

SYD

No thanks, Mama. I've got some studyin' to do.

HELEN

I wasn't askin'. And I expect your studies can wait 'til later this evenin', can't they?

SYD

Normally they might. But then I'm headin' out with some of the girls tonight.

HELEN

I'm sorry, you're what?

SYD

I'm goin' out later. For a few drinks and then maybe some dancin'...

BUD (*Off.*)

Hey, Syd! I need that milk, baby girl!

SYD

I'll be right there, Daddy.

HELEN

Oh, no. No, no, no. You will not be goin' out tonight, do you understand me? Especially on a Sunday night.

SYD

What difference does it make? It's not like you and Daddy ain't havin' drinks at home with the neighbors.

HELEN

Well, it's not the same thing. We're doin' it in honor of your Daddy's award. And none of us here is endeavorin' to get our nursin' degree.

(Sydney starts to interject.)

No. Not another word. And I don't appreciate you arguin' with me in front of the Larson's. You will not be goin' out tonight.

SYD

Well, it's already been decided. So, tough shit, Helen.

(She exits through the archway with the milk.)

HELEN

(Rising up, she slams her hands on the table.)

Sydney...!

(Beau and Beverly freeze. A long, uncomfortable moment. Helen sits.)

I'm sorry.

BEVERLY

There ain't no need to apologize. Just take a deep breath.

(Beau has not moved. Bud enters.)

BUD

What happened in here? Syd looks pissed off.

BEVERLY

Everythin's fine, Bud. Just a little misunderstandin' is all.

BUD

Sounded like a little more than that. You all right, sweetheart?

HELEN

Mm hm.

BUD

(Unconvinced.)

Well, okay then. You joinin' me, Beau?

BEAU

(Distracted.)

Ah... yup.

Syd by Craig Houk

BUD

Well, get your ass in gear then. Drinks are comin' up, ladies.

(Bud exits. Beau remains still.)

BEVERLY

Beau?

BEAU

(He looks to Beverly.)

Yeah?

BEVERLY

Did you get what you wanted?

BEAU

Uh... yeah... yeah, I sure did. Looks delicious.

BEVERLY

I'm sure it is. Now, why don't you grab a knife and a fork and head on out to the porch?

BEAU

Yes, ma'am.

(Beau does as is instructed and exits through the archway.)