SIT BACK AND WAIT TILL SUNRISE

A Thesis
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts

by
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SIT BACK AND WAIT TILL SUNRISE

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Over two years ago, I came up with an idea for a play showing there is more to theatre than just actors and lights and sets. There are points of view other than those viewed from the stage and from the seats. As this project grew in scope, I realized I was moving in an important direction. That direction was the human heart, not the one that beats but the one that feels. Theatre is a communication from one heart to another.

The purpose of this thesis is to show dramatically that theatre is not an end, but a means to an end.

It is not the production but the viewing of the production, the interaction between actor and audience, that holds the true meaning behind what theatre is for.

I chose the dramatic script because the reader should know "from the inside out" what I am trying to communicate.

From what I have seen as of now in readings and working productions, I feel I have been successful in my communication. More importantly, I hope the success will continue as this play is seen and read again and again.

L. Michael Breeze
CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOSEPH THUROMAN
ACTOR #1
ACTRESS #1
ACTOR #2
ACTRESS #2
ACTOR #3

STAGE MANAGER

MINOR ACTOR / FREDRICK THUNDERSON

THEATRE MANAGER

MAX
NORM

CONDUCTOR

The action takes place during a full season at the Eternious Theatre somewhere in the Mid-West, Present day.

The Eternious Theatre is a great old hall with a balcony and richly ornate decorations along the walls. This does not have to be represented but should be suggested through the characters because the theatre plays a part in this play as well. The settings of the individual plays need not be complicated, but simple and easy to move on and off.
SIT BACK AND WAIT TILL SUNRISE

ACT ONE
(Enter THEATRE MANAGER and JOSEPH THUROMAN, an average man, age 50.)

THEATRE MANAGER
Alright now- whoa, hey Jimmy! Jimmy! Can you bring those lights up? Expect us to clean this stage in the dark? O.K. now, you got this stage area here. The seat section out there. And the backstage area in the rear.

JOSEPH
Lot smaller than the warehouse.

THEATRE MANAGER
Well it's got to be spotless every night. Can't have the audience or the actors choking on the dust.

You got it.

THEATRE MANAGER
We got a new show coming in tonight so let's get going. Let me see you sweep. Go on, sweep the floor... Not bad, pretty good as a matter of fact. Get the stage and the seat sections clean by six. The guy you're replacing cleaned backstage already.

JOSEPH
What happened to that guy anyway?

I don't know.

(THEATRE MANAGER exits. JOSEPH begins sweeping the stage. Enter ACTOR #1, GEORGE, late twenties, carrying a huge rock.)

ACTOR #1
Excuse me. Is this spot clean?

Clean enough.

ACTOR #1
Good. You're new here, huh?

Yes, I...
ACTRESS #1
George? Where the hell is he? Could you help me with this column?

JOSEPH
Me?

ACTRESS #1
No that rock. Yes you! We're in a hurry.
(They exit and return carrying the column.)

What's your name anyway?
Joseph Thuroman.

ACTRESS #1
Nice to meet you, Joe.
(ACTRESS #1 exits.)

JOSEPH
Uh, that's Joseph.

ACTRESS #1
Whatever.
(From offstage.)

JOSEPH
Did Mary do this?

ACTOR #1
The column?

JOSEPH
Yes, did she put it here? Well, No matter, it's wrong.
(He moves the column and exits.)

ACTOR #1
You understand any of this? To me this is crazy. I mean it seems like these people are getting kindly worked up over silly stuff. You know?
(JOSEPH goes over to the rock and dusts it. STAGE MANAGER enters and moves column back.)

STAGE MANAGER
Hey! Careful over there buddy. What do you think you're doing?

JOSEPH
Cleaning this rock.
STAGE MANAGER

That's not a "rock". It is a prop. You don't touch props- got it?

JOSEPH

But I'm the new-

STAGE MANAGER

I don't care if you're Thespis back from the dead. We don't let just any everyday Joe come in off the street and man handle our props.

That's Joseph.

STAGE MANAGER

I don't care!

(Stage Manager exits. Joseph continues dusting the rock.)

JOSEPH

See what I mean? Weird. Oh well, it's just another job. And I guess it's better than that empty warehouse I cleaned. But I don't know much about this Theater business.

(AActress #1 enters.)

ACTRESS #1

You'll learn.

JOSEPH

Pardon?

ACTRESS #1

Better keep off those props.

STAGE MANAGER

Clear stage folks. It's show time.

(Stage Manager and Actress #1 exit.)

ACTOR #1

Where's my... Damn!

(He runs into the column.)

Who's got my mask?

(He moves the column.)

(Actor #1 exits. Joseph exits.)

STAGE MANAGER

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we bring you Inferna Rex by Abitcheades.

(Stage Manager exits. The play opens just outside the King's palace. Enter Actor #1 as King in Greek robes and mask.)
ACTOR #1

0, my heart hangs heavy
on this mine eve of destruction.

Nothing. Not the light
song of the bird can lift my poor laden spirits.

And yet, I must be
of sound thought to put judgement on my own.

(Enter ACTRESS #1 as QUEEN in Greek
robes and mask.)

ACTRESS #1

Husband, why do you seem to be so thoughtful on this night of distress?

ACTOR #1

If I seem thoughtful it is because my emotion has purged from my
thought and I stand mortified by these circumstances.

ACTRESS #1

0, you must not dwell on the inevitable.

ACTOR #1

And you must not guide the blind with the blind. You do not know what
troubles me. And therefore the advice you offer is useless. Speak not
to me woman. You cannot be of assistance at this time.

ACTRESS #1

No, I cannot be of assistance to he who will not help himself. And I
cannot see what you will not show. So be ye not angered at my
ignorance. And be ye not- you will not listen?

ACTOR #1

There is nothing for you to do. You will know soon enough.

ACTRESS #1

Then that is when I shall return to your side if you will not need me
till then.

ACTOR #1

You will know when it is time. And you will be welcome.

ACTRESS #1

I hope the criminals you are judging tomorrow get more of your
attention than I have. It will be a black day indeed.

(Actress exits.)

ACTOR #1

Oh what can I do? How can I lift
this burden of my soul?

I am of my own the man who is to
put a criminal to death.
One is as many, but this is my son.
Tomorrow the day is set and by sunrise
of that day it arrives.
    The hour is one but this is my son.
    And I know well he has done it by
my duty as I saw.
    O duty is duty but this is my son.
    It is my office my service to my
country by number look on.
    They are my people but this my son.
    Bonds of blood on bonds of honor, pride
and vanity on that which will be
    I am their king but he is my son.
    And life be it mine or his, must carry
on for my father and so,
    For I am his father and he is my son.
    My office I deny, it must by ripped
from me by council for deed
    I'll no longer be King for sake of my son.
    For he he yet guilty I can not
be the man who makes the. . .
    Apollo be with this criminal, my son.
    He dies tomorrow. Unless some distraction
some greater crime happens.
    The King kills himself- they'd blame the poor son.
    But my wife could die by my hands
a horrible crime of no equal.
    This would mean freedom not for me but my son.
    (Enter ACTRESS #1.)

ACTRESS #1
My husband? There is a commotion in the city.

ACTOR #1
I have felt the unrest.

ACTRESS #1
What could have caused this?

ACTOR #1
Our son is to be tried tomorrow. He is the one who is to be executed if. . .

ACTRESS #1
He must not! What do they think he has done? Why was I not told? This cannot be.

ACTOR #1
No, it cannot be. Do you think he should live?
ACTRESS #1

Of course, he is our son.

ACTOR #1

(Taking out a dagger.)

I am to pass sentence. I know he is guilty. If I try him he dies. So I must be taken from office by force.

ACTRESS #1

What are you saying my husband?

ACTOR #1

If I can commit a crime horrible enough, he will be forgotten. And I will not be forced to make that decision.

ACTRESS #1

What is your crime, my husband? Father of our son.

ACTOR #1

You will wait for me in our chamber.

ACTRESS #1

Of course I will wait. Because I am your wife and he our son. I would give the world for our son. But nothing that is not mine to give.

You will be cursed, O, King of all the land.

O, wise and wretched ruler.

What you will do will liberate your son.

But you will curse his future in the strongest of bonds and your future will cease to exist.

Hear these words from me, you trench.

I will speak no more.

(ACTRESS #1 exits.)

ACTOR #1

I have been damned.

But was for my son. My son.

My son. For my son.

(ACTOR #1 exits. Enter ACTOR #2 as MESSENGER in Greek robes and mask; HERMAN, early twenties, is in his first professional role.)
ACTOR #3

Majesty? Lord? My sovereign?

(Enter ACTOR #1.)

ACTOR #1

What is it?

ACTOR #3

I have news that you will regret forever to hear. But I must tell you. I will be brave.

ACTOR #1

Be brave, young messenger. What is your news?

Is the queen with you?

ACTOR #3

No... she sleeps.

ACTOR #1

With this news, better she not awake. Her son, your son, the prince has lost his life.

What?

ACTOR #3

He was found moments ago. Dead of anxiety it appears. There is no real answer. Just cold in his prison bed. Lifeless. As he would be in death. Shall I call a doctor for the queen?

ACTOR #1

Why?

ACTOR #3

When she hears the news it will affect her.

ACTOR #1

No, she will not hear it. For a while. Now go.

(ACTOR #3 exits.)

I have business of a similar kind to get to in my own.

(Pause.)

My family today is gone. Each on his own. My wife by my hands for my son. My son by the gods for me. And I by the hands of fate, for I will live in death and die in life, cursed by my own hand and the deeds of my son.

(Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

ACTOR #3, enters, bows, followed by ACTRESS #1 and ACTOR #1. Enter STAGE MANAGER.)
STAGE MANAGER
Good show, folks. Really knocked 'em dead out there. Now turn in your costumes and check your props. Get any blood on you? Doesn't look like it.

(STAGE MANAGER exits.)

ACTOR #1
(To ACTOR #3.)
"Your son the Prince has lost his life."? Where'd you get that?

ACTOR #3
I couldn't think. I just went blank. Do you think they noticed?

ACTOR #1
Just the Greek professors. Good ad lib though.

ACTRESS #1
I kind of liked it.

ACTOR #3
I'll get it right tomorrow night. I promise.

ACTRESS #1
We'll see. Good show.

ACTOR #1
So long.

(Exit ACTRESS #1 and ACTOR #1.)

ACTOR #3
Good night. With this news better she not awake. Her son, and yours, he is dead. The Prince was found dead. The PRINCE was found dead. The Prince WAS FOUND DEAD. THE prince WAS found dead. The Prince WAS FOUND DEAD.

(Enter JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH
Excuse me.

ACTOR #3
What? Oh, you scared me.

JOSEPH
Sorry, I'm Joseph Thuroman... the new custodial manager.

ACTOR #3
Gotcha. I'm Herman Ross the latest Actodial wonder.

JOSEPH
Exactly what kind of play was it that you were doing out here tonight?
ACTOR #3
You've never heard of Inferna Rex?

JOSEPH
Is that some kinda dinosaur?

ACTOR #3
Close. It's a Greek tragedy.

JOSEPH
Tragedy came to mind.

ACTOR #3
Mine too.

JOSEPH
What do people see in stuff like this? I mean those spooky masks and robes and stuff. I'd rather stay home and watch The Jeffersons.

ACTOR #3
Well some folks want to get out and think. Didn't this show make you think any?

JOSEPH
Gave me a headache.

ACTOR #3
Aww, come on now, didn't you get anything out of it?

JOSEPH
Well, that king fella was in trouble. I wasn't quite sure why. Except he was uglier than sin.

ACTOR #3
Sin is right! Didn't it bother you when he killed his wife?

JOSEPH
No, she deserved it. What bothered me is that messenger wasn't man enough to tell the king his son was dead. I didn't know what his problem was.

(Enter ACTRESS #2, ABBY, in her mid twenties.)

ACTRESS #2
Who's in here? Hello? Oh, Herman! Have you heard what we're doing next? Budapest in the Morning!

ACTOR #3
I knew it was a Maltstaff, but Budapest in the Morning? Wow.
ACTRESS #2
Do you think I’ll get Lucinda?

ACTOR #3
Lucinda? I would’ve thought you’d want Jessamine.

ACTRESS #2
Jessamine? No! Watch me do Lucinda.

JOSEPH
I’ve got to check the seats.

(JOSEPH exits into seats. He checks the aisles for trash.)

ACTRESS #2
O.K. . . Bedlo? Bedlo?
What right have you to be so violent, thus?
I loved him when you had no intentions.
And now you expect me to fold my hands.
And leave him for your hands to knead alone.
Your bread is baked in a poorly made fire
to think my passion as low and brittle
as to idly listen with no response.
To this mangled tale you tell to-

ACTOR #3
I get the picture. You’re good, but don’t you think Mary’s got that wrapped up?

ACTRESS #2
Not if I can help it. Oh Herman, you don’t know how bad I want Lucinda.

ACTOR #3
Jessamine’s a good part.

ACTRESS #2
Oh Herman, shut up, will you? Do you really think Jessamine? If I get Jessamine, I’ll die. I’ll sit there and watch Lucinda and I’ll just die.

ACTOR #3
Just stay calm. We’ve got some time before it starts. I’ve still got to live through Inferna Rex.

ACTRESS #2
Oh, you’re doing fine. At least you’re on stage.

Yeah, right.
JOSEPH
Inferna Rex, huh. By Abitchedes. I guess this would be your basic program. Wonder why people leave these behind? I mean there must've been near fifty of these out there. And they'd cost a good seven bucks at a ball game. I suppose about fifty folks didn't like the show. Course that's easy to see. But seven bucks is seven bucks. Shoot, I bet I could sell these for...

(Enter STAGE MANAGER and ACTRESS #2, she's crying.)

STAGE MANAGER
There, there. You got a part, Abby. You got Jessamine.

ACTRESS #2
But that bitch got Lucinda. She always gets the good parts.

JOSEPH
What's wrong? Are you not feeling well?

STAGE MANAGER
She didn't get the part she wanted.

JOSEPH
Oh. I'm sorry. You seemed to want it pretty bad.

ACTRESS #2
I already know the part of Lucinda. I have it memorized. And now Mary's going to come in here and waltz it off in the same way she does all the others. It just won't be special. And the audience won't even know how good it could have been.

JOSEPH
Isn't that what matters, though? The audience? I don't know! Maybe I should dust this curtain.

STAGE MANAGER
I'm taking Abby here back stage. She'll be alright. Thanks.

(Exit STAGE MANAGER and ACTRESS #2.)

JOSEPH
No problem. Mercy. I felt bad once when the gas company didn't move me up to the offices after five years. But... this actodial stuff must get rough.

(Enter ACTRESS #1.)

ACTRESS #1
Working late?
JOSEPH

Oh, hi! Just finishing up.

ACTRESS #1

Have you seen Abby?

JOSEPH

Yeah, you want her?

ACTRESS #1

No! Just... was she O.K?

JOSEPH

I got a question for you. Is she ever O.K.?

ACTRESS #1

(Laughing.)

Why do you ask that?

JOSEPH

She seems to be easy to work up. She was pretty riled. Just because she said some bitch got the part she wanted.

ACTRESS #1

She called me a bitch?

JOSEPH

Oh. I'm sorry. Are you Mary? I didn't realize...

ACTRESS #1

That's O.K. And your name is... Joe?

JOSEPH

Seth?

ACTRESS #1

Joseph. Joseph Thuroman. Good to meet you Mary. And congratulations, I guess, on your show.

ACTRESS #1

Thank you, sir. I guess I'd better split.

JOSEPH

We'll be seein' ya. Good luck.

ACTRESS #1

Ah, ah, ah. Never good luck. Always break a leg. Don't ask me why.
Just never say good luck. That's bad luck. And stop making that face. You'll get used to us. Good night.

JOSEPH

'Night, and break a...

ACTRESS #1

Leg.

JOSEPH

Whatever.

(ACTRESS #1 exits.)

I guess I always figured that people were gonna be different out in the entertainment world but they're just like you and me. Course, I wouldn't cry if I didn't get to be some part in a play. But I'm not talkin' about that. The way people act around each other, that's what I mean. But I guess they're gonna be startin' this next show soon, so I'd better get to cleanin' up here.

(JOSEPH exits. Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

STAGE MANAGER

Tonight we present to you Budapest in the Morning, by Henry Maltstaff. (STAGE MANAGER exits. The play opens along a road to Budapest. Two or three benches line the road. Enter ACTRESS #1, as LUCINDA, in Elizabethan dress.)

ACTRESS #1

Nothing shines quite like the sun over Budapest in the morning!

(Enter ACTRESS #2, as JESSAMINE, in Elizabethan dress.)

ACTRESS #2

Yes, my dearest Lucinda; the sun shines so brightly I fear I may lose vision.

ACTRESS #1

We must wait here for the men to gallop by. And soon we will see our man.

ACTRESS #2

Our man? You keep saying our man, Lucinda. I fear you have us with our hands in the same glove.

(Enter ACTOR #2, dressed as a very old man; ROGER is in his late twenties.)

ACTOR #2

Did I hear words of gloves? Words of gloves that cover dainty
knuckles? Ladies my time has been so long. I beseech you to lean my way with some act of affection.

ACTRESS #2

Get from our vision, you prune!

ACTRESS #1

Jessamine, how speak you thus to this kindly grandfather? Who laughingly asks us of our favors. Please take heart, little toadstool and leave.

ACTOR #2

Babbling dogs of putrid breath! I hope your milk sacks droop to your death.

(ACTOR #2 exits.)

ACTRESS #2

Now tell me, dearest Lucinda, of this man you spake.

ACTRESS #1

I spake most assuredly, dear Jessamine, of your man, my friend Winslow with whom you are in love.

ACTRESS #2

Well that is well and good, friendly and matronly Lucinda, but I love him not.

ACTRESS #1

You feel no overt affection for our friend Winslow?

ACTRESS #2

Indeed, that was my remark sweetly clad Lucinda.

ACTRESS #1

That profound me.

(Enter ACTOR #2, as beggar on crutch.)

ACTOR #2

'Allo and sunny morning to you, my wonderful women of wispy ways.

Shut your trap.

ACTOR #2

My deepest sympathy on your cycle of days, dear lady of lord's luster. But an empty trap is much a great bother to close when, with little gift, it will be full.

ACTRESS #1

You'll get naught but a strap from me to your empty trap.
But surely this is a facade or ludicrosity to act not a lady, but a lugworm from the pits.  
(To ACTRESS #2.)
You must be this laden lassies doctor, out on a stroll in the morning light?

You reek of hogs, by faith, if not worse.

So, you are a medic.

Sir, if you do not leave us, we will take that crutch and force it so far down your trap you will have the ability to sit on it without bending your knees.

And may I add that not even the sun over Budapest can expose the sour center of such silly symbols, as your superficial symmetry, that suckered my senses. So there!

(ACTOR #2 exits.)

Now, Jessamine, lovely Jessamine, why is Winslow not the holder of your heart?

As I would have told you when you asked, I have another.

Another? Is this one that I know? May I see him gallop by today, as I should see my dearest?

He should gallop by, as does your dearest, my friend Lucinda.

And will I know this stallion that gallops by, Jessamine?  
(Enter ACTOR #2 as a fat merchant.)

Hello and hello, my sugar plum fairies.

Get out of here you ox. You whale-assed serpent!

Are you directing your statement toward me, M'ladys?
ACTRESS #1
Yes, oaf.

ACTOR #2
I can assure you that I mean nothing but the greatest of...

ACTRESS #1
I care not, lard monkey. Ape dung. Escape my sight.

ACTOR #2
Hell hath no fury like this cow.

(ACTOR #2 exits.)

ACTRESS #1
Now please, sweetest Jessamine, tell me the name of this other.

ACTRESS #2
You will know it soon enough.

So please tell me now.

ACTRESS #1
Bedlo.

ACTRESS #2
Bedlo? Bedlo? What right have you to be so violent, thus? I loved him when you had no intentions.

(Pause.)

ACTRESS #2
And now I expect you to fold your hands.

ACTRESS #1
And leave him for your hands to knead alone.

(Pause.)

ACTRESS #2
My bread must be baked in a poorly made fire, to think your passion as low and brittle, as to idly listen with no response, to this mangled tale I tell. Ah, but you are the baker in the fire, dear Lucinda. For I have spoken hence to our dear Bedlo. For he comes today for me, and not you.

ACTRESS #1
He will not escape my beauty.

(ACTOR #2 enters as Bedlo.)

ACTOR #2
O, dearest wench, he already has.
ACTRESS #1
Bedlo, my love, I've been waiting your return.

ACTOR #2
You, woman, have lost all you could have ever waited.

ACTRESS #2
You see, Lucinda, Bedlo has come for me.

ACTOR #2
No, I have come from Winslow. And I have come to you. Three times today I have come, and you have sent me off.

I saw you not today.

ACTOR #2
But 'twas I that for the first time saw you. When I am old, will you treat me as thus? When I am hurt and lame, will I be shamed? And if I gain in size, should I fear you? If this is how you treat your fellow man, I can expect no more from you for me.

ACTRESS #2
That is a hardly hit man who says this to a lady.

ACTOR #2
If there were a lady present, cow, I would most assuredly make amends. But for this moment, I feel as if I must move upwind of these fleas, that suck the blood of life from the weakling pup.

ACTRESS #1
Pup is not the word for a swamp mound as yourself, who destroys the lives of those who love him.

ACTOR #2
Had you a life beyond the pack of bile you are, I would take heed to this display of gas. But 'tis morning and I am off to see the beauty I trust; for nothing shines quite like the sun over Budapest in the morning.

(ACTOR #2 exits. Then re-enters. ACTOR #2 bows, followed by ACTRESS #1 and ACTRESS #2. All exit. JOSEPH enters and begins sweeping. ACTOR #3 enters.)

ACTOR #3
Hi, Joseph, how'd you like that one?
JOSEPH
Hello there, Herman. Well... those girls were dressed pretty.

ACTOR #3
Oh, come on now, didn't you think it was funny?

JOSEPH
Well, I couldn't understand a lot of it. But they sure were mean to each other.

ACTOR #3
Yeah, did that bother you?

JOSEPH
No. I didn't care much about that. But I wasn't sure why. You know? Why do people treat each other like that?

ACTOR #3
That's a good question. I guess we just take things like that for granted. Shoot, I'm depressed now.

JOSEPH
Oh, now don't get depressed. It'll make your milk sacks droop!
(Enter ACTOR #1.)

ACTOR #1
Run for cover, here comes World War Three!
(Enter ACTRESS #1 and ACTRESS #2.)

ACTOR #3
Oh, no.

ACTRESS #1
Well you didn't have to recite the whole monologue.

ACTRESS #2
What did you want me to do? Wait for someone in the audience to chime in with it?

ACTRESS #1
No, I needed help; just not that much.

ACTRESS #2
Well you got more than you needed. I'm sorry.

ACTRESS #1
No you're not. You loved this.

ACTRESS #2
So? Is it my fault? I knew just enough to pull you out of a jam.
ACTRESS #1
You didn’t have to spread my jam on toast and eat it right there in front of everybody.

(Enter ACTOR #2.)

ACTOR #2
Please. Please. Please. Please, girls! I don’t care if you argue in front of most of the public, but could you put a leash on the stupid analogies?

ACTOR #1
Roger, don’t mess with Mary when she’s foaming at the mouth.

ACTRESS #1
George, that was uncalled for.

ACTOR #1
I’m sorry, Mary. But this is all so...

No he’s not.

ACTOR #2
He’s not? I’m what?

ACTOR #1
He’s sick and tired of you girls going off and expecting to be coddled after every malturn you take. If you’re not big enough to stand up for yourselves off stage, then you sure as hell don’t belong on it... Right, George?

ACTOR #1
Huh, well, uh... Herman?

ACTOR #3
Guys, I haven’t been here long enough to...

ACTOR #2
He’s right. But nonetheless, ladies; grow up.

ACTRESS #2
Well, if the Judge and Jury are through, I think I’ll go over to the the Goombay for a drink... Mary?

ACTRESS #1
Yes, Abby, I’d love to. Shall we?

(They exit.)

ACTOR #2
Better ask for the kiddies menu!
You’re really putting them through a lot.

You haven’t been backstage with these prima donnas during the show. It’s like *Rocky IV* and *V* back there.

Well the next show’s got some real parts in it.

Yeah, I love murder mysteries.

You auditioning for *Dead Druid*?

I thought I would.

Good luck.

Are you here to try out, Joseph?

No. I’m just waitin’ around to clean up.

Are you trying out, Herman Ross?

Yes? Script? Oh! I’ve got it memorized. Ready? Ahem. . . And this brother of mine, this gag, who currently calls himself a private investigator has done nothing but suckle the breasts of the nearest vagrant child of our lord until she’s dry as a cat’s. . . what? Move onto the next? Already? That’s all? Wow.

Heavens to Betsy! There were sure some nervous people in here tonight. Pacing and smoking. I’ve never seen so many ashes and butts. . . they need to have a little hole or something for me to sweep them into. Oh course, they’d have to watch what they called it!

(Enter ACTRESSES #1 and #2. And ACTORS #1, #2, and #3.)
ACTOR #2
Oh, you don’t know what you’re talking about! Richard Enz is one of the most famous authors in the world! Let alone playwright.

ACTOR #1
And Murder at Dead Druid Inn is famous. The audience gets to pick the ending.

ACTOR #2
Just because there’s no good, juicy woman’s roles means the play’s bad.

JOSEPH
What’s the trouble?

ACTRESS #1
We’ve not been selling too many tickets.

JOSEPH
I’ve been meaning to ask you all about that.

What’s that Joseph?

ACTOR #1

JOSEPH
Well I wasn’t sure if it mattered. But with these shows you’ve been puttin’ on, and all that language . . . do you folks check the T.V. listings for conflicts and stuff? You know, on the nights you do the show.

(Pause.)

ACTRESS #2
See? You’ve got your work cut out for you.

(ACTRESS #2 exits.)

ACTOR #2
At least we’re capable. The season’s in the right hands now!

(Actress #2 exits.)

ACTRESS #1
Let’s hope so. We need some power moves, before we get to the original work.

(Actress exits.)

ACTOR #1
That’s right. I’ve been wanting to show you some pages of dialogue, Mary, to get your opinion.

(He exits.)

ACTOR #3
Guess my work’s cut out for me. I’ve got the lead. Do you think I can
handle this, Joseph? I mean from what you've seen?

JOSEPH

It doesn't matter what I've seen, or even what you think, Herman. You just have to get out there and do it. As hard as you can. Then you'll know for sure.

ACTOR #3

Yeah, I don't guess I can worry about it now. Just do it. See you later.

(He exits.)

JOSEPH

(To audience.)

You know, it's amazing how quick you can get to know people. Watch their mannerisms. I'm kind of looking forward to seeing this detective show just 'cause I know Herman. But I'll tell you who I think I'm kinda gettin' almost, maybe a little partial towards... is... well... that, uh... that Mary girl. But that's another story. I just have to wait that one out, I guess. See if there's a chance. Shoot, I never thought some old theater could be this much fun!

(He exits; STAGE MANAGER enters.)

STAGE MANAGER

We present to you this evening: Murder at Dead Druid Inn, by Richard Enz.

(STAGE MANAGER exits. The play takes place in the lobby of FORLICK HARLEM'S hotel. Some large chairs and other furniture, as well as, a staircase and window can be seen. Enter ACTOR #1 as SLUMPED BUTLER and ACTRESS #2 as MAID.)

ACTOR #1

(He crosses stage to window.)

I say there, Andrea, I do believe I've just seen a vampire in the garden.

ACTRESS #2

Of course, and I just saw a werewolf in the kitchen.

(Enter ACTOR #2, as FORLICK HARLEM, and ACTRESS #1 as LADY HARLEM.)
ACTOR #2
We're home now, thank God. Any guests?

ACTOR #1
One young student upstairs, Sir. He paid already.

ACTOR #2
Good. You won't need to check on him for a while. Lady.

ACTRESS #1
Yes, Forlick?

ACTOR #2
Let's retreat to the lounge for tea.

ACTRESS #1
Very good. I'll change into my house slippers first. (She exits.)

ACTOR #2
Did you check the guest in?

ACTOR #1
Yes.

ACTOR #2
And the tip? The tip? The tip?

ACTOR #1
... Yes.

ACTOR #2
Why isn't it in my pocket?

ACTOR #1
It is.

ACTOR #2
What? Don't be mad. I've been out all day.

ACTOR #1
So has Andrea.

ACTOR #2
Out all day! What's this?

ACTRESS #2
I've got to clean the attic. Don't listen to that weasel. (She exits.)
Dear lord, that’s right. My brother shows up today. The pride of the Harlem family. Humph. I’ve worked for everything I have. Hard. Worked hard for everything I have.

Yes, sir.

I mean it. I’ve worked.

Yes, sir.

Hard.

I know, sir.

All my life.

Me too, sir.

Shut up. And this brother of mine; this gag who currently calls himself a private investigator, has done nothing but suckle the breasts of the nearest vagrant child of our lord until she’s dry as a cat’s butt, and move on to the next. Winston Harlem is a mutt, whom I sincerely wish never existed, and I curse my mother’s womb that he didn’t die there. Where’s my wife? I need a seltzer.

(Might I suggest a strong lamp oil for a chaser, Sir?

(He goes to bookshelf and hides "tip" in a large book. There is a knock at the door. Another knock.)

Suppose I should get that.

Yes?

Winston Harlem, here to see my brother forlick.

(ACTRESS #2 enters, screaming bloody murder.)
She's heard of me.

Wait till your brother gets in here.

Aren't you going to pay attention to me?

What is it... My beautiful young thing? Can I be of help?

The student, our guest, is dead.

Are you sure?

There's a harpoon sticking out of his stomach, and there's blood on the ceiling.

Was he breathing?

I'm not sure.

Well go check and see. (She goes.)

If he is still breathing... he'll no doubt want some medical help. Do you know any doctor things?

Only teeing off. My putting is a little weak.

No, no, he's dead for sure.

Well if it isn't my brother, Winston, gracing the doorstep of the Dead Druid Inn. Hello, brother.

Forlick, I love you. How have you been? Better than your guest I hope.
Is that a joke?  

Ask your maid.  

Alright, is that as joke?  

What, Sir?  

I don't remember.  

The guest that is in his room has a harpoon sticking out of his gut, and there is blood on the ceiling.  

That, is that a joke?  

Oh no, Sir.  

(Enter ACTRESS #1.)  

Well it took me forever; but I found my house slippers.  

So what?  

Forlick!  

Our guest, the student, is dead. At least he's paid up.  

This is awful. What will we do?  

Needless to say, I suspect foul play.  

Birds?  

Murder.
Yikes.

ACTOR #1

And what's more... I know who did it.

ACTOR #3

And what's more... I know who did it.

EVERYBODY

(All speak at once.)

What?... How?... Who?...

(All freeze except ACTOR #3.)

ACTOR #3

(To audience.)

But I'll let you decide. You most certainly outnumber me, and the honor shall be yours. The suspect with the loudest applause will be charged with the murder of the young student, upstairs in number seven. Alright, now as I move my handkerchief above the heads of the suspects, you applaud as to their guilt. Is it the charming Lady Harlem, cheery and well-to-do, but always looking for alternative incomes to maintain her lifestyle... What of the beautiful maid? They say hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. I don't know what "scorned" means; but this lusty wench is vengeful.

(Aside.)

My brother told me... And how about my brother? Forlick Harlem has been down on his luck lately, and was always very stressful anyway... Or did the butler do it?

(Actor #3 holds the handkerchief above each suspect. After the last suspect, he makes the decision. All unfreeze, with reaction to his announcement.)

(Lady Harlem scenario.)

Alright it was Lady Harlem.

ACTOR #3

What?

ACTRESS #1

Good God man... are you mad?

ACTOR #2

No, but my sister-in-law is. How long could it possibly take someone to find bedroom slippers? And why announce it when she enters the room.

ACTRESS #1

This is absurd. Why would I kill our guest?
He was a student. Why would a student stay at a place like this? Unless he knew the owner’s wife. Very well, if you get my meaning.

How dare you.

How dare me?

How dare her!

ACTRESS #1
(Pulls a gun.)
I didn’t kill him but I loved him, and nothing will make me pay for something my heart’s already paying for!

My darling!

Take her away.

(MAID scenario.)

Well, I’m sorry to say that it was the beautiful and weary maid. Obviously torn from her home at an early age; she will obviously lose her job.

Obviously!

I will take her in and console her. Teaching her the ways of the wise. A strong moral code. And a sense of what’s sensually right. It’s in your best interest to keep this quiet anyway, right brother?

I suppose so.

Just please take her away.
ACTRESS #2
I’m sorry Ma’am. . . for everything.
(BUTLER takes her away.)

ACTRESS #1
What is that supposed to mean?

ACTOR #2
Nothing, dear, she’s raving mad.
(They exit.)

ACTOR #3
You can always count on the one that found the body. And an already guilty conscience is more apt to do something wrong.

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(BUTLER scenario.)

ACTOR #3
Alrighty, the Butler did it.

Of course!

ACTOR #2

Should’ve known.

ACTRESS #2

I’ve suspected his character for a while.

ACTOR #1

Now wait a minute.

ACTOR #3

It’s over my friend; no more murders no more stealing tips.

ACTOR #2

Stealing tips?

ACTOR #1

I’ve never murdered!

ACTOR #2

No matter! Get out of my house you lout. Winston, my apologies. Now I must find a new butler.

(He exits with ACTOR #1.)
Thank you, dear Winston. And now I think someone should clean up number seven.

ACTRESS #1

Yes Ma’am. But someone else really deserves this job.

ACTRESS #2

I didn’t do it!

ACTOR #1

(From offstage.)

Still... I can’t reach the ceiling.

ACTRESS #2

(ACTRESS #1 and #2 exit.)

ACTOR #3

I’ll help you in a minute.

**********************************************

(FORLICK scenario.)

ACTOR #3

Very well, the murderer is my own beloved brother, Forlick Harlem.

ACTOR #2

Winston, how dare you! This is no way to treat your brother, let alone your host for the weekend.

ACTRESS #1

Oh Forlick, my darling, no!

ACTOR #3

My weekend is over, brother. You never were an actor and you didn’t seem surprised when the news hit. Also where were you when the murder happened?

ACTOR #2

We were out. Lady Harlem and I.

ACTOR #3

That’s interesting, brother. How would you know where you were? We don’t know when it happened yet. Take him away.

(ACTOR #1 does so. Women follow.)

**********************************************
ACTOR #3
You chose well. But not very wise. You see, we did not look at every suspect. There was one "person" with motive, opportunity and the ability to kill that you completely overlooked. Oh, the clues were there. Very obvious at times. The motive was the maintenance of being of the killer; the need of a certain substance to thrive. Blood.

(He chuckles.)
My dear friends, didn’t you find it interesting that the student lay in bed and the only blood mentioned was on the ceiling? And undeniably odd that I happened to know the room number of the student. But most importantly, didn’t you take into consideration anything the butler said? For he saw me in the garden before I ever made my entrance known. Imagination is a thing of the mind; reason a thing of the body, but fear a thing of the soul. You should never let the natural defense of your imagination drop. For your reason is no match for fear.

(He laughs.)
Halloween happens in it’s season but death can come for any reason. Now I must bid you good eve’. Damn student wore me out before I finally pinned him to the ceiling with the harpoon. Almost had me in the heart, but I sucked him dry as a cat’s butt. And now it’s time to move on to the next. You may forget my face; but don’t forget my words, for we may come in contact again, and my thirst may not be quite this quenched.

(Black out. Pause. Lights up.
ACTOR #1 and ACTRESS #2 bow; then
ACTOR #2 and ACTRESS #1; then
ACTOR #3. All exit except ACTOR #3.
Enter JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH
There you go! There you go, Herman. I knew you could do it!

ACTOR #3
Thanks, Joseph. Did you really like it?

JOSEPH
I sure did. Gave me chills.

ACTOR #3
Did you understand the ending?

JOSEPH
Sure did. .. you were a werewolf.

ACTOR #3
I was a vampire.

JOSEPH
Spooky all the same.
ACTOR #3
You want to run over to the Goombay Lounge with me for a drink?

JOSEPH
Well... Sure. I don't have much left to go here. I can run over there with you. That'd be fun. Yeah. Thanks.

ACTOR #3
No problem. You want me to wait, or go ahead and get started?

JOSEPH
Maybe you should wait. This one bartender I met in Belgium gave me the best advice I ever got. One time he said, "Never touch anything that can get you arrested, never drink alone, and never bite down real hard on anything frozen."

ACTOR #3
Sounds like some good words to live by.
(He laughs.)

JOSEPH
They've carried me through twenty-five years.

ACTOR #3
What were you doing in Belgium?

JOSEPH
Oh, I was settling some family matters from when I was little. Let me finish up the seats out here and we can go.
(JOSEPH goes into the seats.)

ACTOR #3
O.K., take your time.

ACTRESS #2
(As she enters.)
Herman? Come on! Where have you been? We have to celebrate.

ACTOR #1
(As he enters.)
Come on Inspector Harlem. . . the night awaits.

ACTOR #2
(As he enters.)
Let's just get on with this.

ACTRESS #1
(As she enters.)
Are you ready Herman? Don't tell me you forgot.
ACTOR #3
I guess I did. Are we leaving now?

ACTOR #2
You bet, now come on.

ACTOR #3
O.K., wait a minute. Joseph? Joseph?

JOSEPH
(From out in the house.)
Yeah, yeah Herman. I'm ready just now.

ACTOR #3
These guys wanted me to go with them. Would you mind if we hit the Goombay some other time?

JOSEPH
Oh! Uh, sure. I'm... I've got some more to do here and all. And stuff at home. It really wouldn't have worked out too well for me anyway. You know. So... some other time.
(He exits.)

ACTOR #3
Man, he was kinda disappointed.

ACTOR #2
We've had this planned for awhile, Herm. Don't put a guilt trip on us.

ACTRESS #2
Let's just go!

ACTOR #1
Joseph can come along next time.
(All exit. JOSEPH enters.)

JOSEPH
I'll never forget back when I owned a motorcycle, Harley 500, or something like that. I don't know; it's been several years. Anyway, this one group of fellas was always asking me to ride with them. And I told them "No", cause they looked kind of shifty, if you know what I mean. Long hair, beards, pot bellies, sunglasses, leather. So I took to riding around a lot on my own. Takin' to the ways of the road. Eating whenever I wanted, shaving whenever my chin itched to where I couldn't stand it. Just being free, gettin' out and seeing the country. Until one day, I looked in the mirror at this guy who was overweight, tangled hair, beard. I took off my sunglasses and looked again. I was shifty. Or at least what I thought shifty always looked like. Next day I drove up to the big garage where that group hung out. And they took me in! Smiled, said, "Howdy", the whole shebang. I
almost cried. I told them what I had done and they laughed. They said it happened a lot. Well, I gave them my bike. Felt so bad I just shook hands with Old Crusty and left. But you don’t need to hear this. I’ll tell you what, it looked like rain when I got here. I think I’ll grab my poncho and head for Patton Park.

(He exits. ACTOR #1 enters.)

ACTOR #1
Lord have mercy! It’s really coming down out there!

ACTRESS #2
(As she enters.)
You’re telling me. Get in here everybody!

ACTOR #3
(As he enters.)
Some celebration. I’m soaking wet.

ACTRESS #1
(As she enters.)
You’re not the only one.

ACTOR #1
Come on in here, Mary.

ACTRESS #1
(As she enters.)
Who brought the board?

(Enter ACTOR #2.)

ACTOR #2
I’ve got it... this should be perfect!

ACTRESS #2
We really don’t have to do this tonight.

ACTOR #1
Yes we do. Tonight’s the night it happened.

(ACTOR’S #1 and #2 laugh darkly.)

ACTOR #3
What happened?

ACTRESS #1
Apparently some great actor killed himself on this stage, on this night back in the years this theatre opened.

ACTOR #2
It was on the opening night of Maltstaff’s Piglet. His last words were, "Exist, or cease to exist."
He chose the latter.

Right there in front of the audience?

Yep. They say it was his best performance.

Talk about your extreme Naturalism.

Don’t joke! We’re going to call up his spirit and it would be safer if he wasn’t miffed.

What would make someone do that? Was he successful?


What are we going to do. . . exactly?

This is a tradition here at the Eternious. Each actor’s opening season here, he or she must speak with Fredrick Thunderson, our famous acting ghost.

You didn’t get here until it was too late last year, Abby. So you and Herman get to meet Fred together.

Enough stalling. Prepare to meet the great Fredrick Thunderson. Everyone put your hands on the board. O.K. Now. Empty your minds. Let the board float up between us. Feel the power of your heart. Throbbing. Sending blood throughout your body; fingertips, elbows, shoulders, neck, face, eyelids. Now your chest, down your back, around and down your legs to each toe. Let go of your body now. Let yourself float. Float up into the realm of the soul. Reach out with your heart. Call to Fredrick. Beckon him to us. Still floating. . . floating. . . you can’t feel your body. Float. With each breath you rise higher. Fredrick? Fredrick, are you with us?

(Pause.)

Everyone let go of your tensions. Go free. He’s waiting. Open up. Fredrick?

(From the audience we hear a groan.)
Almost imperceptible at first. But growing in volume.)

Did I hear something?

Fredrick?

What in the world? Hello?

Hello.

Oh my God. . . Where are you?

I’m in the theatre.

Can you see us?

Yes.

Tonight will be the death of me.

We know.

Shhh! Can. . . may we see you sir?

Yes.

Good lord.

Wow.

ACTOR #1

ACTOR #3

(Groan.)

ACTOR #2

VOICE

ACTOR #2

VOICE

ACTOR #1

VOICE

ACTRESS #2

ACTOR #2

VOICE

ACTRESS #1

ACTOR #3

ACTORS #1 and #2 rise.)
Are you angry?

VOICE

Yes

(He groans.)

Are you going to hurt us?

JOSEPH

Why would I do something crazy like that?

(JOSEPH is wearing a poncho and speaks with a bit of a rasp.)

I went to the daggonned pond out at Patton Park to see the rain hit the water. And I must've fell asleep or something, but I woke up down the bank lying in the shallows. No telling how long I was there.

(He coughs, Pause.)

ACTOR #2

Well you have just succeeded in scaring the everblooming holy mother of pearl shit out of us!

JOSEPH

Oh, I'm sorry. I'll be alright! I don't think it's anything serious.

ACTOR #1

Have a seat Joseph.

JOSEPH

What are you all doing here so late?

ACTOR #1

We were trying to come in contact with a ghost.

JOSEPH

Is that what this board here is? And you got the lights down low... shoot! If I'd a known you were doing something like this I could've played a little trick on you.

(Pause.)

ACTOR #3

Do you believe in ghosts, Joseph?

JOSEPH

I don't think so. I used to believe in monsters. But once you give anything a closer look, it's not what you thought.

ACTOR #1

That's true. No matter how many ways you look at something, there's
still that many more.

ACTRESS #1
A good acting performance can be seen over and over again.

JOSEPH
Sort of like Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang. Comes back every year.

ACTOR #2
Sometimes you have to wonder why we even try. An actor spends ninety-nine percent of his time looking for the truth. The audience spends all of their time taking it for granted.

ACTOR #1
Truth, truth, what is the truth anyway?

"The search for the truth is the most important work in the whole world, and the most dangerous."

ACTOR #3
Wow.

ACTRESS #2
Who said that originally?

ACTRESS #1
Wasn’t it Maltsaff?

ACTOR #1
Baker?

JOSEPH
No, it was Vincent Price in The Fly.

ACTRESS #1
(With a sincere smile.)
It really is pretty amazing where we find our answers in life, isn’t it?

ACTOR #2
Kind of.

JOSEPH
You know I think each person has one question they’ve got to answer before they die.

ACTOR #1
What’s that?
JOSEP H

I don’t know. It’s personal with each man and woman. Just a question that they secretly have all their lives.

ACTOR #2

Where do you get that?

JOSEPH

My grandfather, he raised me ’til I was in first grade. One night I was laying on the floor in the kitchen drawing on one of those yellow legal tablets, you know? And my grandpa was washing dishes and all of a sudden he just turned to me and asked for my pad and pen. He sat at the dining room table and wrote for a few minutes. I asked him what he was doing and he told me his homework. He was doing his homework. When he finished, he tore out the sheet he was writing on, and gave me my stuff back. Then he dried the dishes and went to bed. He died the next morning.

ACTRESS #2

Oh my God.

JOSEP H

I got that paper he wrote on. But I never looked at it. Someday I will. But not until I’ve answered my question. ’Cause I wouldn’t want to cheat on my homework. Wouldn’t be fair to me or Grandpa.

(Pause. There is a long silence.)

ACTOR #3

You study philosophy or something?

JOSEPH

No, I just think a lot. You work in a warehouse alone for twenty years, you get used to thinking.

ACTOR #1

You know much about acting?

JOSEPH

Well, you know, just from T.V.

ACTRESS #1

What’s your favorite T.V. show?

ACTOR #2

No! Who’s your favorite actor? This’ll get us somewhere.

JOSEPH

My favorite actor, of all time?

(Pause.)

That would have to be... Burt Ward.
ACTRESS #2

Burt who?

ACTOR #3

Oh, you know... Robin.

JOSEPH

Yeah.

(ACTOR #2 is holding back a laugh.)

ACTOR #2

Robin is your favorite... you consider him an actor?

JOSEPH

Oh, I'm tellin' you. He was so intense. He'd get right up in Batman's face and listen real hard. Really make me care about what was gonna happen next. He's full of energy. And had that snappy dialogue like, "Holy mousetraps, Batman." Or something like that. He just made that show for me. Not to belittle Adam West but I just like to watch ol' Burt. I'd like to meet him someday.

Good luck.

ACTRESS #2

Let's do the Improv game!

ACTOR #1

Oh no! We'll be here all night.

ACTRESS #1

No, just one round. It'll be fun. You play too, Joseph.

JOSEPH

Oh no, I wouldn't...

ACTOR #3

If they're gonna drag us into this, you gotta go too, buddy. Come on.

ACTRESS #1

Joseph, Herman, and me against George, Abby and Roger.

ACTRESS #2

O.K. us first.

ACTOR #3

You three are stuck in a train station.

ACTRESS #1

Well that's an exciting start. Let's see... Abby, you're about to go
into labor and you two are blind. Joseph?

JOSEPH

Let me see here, I'm supposed to add something to this situation?

ACTOR #2

That's about it.

JOSEPH

O.K., how 'bout... Abby there is... No... no, George. George is on fire.

(Pause.)

ACTOR #2

Listen I'd love to stay and watch the unfoldings here, but I'd better get to the Goombay for a nightcap before they close.

ACTOR #1

That sounds good to me, Rog. The rest of you guys want to come along? I'll buy another round of drinks.

ACTOR #3

No thanks, I'm taking Abby home.

ACTOR #1

Well, well, well,...

(All exit except ACTRESS #1 and JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH

I'm uh, sorry if I didn't do too good.

ACTRESS #1

You did fine. We shouldn't have thrown you into it like that.

JOSEPH

Oh, that was fine. I guess. Did... uh... did you have fun with this show? This mystery?

ACTRESS #1

Yes! This show got the season back on its feet.

JOSEPH

Yeah the audience liked this one a lot. There weren't as many programs left over.

(ACTRESS #1 laughs.)

ACTRESS #1

Did you really spend twenty years in a warehouse?
JOSEPH

Yeah... well actually it was more like sixteen years. I lead kind of a simple life there for a while. You see once my grandpa passed away, I was sent to relatives in Belgium. They were real strict, and you know, I know they loved me, but I was still a burden on them so I ran away when I was eight. And by the time I was ten I walked into Paris, France. I remember seein' the Eiffel Tower. Boy, it was an eye full. It took me five days from the time I saw it 'til I finally got to it. Beautiful.

ACTRESS #1
I'll bet. How long were you there?

JOSEPH
Not long. Next couple days I met my second best friend in the world, Mrs. DeBreech. And I came over to America again with her. And she brought me to her farm. Her husband left her and she had no one to work but her daughters. She was a little too old to do milking and all on her own.

ACTRESS #1
Wasn't she taking advantage of you? Making you work on her farm so young?

JOSEPH
Oh, I wasn't doing any work for her. She just wanted me to hang around the house and talk to her. We talked a lot. And then when I was fifteen; just old enough to finally help with chores, she sent me out on my own. Gave me a bunch of things her husband left. Ties and belts and stuff. And she told me to visit whenever I was near by.

ACTRESS #1
Have you ever made it back?

JOSEPH
No. I walked for a while, doing odd jobs. Then I jumped on a train that was on its way West, I thought, but I ended up North here. I was a bat boy for the Harvon Indians for a few years. But you don't want to hear about me.

(JOSEPH coughs again.)

ACTRESS #1
Yes, I do! But you're not in any shape to be up this late talking about yourself. Fell in a pond!

JOSEPH
Oh, I'm used to being up late.

ACTRESS #1
Well, maybe we can talk later. Take care of yourself.
JOSEPH

Uh. . . Mary?

ACTRESS #1

Yes?

JOSEPH

Nothing. . . Mary?

ACTRESS #1

What?

JOSEPH

I was just. . . do. . . would you like to. . . I. . . would you care for. . . I kind of thought maybe we could go out for lunch and maybe a nightcap sometime.

ACTRESS #1

I think that would be nice, Joseph.

JOSEPH

Really? That was easier than I thought!

ACTRESS #1

Would you like to walk me to my car?

JOSEPH

Sure. I hope I’m not gonna catch cold now.

(They exit. Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

STAGE MANAGER

The cast list for One Wish will be posted within the hour.

(Enter ACTORS #1 and #2.)

ACTOR #1

Do you think you got it?

ACTOR #2

I don’t care.

ACTOR #1

Herman was pretty good. He auditions very well.

(He smiles.)

ACTOR #2

What? I’m not worried. I know I’m good. Herman deserves a shot. The little lugworm. Besides, the season’s back on its feet. What about you, Mr. Smirk? Aren’t you worried?

ACTOR #1

Not really.
Well neither am I.

ACTOR #2

I know. There it is. He’s putting it up.

ACTOR #1

You go look.

ACTOR #2

Come on.

ACTOR #1

(They exit.)

ACTORS #1 and #2

(From offstage.)

Yes!

(Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. . . sit back and enjoy tonight’s performance of One Wish by . . . Blanton Whitt.

STAGE MANAGER

(He exits. The play opens in the apartment of Albert Adin. Couch, coffee table and T.V. are seen. A window should be represented. Enter ACTOR #2 as ALBERT; a nerd, carrying groceries.)

ACTOR #2

Hello apartment. . . I’m home. How’ve you been? I got some odds and ends here; T.V. schedule, paper towels, new dispenser for the paper towels, head of cabbage, mustard, whipped cream and this little genie looking thing. . .

(He sighs.)

Well, the suspense is killing me. Should I rub the lamp to see if he comes out, or should I use it as an ashtray for guests? What am I saying? I never have guests!

(He rubs the lamp . . . no response.)

Oh, well.

(He tosses it behind the couch.)

What’s on T.V.? Oh, boy. . . one of those old movies with color added. Too bad I don’t have a color T.V. Now this is a classic scene here! Ha Ha Ha, I don’t know how they did that!

(ACTOR #1, as GENE, rises up from behind the couch. He’s wearing turban, suit jacket, and a tie.)

ACTOR #1

Snappy there has a double jointed back.
ACTOR #2

W-h-h-at are you doing here?

ACTOR #1

W-h-h-atching a classic movie on that cheap T.V. You rubbed that lamp didn't you?

ACTOR #2

Are you a genie?

ACTOR #1

Are you for real? What year is it?

1985.

ACTOR #1

Is everyone a nerd in 1985?

ACTOR #2

No. Just me. Do I get three wishes?

You get one. I'm not wasting my time and effort any more.

ACTOR #2

The legend says three.

ACTOR #1

The "legend" says Paul Bunyan and Babe formed the Grand Canyon. I say it was the Colorado River. Who ya gonna believe?

Just one wish?

ACTOR #2

No, I'm sorry. Did I say one? I meant fifty. Better start now. You've won a bonanza!

ACTOR #2

Are all genies this smart mouthing?

ACTOR #1

No. Just me.

(Actor #1 gets up and crosses around couch. He is wearing jacket, shirt and tie. Unseen until now have been his genie pants and curled up shoes.)

Now make this quick will you? My flying carpet is double parked at Heathrow.
Huh?

ACTOR #2

Inside joke. Come on! Come on!

ACTOR #1

Anything?

ACTOR #2

Anything.

ACTOR #1

How about. . . World Peace.

ACTOR #2

No.

ACTOR #1

No? What’s the matter, is that too much for you to handle?

ACTOR #1

Oh, I can handle it. But you don’t want world peace. Think about it. What does world peace mean? They stop fighting in the Philippines or something like that. The population explodes, and we all starve to death.

ACTOR #2

I’ve never looked at it like that before.

ACTOR #2

No one has. How about a color T.V.?

ACTOR #1

No, I’m just getting used to black and white. How about. . . no more poverty?

ACTOR #1

How am I going to do that? Give everyone the same amount? That’s Communism. Besides, if everyone was rich, we’d all be assholes. No, you’re going to have to wish better than that.

ACTOR #2

O.K., how about. . . a girl.

ACTOR #2

You’d be better off with world peace. Are you sure I can’t get you a nice nineteen inch with a remote control? I’d throw in a satellite dish.
I've never had a girlfriend.

Yeah, and it shows. O.K. here we go. . . .
(He snaps his fingers.)

Just remember I warned you.

(He snaps his fingers.)

Hello.

Hello, I'm . . . My name is Albert. Albert Adin. Would you care to sit?

Would you care to sit? Listen, Al, come here a second, buddy. You can't expect to keep a girl long if you act square and backward. Hang lose. Be cool. And don't over exert yourself. Now go get her.

What's your sign, baby?

Oh, for crying. . . .

Virgo.

Mine too! Small Zodiac! Would you like to watch T.V.?

Sure! What's on?

Just some old movies.

I'm sorry! Hello? How are you? Allow me. I'm Gene L. B. Hair. Good to meet you. Listen, the T.V.'s busted. And I need to talk to Al, here.

Busted?

Come over here! T.V. is not a good beginning now. It's stale. Talk, get to know her, then go for the T.V., O.K.?
ACTOR #2
Are you really a Genie or is this one of those camera shows?

ACTOR #1
She’s waiting. And though it’s not a bad idea, I don’t have any cameras. So get to work while I’m still here to help. Sheeeez!
(ACTOR #2 returns to girl.)

So, are you married?

ACTOR #2
You’re funny!

ACTRESS #2
That’s what people have told me, but looks aren’t everything. What’s your favorite color?

Oh, black.

ACTOR #2
Well that’s elegant. That’s an elegant color. Mine’s brown.

That’s very earthy.

ACTRESS #2
Yes, I like the Earth. Couldn’t get me to live anywhere else!

I don’t guess I could either.

ACTOR #2
Do you shave under your arms?

ACTRESS #2
Pardon me?

ACTOR #2
I’m sorry if that’s too personal, but I’m just trying to get to know you.

Oh. . . yes. Yes, I do. . . I use deodorant too.

ACTOR #2
Oh, really? Me too! We already have something in common. Should we be intimate now?
O.K.

ACTRESS #2

ACTOR #1

Woop, woop, woop. Woop. . . hold up just a second. Al you’re -uh - not quite doing this up to par here. I’d hate to see you try and be intimate. Why don’t you run down to the store and get a bottle of wine?

ACTOR #2

I don’t think I’ve got enough. . .

ACTOR #1

(Snapping fingers.)

You’ve got a hundred dollars, go.

(ACTOR #2 exits. ACTOR #1 sits next to ACTRESS #2.)

So now, what’s your sign?

ACTRESS #2

No trespassing, jerk.

ACTOR #1

Jerk? What about high waters?

ACTRESS #2

At least he’s normal. Have you just had brain surgery?

ACTOR #1

Well not lately. . . Oh! This. Haven’t you ever seen a genie before? I can grant your every wish.

ACTRESS #2

Great! Buzz off.

ACTOR #1

You don’t want me buzzing. You might get stung.

ACTRESS #2

Are you for real?

ACTOR 1

Too much for real. And not doing very well at the human approach either.

ACTRESS #2

What?

ACTOR #1

I command you to like me and want to kiss me right now.
(Snaps his fingers.)

ACTRESS #2
Sorry. That macho game doesn't work on me.

ACTOR #1
What is going wrong? You should be all over me by now.

ACTRESS #2
You're losing your mind. I'll call the cops if you don't watch it.

ACTOR #1
Go ahead! I'd just turn them into pteradactyles. I think? Better let me check myself here.

ACTOR #1 goes to window.
Hey buddy! Hey! You with the stereo!

(He snaps his fingers. Pteradactyle noise is heard.)

O.K. Had me worried there for a minute. Yeah, I'd turn them into pteradactyles. So... you want to get intimate, now?

ACTRESS #2
Not on your life!

ACTOR #1
Better watch it! I've had a long one.

WHAT?

ACTOR #1
I've had a long life. In one of your former lives you probably loved me.

ACTRESS #2
Good thing it died.

ACTOR #2 returns.

ACTOR #2
I'm back! You know that wine store ought to keep better track of their inventory. I told them they had some bottles there over twenty years old! They laughed, I don't think they believed me. Anyway, I got the best they had, 1984, cost me ninety-six dollars, so here's your change.

ACTOR #1
This is not one of my favorite days.

ACTOR #2
Oh, it's one of mine. I found this boom box outside in the street. No one around. So I figured I'd borrow it for tonight. You know, a
little mood music. (He turns it on.)

RADIO VOICE

Traffic is a little backed up on forty-second street tonight, as something has laid a huge egg right in the theatre district. Experts say they are thankful it’s not another Mike Breeze play for a change. Ha Ha Ha Ha.

ACTOR #2
(As he turns radio off.)

Maybe there’ll be music later. Besides, music doesn’t matter. It seems your beauty is all the melody I need.

Oh, Albert!

ACTRESS #2

Oh, somebody get me one of those little paper bags they have on airplanes and cruise ships so I can barf in first class.
(Lights begin to fade, except for a spot on each actor. ACTOR #2 and ACTRESS #2 freeze.)

I can’t believe how easy she’s making this on him! And I can’t get anywhere. That’s what really hurts! She’s not even a real girl! I just called upon the essence of some bimbo and now I can’t even do that right. Well if I can’t make it, this little wash cloth over here doesn’t fit the bill. And I’m sure not going to rest until I’ve put this matter to peace. This is really weighing heavy on me!
(He snaps. ACTRESS #2 disappears.)

Whew... you’ll thank me for this, Al.

ACTOR #2 unfreezes.

What... What happened?

ACTOR #1
This really wasn’t working out.

ACTOR #2
What happened to her? Bring her back! Bring her back now!

ACTOR #1
Sorry, just one wish per customer.

ACTOR #2
That’s not a wish! I didn’t wish for a broken heart.

ACTOR #1
When you wished for a woman; you asked for a broken heart.
ACTOR #2
Get out. Get out of here! She loved me. Just because she didn’t get
turned on by you... you made someone who loved me. And now I’ve got
nothing. For the first time in my life I was feeling important. I
felt like someone else cared. Now I’ll never feel the same. It’s all
over.

Hey, it’s never over.

(He snaps.)

There, you’ve got a color T.V.

(ACTOR #2 is on couch, crying. ACTOR
#1 disappears behind couch. There is
a knock at the door.)

ACTOR #2
What?

(Knock again. ACTOR #2 opens the
door.)

Hello?

ACTRESS #2
Hello! I’m Molly Brown. I just moved in upstairs. Do you have a
color T.V.?

Well, yes...

ACTRESS #2
Would you mind if I watched my soaps on your set then? Mine’s black
and white and I just love to see the dresses in color.

Sure!

ACTRESS #2
This could turn out alright! I’m new in town and kind of lonely. Do
you have any cabbage?

ACTOR #2
(Picking up lamp from behind couch.)

Thank you.

(Sounds of Pteradactyle. ACTRESS #2
bows, then ACTORS #1 and #2 join her.)

ACTOR #1
This was awesome, Rog.

ACTOR #2
Yeah, I’ll get with you a little later, O.K.?
(He exits.)

ACTRESS #2

What was that about?

ACTOR #1

Roger never liked anyone to see him cry.

(Exit ACTOR #1 and ACTRESS #2, arm in arm. Enter JOSEPH and ACTRESS #1.)

JOSEPH

Gets kind of empty in here after a show's done for good, doesn't it?

ACTRESS #1

Yes, it's really strange but I'm a little down. And I wasn't even in this one.

JOSEPH

I think I know what you mean, Mary. This one fella I watched T.V. with back when I was at the gas company. He and I lived in the same apartment building. Well, anyway... he and I were watching Gilligan's Island once and they were trying to get off the island on this particular episode. And he said he hoped they didn't make it, 'cause it would be more sad than happy if they split up and weren't together any more.

ACTRESS #1

That's right, in a manner of speaking. It's just kind of sad in life that we don't realize how good things are until they're almost over.

JOSEPH

Uh huh.

(JOSEPH and ACTRESS #1 speak at the same time.)

JOSEPH

Maybe you'd like...

ACTRESS #1

What do you...

JOSEPH

I'm sorry! Go ahead.

ACTRESS #1

I was just going to ask what you do when you get depressed.

JOSEPH

Oh, I don't know... If it's raining at night, I sometimes go to Patton
Park and watch the drops hit the pond. Sometimes, if it's raining hard enough, it looks like pavement; like you could just walk right out on it. It's almost mesmerizing. Then sometimes I go back home and listen to the cars splash the puddles outside. But usually I buy a pack of peanuts and stay right there on the bank by the pond. Just sit back and wait till sunrise. Every once in a while I catch sight of a rainbow.

(Pause.)
Are you ready to go? I guess it's getting pretty late.

ACTRESS #1
Were you going to ask me something before?

JOSEPH
What? Oh, yeah. . . well I was just going to say maybe you'd like to come with me to Patton Park next time it rains.

ACTRESS #1
I hope you know what the answer to that is

JOSEPH
I think I do.

ACTRESS #1
Thank you, Joseph. For a wonderful evening.

JOSEPH
You're welcome, Mary. And thank you.

ACTRESS #1
Good night, Joseph.

(She exits.)

JOSEPH
'Night

(To audience.)
Did you know that an actor killed himself on this stage? Awful powerful place these old planks of lumber can be. That's why I brought Mary back here. So I'd have the nerve to ask her to Patton Park. I told her I had to clean up, but I had so much energy today I got that done early. Well anyhow, keep me in mind while you're out refreshing yourself. There's garbage cans everywhere. And the floor's not one of 'em.
SIT BACK AND WAIT TILL SUNRISE

ACT TWO
(Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

STAGE MANAGER

All Hail the Boar's Ass... by Vaimitz Helder.
(The play takes place just outside a small hut owned by the ROYAL BEGGAR LADY and her daughter. Enter ACTRESS #1 as ROYAL BEGGAR LADY.)

ACTRESS #1

Nutrice? Nutrice? My daughter come hither ta gau. The cattle will bloat, my princess.

(Enter ACTRESS #2 as NUTRICE, the daughter.)

ACTRESS #2

Mum, please allow my tardiness of late. I've a weary.

ACTRESS #1

You've a weary what? Talk English, you are surely worthy of it.

ACTRESS #2

Mum, my friends ta gau, believe not my status. They say I am no princess.

ACTRESS #1

Then friends are not found in them. Nutrice, if we take the time to declare our Royalty, when we could be gardening, then only our true friends will believe, and to them we must cling.

ACTRESS #2

Oh how you do sound astute, Mum.

ACTRESS #1

Say kind things and you shall always sound wise, my daughter.

(Pause.)

ACTRESS #2

Look at those dark clouds. Should there be a torrent in our fate, my queen?

ACTRESS #1

Aye and again aye, my Nutrice. Something is indeed brewing. I shall prepare our soup and stout ale for the night.

(She exits. Thunder is heard.)

ACTRESS #2

Oh I crave a man to be my prince. Perhaps a gale will draw him to me and mine dynasty will be ordained in believable Royalty. To be wed amidst the cry of gods! My time is coming, and I will be a princess.
Love of all the Land. Mum shall be Queen and my father remembered eternally for his brave death in battle. I cannot await ta gau! Mum? Mum?

(She exits. Enter MINOR ACTOR, as ROBES, the squire, and ACTOR #1, as SIR LOOKUSTHAUL, the knight.)

ACTOR #1
Oh I crave a woman! To keep me snug during this torrent tonight, against her cool flesh. To speak to me softly when I am being rough. A princess I may worship... Day and night. A meal for me to touch. Robes, go to the dwelling place ahead. Fetch me the information what will be given from within.

MINOR ACTOR

By the will, Sir Lookusthaul.

(He approaches the dwelling.)

Hello within this dwelling? I am here to fetch what information will be given.

ACTRESS #1

Hello? Et hello... By the sound, good day I have no money. Ta gau.

(She starts crying.)

MINOR ACTOR

Lady, listen deaf boobs we want, my master only requires--stop wailing! Cease!

(Enter ACTRESS #2, as ACTOR #1 advances.)

ACTOR #1

Robes, you have frightened said fair damsel.

Mum? I am heard your fear, is there-

MINOR ACTOR

We only look for-

ACTOR #1

Silence. Robes here; my squire, is daft. Forgive me for ever picking this orphan from the street. I am Sir Lookusthaul, patron knight to Morte' ce diem.

ACTRESS #2

Twilight!

ACTRESS #1

I am sorry. Forgive my old fearful heart. It is hard on Royalty such as I to cope with outside hands at times.
ACTRESS #2

Won't they be invited in, Mum? Soup and stout ale is much for us to gau.

ACTRESS #1

Yes, and with these gales approaching, thou company might deserve an over stay tonight.

ACTOR #1

It would ease mine skeleton to thon lumber your highness.

MINOR ACTOR

Indubious my bar is lumming for stout ale also.

ACTOR #1

Nix, Robes, The nearby glade was too much a place for bandits to await our aloofness with ale. You must stand watch.

MINOR ACTOR

Without so much as a spoon? Nix nax patty wax, my Sir Lookusthaul, I-

ACTOR #1

Shall be fed well in time, Twiglet, go!

(EXIT ACTOR #1, ACTRESS #1 and ACTRESS #2 into hut. Exit MINOR ACTOR offstage. More thunder. Enter ACTOR #2 as a PRIEST.)

ACTOR #2

Damn the shit I am trudging through. This place has become as of a Hell to me... Shit again, dammit. Curse this Land. Moff et pook slonger. Piss eating Cleric and his spells! These pebbles have done me the good of naught.

(He dumps rocks from his shoe, and calls out more gently.)

My children? In this household. My children? Can someone give aid toward a poor, lame father of the word?

(Enter ACTRESS #1.)

ACTRESS #1

Hello? Oh a minister. Can mine hands assist?

ACTOR #2

Most assuredly. What do you have as a name for said beauty?

ACTRESS #1

I am Queen Lady to Mixtoll and you?

ACTOR #2

Oh, I am the Pope.
Pardon mon?

ACTRESS #1

My name is Father Thepope.

ACTOR #2

(Enter ACTOR #1 and ACTRESS #2.)

ACTOR #1

Nutrice and I became worried when your return was at bay. Forgive, but I see your highness is in goodly hands.

ACTRESS #2

We shall each over stay in the warmth of this hut, during the torrents. Varily, Mum? But what of your young squire, Sir Lookusthaul?

ACTOR #1

He will fare well tonight. I found him as but a babe on the streets of Fenceshire, and raised him as a man to be at mine side ever since.

ACTRESS #1

My, how I well up. I've not heard the call of that city named in years.

Mum?

ACTRESS #2

I lost a son in that city, years ago. My husband died in the siege that followed.

ACTOR #1

I battled in that war. Afterwards, was when I found the stranded youngster. Could he be your son?

ACTRESS #2

Could I have a prince brother lost, as my father, but now found? (Thunder.)

ACTRESS #1

He portrayed on his palm a marking. One as which could only be matched by that of his father.

ACTOR #1

I have seen the mark on Robe's hand.

ACTOR #2

Was it like an etching as this? (ACTOR #2 holds out his hand. ACTRESS #2 runs to him.)
ACTRESS #2

Father! My King.

ACTRESS #1

This man is no father, no priest, no king. Not of yours, Nutrice. This man in black is the living embodiment of what killed your true father, the King.

ACTOR #1

By St. Moncue! Thou art the man of which I spent many a night. Drinking! Skelkhart, my friend, Skelkhart!

ACTOR #2

Elb? Zany Elb? You have changed since our days and nights at the Boar's Ass. This is truly an amiable experience! Let us in the soup and ale and merriment. All in the name of the Boar's Ass.

ACTRESS #2

Mayest we, Mum?

ACTRESS #1

I concede. The torrent is approaching, and we need be warm in the night. Take me by the waist, Sir Skelkhart. Lookusthaul, take Nutrice by the arm, and let us enter.

(Enter ACTOR #3 as KING DIRWIST.)

ACTOR #3

And at once, I return! My wife, my love, your King has come for you.

ACTRESS #1

Dirwist? My Lord!

ACTOR #3

My Lady, who is in your arms? And what shall be my Nutrice, princess of Mixtoll, in the hands of some mere Knight?

ACTRESS #2

Father! Is this my father, Mum?

ACTOR #3

Yes, I am your father, I am King, and I am executioner. State your names, you vermin that dare touch my women.

ACTOR #1

Sir, I am Lookusthaul, very celebrated warrior, and right hand to many kings. I am merely seeing to your daughter's safety.

ACTOR #3

I recall your face; I recall it not however as to when or where, just as to that I have seen it.
Sir, I am Father Thepope, mere dust in the realm of time, giving what I can. I am blessing your family from the gale to come.

You, Father, remind me of something. . . The Boar’s Ass! Skelhart! My old friend, tis I! And you, Zany Elb, have changed old companion. Neither of you recall my visage? I am Sacdo.

Sacdo! Then we all three have come but a long way from our jovial days at The Boar’s Ass.

My Queen, bring us some stout ale that we may sit out in the world, like the men we used to be. For tomorrow, we return to my castle at Mixtoll. And the hand shall rule again.

Dear Sacdo, do you remember the time we nearly burned The Boar’s Ass down? Those are my fondest memories of life.

Then let us begin again, to live the days of yore. You, Zany Elb and Skelhart, shall join me at Mixtoll to reign in a way that pleases all.

Sir Lookusthaul? There’s no bandit near here for kingdoms to come.

My son! I’d know you anytime. For I’ve spent years as a prisoner of war in searching for you! Though our Royal marks match not, we are joined at last.

Look at the mark on that man’s hand, Sir. It’s just as mine.

What’s this?

All hail The Boar’s Ass!

They didn’t know how to take this one.
ACTRESS #2
What are we doing—going back to the Middle Ages again?

ACTOR #2
Vaimitz Helder was actually a contemporary of Maltstaff. Very much ahead of his time.

ACTOR #1
It's some kind of history celebration that the Eternious Theatre Group gets involved with each year, about this time.

ACTOR #2
Helder really was an innovator, but he detested comedy. He said, "If the characters are true to life, then there has to be some sadness. Because tragedies, however small, happen to all us warm individuals."

MINOR ACTOR
He did have a way with words. What does "ta gau" mean?
(Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

Hey, people, cut the chatter and get out of costume, let's go! These things don't grow on trees, you know.
(He exits.)

MINOR ACTOR
Well I guess it's time for Robes to get out of his Robes.

ACTOR #3
Just don't do it here!
(He laughs.)

MINOR ACTOR
Oh not on your life. These two know better!
(MINOR ACTOR laughs.)

ACTOR #2
Oh too well, Lloyd.

ACTOR #1
Yeah, why don't we just leave it alone, guys. O.K.?

MINOR ACTOR
Well, I am out of the room, people. See you soon!
(He exits.)

Good bye!

ACTRESS #2
Take care, Lloyd

ACTRESS #1
He sure is nice.  

ACTOR #3

He's a prince of a guy.  

ACTOR #2

So to speak.  

ACTOR #1

Why doesn't he hang around here more often?  

ACTOR #3

We could arrange for you two to get together, Hermie.  

ACTOR #2


ACTOR #1

Ahhh, you're kidding me.  

ACTOR #3

This is enough, guys.  

ACTRESS #2

He isn't!  

ACTOR #3

This isn't right.  

ACTRESS #2

At least you're finding out the easy way.  

ACTOR #1

Right in front of me.  

ACTOR #3

Didn't you gentlemen want to change the subject?  

ACTOR #2

Come on, ladies. It's become a fact of life. We can talk about him.  

ACTRESS #2

That's not what you said last year, Roger.  

ACTRESS #1

You see, Herman, Big Roger and Bad George took Lloyd to meet Fredrick last year, at the usual time. And somewhere in the middle of calling Mr. Thunderson, Lloyd explained his situation and delivered a proposition to both of our open minded pioneers into fear. They
weren't the same for a while.

ACTOR #1
It's one thing to be on stage with someone of that way of living. But not at four a.m., and NOT alone.

ACTOR #2
I was there.

ACTOR #1
You were no help. Rog here started calling on evil spirits to strike Lloyd down.

ACTOR #2
It's very much like snakes, or any reptile-slash-amphibian. I'm fine with them as long as I know exactly where they are, and they don't surprise me.

(Enter JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH
Hi Hum, Hi Hum, it's here to work I come. Did I hear you talking about snakes?

ACTOR #2
Not really, we were talking about people with alternative lifestyles.

ACTOR #3
Have you ever seen one, Joseph?

JOSEPH
Can't stand 'em. Of course, you know that's just me. I suppose they've got their place. I guess they like each other. Anyway, one came into the warehouse once.

ACTOR #1
Really?

JOSEPH
Yeah, he was all sly, you know, slinkin around. Course I wasn't about to have it, and he started playing hide and seek with me. But you don't hide from the man that cleans the warehouse. I've kinda got the floor plan down after sixteen years. So I caught him hiding behind this stack of fridges. He turned around and stuck his tongue out at me, and I eliminated him.

ACTOR #2
What!?

JOSEPH
Took his head off with a dust mop. It took a good couple of whacks.
ACTOR #3
You killed him?

JOSEPH
Had to. He could've been poisonous.

ACTOR #2
... We said we weren't talking about snakes. We were talking about people with alternative lifestyles: homosexuals, fags, queens, gay boys.

JOSEPH
(Whispering.)
Oh, you mean like Lloyd?

ACTOR #3
How did you know about Lloyd? I didn't know about Lloyd.

JOSEPH
He told me. He was having car trouble one night when I got here. I guess after a practice. But, anyway we talked for a little while.

ACTOR #3
Didn't he make you nervous?

JOSEPH
Not really. Then again, there was an entire car between us. I just never thought about it. He's a nice fellow.

ACTOR #3
That's what I said!

ACTOR #2
I'm taking off. See everyone later. Abby, would you like to make out with me? Mary? Just thought I'd ask.
(He exits.)

'Night everyone.
(She exits.)

ACTOR #3
I'm gone too. Bye.
(He exits.)

ACTOR #1
So long folks.

JOSEPH
George? Are you writing a play?
ACTOR #1
Yes, well I'm just about done with the fifth draft.

JOSEPH
I finished one tonight. What do you do with one when you're done with it?

ACTOR #1
I'm submitting mine to the Eternious Theatre Group here, to be done at the end of the season. You should too. It's probably the best place to start.

JOSEPH
Maybe we could trade plays for a night, and read each other's sometime.

ACTOR #1
Sure. I'll tell you about copyrighting.

ACTRESS #1
What's the title of your play, Joseph?

JOSEPH
I'm not quite sure yet. Did you know the word "Tragedy" came from the Greek word "TRAGODIA"? I like the sound of that.

ACTRESS #1
Do you know what "TRAGODIA" means?

JOSEPH
I didn't get that far. The Library closed.

ACTOR #1
Goat song.

JOSEPH
Tragedy comes from goat song? Isn't it amazing how far back theatre stuff goes? Goat song.

ACTOR #1
Well it's getting pretty late, I guess I better "goat" home.

(ACTOR #1 exits.)

JOSEPH
Would you like to read my play, Mary?

ACTRESS #1
Is it alright?

JOSEPH
Sure! It's in my locker. Do you think you can have it back to me
tomorrow? Cause I might trade with George. Of course I don’t want to rush you.

ACTRESS #1
No, that’s fine. I can get it to you tomorrow night, O.K.? How long is it?

JOSEPH
Well, I didn’t number the pages. It’s about this thick. I’ll go get it.

ACTRESS #1
I’ll come with you. Am I allowed down there?

JOSEPH
Don’t see why not. You’re clean, aren’t you?
(As they exit.)

Did he say “goat” home? That nut.
(Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

STAGE MANAGER
Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight we present The Island, by Monroe Baker.
(The play takes place in the one-room apartment of Henry Loaphace. There are a couch, phone stand, chair, and Christmas tree visible; kitchenette can be suggested. The play opens with ACTOR #3 as HENRY in the chair. Phone rings.)

ACTOR #3
Phone!
(Another ring.)
Well, I guess I’ll get it. Nobody else lives here anyway... Hello. . . No, she isn’t. Should she be? Oh my goodness, where could she be? Did you check the streets? Or maybe the bridge? No, the big one! She could be having an affair; or maybe she’s a pervert? Did you call the pet shop? Yes, maybe you should dial more carefully next time. And right back up yours. Merry Christmas, Nit Wit.
(He hangs up.)
Oh, Melvin, why did you do it? I can understand moving in with a monk. But shave your head? It’s getting embarrassing to have you as a partner. As a matter of fact... .
(He picks up the phone and begins dialing.)
Hello, Mel? This is Henry. What do you mean “Henry who?” Henry! Henry! Henry Loaphace. Right. I want to talk to you about--
(Enter ACTOR #2 as JACK DAVENDER, a
scruffy looking bum.)

About- Get out!- Are you still- Out!

(ACTOR #2 sits on couch, holding a bag of chips.)

Mel?- I said get out!- Are you there?

(ACTOR #3 slams phone on receiver five or six times and throws it across the stage.)

I always get jumpy at four a.m. Get out! Are you deaf?

Huh?

ACTOR #3

How did someone with a name like Davender turn out like you? What do you want?

ACTOR #2

Carol.

ACTOR #3

Your sister left me two years ago. I doubt she’ll be back tonight. Need money?

(Pause.)

ACTOR #2

Well...

ACTOR #3

Get a job. I’m not Saint Claus or Santa Krinkle or whatever the hell.

ACTOR #2

I’ll settle for dip.

ACTOR #3

That I’ve got I’m Saint Dip. What can you give me for it? Got to be at least a dollar.

ACTOR #2

How about this gold cross? Symbolizes giving and wards off bats.

ACTOR #3

Good enough. It’s not important to you is it?

ACTOR #2

Yeah, kind of.

ACTOR #3

Even better.

(ACTOR #3 gets the dip.)
Eat hearty. You won't have Thanksgiving turkey with me. Awwwww hell! Line? That's not it, is it?

(Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

STAGE MANAGER

Cut! No, that's not it! You've said Easter, Halloween, New Year's... I'm waiting for Yom Kippur. Everybody take five.

(All exit. Enter JOSEPH. He is sweeping but stops to try and adjust the star on top of the tree. Enter ACTOR #3 deep in thought.)

JOSEPH

Another standing ovation! This was one of the best ones!

(Pause.)

There won't be any programs left tonight!

(Pause.)

Bet you're sorry to see this one over, Herman.

ACTOR #3

Joseph, can we talk for a minute?

JOSEPH

Sure, what can I do for you?

ACTOR #3

Well, it's obvious I'm getting some pretty good roles here.

JOSEPH

And you're doing a good job.

ACTOR #3

Listen, though, I've got a chance to go off with a big musical on a national tour.

You mean now?

ACTOR #3

Tonight. You've seen that poster on the call board?

JOSEPH

The big one? Less Vegetables?

ACTOR #3

It's actually Lay Vegaytaub. I've only got a small part, but I'll get lots of exposure.

JOSEPH

What do you play- a radish?
No! It’s not like that. It’s about people. I just don’t know if I should leave here or not.

What’s keeping you here?

Nothing now. I’ve fulfilled my contract. It’s just that I know I can do well here.

(Pause.)

Let me tell you a story I heard once, about this little kid who was born with a weak heart. What the doctors would call “a bad ticker.” Anyway, he had a chance to have a long life if he stayed in bed and rested all the time, but he couldn’t stand that so he ran off. Just up and ran away from home, wasn’t even ten years old. Well, it wasn’t long before he walked into this city and just collapsed.

Collapsed?

Yep. Nearly died. But this doctor took him in, and took him home with her. You know, went through all the paper work so that she could be his guardian. And after a few years, she had taught him special relaxation exercises and stuff, so that he could survive. And he decided to run off again. And he travelled all over the place and learned about different people and before it was all over this fellow had been to Europe twice, and France, and all over the U.S. on a motorcycle, and with a baseball team. Anyway, point being he could’ve stayed in a bed all those years and been perfectly safe; but he wouldn’t have seen all he saw or done all he did.

So you’re saying I should-

I’m not saying anything. That little fellow might not have made it at all.

Did you know this guy or something?

I wouldn’t claim him. But I don’t think the safest way is always the best way to do something. Of course I’ve been in a warehouse for the past sixteen years so what do I know?
ACTOR #3
You know plenty. You want to come with me to the party. Watch me say good-bye to everyone?

JOSEPH
No thanks, Herman. I need to clean up, then I think I'm going for a walk.

ACTOR #3
Well then. . . I'll probably be seeing you here and there.

JOSEPH
More than likely, I'll be seeing you!

ACTOR #3
I'm proud to know you Mr. Thuroman.

JOSEPH
Mr. Ross, the pleasure has been mine! So long, and break a leg.

Thanks for everything.

ACTOR #3 exits. JOSEPH looks at audience. He cannot find the words this time, so he smiles and hopes they understand. Enter the THEATRE MANAGER.

THEATRE MANAGER
What's that grin for? You're not done are you? Hey Jimmy! Jimmy, are you there? Well, I guess I'll put some light on the subject. Now get to work. I want this place spotless before I see you smiling again. . . That was kind of. . . But you know what I. . . Aww just get to work.

(THEATRE MANAGER exits. Enter ACTRESS #1.)

ACTRESS #1
Joseph? Joseph? Have you heard?

JOSEPH
I don't think so.

ACTRESS #1
Your script! Your script. It's been accepted! All you have to do is give it a title.

JOSEPH
I haven't even turned it in yet.

ACTRESS #1
I know, I did. They liked it. And they want to do it.
JOSEPH
That's great! I'd smile but... What should I call it?

ACTRESS #1
That's your decision. Actually I had some questions about it.

JOSEPH
What's wrong?

ACTRESS #1
Oh, nothing, but where did you get the names for your characters?

JOSEPH
Do you like them? My Grandfather used to tell me stories and those were some of the names he used.

ACTRESS #1
They certainly are different! And where did you get that poem?

JOSEPH
Did you like it? I put extra work into that. That last part not rhyming... I threw that in as my own little style!

ACTRESS #1
What do you think you'll call the play?

JOSEPH
I was thinking about Goat Lang Syne.

(Lights brighten.)

ACTRESS #1
Somebody must like it. Sounds good to me.

JOSEPH
Well, alright then, Goat Lang Syne. Do you get it? "Goat is from goat song and it happens on New Year's Eve. It's kind of Tragedy.

(Enter THEATRE MANAGER.)

THEATRE MANAGER
Hey, come on Thuroman get to work! I got the lights up. Come on.

(Exit JOSEPH and THEATRE MANAGER.)

ACTRESS #1
Bless his heart. He really does try so hard.

(ACTOR #1 enters.)

Mary!
ACTRESS #1
What!? George, you scared me-

ACTOR #1
Have you heard? Huh? Do you know what play they're doing as our original work? Do you?

Joseph's play.

ACTOR #1
Joseph's play. How did you know? He hasn't even got a title for it yet!

Yes he does.

ACTOR #1
Oh what? What's he calling it? March of the Burning Pregnant Women?

No, Goat Lang Syne.

ACTOR #1
That's O.K. But still, if you knew how much thought I put into this.

ACTRESS #1
Thought has nothing to do with it. George, you know the board here. They're just capitalizing on the fact that Joseph's our janitor. Besides, you'd be amazed at the parts he's written in this thing. They're so... simple. They'll do your show next year.

ACTOR #1
I may not be here next year!

ACTRESS #1
Come on, George!

ACTOR #1
No! Mary, this political crap is just too much. I'm fighting it.
(He exits. Enter JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH
George! George! Mary, wasn't that George? Was he mad?

ACTRESS #1
Well, sort of, Joseph, yes. I wouldn't-

JOSEPH
Would you go get him for me, please?
ACTOR #1 enters.

ACTOR #1
You don't have to, Mary. I'm here.

JOSEPH
Hello, George. I need to talk to you. I don't have long because the boss is cracking down. But all I wanted to say was you and I both know your play was better than mine. I just hope you realize what it means to me to be able to see actors put mine on while I'm still working here and I can see it. I really put a lot into it. I went to the library, shoot! I practically lived there! And I read about poetry and the history of Theatre and stuff and I just can't wait to see it done.

(Pause.)

ACTOR #1
Well, Joseph... Hopefully, I can be in it.

Have you read it yet?

JOSEPH
No! Mary was supposed to give it to me!

ACTRESS #1
I'm sorry. But I was so excited about it, I turned it in.

JOSEPH
That's O.K. You'll probably see it when you try out or something. Be sure and tell me what you think.

(ACTOR #1 laughs.)

ACTOR #1
Don't you worry about that! See you guys when next we meet again.
'Til morn be morn, may your path be warm, and full your gut, and no door shut.

(He exits.)

JOSEPH
He's a hoot.

ACTRESS #1
Why was I even worried?

About what?

ACTRESS #1
You two. I should have had more faith in both of you.
JOSEPH

Huh?

ACTRESS #1

Never mind. Joseph, would you like to celebrate? This is a big moment for you.

JOSEPH

Sure! You want to go over to the zoo or down by the bridge?

ACTRESS #1

Actually I had something else in mind.

(She kisses him for a long, complex moment.)

I'll meet you back here at... ten?

JOSEPH

...

ACTRESS #1

Good.

(She exits. Enter THEATRE MANAGER.)

THEATRE MANAGER

Wasn't that sweet? Not done yet are you?

JOSEPH

Not quite sir, no.

THEATRE MANAGER

Well get to work. You want to leave by ten, better get busy. We've had big crowds in here for this show. It's not going to be easy. I'm headed home to the Mrs.

(He exits.)

JOSEPH

(To the audience.)

Somebody said, "When it rains, it pours." I guess that's a saying worth it's salt! Oh well, I guess I'd better get to cleaning up but it's kind of hard to concentrate. Ten o'clock.

(He exits. Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

STAGE MANAGER

Tonight you will see Pipes and Grapes by C. Ben O'Riley.

(He exits. Enter MINOR ACTOR as PLUMBER #1. He comes in and bends down center stage and mimes taking the cover off the crawl space of a house. He shines flashlight out at audience as if they are the
How's she lookin'?  

ACTOR #2

Not good.  Got at least half dozen leaks back up in 'air.

MINOR ACTOR

Galvanized?

ACTOR #2

Copper.

MINOR ACTOR

Damn.

ACTOR #2

Here.  Take a look.

MINOR ACTOR

Mmm, mmm, mmm, boys, looks like we got some heavy solderin' to do.

ACTOR #2

Got the flux?

MINOR ACTOR

Yep.

ACTOR #2

Brush?

MINOR ACTOR

Yep.  Look at this, they ain't a one of these things got union joints.

ACTOR #2

Better tell the lady.  This could take us a while.

MINOR ACTOR

(Enter ACTRESS #2 drying a plate.)

What's the trouble?

ACTRESS #2

It don't look good, Ma'am.  We're gonna hafta shut your water off a while.

ACTOR #2

Grab holt a this light and see for yourself.
ACTRESS #2

No, I believe you. Just get it done as quick as possible.

ACTOR #2

Yeah, we'll have her fixed directly!

(PLUMBER's #1 and #2 exit. ACTRESS #2 sets the plate down and ties the dish rag around her head and addresses the audience as if she is an old lady.)

ACTRESS #2

Once there was this little fox walking down the road. Cute little red fellow. Fluffy.

(At this point, ACTOR #2 returns as the fox, still in plumber outfit but in some form of a fox mask. He mimes the narration as it occurs.)

When, all of a sudden, he happened upon some grapes. And they looked delicious! Huge, juicy and all purple. Just dripping with grape flavor. But he couldn't reach them, so he jumped. And still they were just too high! All this and our little red furry companion still didn't give in. He kept jumping harder and harder and straining more and more until finally... his little heart burst. And the fluffy little fox died.

(Pause.)

After a short while, a giraffe ambled on to the scene.

(MINOR ACTOR enters. Still in plumber's outfit but of course with giraffe mask on.)

And he saw the fat, juicy, succulent grapes and he wanted them. And he easily attained them after stepping over the bloody pulp of flesh and fur that was once our foxy friend. -Oh my! They were delicious! And the giraffe enjoyed the grapes very much! And he ambled on his way. Then about a half mile down the road, he dropped dead of food poisoning. The moral of this story is: Never eat grapes if there is a dead fox under them.

(ACTRESS #2 takes off the dish rag, is back in regular character of housewife and picks up the plate. She speaks to the two bodies onstage.)

Well, what are you waiting for? Come on! Come on! You said you had a lot to do. I can't go all day without water!

(Plumbers take masks off.)

Sorry, Ma'am.

MINOR ACTOR

We'll be right to her.

ACTOR #2
(Lights. ALL bow at once.)

Good job you two. See ya.

Roger, wait.

No, I've got to go Abby.

Please.

Alright. WHAT?

You are crying. Why?

It's nothing. I've got to go.

Roger, I want to know.

So? This is none of your business.

It's not mine either but I'm curious.

Can you just leave me alone? It's just that there are certain people who will never see me act. And- and sometimes... Hell, I don't want you to hear this!

I want to know you.

Fun show, huh guys.

Great. O'Riley's really something else.

We've come a long way from Abitchedes. I hope to do a C. Ben O'Riley show again sometime. Well... see you tomorrow night. Bye. Goodbye Lloyd. Come and see me. Sure. So long.
(He exits.)

ACTOR #2
Nice guy. Abby, I don't have time right now.

ACTRESS #2
I'm sorry. I'll go get dressed.

Maybe later.

ACTRESS #2
Maybe.

ACTOR #2
Oh, now what's that supposed to mean? I'm not good enough now that—forget it. I'm not getting into this.

(Actor #2 exits. Enter Actor #1.)

ACTRESS #2
George, what is going on with Roger?

ACTOR #1
What do you mean?

ACTRESS #2
The way he acts after shows.

ACTOR #1
Oh that. Listen Ab. He's been through a lot. I can't tell you. And unless you want to get really close, he won't. It's not life or death—nothing to worry about.

(Enter Joseph.)

JOSEPH
Hey! Excuse me. Hey, Abby, you did good! Wasn't she good, George? Dag gone. Just like an old lady. This was my favorite one yet. Course, maybe I'm just in a good mood cause I got a date.

ACTRESS #2
Thank you, Joseph. I'm glad you liked it. I'll look into things, George.

(She exits.)

ACTOR #1
Take care. Got a date, Joseph?

JOSEPH
Yep, Mary and I are headed to the movies. I gotta go get ready. Do you dress up now? I haven't taken a girl to the movies since I saw the
one where the guy gets smaller and a spider almost eats him. But he
gets this stick pin, course it looks like a spear to him, and he guts
it from underneath. It was real memorable.

ACTOR #1
Just your normal clothes should do, I suppose.

JOSEPH
Well, I better go slap on some Aqua Velva.

(He exits. Enter ACTOR #2.)

ACTOR #2
George, I've been looking for you. I saw you out in the audience
tonight. What'd you think?

ACTOR #1
Not bad, Rog.

ACTOR #2
Glad you liked it; anyway I need your advice on something. It's kind
of personal so don't be shocked.

ACTOR #1
What? Feeling constipated?

ACTOR #2
No, I want your opinion on somebody and whether I should think about
them seriously or not.

ACTOR #1
Who? As if I didn't know.

ACTOR #2
Abby... Well what do you think?

ACTOR #1
Roger, she's not as pretty as some I've seen you with.

ACTOR #2
Well neither are you, but I've been meaning to tell you-- George come
on, what do you think? I can't begin to explain- It just seems like
recently she's been treating me like a, a-

ACTOR #1
Like a human? Like she's been treating you like a human, Rog? Don't
be so shocked. I think she may CARE. Actually care about you, Roger.

ACTOR #2
I don't know. Maybe I just like the attention. But I think it could
be pretty nice.
ACTOR #1
Then do it, she won't wait forever.

ACTOR #2
Yeah right, what about you? Who're you taking to the awards ceremony? Mary?

ACTOR #1
What, are you kidding me? Joseph and her are doing too well. I won't make a move on her now.

(Unseen to ACTORS #1 and #2, JOSEPH enters.)

ACTOR #2
Well now that really sucks Tang, George. He's only a janitor who's been here for less than a year. How long have you known her? How long have you known Mary?

ACTOR #1
Longer than that.

ACTOR #2
See? How's it going to look when Mary comes to the City Theatre Awards with our janitor? Disgraceful. I'll tell you right now. Like she's given up. We'll be a laughing stock.

ACTOR #1
I know... He came from a warehouse. And now he's cleaning our floors and writing our plays. And Mary likes him.

ACTOR #2
I thought she had better taste. Better taste than that, at least.

JOSEPH
Shoot! I forgot all about the exterminator. He's coming tonight. Would you fellows tell Mary I had to go? I'll talk to her later. Maybe you could take her to the movies, George. She might like that.

(JOSEPH exits.)

ACTOR #2
Holy shit, did he hear us?

ACTOR #1
Probably. Good going, Roger.

ACTOR #2
Should we try and find him?

ACTOR #1
No, but we had best apologize to him later. Hell, I'd hate to hear
that said about me.  

(ACTORS #1 and #2 exit. Enter JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH

Hello, my name is Joseph Thuroman. I'm Joseph Thuroman. Joseph P. Thuroman's the name. This is Joseph Philbrian Thuroman. What's that? My middle name? Philbrian? Well that's a long story. My grandfather explained it all to me when I started school. You see my mother was going to name me Philip Brian after her brothers in the Army. Till the day of her high school graduation. It seems that every day of school she passed by an old, run down windmill as she walked on her way. Every day from first grade up to high school graduation, this old man sat out in front of the mill. Wore the same clothes every day, looked tired, old and sad. So she would give him a dime of her lunch money everyday, without fail. Neither one of them ever spoke, she just dropped a dime in his old hat, smiled and went on her way. Well, just after the choir sang at the graduation ceremony and she got her pictures taken and all, this old man walks up to her right through the crowd. With tears in his eyes, he hands her three socks full of dimes in an old hat. He kisses her on the cheek and says, "No matter what you do with your life now, I just want you to know you're a winner with me. These are your dimes. They could never do half as good to me in life as your smiles did." Then they hugged real hard and he turned and left. As he was walking off, somebody walked up to her and said, "What were you talking to old Joseph for? He's nothing but a hobo with two pairs of socks to his name. And look, he's only wearin' one sock now."

(Pause.)

My Grandfather said Mom had a picture of old Joseph, but she was buried with it the day after I was born. Don't you see? There's more to people than names and jobs and money and... People got hearts. They got two hearts. One beats, and the other one feels. One's right here in the middle of the chest, and the other is all over inside and out. Just waiting to touch someone else's. That demands respect! Nothing else does.

(He goes out into the audience.)

We're all people here. We're all born the same way. We're all going to die. This is dust. My body. Sweaty dust. So what? These people put on these shows for you and you laugh, and cry, and feel good, and sometimes excited, and you're happy for them at the end maybe, and deep down you wish you could have things that way. Then you go out in the street and those same people need to cross the street, or drop a package and you walk on. You got your nose in the air like one of them shaved poodles. What makes you any better? What is it in life that makes one man say this guy is better than that one. Shoot, I don't care if you're on death row, or overweight, if you walk funny, or got no money, or homosexual, or a different color, different religion; you're a person. You deserve a smile, if nothing else, a smile. How can that hurt? I don't care if they smell bad or talked bad against you last week. We've all got problems. And if you can overlook your
own, then you can overlook your neighbors. How in the world we can't see that I don't know.

(Pause. JOSEPH is holding his heart.)

Excuse me. One heart's broken and this one's not doing so hot either.

(JOSEPH exits. Enter STAGE MANAGER.)

STAGE MANAGER

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight a guest performance of Petr Ilich Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. With Clifford Arnold conducting the St. Albert Philharmonic Orchestra.

(STAGE MANAGER exits. Enter CONDUCTOR. We have not seen this man until now. His character has plenty of room to be very distinct. He crosses the stage and stands at the back just in front of a scrim so that he looks very small.)

CONDUCTOR

Good evening. Before we commence, just a note or two about this piece. *The 1812 Overture* was written not in 1812, but in 1880. Its purpose was in celebration of the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte in Russia, and the completion of the Temple of Christ in Moscow. Tonight's performance will include the designated cannon and mortar fire that were originally intended for the piece. . . So if the music isn't loud enough for you, perhaps the artillery will be. Heh, heh, heh. Enjoy.

(He turns and crosses behind the scrim. He should be lit so that his shadow is cast high and looming on the scrim across the whole rear of the stage. The CONDUCTOR, after a flurry of preparation, taps his baton, then begins conducting as music starts. Pause. Enter MAX and NORM, carrying a long, metal box with wires leading offstage from it. We have not seen these men either. Their action takes place on stage in the foreground of the CONDUCTOR'S shadow.)

MAX

(As he enters.)

So the poodle turns to the penguin and says, "Maybe you'd better give me that quarter."

NORM

(He begins to laugh very loudly, but catches himself.)

Oh Max, where'd you hear that?
MAX
I lit some comedian's show last year. That's the only one I remember.

Too bad.

NORM
(They have set the box down and pulled up two stools. They sit and stare at the box for several moments, then...)

Got the cards?

MAX
(NORM slaps his shirt pocket.)

Deal.

NORM
(NORM deals and the two begin playing Rummy. A few moments of play pass.)

Ha! I discard that in my sleep!

NORM
(They play some more.)

Need this?

MAX

NORM
Yep. I'm out. Five, ten, fifteen... twenty-five... thirty-five, forty-five... forty-five points.

I got sixty-five.

MAX

Sixty-five?

NORM

In the hole.

MAX

O.K.

NORM

My deal.

MAX

How about trying it without cheating this time?

NORM

Pardon me?

MAX

MAX
I will. . .

(MAX deals.)

And you won. . . I don't see how that means I cheated.

NORM
I didn't say you cheated well!

(Rummy.)

What!? 

NORM
Right here; three, four, five.

MAX
That's the three of clubs.

NORM
Huh, so it is. I must be going blind.

MAX
Colorblind, you mean. Those are the four and five of hearts.

NORM
If you've got something to say, go ahead and say it.

MAX
Don't look at me like that. You're the one picking bones, Norm; I'm not a cheater.

NORM
Maybe not, but you're sure good at palming cards and losing.

MAX
Maybe you'd better say what you've got to say.

NORM
I think I did.

MAX
Well then maybe you'd better take it back.

NORM
Maybe you'd better admit to it.

MAX
By Sam, I'll give you something to admit to.

(The fight for most of the fast
music between the Russian Hymn and the Old Tsarist Anthem. It is a fight of extravagant proportions, done to the music. With swashbuckling and many different styles and weapons used. Maybe even swinging in on a cable. They collapse as the music slows, and they speak.)

NORM
How long we been playing Rummy?

MAX
Long as this tour’s lasted.

NORM
I’m sorry I acted like that. You never cheated before now.

MAX
Yeah I have actually, but I’ll quit.
(As the Tsarist Anthem begins, JOSEPH enters. He is in rough shape, speaking with a rasp and coughing occasionally. Pause.)

JOSEPH
Is there anything I can-

NORM
Don’t ask, we’re union.

JOSEPH
Oh...?

MAX
You that janitor here that wrote the play?

JOSEPH
Yep. I don’t know how good it is. It’s all a gimmick anyway.

MAX
I’d say it’d have to be pretty good to live up to the attention they’re getting for it.

NORM
What are you talking about?

MAX
This gentleman - what’s your name?
Joseph Philbrian Thuroman.

MAX

Joe, here, wrote a play - hand wrote a play - and turned it in and they're going to do it, right Joe?

JOSEPH

Yes, it's Joseph.

MAX

You bet.

NORM

Why'd you call it Joseph?

JOSEPH

No, I'm Joseph. The play is *Goat Lang Syne*.

Heavy.

MAX

You O.K. buddy?

JOSEPH

I've got pneumonia.

NORM

What're you doing here?

JOSEPH

I came to see the show. I heard they're doing it with a cannon.

MAX

Not really. There's mortar fire but it's all computer run. We're here to manage the pyro-technics.

JOSEPH

You set it all off from up here?

NORM

No... We make sure it goes off. If it doesn't, we fix it.

MAX

There's a lot of tradition involved. We pull out the firing sticks, it's fun.

NORM

Just the waiting could kill you, though. Every night wait for all this
music and then just sixteen blasts and it's over.

JOSEPH
That's easy waiting. You should try waiting when you don't know when, or even if, anything's going to happen.

MAX
Girl troubles?

JOSEPH
How'd you know?

MAX
Us union boys get around.

NORM
You should be worrying about your health instead of all these women. How'd you catch pneumonia?

JOSEPH
I was out in the park all night a week or so ago.

MAX
Women'll get you every time, comrade.

NORM
You need a salad. You eat much salad?

JOSEPH
Some.

NORM
Salads cure everything, just about. I eat them all the time. I'm never sick.

(Pause.)

Now, mind you, I wouldn't touch one without French dressing on it. That's the only kind I like.

(Obviously this should time out to be said during the Marseillaise. Pause.)

MAX
Or Russian.

Pardon?

NORM
Russian.

MAX
So?

Russian dressing.

... Is a lot like French.


(Pause. MAX whispers something to NORM.)

Joseph, buddy, what's your problem? You want to hear about the E.M.T. poodle at the North Pole?

No thanks. I've never felt this way before. I let my guards down. I don't know.

Don't let her get to you. What happened? She can you?

No, I canned me for her.

So what's the problem?

I didn't want to; I had to.

Oh, you're married.

No, I'm just a custodian, she's an actress.

Well, what's she supposed to do? Only like senators? You let her be the judge of what's good for her.

But her work is so important. She's got power on that stage.
NORM
And what are we? Chopped poop? I go over and pull that gray switch on
the wall. . . This whole place goes dark. That's power. Importance
isn't in the job, Joseph. It's in the heart.

MAX
What makes you so pretty all of a sudden?

NORM
I read that downstairs in the equipment room.

JOSEPH
Mary wrote that down there for me.

MAX
Then your only problem is you. Don't let actors get to you. I used to
act. Over ration to the tee.

JOSEPH
Well, why'd you stop?

MAX
I about got blown up by the special effects in a show. Did you ever
see The Island? It's by Monroe Baker.

JOSEPH
Yeah. They did it here a few months ago.

MAX
You know how Henry Loaphace is supposed to pull down the Christmas tree
in the end? Well, the peon that designed it had rigged it so that the
tree would get real bright, then spark out, and ghost some as the
curtain fell.

JOSEPH
Sounds pretty.

NORM
It gets prettier.

MAX
Well some bone-head brought in a real tree! Damn thing set the whole
stage on fire. Audience was shuffled out, and I didn't get to bow for
the last performance of my career. Went union two years later.

NORM
And we rue that cursed day even now.

MAX & NORM
Union local 1490, give us any lip and we'll kick you in the hiney.
NORM
Come on, you'll never get well if you don't shake that rotten mood. Mr. Bluebird on my shoulder and all that stuff. You should be well for your play when it starts, or you'll miss it.

MAX
Just leave him alone, Norm. It's not your concern.

NORM
Not yours either, Mom.

MAX
Hey. He just wants some consideration.

NORM
I just want you to butt out.

MAX
Yeah? Well butt on this! (They start to fight again. It is the same fight as before. They continue until they realize Joseph is unaffected.)

NORM
Don't let us scare you.

MAX
Yeah, pay us no mind. We'll just kill each other in peace over here.

I'm sorry.

NORM
Don't bother it's a trick. We made up a staged fight so we can let out frustrations.

MAX
Works like a charm! Now you've got to perk up or go home one. Aren't you excited about your show?

NORM
What's it about? Your time here?

JOSEPH
No, it's about lots of stuff. Me, other people, life. . . I don't know. I wish my Grandfather could've seen it. It's about him too.

NORM
Maybe he will see it.
JOSEPH

What?

MAX

Come on, Norm.

NORM

No, Max, I'm serious. We all got souls, right? And they're somewhere in our bodies. And don't chromosomes get passed from fathers and mothers to their children? Well who's to say the soul isn't in one of those chromosomes. Or at least part of it. Maybe we've all got part of all our ancestor's thoughts inside of us. Part of their soul.

JOSEPH

So, maybe Grandpa will watch the play with me?

NORM

Heck he probably helped you write it.

I wonder... 

JOSEPH

What?

MAX

Nothing. I better get back home. Grandfather wrote this little paper.

MAX

Why don't you stay and watch them fire the first round? It's what you came for, wasn't it?

(NORM whispers to MAX.)

JOSEPH

I guess, will it take long?

MAX

No longer than drowning.

What?

MAX

You know it doesn't take long to drown if you're trying to save somebody. The whole incident lasts less than a minute and they're gone. But it must seem a lot longer than that to the person going under.

NORM

What's this got to do with anything?
MAX
How long do you figure it took that boat... "The Edmund Fitz..."

NORM
Gerald.

MAX
What do you think, fifteen minutes? I’m sure they’ve got some idea. But it must have taken an eternity and a half to the good shippin’ crew.

JOSEPH
Time moves funny, doesn’t it?

NORM
Clocks are the speedometers of life.
(NORM looks at his watch then checks to see if it is running.)

MAX
But aren’t we trying to cheer this guy up?

NORM
Yeah, Joseph. I’ll get the firing sticks. Woops!
(NORM falls over the wires going offstage. There is a loud "click" from that area.)

MAX
Oh great!
(NORM doesn’t even look up.)

NORM
Was that the computer hook ups?

MAX
And the power links!
(They scramble to fix the problem, and during the mad shuffle, the long box gets pulled over.)

MAX
The charges! Get the replacers out of the second road box! I’ll start the circuit cross over!

NORM
Red, yellow, then green. Don’t forget!

MAX
Hey, I’m union.
(NORM exits, while MAX works on the box. Pause. Enter NORM.)

NORM
Man, these charges weren't labeled. I think they're the loudest.

MAX
We don't have time to worry; did you bring them all? Sets forty-two and ninety-six?

NORM
Hey, I'm union too, pal.

(MAX loads charges.)

MAX
O.K., loaded.

JOSEPH
Is it going to be alright?

NORM
(They all wait in anticipation during the Marseillaise until the first five rounds go off. Then...)

MAX
What'd you think?

JOSEPH
That's some big noise. Imagine when they did it for real.

MAX
(Gives NORM a look.)

MAX
For real, right.

JOSEPH
Well I don't want to rush off, but...

MAX
Listen, if you're worried about the girl, don't. You've done all you can. Just let her know how you feel. Get it off your chest and then sit back and take it as it comes.

JOSEPH
More waiting.

MAX
Somebody once said, "tomorrow's another day."
I think a lot of people have said that.
(MAX tries to ignore him.)

The important thing is don’t get depressed about it.

Let things happen how they may. If she wants you, she’ll come to you. If she doesn’t, she can go perch on a flagpole. Just be yourself. You’ve made it this far, haven’t you? And eat lots of salad.

I will; French dressing.

Good luck on your play.

Thank you. Thank you both for everything. Nice to meet you.

Good to know you, too.

Nice guy.

Very. But not union.

Definitely not.

Do you think we helped him any?

Hard to say. I like the bit about the soul there. Mind if I use it sometime?

By all means. You - uh - you think you’ll need it?

Yep.

Some union.
MAX gets two sticks, like torches for firing cannons. He hands one to NORM. Pause.)

NORM

Have you really been cheating at Rummy?

MAX

No, you’re not worth the trouble.

(MAX laughs and NORM hits him with his stick. They begin to fight, but they hear the cue. They act like they are setting off the mortar by lighting the box. Their actions become ornate as they have been doing them for a while. After the eleven blasts, they shake hands and hide from each other the fact that they are teary-eyed again. They exit before the music ends. When it is finished, a rather frazzled CONDUCTOR bows, picks up his scattered notes, comes back out in front of the scrim, bows again, and goes back where he came from. Enter ACTRESS #2.)

Mary? Mary?

(Enter ACTOR #1.)

ACTOR #1

Hi Abby. Did you like the overture?

ACTRESS #2

Oh yes, I love the cannons. Have you seen Mary?

ACTOR #1

NO - heh - not since the night we ruined things for her and Joseph. She hasn’t spoken to me or Roger. Have you seen Joseph?

ACTRESS #2

No, neither has she. I was supposed to meet her here tonight. (Enter ACTOR #2.)

ACTOR #2

Hey, have you two read Joseph’s script? Pretty wild stuff.

ACTOR #1

Hey Rog, Yeah, have you seen Joseph or Mary?
ACTOR #2
HA! No, I've been steering clear of her; and I think Joseph's on sick leave.

ACTRESS #2
We should send him something.

ACTOR #2
Don't worry. We've got something lined up for Joseph on closing night of the show, at the season finale party.

ACTOR #1
We're going to get Mary and Joseph back together.

ACTOR #2
Well. I'm going to get ready for auditions. You want to read some with me?

ACTOR #1
No thanks... I might cry.

ACTOR #2
I was talking to Abby.

ACTRESS #2
(SACTOR #2 hits ACTOR #1.)

ACTOR #2
Sure!

ACTRESS #2
(SACTRESS #2 and ACTOR #2 exit. ACTOR #1 pauses to regard the old, ornate theatre around him.)

ACTOR #1
O my heart hangs heavy on this mine eve of destruction. Nothing. Not the - uh - not the... light song of the bird can lift my poor spirits. Poor laden spirits. And yet... I must be of sound thought to bring judgement to my own. That's it.

Hello?

Hello?

(He pauses.)

Its so simple. They sit out there. Waiting for us to communicate with them. A living emotion. Sent across the boards into their seats; their hearts.

VOICE
Simple and yet staggering.
VOICE

What?

I've been working on something. Would you like to see it?

Who's there?

(Enter a man in a dusty old gray robe. It is the actor who played the MINOR ACTOR; but this is not a MINOR ACTOR!)

FREDRICK

It is very well written. I knew the author. I want you to give me your opinion.

Uh...

(FREDRICK smiles, nods, and speaks.)

FREDRICK

And through the night, the dawn. Passes imperceptibly at times to those unwilling or unable to allow its infiltration. Its very existence shatters at their ignorance leaving eternity to suffer and life to dwindle, fractured and never healing from this stellar blow. Mine heart overwhelmed by this great mass of recognition is urged to ask, however softly and listen only for the reply of shadows, "Exist or cease to exist?" And the dark shall bow to the light no more. And the blindness will extinguish the bloom. Life evermore, forgive me. I just wanted to see how it would have sounded when it was completed.

I-

FREDRICK

You are a good man, George. Full of the fire and spirit that is life; theatre. You will do well in this next play. It is imperative.

How do you know all this?

FREDRICK

I watch. All I wanted was fame, recognition for what I did. Now I am famous for something else. It does my soul good to see someone in here, The Eternious, for the right reasons. I'll be with you. The next script to be produced is full of the importance of why we are here. I’ll be with you all. But only you could comprehend why. (He bows.)

Goodnight, my friend.
(He starts to leave, then stops and turns back to George.)

You were very funny as the Butler in that murder mystery.

(FREDRICK exits.)

ACTOR #1

(Pause.)

Thank you, Mr. Thunderson.

(GEORGE runs offstage. Enter Joseph.

JOSEPH

Well, my play is next. I hope you like it. Sometimes that's all a man has is the praise of others. And that can be kind of like wine. Get you high as a kite, but too much of it will make you sick. But that's not how life should be lived. You gotta live life from the inside out. Do the best you can, and all you can ask from others is that they listen. And you hope they like what they see. I hope you like what you see. Good night.

(JOSEPH exits through the audience and out the back of the house. Enter STAGE MANAGER. He watches JOSEPH leave, then:)

STAGE MANAGER

And now for our season finale, an original work by our very own custodial manager. Which only goes to prove no one is to be underestimated. Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight The Eternious Theatre proudly presents to you, Goat Lang Syne, by Joseph Philbrian Thuroman.

(The play takes place in a train station. Several benches line the stage. Two benches are at center on either side of a column. Enter ACTOR #1 in robes and greek mask. He wears a large, shiny star, as he is a Sheriff.)

ACTOR #1

If it takes much longer I'll be late. Dag gone it.

(Enter ACTRESS #1, in Elizabethan dress.)

ACTRESS #1

Is the train late?

ACTOR #1

Yep. Well, it wasn't here when I got here.

ACTRESS #1

I've got plans tonight.
ACTOR #1

Who doesn't? It's New Year's Eve.
(Pause.)

Where were you going?

ACTRESS #1

That's really none of your business.

ACTOR #1

I know, but I felt bad for snapping at you, and I was trying to make pleasant conversation.

ACTRESS #1

Oh, well, that's nice. But it's still none of your business.

ACTOR #1

You're right... I'm going to meet several of my friends throughout life. I just invited all of them to that hotel by the river, you know? Cause I always feel depressed at the end of the year. But this year is going to be different. I invited my first grade teacher. And these guys from the lunch table in eighth grade. And so on.

(He sighs.)

ACTRESS #1

That sounds nice. But if you must know; it's none of my business. (Enter ACTOR #2; he is dressed all in black.)

ACTOR #2

Is the train late?

ACTOR #1 & ACTRESS #1

Yes.

ACTOR #2

Well, I suppose you should each know I have the ability to kill you.

ACTRESS #1

I'm afraid that that's none of my- You have the ability to what?

ACTOR #2

Kill you. You see, I am pure evil.

ACTOR #1

I've got it now; the train is late, this lady won't speak to me, and pure evil walks into the room. This is a sign that life should not go on.

ACTRESS #1

Of course it's none of my business, but that's really silly.
No it's not. He's right. The signs are all here. There's not one sign saying life should go on.

(Enter ACTRESS #2. She is very pregnant.)

ACTRESS #2

I'm due any time now.

ACTOR #2

That shoots that. I suppose we're all just passing through.

VOICE

(Over the P.A. system.)

We're sorry, but due to a mess on down the line, the next rain will not run until this morning at seven.

ACTOR #1

This can't be! My friends are all leaving at seven.

ACTOR #2

Perhaps I was right?

ACTRESS #2

It looks like we'll be here a while, doesn't it?

ACTOR #1

I suppose so. Well I guess we should at least say our names, no matter whose business it is.

ACTRESS #1

Very well, my name is Agathapop.

ACTRESS #2

I'm Tootspeci.

ACTOR #2

You can call me... Maal.

ACTOR #1

And I am Pooterboy.

ACTRESS #1

That was jolly. Can I go on with my plans now?

ACTOR #2

Sure. It's the dead of Winter, and we're hours from daylight. Go ahead and set out on foot.

ACTRESS #2

Not me. At least it's warm in here!
We should celebrate ourselves then. Since we'll miss our parties. I was kind of hoping I wouldn't be depressed this year I wanted something to distract me from the memories.

Your memories depress you? You must have had a rough life.

No, it's just that every New Year, I look back and get depressed because no matter how good life gets, it always moves on. And you always know that the good times will end. Disappointment is inevitable.

We are all here; We will all be gone. Thank God for the tear When best moves along. For when we lose the best And we feel the pain, We can go to rest In all we've gained. When our time's nigh And we ride the dove, We'll be able to fly Knowing that we left love. A love that was handed To us by the best. Those we leave stranded Will shed a tear.

I thought you were pure evil. I am.

Everybody's got a heart.

Ohhhh! I think it's time. No, we've still got twenty minutes.
ACTRESS #1
She means the baby. Here, come with me into the restroom.
(Actress #1 and Actress #2 exit. Pause. Actor #2 sighs.)

ACTOR #2
Technology has sure made some big advancements lately.

ACTOR #1
I don't care how advanced they get, I still miss the little dot in the middle of the screen when I turn my set off.
(Enter Actress #1 and Actress #2 with bundle.)

It's a girl!

ACTRESS #1

ACTOR #1
(Goes to baby.)

Well, well. Kitchy coo! Kitchy - kitchy coo!

ACTOR #2
(Also to the baby.)

Hey baby. How's the little - hey! This is a towel!

ACTRESS #2
No! It's my baby, no!

ACTOR #2
It's a stupid towel!
(He takes it from her, and lets it fall to the floor; stretched from his hand.)

ACTRESS #1
This is none of your business!

No!

ACTRESS #2

ACTOR #1
Give it back to her! Hey, you!

ACTOR #2
She lied to us. Here, take it. Filthy liar.
(Throws it at her.)

ACTRESS #2
(Falls to floor, catching towel. She is sobbing.)
I didn't want to be alone on New Year's. I wanted someone with me.

ACTRESS #1
A child.

ACTRESS #2
My child. To need me and trust me. Young hearts are so free of pain and anger.

ACTOR #1
Yes, but they are not as practiced at feeling.

ACTOR #2
Comes with age. . . Not with towels.

(ACTOR #1 puts his arms around ACTRESS #2.)

ACTOR #1
You have us. We're all here together for New Year's.

ACTRESS #1
What do we do for the rest of the night?

ACTOR #2
Count down the New Year. . .

ACTRESS #2
Sing the song. . .

ACTOR #1
Then kick back and wait for the sun to come up.

ACTOR #2
Here it is, get ready!

(ACTORS join hands as they count.)

ALL
Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one.
(Lights. Actors do not bow. They exit as THEATRE MANAGER enters. Enter ACTRESS #1. THEATRE MANAGER's back is to her.)

ACTRESS #1
Joseph? Oh I'm sorry.

THEATRE MANAGER
What're you looking for old Joseph for? Haven't you heard?

ACTRESS #1
What?
THEATRE MANAGER
Old boy died in his sleep couple of nights ago. No surprises really. He’s been on sick leave for over a week. Heart trouble. Probably should’ve never got near the theatre. They found this envelope at his place. Addressed to you. Don’t suppose there’s harm in you taking it now. I’m headed home for my anniversary.

(THEATRE MANAGER exits. Mary opens the envelope and takes out white paper. She reads aloud.)

ACTRESS #1
"Hello Mary, How long have I been here? Nine months? Seen about eight shows. Met new people. Wrote a play. Haven’t missed one thing you all’ve done, and now, if you’re reading this I guess I didn’t make it to my own opening night. But I want to tell you what you got. Cause we don’t really see what we have till we look through someone else’s eyes. You actors can do something that’s not easy. You make people feel. I saw it. That don’t happen everyday like in banks or restaurants. And it’s pretty special. Cause not everybody can do it. Shoot, I couldn’t get upon that stage and act like some Greek fellow. I just think everyone should know how important they are. Hey, Mary, I read my grandfather’s "answer" today. You know what? I was wrong. It’s not cheating if you look. That’s what our answers are for; is to give to others and help them with their answer. I put it in the package with this letter. Kind of funny it’s a poem, huh? Just like in my play. I’m glad people got to see my answer so early. Well, I’m kind of tired. Think I’ll take a nap. See you soon.
P.S. I don’t want to be fresh or nothing, but I Love You."

(ACTRESS #1 takes crumpled yellow paper from envelope. She reads silently - we hear Joseph’s voice.)

JOSEPH’s voice.

Nothing stays
My God nothing stays
That cute little first grader will
just as soon as this, die.
Time does not falter
We must make each moment
a lifetime
That cute little first grader is
now you.
Don’t dilly dally. Get at it.
Touch everyone you can.
Life is too short
But it’s O.K.,
Nothing stays.

ACTRESS #1

Oh Joseph. . .
(Enter ACTOR #2 and ACTRESS #2.)

ACTRESS #2
Hey, Mary! You meeting us at the Goombay?

ACTOR #2
If you’re coming with us, come on, it’s going to rain.

I’m not coming tonight.

ACTRESS #1
Not you too? George won’t leave his mirror.

ACTOR #2
You coming over later?

ACTRESS #2
No, I think I’m going over to the park.

ACTRESS #1
In the rain? What’ll you do?

ACTRESS #2
Find the pond as quick as I can. Then sit back and wait till sunrise.

Good luck. See you.

ACTOR #2
(Exit ACTOR #2 and ACTRESS #2. Arm in arm. MARY begins humming "Auld Lang Syne", as lights fade.)