

BOISE, USA

Characters (in order of appearance)

DORIS MOORE, 34, JOE's pert and pretty wife, loyal and protective of her family

JOE MOORE, 36, gregarious and popular bank vice president whose life is shattered by scandal

ELDON HALVERSON, 17, smart, manipulative hustler

"BUCK" JONES, 58, Boise's Mayor, formidable old-time, fat-cat politician

BLAINE EVANS, 52, County Prosecutor, BUCK's Grim Reaper-ish henchman

MARJORIE JONES BUTLER, 33, JACK's wife and BUCK's devoted daughter

DR. JACK BUTLER, 35, compassionate psychiatrist, haunted by his son's death

WILL FAIRCHILD, 30's, confident and canny FBI agent

FRANK JONES, 17, BUCK's handsome and submissive son, a West Point cadet

HERBERT JONES, 55, BUCK's brother, wealthy, dapper and openly homosexual

ACT 1: THE FALL, 1955

Scene 1

Night. A doorbell chimes, followed by
CHILDREN'S VOICES: "Trick or Treat!"

Lights on JOE MOORE -- 36, trim and athletic,
and his wife, DORIS, 34, pert and pretty.
DORIS holds a tray of candy apples.

DORIS

My goodness, such a spooky ghost! And what a mean, scary pirate you are!

JOE

I see four arms and two heads. Hey, buddy, I bet you're a man from Mars.

CHILDREN's laughter.

DORIS

Each of you deserves a special treat.

She offers the tray of candy apples.

CHILDREN'S VOICES

Thank you, Mrs. Moore. Thank you, Mr. Moore.

JOE

Happy Halloween, kids.

JOE puts his arm around DORIS's waist. They
wave to the kids. Lights dim.

Scene 2

ELDON HALVERSON, 17, pretty-boy
handsome but could use a hot meal and a night's
sleep, waits in the shadows, smoking a cigarette.
An OLDER MAN enters, his fedora pulled
down, overcoat collar turned up.

OLDER MAN

Three dollars.

ELDON shakes his head scornfully.

Four.

ELDON ditches his cigarette and grabs the OLDER MAN's money. ELDON unzips his fly. The OLDER MAN has trouble getting down to his knees.

ELDON

Hurry up, for Christ's sake, it's freezin'.

OLDER MAN

Don't talk.

ELDON

Just get it over with.

OLDER MAN

Shut up, goddamn it.

He fumbles at ELDON's crotch. ELDON tries to get into it. A POLICE OFFICER appears. He shines a flashlight onto ELDON's face.

ELDON

Shit.

POLICE OFFICER

What's goin' on here?

OLDER MAN

God Almighty.

The OLDER MAN runs out. A SECOND POLICE OFFICER appears.

POLICE OFFICER

Get him!

The SECOND POLICE OFFICER chases after the OLDER MAN. ELDON makes a break for it, but the first POLICE OFFICER tackles him.

ELDON

What the fuck, man!

POLICE OFFICER

What's your name, punk?

ELDON

Fuck off.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm takin' you in. You can cool down in jail.

ELDON

I'm sick o' sleepin' in the park anyway.

The POLICE OFFICER hauls ELDON out.

Scene 3

The office of Mayor BUCK JONES. BUCK, 58, a burly, old-time fat-cat politician, and the County Prosecutor, 52, stork-thin, Grim Reaper-ish, enter.

BUCK

A whole bunch of the kids were dressed up at the Costume Parade like that tiger on the cereal box. What's his name, Timmy, Tommy?

BLAINE

Tony. Tony the Tiger.

BUCK

Somebody got the swell idea to line up all the little tigers grabbing each other's tails and shoot a photograph of me holding on to the last one like a goddamn conga line.

He laughs, re-enacting his holding a tiger tail and waving.

BUCK (CONT'D)

What a helleva campaign poster that's gonna make!

BLAINE

We've had some trouble, Buck.

BUCK

There's always a few mischief-makers on Halloween night. Certainly nothing we ever need our County Prosecutor for.

BLAINE

This is different. Chief Grayson just arrested three men. They were caught in immoral situations.

BUCK

Immoral?

BLAINE

Lewd and lascivious conduct. With three teenage boys.

BUCK is speechless for a moment.

BUCK

How old are the boys?

BLAINE

Eldon Halverson and Hal Baker are seventeen, but they claim they were first assaulted over a year ago. The other boy is fifteen.

BUCK

Fifteen? Dear God.

BLAINE

Eldon swears he knows ten more boys who get frequently propositioned. Apparently these -- encounters -- have been going on a while.

BUCK

And we're just hearing about it now?

BLAINE

Nobody talks about this kind of thing, Buck. It's normal they've kept it hushed up.

BUCK

Normal is what I see Sundays after church.

He grabs the telephone and dials.

People expect us to protect this community, Blaine. We need to clamp this down now.

(on the telephone)

Chief, it's me. Yes, disgusting. I want you to put your men on double shifts. Patrol the public lavatories, Julia Davis Park --

BLAINE

The Greyhound Bus Terminal.

BUCK

Any filthy goddamn place.

(listens, then explodes)

Fuck the overtime! I'll answer to the City Council. You just do what we pay you for!

He slams the telephone down.

BLAINE

I never thought I'd have to prosecute cases like this in Boise.

BUCK

What do you need to convict?

BLAINE

Evidence, confessions.

BUCK

Chief Grayson couldn't get stool pigeon to confess. It'll be up to you. What's the law on the books for this -- ?

BLAINE

It's a felony offense, punishable by five years in the state penitentiary.

BUCK

Five years, that's it?

BLAINE

If I can prove that the accused is an ongoing menace to the community --

BUCK

That won't take much.

BLAINE

-- then sentencing could be more punitive.

BUCK

Do it, Blaine.

BLAINE

Look, I can indict all three men in a minute flat, but that doesn't mean this'll be over with.

BUCK

Why not?

BLAINE

If it's true what Eldon says, and there are other boys involved, it stands to reason --

BUCK

There are more perverts out on our streets.

BLAINE

You need to bring in a professional, Buck, somebody experienced with this type of criminal.

BUCK

Who the hell's got that kind of experience?

BLAINE

Nobody in Boise.

BUCK isn't sure who Blaine implies, but then it hits him, like a sour taste. Lights dim.

Scene 4

A Paris apartment. Moonlight shines through a tall window. The sound of bongos and beatnik poetry in French can be heard outside.

Dr. JACK BUTLER, 35, sits in a chair, staring out, listening. He has an open and compassionate face, but his sad eyes reveal a troubled soul. His wife, Marjorie, 33, a wholesome, freckled Prairie girl, enters. She's wrapped in a dressing gown and sleepy.

MARJORIE

What're you doing up?

She crosses to JACK and listens to the beatnik poetry.

Delinquents.

JACK

(annoyed)

They're not delinquents, Marjorie.

MARJORIE

It's 4 a.m. Where are their parents?

JACK

You can't always blame the parents.

MARJORIE

What is that, some kind of poem or something?

JACK listens, then translates.

BEATNIK VOICE (O.S.)

Que puis-je faire maintenant.

JACK

What can I do now?

BEATNIK VOICE

Quand dans mon coeur, je trouve que j'ai peur.

JACK

When within my heart I find I am afraid.

The BEATNIK VOICE continues to recite and fades out.

BEATNIK VOICE

J'ai peur, j'ai peur, Paris.

MARJORIE

Come back to bed.

She turns to go.

JACK

I have good news.

Pleased, MARJORIE returns.

MARJORIE

What is it?

JACK

The University's offered to extend my grant.

MARJORIE

(wary)

For how long?

JACK

Two years.

MARJORIE exhales, clearly not happy.

I'm sorry that my work's kept us abroad longer than I expected.

MARJORIE

You promised me, Jack.

JACK

I can't pick up and leave in the middle of my research. Ideally I should be charting my case studies for seven years.

MARJORIE

American teenagers have just the same problems that French teenagers have.

JACK

You know I don't have any offer in the States.

Now MARJORIE has some good news.

MARJORIE

My father called.

JACK

Collect?

MARJORIE

(ignoring him)

The Idaho State Board of Health is looking for a director of the new mental health division in Boise.

JACK

No, Marjorie.

MARJORIE

But you wouldn't even have to interview. Daddy's arranged everything.

JACK

I bet he has.

MARJORIE

He's already got his eye on the sweetest house for us on Windward Avenue.

JACK

I can't. Not Boise, not yet. It's too soon.

MARJORIE

You can't keep running, Jack. No matter how far you go or for how long, it won't ever change the fact that Harry died.

JACK

I dreamt about him again.

MARJORIE

Oh, Jack.

JACK

It's always the same. He's at the bottom of the pool. A cloud of blood surrounds his head like a halo. His eyes are wide open. The bubble of his last breath floats up and breaks the surface of the water.

(looking at MARJORIE)

Nobody blamed you, Marjorie.

MARJORIE lays her hand on JACK's cheek.

MARJORIE

I never blamed you.

JACK

You don't have to say the words.

MARJORIE withdraws.

MARJORIE

It's been three years. I have so little family left. I'm missing out on their lives.

JACK

I won't be beholden to Buck. Can't you understand that?

MARJORIE

Daddy isn't just trying to get me back home. He's opening his arms to you, too. I think it's cruel that you keep pushing him away.

JACK thinks a moment, then nods.

JACK

Tell Buck I'm grateful.

MARJORIE kisses him, then exits. JACK's attention is drawn back outside. He hears the sound of a boy playing.

The front page of the Idaho Daily Statesmen,
November 2, 1955 is projected:

Three Men Admit Sex Charges

Scene 5

The kitchen of the MOORE home, a sunny day.
DORIS sets three paper-bag lunches on the
table and calls upstairs.

DORIS

That's enough horseplay, young man! Your father will be ready in five minutes.

JOE enters, tying a tie.

Not that tie, Joe.

JOE

But your mother gave it to me.

DORIS

That doesn't mean I have to love it. You should read the morning paper.

JOE

Why, is there a sale on?

DORIS hurries out. JOE picks up the folded
newspaper and sees the headline.

Jesus...

DORIS re-enters with a different tie. JOE reads
aloud.

“The three arrests represent the start of an investigation that to date has only scratched
the surface.”

DORIS

They say that Ralph Cooper's been in and out of jail for years.

She unties JOE's tie and slips the new tie around his neck.

JOE

But Benny Cassel's just a harmless old gentlemen who sells men's clothes in the department store. He probably sold me this tie.

DORIS

Apparently he's not so harmless. Robbie has wrestling at four.

JOE

My meeting's at three. I can't leave early, Doris. Why can't you take him?

DORIS

Loretta has dance class at 3:30.

JOE

Well, Robbie knows where the YMCA is.

DORIS

No, I don't want him walking there alone.

JOE

He's gone on his own before.

DORIS

It isn't safe, Joe.

She indicates the newspaper. JOE gently takes her by the arms.

JOE

Okay. Four-fifteen. He's gonna have to be a little late.

DORIS embraces him.

DORIS

I'm so lucky to have you.

JOE

I'm pretty lucky too.

DORIS

Yes, you are. I have a secret. Something you don't know I know about you. Tuesday nights when you come home late from the office --

JOE

I haven't done that in weeks.

DORIS

You tiptoe in, and you think I'm asleep. You lay your hand on my cheek so gently I almost don't feel it's there. I hear you breathing close to my ear. And you kiss me softly, like the brush of a feather, so you don't wake me. You're such a considerate man.

She pats his tie-knot.

There. I have complete confidence the Mayor will accept your proposal.

JOE

He will if he wants what's best for Boise.

DORIS

You better run.

She hands him the bag lunches. JOE grabs his briefcase.

JOE

I'll let you know how it goes.

He kisses DORIS, then exits, calling upstairs.

Robbie! Loretta! Let's get a move-on, kids.

DORIS crosses to the telephone and dials.

DORIS

Mr. Williams? It's Mrs. Moore, Robbie's mother. Yes, he is a very polite boy. Mr. Williams, I don't doubt you've already heard from every other mother in Boise this morning, but I was wondering what are you doing about keeping the schoolyard safe. Do you really think a chain-link fence is enough?

Lights dim.

Scene 6

BUCK's office. BUCK greets JOE with a handshake.

BUCK

Have a seat, Joe.

JOE sits opposite BUCK.

I've looked over your proposal. You're quite the forward-thinker.

JOE

Thank you, sir.

BUCK

I'm certainly in favor of cleaning up that part of town.

JOE

But it's much more than that, Mr. Mayor. When our project is complete, downtown Boise will be the envy of Idaho, if not the entire United States.

BUCK nods.

BUCK

I see that you had Mark Rome draft all the paperwork. He's a good lawyer.

JOE

Yes, sir. And Bob Gerrard drew up the architectural plans.

BUCK

Straight-arrow fellow.

JOE

Yes. We graduated high school together.

BUCK

That's a helleva chunk of money your investor is pledging to this.

JOE

Well, he truly believes in our city's future.

BUCK

I'll be the goddamn judge of that.

Seeing JOE's startled reaction, he changes tact.

You were born and raised here, Joe?

JOE

I was.

BUCK

I expect most folks know I hail from Camden, New Jersey. It wasn't much back then. A hardware store, a grocery, a barber shop. But the mayor allowed new businesses to creep in and take root. They built factories. Then the unions came, and they bused in the Negroes, and now today, Camden is a haven for criminality and perversion. I will not let that happen here, Joe. Population-wise, we're already neck-and-neck with Camden. Boise's getting too big, too fast.

JOE

I bet your pardon, sir, but too big for whom?

BUCK

There are evil men on our streets, Joe. They are a cancer eating away at society. It's my responsibility to cut them out and make this city safe again, which means I need to keep Boise contained and manageable.

JOE

You're turning us down?

BUCK

It just isn't the right time.

JOE

(carefully)

Mr. Mayor, people come to me everyday who can't afford their mortgages anymore. They're terrified that pretty soon they won't be able to feed their families. We can help them rebuild their lives. Frankly, if you don't approve my proposal, I'd have to question whose interests you really have at heart.

(standing)

You should know we are prepared to go to the Governor.

Who exactly is “we”?

BUCK

My investor and me.

JOE

It’s my goddamn brother, isn’t it? He’s the only one in Boise with that kind of money!

BUCK

I really do hope you’ll reconsider.

JOE

He picks up his briefcase. There’s a rap at the door.

BUCK

Not now!

A SECRETARY’S VOICE is heard offstage.

SECRETARY’S VOICE

You can’t just walk in --

WILL FAIRCHILD, 30’s, enters. He’s well-groomed, assertive and confident.

WILL

He’s expecting me, toots.

BUCK

Who the hell are you?

WILL

Will Fairchild.

He thrusts his hand at BUCK.

BUCK

Oh, yes, of course, Mr. Fairchild.

WILL turns, grinning, to JOE.

BUCK (CONT'D)

This is Joe Moore. He's the Vice President of our First National Bank.

WILL heartily shakes JOE's hand.

WILL

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Moore.

JOE

How are you?

WILL

Very well. Boise's a lot bigger than I thought it would be.

BUCK

Yes, Joe and I were just talking about that.

JOE

I should go.

BUCK nods, eyeing JOE warily.

By the way, Mr. Fairchild, it's pronounced "Boy-see", if you care to sound like a local.

WILL

(grins)

I appreciate the tip, Mr. Moore.

JOE turns to leave, but WILL stops him.

Nice tie.

JOE

Uh, thanks.

He exits. WILL pulls a pack of Pall Mall cigarettes from his jacket.

BUCK

You're late.

WILL

Traffic on the 20-26 was a killer.

(lights up a cigarette)

May I?

BUCK slides him an ashtray.

BUCK

You'll want to interrogate the three suspects first thing.

WILL

They're no good to me now.

BUCK

Why not?

WILL

Their confessions were tape-recorded.

BUCK

My county prosecutors says the tapes will prove useful.

WILL

In court, sure, but the men will be too scared to open up anymore. No, at this point we focus on the victims. They're the key to the investigation. They'll give up the names of the other boys involved.

BUCK

Christ, the whole thing sickens me. I have a son their age.

WILL

Swell, he could talk to his buddies.

BUCK

He's at West Point.

WILL

Too bad. He could've been a big help.

BUCK

I understood you didn't need "help". I was told you were the Lone Ranger of the FBI.

WILL

Sure, but Associate Director Tolson did in fact facilitate the methodology that I devised.

BUCK

Which was?

WILL

The suspects in the State Department sting were clever. They dressed just like us, suit, tie, clean-cut. They were difficult to detect.

BUCK

How did you root them out?

WILL

The establishments they frequent in Washington are stiff and button-downed. Conversation is limited and cautious out of necessity. I had to bring a suspect some place he felt uninhibited. So Mr. Tolson had a townhouse in Georgetown rented for me. I made it inviting but masculine too. A fully stocked bar, a log on the fire, and always Pall Mall, cartons of 'em. It's their favorite brand.

BUCK

Am I missing something?

WILL tosses the pack of Pall Mall to BUCK.

WILL

Look at the slogan.

BUCK

(reads)

"Wherever Particular People Congregate."

WILL

It's one of their codes. I'd offer the suspect a smoke. He sees it's a Pall Mall, and he trusts me. He lights up, and he starts talking. They're just like women when they get going.

BUCK laughs. WILL offers him a cigarette, which BUCK declines.

(MORE)

WILL (CONTD)

In no time he's telling me all the office gossip about the people he works with, the men in particular, and he offers up their names.

BUCK

You'd think nowadays they'd be more discreet.

WILL

Nope, they turn on each other every time.

BUCK

So what do you need from me?

WILL

I want a set-up like I had in Georgetown, then I'll target suspects. But I need somebody who can get the boys to open up. They'll finger the men who aren't so obvious, like the married guys.

BUCK

Married?

WILL

It's not just the loners, Mr. Mayor. It's also the neighbor next door who takes the trash out after he's tucked his wife into bed.

BUCK

Dear God, how do we even know who to look for?

WILL

We don't. It could be anyone.

An image of the Daily Statesman is projected:

Morals Probe: Boise Nabs Four Moore

Scene 7

The Moore home, Thanksgiving Day. JOE and DORIS are at the table, two slices of uneaten pie in front of them.

DORIS

Was the turkey dry?

JOE
(distracted)

No.

DORIS
I put orange peel in the cranberry. You didn't care for it?

JOE
Sorry.

DORIS
You left almost a full plate, Joe.

JOE
Lloyd Adams came to me for a second mortgage when his wife was dying of cancer. He couldn't pay her hospital bills so I gave him a loan at zero interest. Now the poor man's spending his Thanksgiving in a jail cell.

DORIS
The Daily Statesman said the prisoners would be getting turkey with all the trimmings, white and dark meat.

JOE
I don't think Lloyd goddamn cares, Doris.

DORIS
Joe, please, the children will hear you.

JOE
(lowers his voice)
He's a lonely sixty-two year-old man.

DORIS
Maybe the judge will take that under consideration.

JOE
Benny Cassel's sixty, and he got ten years, hard labor. Ralph Cooper got life.

DORIS
They committed terrible crimes, Joe.

JOE

Murder is a terrible crime, Doris.

DORIS

What if it had happened to our son?

JOE

It won't.

DORIS

You don't know that, Joe. You never can know. Every morning after Robbie goes off to school, I pray with the other mothers. I pray that every one of those evil men gets what he deserves. Excuse me.

She exits.

JOE

Sweetheart --

Frustrated, JOE bangs the table.

Scene 8

BUCK's house, Thanksgiving Day. BUCK is at the head of the table. Next to him is his handsome 17-year-old son, FRANK. JACK and MARJORIE sit in the other two chairs. Throughout the scene, MARJORIE serves cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes, while BUCK, JACK and FRANK pass a platter of turkey.

MARJORIE

That military haircut makes you look so handsome, Frank.

FRANK

You're the only one who thinks so.

MARJORIE

Nonsense, I bet you can't keep the girls off of you.

JACK

There aren't any girls at West Point.

MARJORIE

I meant now that he's home. Rebecca Marshall's back from I.U.

BUCK

Nice girl. Your mother liked her too.

MARJORIE

I hear she's not going steady with anyone.

FRANK

My leave's just for a couple days, Marjie.

JACK

And she's probably spending the holiday with family.

MARJORIE

Becky'd come running if Frank called. Any girl would.

FRANK

You're exaggerating.

MARJORIE

You always had some pretty little thing draped over your arm.

BUCK

Of course he did. He's a good-looking boy. He gets his looks from his mother.

MARJORIE

Frank, you're blushing.

JACK

Leave him alone, Marjorie, okay?

FRANK smiles at JACK appreciatively.

FRANK

Everything sure smells delicious.

MARJORIE

It felt good cooking like an American again. I was bored to tears with all those sauces and souffles.

JACK

Yes, French food is so monotonous.

FRANK and BUCK laugh. MARJORIE isn't as amused.

FRANK

What was Paris like, Jack?

JACK

Wonderful.

FRANK

I'd like to see it myself one day.

BUCK

We've got plenty of attractions right here, Frank.

FRANK

Yes, sir.

JACK

The day we got in we took the Metro from Gare du Nord to our hotel in the Place Vendome. I ran up the stairs from the station two at a time.

MARJORIE

He almost gave himself a hernia.

JACK

And the first thing I saw was the Eiffel Tower and the Champs Elysee both at once.

FRANK

Wow.

JACK

I'll never forget that.

FRANK

It's got to be tough getting used to Boise again.

MARJORIE

Boise isn't so terrible.

FRANK

It sure as heck ain't Paris.

BUCK

I doubt that's how West Point expects its cadets to talk, Frank.

FRANK

No, sir, sorry, sir.

JACK

You're right, though, Frank, it's definitely an adjustment.

BUCK

Which I hope I've helped make as easy as possible.

MARJORIE

A prestigious job, a new car, a house on the Avenue. Very easy, I'd say, wouldn't you, Jack? We didn't even have to unpack, Daddy took care of everything.

JACK

Yes, you really outdid yourself, Buck.

FRANK

(under his breath)

I bet.

BUCK

Well, if it keeps you two gypsies in Boise, it was worth every nickel.

MARJORIE finishes serving and sits.

MARJORIE

I still think we should've waited for Uncle Herb.

BUCK

As usual, Herbert has other priorities.

MARJORIE

What could possibly be more important than spending Thanksgiving with family?

BUCK dives in to his food.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

Daddy, please, the blessing.

BUCK puts down his fork. All bow their heads.

BUCK

Thank you, Lord, for all the bounties of the day and for bringing my family home.

MARJORIE squeezes BUCK's hand.

It's times like these when we most miss our beloved Joanne. God bless her sweet soul.

MARJORIE, FRANK AND JACK

Amen.

Everyone begins to eat.

JACK

So how is West Point treating you, Frank?

FRANK

The upperclassmen sure are rough on us plebes.

JACK

Unfortunately a bit of hazing's expected. You're younger than most of the guys.

FRANK

That's what I get for skipping a grade. But I don't let them bother me.

BUCK

Atta boy. You earn your place in the world, you'll earn respect.

FRANK

Yes, sir.

BUCK

None of us is entitled, Frank.

FRANK

No, sir.

MARJORIE

For Heaven's sake, Daddy, you're not his commanding officer.

BUCK

I am making the point, if I may, Marjorie, that people naturally recognize your brother as a young man with a bright future. The day he left for West Point, Jack, the Daily Statesman printed a headline: "Boise Boy Does Us Proud."

JACK

Impressive.

FRANK

Thanks, Jack.

JACK

Marjorie told me there was a marching band at the train station.

FRANK

(embarrassed)

Yeah.

BUCK

Slang, Frank.

JACK

Your mother would've been very pleased.

FRANK

I sure hope so.

MARJORIE

With everything going on these days, they should be plastering posters of you all over town.

FRANK

Marjie, that's ridiculous.

MARJORIE

“Frank Jones, Shining Example of Youth.”

BUCK

That’s not such a bad idea.

FRANK

Yes, Dad, it is. There are plenty of guys just like me.

MARJORIE

Is it so terrible we’re proud of you? Thank Heaven we don’t have to worry like other families are right now.

FRANK

It’s a mess, that’s for sure.

JACK

You don’t happen to know any of the boys, Frank?

MARJORIE

Of course he doesn’t.

JACK

Hal Baker or Eldon Halverson?

MARJORIE

Delinquents.

JACK

(irritated)

Marjorie --

FRANK

She’s right, Jack. They are delinquents. Everybody knows that.

BUCK pushes his plate away.

BUCK

Give your sister a hand clearing off the table.

FRANK

Yes, sir.