



The Sandbox (1959)

THE PLAYERS

The Young Man, 25, a good-looking, well-built boy in a bathing suit

Mommy, 55, a well-dressed, imposing woman

Daddy, 60, a small man; gray, thin

Grandma, 86, a tiny, wizened woman with bright eyes

The Musician, no particular age, but young would be nice

Note: When, in the course of the play, MOMMY and DADDY call each other by these names, there should be no suggestion of regionalism. These names are of empty affection and point up the pre-senility and vacuity of their characters.

0.1

The Scene: A bare stage, with only the following: Near the footlights, far stage-right, two simple chairs set side by side, facing the audience; near the footlights, far stage-left, a chair facing stage-right with a music stand before it; farther back, and stage-center, slightly elevated and raked, a large child's sandbox with a toy pail and shovel; the background is the sky, which alters from brightest day to deepest night.

0.2

At the beginning, it is brightest day; the YOUNG MAN is alone on stage, to the rear of the sandbox, and to one side. He is doing calisthenics until quite at the very end of the play. These calisthenics, employing the arms only, should suggest the beating and fluttering of wings. The YOUNG MAN is, after all, the Angel of Death.

0.3

MOMMY and DADDY enter from stage-left, MOMMY first.

MOMMY: [Motioning to DADDY.] Well, here we are; this is the beach.

DADDY: [Whining.] I'm cold.

MOMMY: [Dismissing him with a little laugh.] Don't be silly; it's as warm as toast. Look at that nice young man over there: he doesn't think it's cold. [Waves to the YOUNG MAN.] Hello.

YOUNG MAN: [With an endearing smile.] Hi!

MOMMY: [Looking about.] This will do perfectly . . . don't you think so, Daddy? There's sand there . . . and the water beyond. What do you think, Daddy?

5

DADDY: [Vaguely.] Whatever you say, Mommy.

MOMMY: [With the same little laugh.] Well, of course . . . whatever I say. Then, it's settled, is it?

DADDY: [Shrugs.] She's your mother, not mine.

MOMMY: I know she's my mother. What do you take me for? [A pause.] All right, now; let's get on with it. [She shouts into the wings, stage-left.] You! Out there! You can come in now.

The lights dim; night comes on. The MUSICIAN begins to play; it becomes deepest night. There are spots on all the players, including the YOUNG MAN, who is, of course, continuing his calisthenics.

DADDY: [Stirring.] It's nighttime.

MOMMY: Shhhh. Be still . . . wait.

55 DADDY: [Whining.] It's so hot.

MOMMY: Shhhh. Be still . . . wait.

GRANDMA: [To herself.] That's better. Night. [To the MUSICIAN.] Honey, do you play all through this part?

The MUSICIAN nods.

Well, keep it nice and soft; that's a good boy.

The MUSICIAN nods again; plays softly.

That's nice.

There is an off-stage rumble.

DADDY: [Starting.] What was that?

MOMMY: [Beginning to weep.] It was nothing.

60 DADDY: It was . . . it was . . . thunder . . . or a wave breaking . . . or something.

MOMMY: [Whispering, through her tears.] It was an off-stage rumble . . . and you know what *that* means.

DADDY: I forget. . . .

MOMMY: [Barely able to talk.] It means the time has come for poor Grandma . . . and I can't bear it!

DADDY: [Vacantly.] I . . . I suppose you've got to be brave.

65 GRANDMA: [Mocking.] That's right, kid; be brave. You'll bear up; you'll get over it.

Another off-stage rumble . . . louder.

MOMMY: Ohhhhhhhhhh . . . poor Grandma . . . poor Grandma. . . .

GRANDMA: [To MOMMY.] I'm fine! I'm all right! It hasn't happened yet!

A violent off-stage rumble. All the lights go out, save the spot on the YOUNG MAN; the MUSICIAN stops playing.

MOMMY: Ohhhhhhhhhh . . . Ohhhhhhhhhh. . . .

GRANDMA: Don't put the lights up yet. . . . I'm not ready; I'm not quite ready. [Silence.] All right, dear . . . I'm about done.

The lights come up again, to brightest day; the MUSICIAN begins to play. GRANDMA is discovered, still in the sandbox, lying on her side, propped up on an elbow, half covered, busily shoveling sand over herself.

70 GRANDMA: I don't know how I'm supposed to do anything with this goddam toy shovel. . . .

DADDY: Mommy! It's daylight!

MOMMY: [Brightly.] So it is! Well! Our long night is over. We must put away our tears, take off our mourning . . . and face the future. It's our duty.

GRANDMA: [Still shoveling; mimicking] . . . take off our mourning . . . face the future. . . . Lordy!

MOMMY and DADDY rise, stretch. MOMMY waves to the YOUNG MAN.

YOUNG MAN: *[With that smile.]* Hi!

GRANDMA *plays dead.* (!) MOMMY and DADDY go over to look at her; she is a little more than half buried in the sand; the toy shovel is in her hands, which are crossed on her breast.

MOMMY: *[Before the sandbox; shaking her head.]* Lovely! It's . . . it's hard to be sad . . . she looks . . . 75
so happy. *[With pride and conviction.]* It pays to do things well. *[To the MUSICIAN.]* All right, you can stop now, if you want to. I mean, stay around for a swim, or something; it's all right with us. *[She sighs heavily.]* Well Daddy . . . off we go.

DADDY: Brave Mommy!

MOMMY: Brave Daddy! *[They exit, stage-left.]*

GRANDMA: *[After they leave; lying quite still.]* It pays to do things well. . . . Boy, oh boy! *[She tries to sit up.]* . . . Well, kids . . . *[But she finds she can't.]* . . . I . . . I can't get up. I . . . can't move.

The YOUNG MAN stops his calisthenics, nods to the MUSICIAN, walks over to GRANDMA, kneels down by the sandbox.

GRANDMA: I . . . can't move. . . .

YOUNG MAN: Shhhhhh . . . be very still. . . . 80

GRANDMA: I . . . I can't move. . . .

YOUNG MAN: Uh . . . ma'am; I . . . I have a line here.

GRANDMA: Oh, I'm sorry, sweetie; you go right ahead.

YOUNG MAN: I am . . . uh . . .

GRANDMA: Take your time, dear. 85

YOUNG MAN: *[Prepares; delivers the line like a real amateur.]* I am the Angel of Death. I am . . .
uh . . . I am come for you.

GRANDMA: What . . . wha . . . *[Then, with resignation.]* . . . ohhh . . . ohhhh, I see.

The YOUNG MAN bends over, kisses GRANDMA gently on the forehead.

GRANDMA: *[Her eyes closed, her hands folded on her breast again, the shovel between her hands, a sweet smile on her face.]* Well . . . that was very nice, dear. . . .

YOUNG MAN: *[Still kneeling.]* Shhhhhh . . . be still. . . .

GRANDMA: What I meant was . . . you did that very well, dear. . . . 90

YOUNG MAN: *[Blushing.]* . . . oh . . .

GRANDMA: No; I mean it. You've got that . . . you've got a quality.

YOUNG MAN: *[With his endearing smile.]* Oh . . . thank you; thank you very much . . . ma'am.

GRANDMA: *[Slowly; softly—as the YOUNG MAN puts his hands on top of GRANDMA's]* You're . . .
you're welcome . . . dear.

Tableau. The MUSICIAN continues to play as the curtain slowly comes down.