**Buried Child**

**By Sam Shepard**

Act I

In an old farmhouse on a failed plot of land in Illinois, the characters Dodge and Halie are introduced. The scene begins with the couple having a conversation with one another, discussing events of their past. Halie is not seen in the scene as she is yelling from upstairs, while Dodge is sitting on the basement sofa. He occasionally sneaks drinks from a bottle hidden in the couch; it is evident that he is an alcoholic. They talk about their son Ansel, a model son, who was murdered years before, allegedly by his psychotic, Catholic wife on their wedding night. They also talk about another son, Bradley, an amputee who comes to cut Dodge's hair forcefully while he sleeps; Dodge is wearing a baseball cap to ward off this inevitability.

Halie leaves for church, dressed in black, and tells the third son, Tilden, to look after Dodge. Tilden then enters the scene with an armful of corn, which he claims grew in the field outside. Dodge states that nothing has grown in the field since the Dust Bowl, and accuses Tilden of stealing from a neighbor. Dodge and Tilden then begin to discuss Tilden's past; they speak of how he "got into trouble" in New Mexico, and how in failing his attempt to leave the family home for a new life, Tilden was forced to flee following this incident. Tilden is evidently mentally unwell as he sits, shucking corn into a bucket. When Dodge falls asleep at the end of their conversation, Tilden covers him with the corn husks, creating a blanket, before he goes outside into the rain. Bradley enters the room shortly after and shaves Dodge's head while he sleeps.

Act II

The scene begins with the introduction of Vince and Shelly. Vince was headed to meet his father, Tilden, in New Mexico but has decided to stop over at his grandparents on the way there; Shelly is just tagging along for the ride. Vince is surprised when he enters the house as Dodge doesn't recognize him at all. Shelly then believes they have entered the wrong house and tries to convince Vince to leave, but he doesn't budge. Tilden then enters the room with a bundle of carrots and is disinterested in Shelly and Vince. Vince then gets Tilden's attention, but Tilden also doesn't recognize Vince.

Vince tries different methods to convince Tilden and Dodge of his identity, while Shelly helps Tilden with the carrots. Dodge then motions to Vince and tells him to go buy him alcohol, and he does so. While he is gone, Shelly talks to Tilden and asks him questions about Vince. Tilden goes on saying that he doesn't recognize Vince but he does look familiar. Tilden also talks about the son he had a long time ago with his mother, Halie, but Dodge had killed the baby and buried him in the backyard. Bradley then re-enters the scene and begins to harass Shelly by sticking his hand in her mouth. He then takes a fur coat and places it over Dodge and blacks out.

Act III

The scene begins with Dodge presuming that Vince has run away and left Shelly. He also tells Shelly to not fear Bradley as he only has one leg. After some time, Halie enters the house with Father Dewis, whom the audience later learns she is having an affair with. Halie sees Dodge and Bradley lying shamelessly on the sofa and smiles in embarrassment to Father Dewis. She then starts a yelling match with Dodge and Bradley, and they exchange several words until Shelly intervenes. In frustration, Shelly grabs Bradley's wooden leg and waves off the rest of the family, expressing her anger with them and Vince. Father Dewis tries to calm Shelly down and places the wooden leg onto the table.

Soon after, Vince returns drunk and hurls beer bottles at the house. He then climbs through the door's netting and states that he has to stay at the farmhouse with his family. Halie and Dodge then recognize Vince, and Dodge hands him the ownership of the house and land. With the land now his, Vince decides to stay at the house, while Shelly tries to convince him to leave. Shelly gives up on Vince and leaves, and Vince grabs the wooden leg and throws it outside the house; Bradley goes crawling for it. Father Dewis leaves the house and Halie heads upstairs to her room. Vince realizes that Dodge has died and places a blanket and rose on his body. Halie then begins to yell out that corn has bloomed in the backyard, while Vince sits motionless on the sofa. In the final scene, Tilden walks around the room with the corpse of a baby in his hands.