

EPIPHANY  
A play by Richard Stimac

CHARACTERS

SEPH:	White; male; mid 40s; father to MIRI.
MIRI:	White; female; mid to late 20s; daughter to SEPH
KING:	White; male; late 20s; county deputy

TIME

a summer night, Illinois, 1970's

SETTING

A small trailer home with a front door that leads into the living room. The kitchenette is to the left. A hallway to the right opens to the audience. Implied off-stage is the bathroom and the bedroom down the hall.

ACT 1

SETTING:

A dim porch light shines through the picture window. There is a couch with folded blankets and sheets and bed pillows stacked on one end. No lights are on. The room is lit by the TV. A coffee table has an open pizza delivery box and a dozen or more cans of beer. There is a large ashtray filled with butts and a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. A clock shows 12:00. On the TV, a black-and-white image of the American flag comes on and then Ray Charles singing “America the Beautiful.”

AT RISE:

SEPH sits in a La-Z-Boy chair in front of the TV. He changes channels often with a clicker remote. Many channels have color bars. Without any sound from outside, MIRI bursts through the front door. SEPH clicks the volume down to silent. MIRI rushes through the living room to the kitchenette and begins to vomit in the sink. SEPH sits motionless. MIRI runs the tap and cleans herself up in the sink. She walks into the living room and turns the lights on. SEPH changes the TV to the black-and-white test pattern.

MIRI

You’re still up?

SEPH

Do you know what time it is?

(She examines the wall above the sink and fingers a small hole.)

MIRA

Isn’t this where you shot—

SEPH

That one’s in the bathroom.

(MIRI looks at the TV and then the clock.)

MIRI  
Is it that late?

SEPH  
You remember the agreement?

(MIRI collapses on the couch.)

MIRI  
I feel like shit.

SEPH  
You look like shit.

MIRI  
Thanks, dad.

(MIRI reaches to the coffee table and shakes a few cans of beer until she finds one that still has beer in it. She drinks from the can.)

SEPH  
Pizza?

MIRI  
I couldn't eat.

(SEPH taps the pack of cigarettes so that one of the cigarettes shakes partially out. He offers it to MIRI. She takes the cigarette and he takes the lighter from the coffee table and lights the cigarette for her. He then shakes one out for himself and lights it.)

MIRI  
Some shit they got me into.

SEPH  
The same girls as last time?

MIRI  
Last time?

SEPH  
You know what last time.

(MIRI sits up straight and turns to fully face him.)

MIRI

I don't know what last time. Remind me. What last time are you talking about?

SEPH

Not again tonight.

MIRI

Not again? Not again what? What do you not want to happen? Again. Tonight.

SEPH

We had an agreement. You came to stay here. You follow my rules.

MIRI

Your rules. Which are, remind me?

SEPH

Not coming home drunk at midnight.

MIRI

Not coming home drunk at midnight's not something you approve of now?

SEPH

I can't do this tonight.

MIRI

Just like old times.

(MIRI slouches back onto the couch.)

SEPH

I worked a double and I double-back in the morning shift.

MIRI

They're killing you.

SEPH

What choice do I have?

MIRI

Work less.

We're not union. SEPH

Get a different job? MIRI

I can barely make it through my shift. SEPH

You own this piece of trash. And the land. What else? MIRI

There's always more. SEPH

Like what? MIRI

What's up tonight? With the questions? SEPH

Just wondering why my dad is killing himself. MIRI

I need the job. SEPH

You said that. I asked, what for? MIRI

Expenses you don't know about. SEPH

Other children? MIRI

Stop. SEPH

A young mistress? MIRI

One of the girls you were out with tonight. SEPH

MIRI

I could have told you which ones had VD. You own somebody money?

(SEPH finishes his cigarette then shakes a few cans of beer. All empty. He gets up and goes to the fridge and grabs another six pack and brings it back to the coffee table. He pulls one can and offers it to MIRI. She accepts. He sits back down and opens a can for himself.)

Gambling?

SEPH

I know that I'd lose.

MIRI

What is it then?

SEPH

It's just . . . people.

MIRI

Who you owe money to?

(SEPH shrugs. The phone in the kitchen rings. Then rings again. And again. MIRI begins to rise but SEPH shakes her off. He gets up and answers the phone.)

SEPH

Yeah?

(He looks at MIRI, and covers the microphone on the receiver.)

The sheriff.

(He uncovers the mic and listens.)

Yeah.

(He continues to listen to the speaker on the receiver of the phone.)

Ok. Yeah. Ok. Yeah. I got it. OK.

(He hangs up.)

A deputy is coming over. To talk to you. Know what about?

(MIRI shakes her head "no.")

Kinda late for them to be coming over. Sure you don't know?

(Again, MIRI shakes her head "no.")

Certain?

(A third time, MIRI shakes her head "no.")

Third times a charm. Let's clean this mess up. For company.

(SEPH begins collecting the beer cans. MIRI stands and picks up a few cans. SEPH and MIRI begin smashing the cans. It becomes a game. And they laugh. Easily. When all the cans are smashed SEPH goes to the kitchen and gets a black trash bag. They begin putting the cans in the bag, and then finally SEPH shoves in the pizza box.

MIRI

You don't recycle the aluminum?

(SEPH pours in the butts from the ashtray.)

SEPH

Go get the Lysol from the bathroom.

(MIRI goes to the bathroom. SEPH takes a twisty and seals the bag and sets it near the door. He sits and lights a cigarette. MIRI returns with the Lysol can. She holds the cap down so there is an even and continuous mist as she walks about the room.)

MIRI

Why are we worrying about what some deputy's gonna think?

SEPH

Don't want him thinking you're some two-dollar whore.

MIRI

I'm no whore.

SEPH

You know I didn't mean it like that. I just meant—

(A car pulls up.)

MIRI

Here already?

(SEPH shakes a cigarette out for MIRI. She pauses before taking it. He offers her the lighter and she takes it and lights her own cigarette. She turns her back to her father. They smoke in silence for a minute.)

SEPH

He was waitin'.

MIRI

Let's act respectable.

SEPH

Respectable.

(There's a knock at the door. Neither SEPH nor MIRI reacts. Another knock.)

Well?

(MIRI takes a long drag on her cigarette and turns her back to the door.)

OK.

(SEPH gets up and answers the door. KING is on the steps leading up to the front door.)

KING

Evening. The Sherriff called earlier and—

SEPH

We knew you was coming. Get in here.

(SEPH holds the door for KING who takes a few uncertain steps into the living room.)

All the way in.

(KING steps fully into the living room. SEPH closes and locks the door behind him.)

KING

Good evening, ma'am.

MIRI

Ma'am?

SEPH

Go on. Say hello to the deputy.



MIRI

“Hello to the deputy.”

SEPH

Have a seat. Anywhere. Except that chair. That’s my chair.

(SEPH takes a seat the chair and lights  
another cigarette.)

Smoke?

KING

I’d prefer to stand. This should only take a minute.

SEPH

Then get to talkin’. What you need?

KING

Well—

SEPH

What can I do you for?

KING

I came to talk to your MIRI.

SEPH

My MIRI. What’s my MIRI got to do with anything?

KING

Something happened earlier tonight. We’re following up with the kids, the young people, who were out.

SEPH

My MIRI wasn’t out. She has an eleven-o-clock curfew.

KING

Your daughter has a curfew.

SEPH

When she lives here, she does. What’s the issue?

KING

Actually, sir—

MIRI

Sir.

KING

I need to speak with her. In private.

SEPH

You don't need to speak to my daughter in private. Whatever you got to say—

MIRI

Go on. Take the trash out. Let the man do his job.

(MIRI turns enough to make eye contact with SEPH and then signals him to get the trash bag and get out.)

I'm not telling you what to do. Just asking you to let the man do his job so that he can leave.

(SEPH stands and takes the trash bag with him out the front door and leaves it open.)

KING

This won't take long

MIRI

No, this will not take long.

(She turns towards KING.)

You.

KING

Ma'am?

MIRI

No reason to remember.

KING

Ma'am. I'm sorry, but—

MIRI

What do you need to know about? About me and my friends. What went on earlier tonight.

KING

Ma'am?

MIRI

Enough with the "ma'am." You come here to talk. So talk.

KING

It's about your father.

MIRI

My daddy?

KING  
We found a body. Someone SEPH associates with.

MIRI  
Associates with?

KING  
You were home by 11 tonight.

MIRI  
I never went out.

KING  
You said you went out with friends.

MIRI  
I meant real early. Around 7. Came home after that.

KING  
SEPH said that you were home at 11. A curfew.

MIRI  
He's been drinking. Fell asleep. I never went out.

KING  
You were home. All evening. With him.

MIRI  
All evening. We watched *Happy Days*.

KING  
You and SEPH watched *Happy Days* tonight.

MIRI  
That's what I said.

KING  
That's was on yesterday

MIRI  
Same thing every night. Get drunk. Watch TV.

KING  
We know you went out tonight.

I didn't. You heard what my daddy said.

MIRI

SEPH own a gun?

KING

If he did, I wouldn't tell you.

MIRI

You sleep on that couch?

KING

This conversation is all over the place.

MIRI

This . . . situation, tonight, it's serious. The body we found is someone . . . important to a lot of people. People your father does business with.

KING

My dad doesn't do business. He works at the salvage yard. Worked today. A double. Going back in the morning. So, he needs to get to sleep.

MIRI

SEPH doesn't work at the salvage yard.

KING

Yeah, he does. Yard maintenance.

MIRI

SEPH lost that job six weeks ago.

KING

Six weeks?

MIRI

You knew?

KING

I suspected.

MIRI

Has he been doing other work? On the side. To pay the rent. Buy food.

KING

You're good at your job.

MIRI

KING

We can talk now, you and me. Or we can talk again in the morning. Probably will, either way.

(MIRI turns to fully face KING.)

MIRI

You don't remember me, do you?

KING

Ma'am?

MIRI

High school. You were a few years older than me. No reason for you to remember me.

KING

We were in high school together?

MIRI

You were in school plays. Musicals. *The Pirates of Penzance*. You had the lead role.

KING

I barely remember that.

MIRI

Now a cop.

KING

Being a cop and an actor is kinda the same thing.

MIRI

How so?

KING

Lots of people pretending to be things they're not. Saying things they know aren't true but wish were.

MIRI

Liars.

KING

In the theater, they're actors. In the law, yeah, liars.

MIRI

You think I'm a liar.

KING

I think you wish you were.

MIRI

Do you remember every case you work on?

KING

Most. If I take my time to remember.

MIRI

Do you remember—

(SEPH appears at the door.)

SEPH

Done?

MIRI

You almost scared me to death.

SEPH

Well?

KING

For now. The sheriff or another deputy will follow up tomorrow morning. Be available.

SEPH

I work early tomorrow.

KING

Take care. (Speaking to SEPH.) I remember. (Speaking to MIRI.)

(SEPH steps aside for KING to leave. Once the deputy is gone, SEPH steps into the trailer and locks the door. He peers through the window and watches the car pull away. After the sound of the engine fades, SEPH goes into the kitchen and gets a bottle of whiskey and two glasses from the cabinet. He fills both glasses, much more than a shot or two, then gives one to MIRI.)

SEPH

Here's to family loyalty.

(He downs his whiskey in one gulp.)

SEPH (cont'd)

Go on. Drink up.

MIRI

You weren't at work today.

SEPH

Sure I was. You can be certain to keep that in your head. I was at work.

MIRI

No. You weren't.

SEPH

I say I was, so I was.

MIRI

Being at work isn't something you can lie about. It's not like being at home this evening. You weren't home this evening.

SEPH

I was home all evening. Tired. From work. And I go back in . . . in, what, less than six hours.

MIRI

So this is how it's gonna be.

SEPH

This is how it's gonna be.

MIRI

I remember. He was the one.

SEPH

The one?

MIRI

The deputy. Who found me.

SEPH

You two know each other?

MIRI

He's the one who found me.

SEPH

Found you what? Where? One of your drunks. In a ditch. Vomit all over your clothes.

MIRI

When I was raped.

SEPH

Why do you have to use that word?

MIRI

Because I was raped. By your buddies.

SEPH

They weren't my buddies.

MIRI

Your drinking buddies. Down at La Cosita's.

SEPH

I never saw them there.

MIRI

OK. Then at the Magyar Hall. Or the Elks or whatever.

SEPH

Associates. That's the word I'd use.

MIRI

Associates? Associates you do business with now. You quit your job.

SEPH

I was fired.

MIRI

Fired. Quit. It's all the same.

SEPH

I don't understand why you carry on about my knowing them.

MIRI

You work with the men who raped me.

SEPH

They were never my friends.

MIRI

The deputy wasn't here for me. He was here for you. Asking about you. They found a body tonight.

SEPH



That's what the police do. They find things.

MIRI

They know that you lost your job six weeks ago. And that you've had money coming in.

(SEPH pours himself another whiskey.)

SEPH

Drink up. I said it once, already. To family loyalty.

(SETH drains his glass. MIRI takes a good drink but does not empty the entire glass.)

MIRI

When mom died—

SEPH

Don't bring all that up, too.

MIRI

When she died, down that hall, in that bed . . . you remember that, right? I was twelve years old. You wouldn't let me go in to see her.

SEPH

I wanted you to remember her how I remembered her, beautiful, and full of life. And happy. And young.

MIRI

I'd sit in that hallway, right there, and just look at that door. Sometimes, I could hear her breathe. Cough. Move.

SEPH

Let the dead be the dead.

MIRI

One day, when you were out . . . at work . . . I went into the room. She was asleep so I sat at the foot of the bed and watched her. She did wake up and moved her hand for me to sit with her. She could barely talk by that time. But she did. Yeah, she talked. Wanna know what she told me?

SEPH

I told you not to go in that room.

MIRI

She told me that it was my job to take care of you. I was twelve years old and my dying mom told me that it was my job to take care of my drunken, criminal dad.

SEPH

You think I didn't try. I had a federal conviction when I was twenty. Younger than you are now. You know who hires men with federal time? No one. At least no one who cares about whether you've been done time or not. I took work with the people who'd pay me for work that I could do.

MIRI

It's them, isn't it? It's them you owe money to. Who you work for.

SEPH

Not them. I work for myself.

MIRI

No, maybe not those two, exactly. But them, all the same. Always them. Doing things to you. That's why you didn't do anything. When it happened.

SEPH

I tried.

MIRI

You tried?

SEPH

I tried. I took my pistol and I drove there and I sat in my car and I knew if I went in there I wouldn't be coming out. And all I thought about was you. About your mom being dead. And . . . about you.

MIRI

You never thought about me.

SEPH

I've thinking about you since the day I found out your mom was pregnant. There's not a day goes by that I don't think about you. I could get by. On less money. You're right about that. But then what? With you? What happens to you?

MIRI

I'll survive.

SEPH

You don't know how you were.

MIRI

You can't even say it.

SEPH

You haven't been the same. You were such a happy kid. Always laughing. That's what I remember about you. Like your mother, beautiful. Now, you, drunk, no job, pretty much good as dead. What's a man know about raising a girl whose momma just died? I just want to remember how things were before all that.

MIRI

But my mom did die. And I was raped. And my dad turned into a drunk who couldn't keep a job.

SEPH

I can't change all that.

MIRA

You can now.

SEPH

Being old means you give up on doing better.

MIRA

Trying can't be a mistake.

SEPH

What's the opposite of a mistake?

MIRA

Isn't one. Just better mistakes than others.

SEPH

Choosing right is making less of a mistake.

(SEPH reaches for the whiskey bottle but then settles back in the chair.)

MIRI

I wanted you to love me. To protect me. To be my dad.

SEPH

For me, this is being a dad. It's the best that I could ever give you.

(MIRI lies down on the couch. SETH watches MIRI. He stands and sits on the edge of the couch next to his daughter. They look at each other. SEPH reaches for MIRI. She goes to him. He holds her. Their body positions suggest the Pietà.)

(END OF ACT)