



Ronald Tavel and actor Joel Markman in a famous Jack Smith study, circa 1963-64.

MY FOETUS LIVED ON AMBOY STREET

a radioplay by Ronald Tavel

**Copyright 1977, 2005 by Ronald Tavel.
All rights reserved. Address performance inquiries
To the author or his representatives.**

My Foetus Lived On Amboy Street
A Radioplay

Ronald Tavel

NARRATOR: Hi. Do you recognize my voice? you couldn't recognize my face, I don't have any. I lost it in a hideous accident this morning. I was crossing 4th Avenue, you know, where all the second-hand bookstores are? and there was this truck stopped for a red light. It was carrying two 30 foot steel cables strapped to either side of it and both projecting out in front of the truck a good 6 or 7 feet or so. Two steel cables projecting out right at face level. I was lost in thought, strolling past the second-hand bookstalls, looking for a book of mine, equally lost, out of print, not to be had for love or money, but perhaps to be found remaindered or given to a down and out book seller along with the rest of his library when somebody kicked off. Families do that, they get rid of your library first thing when you croak. They divy-up your clothes, but they get rid of your library. A library is an act of faith. So there I was, crossing the street, not noticing that the light was changing, my head full of the like thoughts just mentioned and I guess the truck driver's head was similarly filled with thoughts—like “girl wanted—see driver” and such—anyhow, it was no more his fault than mine, but he stepped on the pedal, I crossed right in front of him and one cable rammed into my face, he swerved, the other tore into me, he swerved again and took my whole face with him. So you couldn't recognize my face, I haven't any, look like the advertisement for the horror film outside the Academy of Music Theatre. I went straight to 14th Street, boy, is it tough there, I figured nobody would be upset seeing me there, it's plenty rough there, they don't fool around. I'm sitting in the emergency room at Beth El now, only two or three blocks from the mishap. Here comes the nurse, pretty little thing, from what I can make out of her. Can't see too clearly, looks foreign.

NURSE: Hello. What seems to be the matter?

N: "Seems," Madam, I know not "seems."

NURSE: Where does it hurt?

N: Can't you see?

NURSE: I don't have my glasses.

N: Do you often forget your glasses?

NURSE: Quite often.

N: "Girl Wanted!"

N: So—do you recognize my voice? Don't worry, you will in a bit. I'm that guy that wanders on first and gets familiar, muses on about this and that and tells you this is gonna be a memory skat piece, *his* memories, full of flashbacks, about his childhood and family. We all had families, some of us even had childhoods, so we connect, we identify, specially since it's a memory, a dream piece as it were. I never had a childhood and, faceless as I am, probably have little future, but I did have a gestation period and that's what I'd like to bring you in on.

Look, there's Mom and Dad in their cold water flat on Amboy Street. Mom's three months gone, they're discussing their marriage plans, she's doing the dishes, or dish, one dish, they're poor.

MOTHER: I'm doing the dish.

FATHER: One with the blue rim around it and the nasturtium painted in the middle?

MOTHER: Yup, that's the one. You'da known of course which one it was if you'd eaten off it.

FATHER: I'da known of course which one it was if I'd eaten off it.

MOTHER: But you couldn'ta since we have no food. But I'm doing the dish.

(Sounds of the washing of the dish, running water, etc.)

FATHER: Makes it seem real home-like when you do the dish. Kitchen sounds, a crackling hearth, the soft gurgles of a new born babe.

MOTHER: Babe ain't here yet, but speaking of which, when we gonna git hitched?

FATHER: How come you speak like you was from way out west.

MOTHER: West is best. And I am.

FATHER: Oh.

MOTHER: Don't like to talk about the past, can't find a place to begin, the past goes back so far, to the year One actually, or the evolution of man from a spider monkey, and before that, a spider.

FATHER: So you hold we evolved from spiders?

MOTHER: Yup, 'ceptin' we lost their patience 'long the long line of evolution. Wanna git that there spider web up on the cornice with this broom. I can't reach that far. I'm fixin' a rag on the broom for you.

FATHER: You're fixin' a rag on the broom for me.

(Sounds of rubbing the broom along the wall. A scream.)

FATHER: Get 'im!

MOTHER: Did ya git 'im?

FATHER: Got 'im!

MOTHER: What was that scream?

FATHER: The spider.

MOTHER: No kiddin'?

FATHER: 'Spect a difficult confinement?

MOTHER: Don't know yet. Don't get the feelin' of a confinement. The sense of it. Don't presage it nohow. But whatever, don't want it here on Amboy Street.

FATHER: Site of the Amboy Dukes, first dirty book of youth.

N: Let me explain right here what the Amboy Dukes, first dirty book of youth, meant to all of us back in those days. It said, "I could tell from the rustling sounds in the back of the car
(*struggling sounds*)
that Ace was going to lay Ann."

ANN: Hey, who the hell do you think you are!

ACE: Hold, still, baby, don't make so much noise.

ANN: I don't even know, I never seen you before, this is the first time we –

ACE: Shut up, will ya!

N: We couldn't believe they'd print a word like that in a book. I kept looking at the word over and again but for all I looked at it, I couldn't believe. It was never real. It was never there. It never came to exist. You know that because something is unprovable doesn't mean it doesn't exist, and likewise, because something *is* provable, doesn't mean it *does* exist. Reality is like that. I never came to believe the word was there, study it as I would. –And then the whole mystery of sex, it's so hard to recapture how it

crawled along your thigh lying awake all night in the steamy tenement on Amboy Street. The sweetness of it, sweet sweet, sweetness of it, only a virgin can know and have to be real young at that. Real young and a virgin, the pain, the honeyed crippling pain of it, the word, the picture, the back of the car, the tough kids, them hoods, they got it, they caught the girls in the rush hour streetcar and gave them a thorough investigation, one in front, one in back of her, she was scared, too scared to scream, who would believe her, they looked so innocent, had such innocent expressions on their faces while they were doing it to her, oh God, it made me cry in the night with longing and love drops, the toughies got it, but me, me? would I ever get it? could I live that long? Life was really about that, waiting for that, the struggling sounds on the leather seats, and who the hell did he think he was, the guys in the front not turning around, not even when they stopped for a red light. And they never stopped crossing Brooklyn Bridge, just threw the gun out the open window into the East River, it dove down straight into the water like Johnny Weissmuller . . . Do you recognize me now? I'm the spider.

(Scream of the spider being rubbed out.)

N: There's Mom now. She's seated by the ornamental fake radiator, a sweater thrown over her shoulders, shivering, quivering slightly, lost in thought, staring out the grimy, cracked window. She's in her fourth month. Let's look in on her.

MOTHER: That scream what was it?

FATHER: The spider being rubbed out.

MOTHER: Did you pick up the ice cream and dill pickles?

FATHER: Yup, wanna fix 'im?

MOTHER: Can't find it in me to move from this window Could ya fix 'im yaself? Jist arrange the pickles on either side two scoups of ice cream, like they was carrot sticks or somethin'.

(Sounds of the delicacy being prepared. A spoon drops on the floor.)

FATHER: See much out the window?

MOTHER: Jist the movie the-a-ter. It's lettin' out. Whole crowd is leaving. There's a gentleman with a fedora and a woman in red jist come out. Seem to be waitin' on the curb for somethin'.

(Sound of the ice cream splattering on the floor, and then being scooped up and plopped back on the dish.)

FATHER: A woman in red?

MOTHER: Nice lookin' girl. Suppose you think the ice cream tastes better if it's been on the linoleum first.

FATHER: Never gave it much thought one way or the other. This ain't no kitchen-tested recipe. Want me to prepare the pickles the same way?

MOTHER: Berl them first.

FATHER: Berl them?

MOTHER: You hoid me. Gorilla wid a gat down dhere.

FATHER: No kiddin'? Least it ain't no necktie party.

MOTHER: Hope this ain't either, but it will be if you don't pick the end of ya necktie outta the pot fore it starts berlin'. The gentleman is runnin' into the alley.

FATHER: And the woman in red?

MOTHER: Took a powder. Know where the salt and pepper is?

FATHER: Under the radiator?

(Sound of gunshots in the streets.)

FATHER: Someone bangin' on the radiator pipes?

MOTHER: Don't see why they should. We ain't the supers.

FATHER: Thought I heard knockin' on the pipes.

MOTHER: Musta been the gunshots you hoid.

FATHER: Oh. Funny place to keep the salt and pepper.

MOTHER: Where?

FATHER: Under the radiator.

MOTHER: Silly goose, I don't keep them there. Get up off your knees, will you? They're out on the window box with the milk 'n stuff, keeps them fresh since we can't afford a iceman.

FATHER: Poverty has its little compensations. Like peace of mind. Look at that, will ya?

MOTHER: Thought you was makin' the food? What're you starin' out the window for?

FATHER: Better than lookin' under the radiator. All I see out the window is some sucker gittin' plugged.

MOTHER: And what's under the radiator that's worst?

FATHER: A spider.

MOTHER: Oh, Pretty-Boy, don't scare me, I'm in my fourth month!

FATHER: You expectin'?

MOTHER: I'm in my fourth month, ain't I?

SPIDER: This is the spider speaking.

CAR: This is the back of the car speaking.

FATHER: Suzy, Sue, why don'tcha tell me somethin' about yer past? Time I knew, ya know, we been together long enough.

MOTHER: Already told ya I wouldn't know where to begin. The past goes back so far, evolution was patient and a long time comin', in comin'.

FATHER: Start with yer upbringing', Sue.

MOTHER: Well, my Dad dabbled in investments, had a great track record. He sent me to finishing school. Figured I needed it, I was a diamond in the rough.

FATHER: Then you represent one of your father's few bad investments?

CAR: This is the leather seats in the back of the car speaking

N: I have in my life seldom underestimated anyone. In fact, I usually give them the benefit of the doubt right up to the point where they can no longer recognize themselves. However, I lack the strength of my own convictions. As a matter of fact, I don't even reap the benefits of my convictions. Like the time I was sent up to the Mattahorn State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Boy, did I have opportunities there! But did I take advantage of them? Only to get myself deeper into trouble. Like the time the old nurse came into my room to make the bed, she was going about it so slow and giving me all these looks, I thought it was pretty obvious what she was expecting, so I pushed her toward the striped, stained mattress, but I did it too half-heartedly, it gave her a chance to break away and get out and run screaming down the hall. A couple of other inmates rushed in to help me and quickly I slammed the door and threw the latch. The doctors started banging on

the door and making funny faces through the unbreakable glass so I struck a match and lit my in-patient garment: that made them even wilder out there so I lit up a few of the other inmates locked in with me. I told the doctors they had dared me to, I told them that afterwards at my hearing, and they did, they really did. But do you think it would've helped my case? Never! They sentenced me to four more years. And put me out on welfare when my time was up. I should tell you how I got sentenced there in the first place. I used to work for a luncheonette down on Canal Street, no, not a short order cook like people always assume, they leap to assume that, though I kin rustle up some eggs for you anytime I take it into my head to, and fry a hamburger, hell, what's there to doing that? No, I delivered the hot coffees and prune danishes when people called down for them, the guys that work in those offices and warehouses around Canal Street, you know? Anyhow, I got in real friendly with this here secretary, she was an older woman, around in her early sixties, but nice lookin', you know? She got around to invitin' me to visit her once, so I took the IRT up to her place on the upper West Side and her husband was there which seemed pretty strange to me so I had to sit around and wait a long time drinkin' coffee and eatin' cookies that she made until he got up and went to the bathroom. Then I made my pass at her. And next thing ya know the super threw me out on the street. On the way down the elevator with him I told him it was probably all that coffee that made me so nervous, and that's why I did things like that. And waitin' around so long doesn't help much either. Then I asked him, the super, that is, if he had some spare change for the subway so's I could get back downtown to my hotel and that's when he threw me out on the street I walked home in the snow, six-five blocks They mighta called the cops, I thought about that while I was walkin' downtown. On the stairs goin' up to my room in the hotel, there was this door open on the third floor, two old sisters live there, they're old, ya know, but still nice lookin', and the door was open, they smiled at me when I went past

them, so I turned around and went straight into their room, I grabbed both of them and threw them on the bed. But I guess I was too slow or else I misinterpreted their smiles but it's more likely I was too slow and seemed to lack conviction. This time I ended up in the station house, and, yup, they did have a report on me from the Upper West Side. I spent four months under psychiatric examination and got fired from my delivery boy job and got put out on welfare. I've worked a few weeks now and then since then, or a few days, but mostly I've been on welfare for twelve years. I don't mind, I know how to keep busy, I make a tuna fish sandwich when they got tuna fish on sale at Bohack's. I watch TV part of the day and when the welfare check comes I spend it right away on the hookers on Third and 12th. So I'm broke now and would appreciate it if you have a olive to eat. Could I keep this box of matches? You got plenty over there.

OLD LADY: Sure, you can keep them, sonny.

N: If I have spare change in my pocket, sixty cents or so, I go to the Variety Photoplays Movie House and feel my way around in the dark. The terlets stink there. Once there was an older woman there, she let me feel her legs, she had nice legs, she still had nice legs.

OLD LADY: Want another book of matches. I got plenty.

N: Sometimes I follow a woman on the street if it's real late. You can never tell about women walking alone on the street at night, slowly. Course, they could be a drinking girl or something, so you have to be careful and stay pretty far behind. No fast moves, you shouldn't try to catch up with them too quick, they usually run into a lobby and call the watchman.

OLD LADY: Sonny, how would you like to go to London with me?

N: All the way to London?

OLD LADY: I have no friends there.

N: Neither do I.

OLD LADY: That's not what I mean. There's nobody there to criticize me or to say—

N: But that *is* what I mean. What if you decide to drop me there. I wouldn't know what to do.

OLD LADY: Big boy like you wouldn't know what to do?

N: No, ma'am, not in London.

OLD LADY: But you said you like me, you said you wanted to see the world, to travel, to be set up, live free of charge and worry. Don't you like the idea of living in London?

N: Yes, ma'am, I do.

OLD LADY: Then what's the problem?

N: *(pause)* No problem, ma'am.

(pause)

I lack the courage of my convictions

N: Do you recognize my voice now? Things are so troubled that I don't sound myself.

MOTHER: Maybe you have a cold.

N: Awww, ma!

MOTHER: You ought to save your voice if you have a cold. Besides, I want to talk now. I have a story to tell about your older brother, Stu, — Stu, my favorite son.

N: Mother wants to tell you a story about her favorite son. So let's look in on her. There she is now, five months gone, and still on Amboy Street. If the depression doesn't let up, if Dad doesn't get a job soon, I'll be born here, on Amboy Street. In Brownsville. Things could be worst. But not much.

MOTHER: I figured on havin' Stu in Ohio, the craziest and most talented people are born in Ohio, anywhere in Ohio, big state. And, of course, in Brooklyn, but everybody knows about! Not so many as know about Ohio. Nutty place; good place to be born, it augurs well. Little bit of everything there, the South, Midwest, North—and I wanted the best for Stu. I even wanted him to start off as best as possible, be born in Ohio, good a start as you can give anyone in life. So we bought a big old mansion out there, near Cleveland.

N: It wasn't so big.

MOTHER: Now, who's tellin' this story? Had eight or nine rooms, that's big. And it was in Ragtime, you know them days, used to call them the Edwardian Period, call them Ragtime now, puts a different ethnic slant on things. But then the slant was Edwardian, it was English, and that gave the flavor to the era.

FATHER: Take milk and sugar in yer tea, dear?

MOTHER: Please. Thank you.

(whisper)

Wonder how come he doesn't know if I take milk or sugar? Live with a man for years, yer whole life, 'n he doesn't know, can't remember if—

FATHER: I like when you remember back to your early days, Suzy, like to hear ya tell about them. You and Stu. Got that house outside of Cleveland when you was five months pregnant with Stu. Planned everything just right. Did up his little bedroom in blue.

MOTHER: Now, who's tellin' this story, Ace, you or me?

FATHER: Jist make it short. I don't want to keep the light burnin' too long. I can't support the 'lectric company when I'm out of work. Give us a song, Sue, 'fore ya start.

MOTHER: Song? – what kinda song?

FATHER: Song about you and Stu.

MOTHER: O.K. – A song called “You 'n Stu.”

(She sings the song)

FATHER: That was lovely. Meaningless but lovely.

MOTHER: And now to my story. Stu came into the world with everything a son could ask for: that is, he was my oldest son, the first born male, the favorite, the heir, the one to get all the pressure put on him, the one singled out to achieve, to accomplish, to do great things—what more could a person ask for?

FATHER: And did he, in fact, ever ask for more?

MOTHER: No, never. That's what was so strange about Stu. You'd expect someone who had everything in life to ask for more. But he never did. He was very quiet. Very quiet for a boy. Started out fine – was an athlete in elementary school; then, he came down with polio, and, you know, kids with polio became great athletes, Olympic champions, so I was grateful for the polio. Won a scholarship to a big midwest university – Notre Dame or Notre Pere, or one of them places. And we saw him off on a fine September day, the wind caught and moaning in the leaf-dropping branches of early autumn. And I walked back up the flagstone path into the big old mansion, wiping a tear from my cheek. And then, I waited. The phone-call came in late November, middle of the night. Stu's voice was shaky, I asked him what had happened, God! what had happened? He said, Nothing, Ma, nothing, I just gotta come home. I told him he could: and he returned to the mansion and I had him

back. But he never left again. Took a job in a factory nearby, got fired, took another and so on. He's mostly on unemployment. I never asked what really happened out at Notre Pere and he volunteered no information. Gradually, I grew tired of Stu and the mansion and Ohio and Cleveland, after all, I'd done my job in regard to him and I wanted to see how the other half lives, the folks in Brooklyn, best other place for a child to be born. But I don't want him here on Amboy Street, I think Coney Island would be a better, certainly more imaginative place to first see the world. Lunatic Park be about right.

FATHER: Luna Park.

MOTHER: What?

FATHER: It's called Luna Park, not Lunatic Park.

MOTHER: Who's tellin' this story, you or me?

FATHER: And Stu?, what happened to Stu?

MOTHER: Well, he's got the mansion, doesn't he? all to himself for the rest of his life. I'm tired of talking about Stu. Notice what day of the month it is? Look over there, on the Police Gazette calendar, Ace, I'm enterin' my sixth month.

FATHER: Why so you are. Pretty, ain't she? the gal on the calendar.

MOTHER: That the Gibson gal? Or Lillian Russell?

FATHER: Neither. Mae Busch.

MOTHER: That so?

N: Coney Island! Wow! I'd love to born in Coney Island!

MOTHER: You say somethin', Ace?

FATHER: Just that if you're finished now, I'd like to turn off the light.

MOTHER: Thought you said somethin' about Coney Island

(Sound of the light being switched off.)

N: Gee, it's dark in here.

FATHER: Whadya expect wid the light toined off?

MOTHER: Whadyoo say?

FATHER: I said whadjoo expect wid the light toined off?

N: Gee, it's dark in this womb. Roomy, but dark. 'N all the prune danishes yid wanna eat.

N: I'm getting real excited about being born in old Coney Island. So excited, I'm kickin' to git out! And that's givin' Mom no end of pain in her seventh month. I stretch out my legs, all eight of them, covered with a soft yellow and brown down – creature like me ought to have more patience. Do you recognize my foetal voice now? Sounds strange to you? Nothin' like all the funny sounds I heard myself during the seventh inning when Mom decided that Stu's appetite wasn't up to par and told Pa it would be better if they went to a farm with fresh air to perk up little Stu's appetite. Let's listen in on them up in an old Wisconsin farm

(Sounds of animals: cows, pigs, frogs, crickets, chickens.)

N: Quite a symphony! But listen to the strangest sound of all:

(Gurgling, choking, swallowing sound)

FATHER: Whatcha doin', Ma?

MOTHER: Force-feedin' Stu?

FATHER: Force-feedin' him?

MOTHER: Only way to git the food down his trap. I hold his cheeks like so in the vise of my left hand and shove the banana mush down his throat like so with my right. Right, Stu?

(Gagging sounds)

FATHER: But he's gaggin'.

MOTHER: Yup. Next he'll vomit up. Vomits up in my face three times a day. But I get the food down.

FATHER: Farm life really does him good, don't it?

MOTHER: You bein' smart or somethin'? This is an investment like my pa used to make. Stu'll eat good when we're back in Cleveland, you wait 'n see. He'll carry the happy sounds of the farm back with him in his memory and eat good and wish all his life he lived on a farm.

N: Course, Stu never did grow up to live on a farm. He lived out his days in the old mansion outside of Cleveland, all alone, and they buried him on a hillside in the cemetery near Wooster, back in '63 that was. But he was to wish all his life, every minute of every day right up to the end, that he had lived his life on a farm

N: If we can cut away from Stu for now, I'd like to tell you about my own wishes and anxieties during the eighth month of my foetal development. It was after such a long time in the womb that I simultaneously experienced two contradictory feelings. One was that I was getting pretty used to the womb and very comfortable and not at all looking to leave it, specially the way I was, developing very slowly and surely into a hairy spider, and rather a big one at that and one they were sure to stomp on soon as they caught sight of me and 'fore I could scramble up a wall and swing a web in the cornice above broom reach. And the other feeling was that after so long an incubation, I just

simply would never be born. It's hard to describe what caused this grief and to describe exactly what it feels like to people who never experienced it. But if you have ever had the gut feeling that life is just waiting and waiting and waiting, then I think you could extend yourself to imagine what it is to feel that you simply will never be born. You'll just wait around until you are. So I tried to enjoy things the way they were. I listened to the sounds of Coney Island when mom and dad went there to look for an apartment.

(Sounds of Coney Island accompany this section.)

MOTHER: Ever see so many freaks on display!

FATHER: Yup. Shall we take a look-see at the girlie shows?

MOTHER: Nope. Look at that, Milo the mule-faced boy, Joanna the bear-girl, Arnie the alligator-man –

FATHER: What a tragedy that these people should have to live. What could life be like for them? What kind of parents did they have that didn't kill them when they were born. First thing when they were born, it was their duty to do that.

N: Gulp!

FATHER: Wanna go on the loop de loop?

N: Want me to start spinning right now?

FATHER: Whadjoo say?

MOTHER: Not at the bottom of the eighth, Ath, a, Ace.

N: Good girl!

FATHER: Look at that funny guy, Suzy.

MOTHER: What funny guy?

FATHER: One over there. Seems to be making a delivery to the freaks. Coffee and danishes it looks like.

MOTHER: What's so funny about that?

FATHER: Only the way he's lookin' at the three-hundred year old lady. Wonder if she really is three-hundred years old

OLD LADY: Sure, I have a box of matches — and a olive, too.

N: Olives go good with prune danishes?

OLD LADY: Wouldn't know, tastes vary so. Might for you.

N: What's yer name, honey?

OLD LADY: Lillian Russell.

N: That so? Been in the freak show long?

OLD LADY: Not long. Wasn't old enough. To pass for three-hundred, that is, until recently. Until recently I passed my time quietly up at Saratoga Springs. I feel comfortable there, having spent so much time at the spas and races there with Diamond Jim and the hoy-poloy. They used to refer to me as, "That woman!" Real good danish.
(sound of her eating)
Now they refer to me as, "That bag."

N: Real good olive. You're a nice ol' bag. Wanna go fer a ride with me in my auto-machine?

OLD LADY: Where to?

N: Over Brooklyn Bridge.

(aside, whispering):

I know her, she'll never put out for me. Not Lillian Russell, not someone that famous. But I could shoot her if she don't and throw the gun out the window of the car when we drive over Brooklyn Bridge. It'd dive down straight into

the water like Johnny Weissmuller . . . They'd have to drag the whole East River jist to find the fatal weapon. Drag fer the bag.

OLD LADY: I ain't goin' widcha. Got too good of a set-up, here, Sonny. Get lost, go on welfare!

N: If you don't come with me for a drive, I'll kill ya right here on the midway, I ain't ascared!

OLD LADY: Help! Help me! He's got a gun!

MOTHER: Oh! help her, he's got a gun! He's gonna shoot the old bag—quick pa, get it away from him!

(Sounds of the MOTHER, FATHER, and N. struggling)

N: Get away from me, you two, I'm gonna plug her!

FATHER: Drop dhat gat!

(Gunshots go off)

MOTHER: Oh! he got me!

FATHER: Where?

MOTHER: In the stomach, I think!

(The music of "You 'n Stu" whelms up melodramatically.)

N: Well, folks, I struggled in the womb for weeks and weeks with nothing but the sound of nurses and doctors outside. But there wasn't room in the womb for me *and* the bullets. I had to move over for them. And this placed me in a squashed position. I lost the fine brown and yellow down on my legs from worry and the squash. First they turned grey from worry, then they fell off from the squash. And there was no room for my legs, either, and they fell off. And blood oozed quietly out half drowning me. Mother

was hemorrhaging all right. But she's tough, she don't fool around, she's going to pull through. And me? Well, at least I ain't on Amboy Street. This hospital is somewhere in Crown Heights. Fairly classly neighborhood—remember it's the '30s. And Dad never had to get a job after all, no need to worry, I'd never be born on Amboy Street. But I was to wish all my days that I'd lived on a farm

(Agitated wrenching and splashing sounds)

MOTHER: Oh, baby within me! what are you doing???

N: Moving aside to make room for the bullets. And keep my head above blood.

MOTHER: Oh! don't move so forcefully, so much! so much!

N: O.K., I won't, but I'll drown if I don't So I maneuvered myself around into a circle, like a perfect, beautiful serpent, and pulled my spirit up above the rising blood where I finally saw, with sparkling fire and huge, popping eyes amidst labor cries, like a cloud-gowned Taoist hermit, the face of my own foetus

(Very long, silent pause)

MOTHER: Oh, baby within me, what are you doing?

N: Moving aside, Mother, to make room . . . for the young.

END.

The Song

You 'n Stu
Better learn to swim
Better start, better begin
To learn to swim
You 'n Stu
Or you're through.

Keep your head above the flood
Raise it high, there's rising blood
Trudge, trudge through the mud
There is rising blood, blood, blood.

You 'n Stu!
You 'n Stu!
You're *both* through.
(Better learn cause you're both through.)