

HORACE WHIRLEY'S WOE

A Farce By

Ben Josephson

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Cast of Characters

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <u>ALAN:</u> | Male, 30, any "race" |
| <u>LINDA DAVIS:</u> | Female, 30, any "race" |
| <u>POLLY MAXWELL:</u> | Female, 50, any "race" |
| <u>MRS. CLARK:</u> | Female, 65, any "race" |
| <u>ROSCOE:</u> | Male, 25, any "race" |
| <u>DR. VANCE:</u> | Male, 70, any "race" |
| <u>FRANK:</u> | Male, 15, any "race" |

Scene

Dr. Vance's house. The living room. Four entrances: front door (down right), hall (up right), kitchen (up left), bedroom (down left). An easy chair center stage. A small table alongside it, and a larger table apart. Sundry other furnishings, including some chairs.

Time

Scene One: Now. Scene Two: A few days later. Scene Three: The next day.

ACT I

SCENE ONE

1

Alan, in suit and tie, paces. He is missing a tooth or two, and one eye is patched with surgical gauze and adhesive tape. Linda Davis, in a suit ensemble, sits in the easy chair with a briefcase in her lap. She, also, is short some teeth. One hand is bandaged.

ALAN

I can't stand it, Linda. Too much happens, and nothing makes sense.

LINDA

Honey, come here.

ALAN

What does it add up to?

LINDA

(Puts down her briefcase.)

Alan!

ALAN

What does it all *mean?!*

He makes for the front door. Linda opens her arms.

LINDA

Hold me!

Alan stops. Pause. He joins Linda in the chair, holds her.

ALAN

I have to get *answers!*

LINDA

Kiss me!

He kisses her.

ALAN

But who...*who has them?!*

LINDA

(Kisses his eye patch.)

I'm sorry, Alan. I'm sorry I slugged you.

ALAN

(Kisses her bandaged hand.)

Oh, your poor little hand.

LINDA

I'm sorry I knocked you out cold.

ALAN

I'm sorry slugging me broke your precious little hand.
 Linda, I have to **hear** those answers, to **record** them, to
broadcast them, so I can **save us all!**

LINDA

I can save **you**, Alan.

ALAN

Strife! There is nothing but strife!

LINDA

Not between us.

ALAN

No?

LINDA

Oh, not any more!

They go into a passionate clinch.
 Polly Maxwell, in a nurse's outfit,
 enters from the hall with a banner
 reading "Hip, Hip, Hooray!!!" She
 stands on a chair, and hangs one
 corner of the banner while Alan and
 Linda work up a head of erotic
 steam.

POLLY

Get up, you two!

Polly steps down, moves the chair,
 then climbs back on. She reaches to
 where she aims to hang the banner's
 other corner, but falls short.

POLLY (cont'd)

Hey! Mister!

She gets down, goes to Alan, and
 tugs his arm.

POLLY (cont'd)

Give me a hand.

Alan's hand, a pair of panties in its grasp, emerges from under Linda's skirt as Mrs. Clark, in a dowdy dress, and carrying a suitcase, enters by the front door.

MRS. CLARK

How cheap can they get?!

POLLY

(Trying to pull Alan and Linda apart.)

This chair belongs to Dr. Vance! No one can use it but him!

MRS. CLARK

"Mrs. Clark," they tell me, "you're the only relative Roscoe has. The boy's all yours."

POLLY

Not in this chair! Use the spare bedroom!

MRS. CLARK

(Looking back out the front door.)

Now where did he go?!

Polly pulls and pushes Linda and Alan toward the bedroom.

LINDA

Okay, lady! Okay!

POLLY

In **there**!

Roscoe, a bit disheveled, in slacks, open-collared shirt and sports jacket, enters by the front door. Whatever little affect Roscoe may manifest is arbitrary and instantaneous, discontinuous. Emotions dissolve as soon as they appear. Roscoe delivers his lines straight, with conviction; to him, what he says is simply, and utterly, logical. He is not suggestive, ironic, or calculating. For the purposes of playing this role, the actor should respond to voices which only Roscoe hears.

ROSCOE

Barrábada! Parrábana! Fanga-fanga-fanga-fanga-jee!

Alan stops, as Linda tries to tug him into the bedroom. Roscoe exits to the kitchen.

POLLY

(To Clark)

Where's the cake?

MRS. CLARK

Cake?

POLLY

You said you would pick up the cake!

Polly turns and rushes out the front door.

LINDA

(As she pulls Alan toward the bedroom.)

Come on.

Roscoe enters from the hall.

ROSCOE

It's a house it's a hoose it's a hoose and a noose...

Roscoe exits to the kitchen.

ALAN

Let go! Let go!

Alan breaks away from Linda and gets out a recording device. Roscoe enters from the hall.

ROSCOE

...it's a hoose it's a noose a caboose...

ALAN

(To Roscoe.)

Hey, guy! Hey! Speak into **this!**

ROSCOE

(As before, no response to Alan.)

...and it's Horace Whirley's...Horace Whirley's...Horace Whirley's woe.

ALAN

That's it!

Roscoe exits to the hall.

LINDA

Alan!

ALAN

But Linda, did you hear what he **said**?!

MRS. CLARK

(Variously, to Alan and Linda.)

"I came to visit," I tell his shrink. "**Just** to visit!"
"Sorry," says the creep in charge, "we can't afford to keep him."

Roscoe enters from the kitchen.
Alan, holding out the recorder,
follows Roscoe around.

ROSCOE

However smoothly smiles the sun, I can say and only say they
reaped a truckload at the turning of the earth. Shot through
the bowels and after that four-fingered throne, my fine
thirsty stevedore sprayed off his pipes.

MRS. CLARK

Roscoe, **I** can not afford to keep you!

ROSCOE

Get yourself a thimbleful of boxes, and contrapolate a
rainbow through the sludge.

MRS. CLARK

My wages are as puny as your welfare checks!

ROSCOE

A happenstance, a happenstance.

MRS. CLARK

(Shaking Roscoe.)

This is serious, you lunatic! The two of us are destitute!

ROSCOE

A happenstance in old-time France.

ALAN

(Extending his hand to Roscoe.)

Roscoe, you are the man I have been looking for.

Roscoe extends his hand parallel
to, and a foot to the side of,
Alan's. Alan smiles, and moves his
hand so as to clasp Roscoe's. As he
does so, Roscoe, hand still
extended, rotates away in place.

ALAN (cont'd)

(Laughs.)

Ah, that's great! What a sense of humor! But, look, what I'm after is the heavy stuff. See, I'm trying to break into radio.

MRS. CLARK

Roscoe is in radio.

ALAN

Is that right?

MRS. CLARK

Come to think of it, that's wrong. It's radio that's in him. He has a receiver.

ALAN

Most people do.

MRS. CLARK

In his head.

ALAN

No!

MRS. CLARK

That's what he says.

ALAN

Roscoe, I am a newsman. No one will hire me, but I'm a newsman in my soul.

LINDA

You're a lover.

ALAN

(To Roscoe.)

I have recorded tons of stories. **Tons!** A lot of good that does! The radio guys keep telling me to go get lost. Well, they're not so hot themselves! Tune 'em in, and what do you hear?!

ROSCOE

Snickers and snoops and howls and yowls.

ALAN

Yes! Oh, man, that is so, so true! And they blitz you, Roscoe. They bombard you with facts and opinions, and nothing adds up.

LINDA

Alan, there are no answers.

ALAN

That's what **you** think! There **are** answers, and Roscoe is the guy who **has** them!

(To Roscoe.)

Tell her.

ROSCOE

A concatenation of underrated facsimiles is instrumental to the outcome and the ingo.

ALAN

(To Linda.)

He cloaks his wisdom in riddles.

MRS. CLARK

(To Alan.)

My grandson is legally incompetent. You can't record him without my say-so.

ALAN

But lady, I am about to revolutionize journalism!

MRS. CLARK

We'll settle for a hundred bucks an hour, or eighty percent of royalties, whichever is more.

ALAN

I have no money!

MRS. CLARK

I want a five thousand dollar minimum guarantee.

ALAN

No, no! Set your greed aside, set your sights on glory! We will smash the cacophony of the world, we will blast it to smithereens with Roscoe!

MRS. CLARK

Five thou up front!

ALAN

They sow confusion! They thrash us with the loose ends of experience! Roscoe is the man to put all of it back together!

(To Roscoe.)

Okay, fellah, tell us your secrets.

MRS. CLARK

(As she grabs unsuccessfully for the recorder.)

Oh, no you don't!

ROSCOE

Shop girls, of course, will often tout the bric-à-brac that you lack.

ALAN

Of course they will! Of course!

Clark goes about lunging
unsuccessfully for the recorder.

ROSCOE

There are incandescent mountains in the basement's barren bottom.

ALAN

All right! That is sensational!

ROSCOE

Should you care to chat, I have bagels and a perfect pot of tea.

ALAN

Why, how kind of you to offer.

ROSCOE

Two bagels. In Bi-loxi.

ALAN

Roscoe, that is pretty far away.

ROSCOE

(As he sits in the easy chair.)

Away: a word.

ALAN

"Away" **is** a word! That's right!

ROSCOE

A wayward worm arises from the Mississippi mud.

ALAN

Aha!

LINDA

Alan! Make love to me!

ALAN

Aha! Aha!

LINDA

Passionate love!

Clark grabs Alan's recorder.

ALAN
Give that back!

Clark exits to the kitchen. Alan follows, but Linda stops him with a stranglehold.

LINDA
Love, Alan! Love! Love! Love!

Alan flips Linda to the floor. She bites his leg. He screams. He pulls her hair. She screams. They pommel and claw each other. In fine, a goodly tussle: it bloodies both.

LINDA
I hate you!

ALAN
Don't say that!

LINDA
I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!

ALAN
Oh, you cause me so much pain.

LINDA
It's over!

ALAN
No!

LINDA
We're through!

ALAN
But I can't live without you!

LINDA
Oh, Alan! Alan, does that mean you love me?!

ALAN
Sure. Why not?

Alan and Linda embrace. Linda takes a band-aid from her pocket, and sticks it tenderly on Alan's face

LINDA
And I...oh, I do love you so!

Alan takes a band-aid from his pocket, and reciprocates Linda's tender ministrations. A tantalizing pause, as veins engorge and juices gush. They bolt into the bedroom.

ROSCOE

(Alone.)

The imbeciles are eating raisins. That's a far cry. A far, far cry. But you think different.

Dr. Vance, in suit and tie, and with a little black bag in hand, enters by the front door.

ROSCOE

And the pleasure of your company is a plume in my chapeau.

DR. VANCE

Nobody uses that chair but me.

ROSCOE

My skull has wings. Don't nail me down with pen and ink.

DR. VANCE

Do you know where you are?

ROSCOE

At my grandma's.

DR. VANCE

Whose?

ROSCOE

Mrs. Clark's.

DR. VANCE

She just keeps house here. She doesn't own the place. Get up.

ROSCOE

Up, up, up.

Roscoe gets up; that is, Linda's briefcase in hand, he gets up higher in the chair, perching on its back. Mrs. Clark enters from the kitchen.

DR. VANCE

(To Clark.)

Explain yourself.

MRS. CLARK

The state hospital kicked him out. He's moving in with us.

DR. VANCE

Says who?

MRS. CLARK

Roscoe, the spare bedroom is yours.

DR. VANCE

Mrs. Clark, you are taking liberties. I will have to let you go.

MRS. CLARK

Go?! Where?!

DR. VANCE

If you want to stay, then get him off my chair!

MRS. CLARK

Roscoe! Down!

A knock at the front door. Vance opens it to Frank, who wears a pack on his back.

FRANK

(To Vance.)

Dr. Vance?

ROSCOE

(To Frank.)

Young man, you are magnificent.

FRANK

Oh, thank you, sir! I uh...I uh...

MRS. CLARK

(To Roscoe.)

Down!

ROSCOE

(To Frank.)

Your lips are like the petals of the lilac.

FRANK

Oh, sir, thank you very much!

ROSCOE

You perfume the room with the west wind and with a wisp of fresh, raw sewage.

Uh...

FRANK

DR. VANCE
(To Clark.)
What's your grandson taking?

MRS. CLARK
Taking?

DR. VANCE
Drugs! What's he on?!

MRS. CLARK
Doctor! Roscoe does not do drugs!

FRANK
(To Vance.)
Aunt Polly said to come, sir, so I hitchhiked down from the mountains, sir, and uh...and uh...

DR. VANCE
(To Clark)
No one releases unmedicated psychotics.

MRS. CLARK
Oh, you mean *medicine!*

Clark pulls a piece of paper from her bosom.

MRS. CLARK
They gave me a prescription.

DR. VANCE
Well, get it filled!

FRANK
(To Vance.)
My uncle, he brought me up, and he's a hermit, see, so Aunt Polly said, "Frankie, run away from him," so uh...so uh..

MRS. CLARK
(Crumpling the prescription.)
This stuff costs a fortune.

FRANK
(To Vance.)
Sir, Aunt Polly said you have lousy help. She said to come and be your houseboy.

MRS. CLARK
(To Frank.)
Get out!

FRANK
But---!

MRS. CLARK
Steal my job, will you?!

Clark shoves him out the front door, and slams it.

DR. VANCE
Give me that.

Clark hands Vance the prescription. He reads it, then takes a bottle from his bag.

DR. VANCE (cont'd)
I have samples.

MRS. CLARK
You mean they're free?!

Clark takes a pill from the bottle, exits to the kitchen. There is a knock at the front door. Vance opens it. Frank, again.

FRANK
Because you see, sir, I can't go back home, and Aunt Polly said you are a marvelous human being, sir, and she said---.

ROSCOE
Turn around, boy.

FRANK
Uh, she said...she said---.

ROSCOE
Boy, you turn.

Frank turns and faces the front door. Clark enters from the kitchen with a glass of water.

MRS. CLARK
(Handing the glass to Vance.)
Hold this.

Clark shoves Frank out the front door, and slams it. She takes back the glass.

MRS. CLARK

Okay, Roscoe. Open up.

Roscoe opens his mouth. Clark approaches. He closes it.

MRS. CLARK (cont'd)

Don't play games!

(Trying to force the pill on Roscoe, she spills the water.)

Oh!

Clark exits to the kitchen. There is a knock at the front door. Vance opens it. Frank, again.

FRANK

Aunt Polly said---

DR. VANCE

Yes, yes, yes.

FRANK

Sir, where is---?!

DR. VANCE

(To Roscoe.)

If you can squelch, for just one moment, those voices that keep screeching inside your blighted head---

FRANK

Where is---?!

ROSCOE

Gnarling pneumonectomized mnemonicians nurse cnemial knobs.

DR. VANCE

Hmmm. That was---

FRANK

Dr. Vance, I---!

DR. VANCE

(To Frank, confidentially; putting an arm around the boy.)

Young man: that was a most impressive alliteration.

FRANK

(Jumping up and down.)

But I have to---!

DR. VANCE

(To Roscoe.)

Look: if, through the roaring desolation of your mind, you can hear just this, my fervent, urgent plea, then get---!

FRANK

But I---!!!

DR. VANCE

You!? I am attending to **this** man. He is **ill!** He requires **care!** And **you** have to...to---.

Urine dribbles down Frank's leg, onto the floor. Pause, as Vance takes it in.

DR. VANCE

O-o-o-oh. To void. Indeed, that **is** the ineluctable imperative---is it not?---of an overdistended bladder. The bathroom is that way.

Frank exits to the hall.

DR. VANCE

(To Roscoe.)

Get off my chair!

Clark, her glass refilled, enters from the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

Let's do it, Roscoe.

Polly enters by the front door, a cake box in her hand.

POLLY

(To Vance.)

My hero!

ROSCOE

(Resisting Clark.)

I can do it myself.

Clark hands Roscoe the pill and the glass.

POLLY

Doctor, doctor! You are a saint!

Roscoe empties the glass on Clark.

MRS. CLARK

(To Roscoe.)

You are asking for it!

Clark takes the glass and pill and exits to the kitchen. Until noted, Roscoe, on the chair's back, attends exclusively to his voices, and is oblivious to what goes on around him. He might register an instantaneous facial expression, or strike a pose, in response to those voices, but nothing he does should appear to comment on, or otherwise relate to, what happens around him. Whatever he does should be subtle enough not to draw the notice of the other characters; nor should it divert the audience's attention from those characters' doings. Frank enters from the hall.

FRANK

Aunt Polly!

DR. VANCE

(To Polly.)

You might have told me he was coming.

POLLY

But it was a surprise!

(To Frank.)

You are going to love it here!

FRANK

Oh, I do already. Everybody's been real, real friendly, and uh...and uh...

POLLY

And you are going to learn. About life, Frankie. Life! You will learn to cherish it, to revere it!

Clark, her glass refilled, enters from the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

(To Polly.)

Get your nephew out of here.

POLLY

Mrs. Clark, the doctor no longer has any need for your services.

Clark throws the water in Polly's face. Polly hands the cake box to Frank.

POLLY

(To Clark.)

You witch!

Polly throttles Clark.

DR. VANCE

(Pulling the women apart.)

Cut it out!

MRS. CLARK

You can't fire me! You can't fire me!

DR. VANCE

I'm not firing you!

POLLY

But what about Frank?!

DR. VANCE

I'll keep him, too!

POLLY

(Taking the box from Frank, and handing it to Clark.)

Go find a plate for this, and brew us up some coffee.

DR. VANCE

(To Clark.)

And boil me a hot dog.

MRS. CLARK

(To Frank.)

You get Roscoe down.

Clark exits to the kitchen with the glass and box.

FRANK

(To Roscoe.)

Uh...excuse me, uh...sir, excuse me, but---

DR. VANCE

Frank, leave him be.

POLLY

But he has no right to sit there.

DR. VANCE

One must make allowances, Mrs. Maxwell. Roscoe is sick.

Vance sits in the chair, with Roscoe perched above. He puts the pill bottle on the table beside him.

POLLY

You have such compassion for the sick!

DR. VANCE

I have infinite compassion for everyone who suffers.

POLLY

And today, doctor, you laid down your stethoscope.

DR. VANCE

For the very last time.

POLLY

You have battled the scourges of mankind for fifty years!
And therefore we rejoice!

Polly grabs the dangling corner of the banner, and hands it to Frank.

DR. VANCE

I have battled, and I've lost.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

Get up there.

Frank stands on a chair.

DR. VANCE

I have given my all, but things are worse than when I started.

POLLY

Frankie, hold it high!

Frank raises his arm, and the banner comes into its own.

DR. VANCE

Human misery proliferates. I didn't retire today. I surrendered.

POLLY

No, no, no! You have comforted, and you have healed.

DR. VANCE

I wanted victory, total victory.

POLLY

Those you have inspired will carry on.

DR. VANCE

I wanted nothing less than a world without pain.

POLLY

Frank, let the spirit of this man touch you.

DR. VANCE

Now what I want is something that ought to be much simpler.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

Let it touch you as it touched me.

FRANK

Have you comforted and healed, Aunt Polly?

POLLY

Frank, I have done more! I have resuscitated! I have brought people back from the dead!

Clark enters from the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance, observing him seated under
Roscoe.)

I'm glad you and Roscoe have worked things out.

DR. VANCE

Mrs. Clark, where is---

MRS. CLARK

Deep down, my grandson's as solid as a rock.

DR. VANCE

I was expecting my lawyer.

POLLY

Oh, I let her in an hour ago.

(To Clark.)

Did she leave?

MRS. CLARK

I guess. Dr. Vance, you can rely on Roscoe. How 'bout putting him on the payroll, too?

DR. VANCE

No. But I will let him stay.

Vance holds up and examines the
panties he's discovered in his
chair.

MRS. CLARK

Roscoe, the spare bedroom is yours.

POLLY

That room belongs to Frank!

MRS. CLARK

Roscoe! Go in there and claim that room!

Roscoe doesn't budge.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

Drop that! Get down!

Frank drops the banner and gets
down.

MRS. CLARK

(To Roscoe.)

Get up!

Roscoe doesn't budge.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

Take off your pack!

Frank takes off his pack.

MRS. CLARK

(To Roscoe.)

Get up and go!

Roscoe doesn't budge.

POLLY

(Points to the bedroom.)

Go, Frank!

Frank heads for the bedroom.

POLLY (cont'd)

Atta boy, Frankie! Claim your turf!

Frank stops, and turns to Polly.

FRANK
Is there turf in there?

MRS. CLARK
Roscoe!

Roscoe doesn't budge.

POLLY
(To Frank)
Quick! Throw your pack on the bed!

Frank holds his pack aloft and runs into the bedroom. Linda screams off stage. Brandishing the pack, she chases Frank back on. She is naked except for a patchwork of bandages; the bandages are positioned so as **not** to conceal her breasts or genitals.

LINDA
Blasphemy! Love is sacred! Sacred! You have committed blasphemy, you scum!

Linda flings the pack at Frank.

DR. VANCE
Ms. Davis, where is my will?

LINDA
Oh...it's, uh...

Linda drops to her hands and knees, searches the floor around Vance's chair.

LINDA
It's...it's around here somewhere.

DR. VANCE
You and I, Ms. Davis, are, or at least the public perceives us to be, highly-skilled professionals. To the extent that we are incompetent, it behooves us to don decorous clothing in order to keep our clients in thrall.

LINDA
Oh...oh, sure! Hang on!

Linda exits to the bedroom.

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance.)

Have you made your will?

POLLY

(To Clark.)

Bring in the cake.

MRS. CLARK

(To Frank.)

You heard her, houseboy.

Frank exits to the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK (cont'd)

Dr. Vance, you have no family.

Frank brings in the cake, and sets
it down.

POLLY

I'll have some coffee. Black, Frankie. Anyone else?

MRS. CLARK

Yeah. White coffee for me.

Frank exits to the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK (cont'd)

(To Vance.)

No one is as close to you as I am.

DR. VANCE

You are my servant, Mrs. Clark.

MRS. CLARK

How much are you leaving me?

DR. VANCE

And not a very good one. Good servants know their place.

MRS. CLARK

I have slaved for you. You owe me.

DR. VANCE

Say I bequeathed my entire estate to you.

Frank enters from the kitchen,
hands Polly a mug of coffee, and
exits back to the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

How much does it amount to?

DR. VANCE

Oh, a million, more or less. Say I named you as my heir.

MRS. CLARK

Yes! Oh, that...that would be wonderf---!

DR. VANCE

It would be suicide.

MRS. CLARK

Dr. Vance, I **like** you! I hope that you...you live **forever**. I wouldn't dream of...of **poisoning** you, or...or...or...**anything**. Oh, no! Not for twice that amount!

DR. VANCE

How 'bout for three times as much?

MRS. CLARK

Ha, ha!

DR. VANCE

I lied. I'm worth three million.

MRS. CLARK

Th...three m-m-m---. I am not a murderer, Dr. Vance!

DR. VANCE

I am leaving you nothing.

MRS. CLARK

You ungrateful, tightfisted---!

DR. VANCE

Calm down, Mrs. Clark. Our discussion has been academic.

Frank enters from the kitchen.

FRANK

(To Clark.)

Ma'am, I uh...I uh...

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance.)

Academic? How?

Frank exits to the kitchen.

DR. VANCE

I am going to outlive you.

MRS. CLARK

No way!

DR. VANCE

I am the expert on life and death.

Vance grabs Clark's wrist, takes her pulse.

DR. VANCE

You are going to croak before **me**.

MRS. CLARK

You wanna bet?

DR. VANCE

How much?

MRS. CLARK

All I got against all you got.

DR. VANCE
(Calls to the bedroom)

Ms. Davis, I want my will!

Frank enters from the kitchen.

FRANK
(To Clark.)

Ma'am, I've been looking and looking, but I can't find any white coffee.

MRS. CLARK
(To Vance.)

You're gonna keep this jerk?

Vance shrugs.

FRANK

All the coffee in there is black.

MRS. CLARK

Git, Frankie! Go back where you came from!

FRANK

But Aunt Polly said---

POLLY

That's right!

Polly hands Frank the banner corner.

Get up there.

POLLY (cont'd)

Frank stands on a chair.

POLLY (cont'd)

(To Clark.)

This boy knows nothing. Do not look upon that as a fault. It is an opportunity.

Clark exits to the kitchen.

POLLY (cont'd)

Frank, you have lived the life of a hermit. Did I say "life?!" Oh, what you have been through is mere existence. I was like you, Frankie. I, too, was a blank slate once.

FRANK

And then you left uncle.

POLLY

And discovered this great man here. Hold it high!

Frank raises the banner.

POLLY (cont'd)

"Life!" We worship it, this man and I! Your uncle doesn't know the word.

FRANK

Yes he does. He says he lives the life of Riley.

Clark enters from the kitchen with a mug of coffee.

POLLY

He accomplishes nothing.

FRANK

He catches fish.

POLLY

He creates nothing.

FRANK

He whittles. He makes *fantastic* sticks!

POLLY

But he doesn't *do* anything! For *others*!

MRS. CLARK

(Sticking her head into the bedroom.)

Ms. Davis, get out here!

POLLY

That's what life is, Frankie! ***Other*** people, not ***yourself!***

Linda, dressed as she was at the beginning, enters from the bedroom.

LINDA

(Proceeding to search the floor again.)

The will! The will!

MRS. CLARK

We got a wager, Dr. Vance.

LINDA

It's right here, somewhere. It's uh...it's uh...

MRS. CLARK

I want to see that wager down in black and white.

DR. VANCE

Mrs. Clark, I am not stupid.

LINDA

(Searching.)

Bear with me, doctor.

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance.)

You mean it's off?

DR. VANCE

It was never on.

(To Linda.)

I have something else you lost, Ms. Davis.

Vance holds out her panties. Linda stands up. She starts to reach for them, then notices Roscoe. She grabs the briefcase from him.

LINDA

Oh, I am so embarrassed! I have never misplaced my briefcase before!

Linda opens the briefcase, pulls out the will, hands it to Vance.

LINDA

Sign here.

Linda offers Vance a pen, but Clark swipes it.

MRS. CLARK
Wait! Who gets the car?

LINDA
It'll be sold.

MRS. CLARK
And the house?

LINDA
That, too. Everything will be liquidated. The estate will consist entirely of cash.
(To Vance.)
I'll take my panties now.

Vance hands Linda her panties, and she slips them on.

MRS. CLARK
Who gets the cash?

POLLY
Rest assured the disposition of the doctor's fortune will be in keeping with the greatness of his soul.

MRS. CLARK
You?!
(To Vance.)
You're gonna give it to this...this **nurse?!**

DR. VANCE
She is an angel of mercy.

MRS. CLARK
Oh, yeah: Our Lady of the Bedpans. I have worked for you, doctor, I have **sweated** for you, I---!

POLLY
(To Clark.)
...stink! You have sweated and you keep sweating and...
(Holding her nose.)
...you smell that way.
(To Frank.)
Hold it higher.

Frank stretches to raise the banner higher.

MRS. CLARK
(To Vance.)
How the hell can you leave---?! You can not leave your loot to this---!

DR. VANCE
Mrs. Maxwell is not my heir!

MRS. CLARK
...to this---!
(Brief pause.)
She's not?

Vance shakes his head.

MRS. CLARK (cont'd)
Oh. Okay. Then, who...who is?

POLLY
We all go whence we came. This is a natural law. How mysterious that without this law, there would be no life at all!

Alan enters from the bedroom dressed only in a patchwork of bandages. The bandages are positioned so as **not** to conceal his genitals.

ALAN
Linda's busy, Roscoe. Let's pick up where we left off.

LINDA
Alan! No!

POLLY
Dr. Vance, who is life's champion, has made out his will to conform with natural law.

DR. VANCE
Correct.

POLLY
Faithful to the life-giving principle that all goes whence it came, the doctor has bequeathed his estate to---.

ROSCOE
When the weather is wet, they sing cantatas.

ALAN
(To Clark.)
Where's my recorder?!

LINDA
(To Alan.)
Come on!

Where's my mike?!
ALAN

Linda grabs Alan.

I need a mike!
ALAN

Linda drags Alan off to the
bedroom.

POLLY
(To Clark.)
He has bequeathed all his paper cash to the U. S. Bureau of
Engraving and Printing, and every last monetary electron he
owns to the Federal Reserve!

DR. VANCE
Now, Mrs. Clark, go get my hot dog.

MRS. CLARK
Is that what you really want?

DR. VANCE
You know I am unspeakably fond of hot dogs.

MRS. CLARK
Surely, doctor, there is something---one special
thing---that you want most of all...

DR. VANCE
Well, I...I do want my hot dog.

MRS. CLARK
No. Something you want so, **so** much, that you...you want
desperately?

DR. VANCE
(Brief pause. Sigh.)
Yes. Oh, Mrs. Clark, there is! I want...I want to **laugh!** I
have immersed myself in the calamity we call life, and I
have struggled fruitlessly to transcend the elemental
horror. All I want---oh, how I crave it!---is to do that one
thing I have never done.

MRS. CLARK
If I make you laugh---

DR. VANCE
You won't.

MRS. CLARK

If I make you laugh, **or** if **Roscoe** makes you laugh---

DR. VANCE

Oh, but his is a hopelessly mirthless plight.

MRS. CLARK

If we make you laugh, will you leave me your money?

DR. VANCE

Every penny.

Clark heads for the bedroom.

ROSCOE

Doctor, you are sitting in my chair.

POLLY

(To Frank, as she looks at the pill
bottle.)

Bring me a glass of water.

Frank lets go the banner, steps
down, and exits to the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

(Sticking her head into the bedroom.)

Get out here, Ms. Davis!

(To Vance.)

Tell her to draw up a new will.

DR. VANCE

(Hand extended, palm up.)

The current one will be in force until you crack me up.

Clark slaps the pen into Vance's
hand. Frank enters from the
kitchen, and hands Polly a glass of
water. She takes a pill from the
bottle, and approaches Roscoe.

POLLY

Open, Roscoe!

Linda, partially undressed, and
Alan, as last time, enter from the
bedroom.

ALAN

(To Vance.)

Hey, man! Hi, there! I'm Linda's friend.

(Taking Vance's hand, and pumping it.)

It is really great to meet you! Would you mind if I took her
back for just a wee bit longer?

Polly tries to force the pill on Roscoe. The water spills on Vance.

POLLY
(Handing Frank the empty glass.)

More!

Frank exits to the kitchen.

DR. VANCE
(To Linda, as he signs the will and hands it to her.)
Put this away. Then draw up a new will, naming Mrs. Clark as my heir. If I sign the new will, the current will shall be void.

Linda puts the will in her briefcase.

ALAN
(Taking Vance's hand again, and pumping it.)
Meeting you, sir, has been a pleasure. An absolute delight!

Alan takes Linda's arm, and they head for the bedroom.

ROSCOE
Mister, mister, mister.

Alan turns back.

ALAN
Yes. What is it, Roscoe?

Frank enters from the kitchen and hands the refilled glass to Polly. Polly goes back to work on Roscoe.

MRS. CLARK
Okay, doctor, listen: so there is this Episcopalian platypus, see, and he---

DR. VANCE
---walks into a bar. I have heard it, Mrs. Clark.

ROSCOE
Unable. Can not.

DR. VANCE
I have heard them **all**.

ROSCOE

Can not condone.

LINDA

(Unsuccessfully tugging Alan towards the
bedroom.)

Alan! Come!

MRS. CLARK

Well, then, doctor...doctor! Watch this!

Polly's water spills on Vance, as
Clark commences to make funny faces
for him.

POLLY

(Handing the glass to Frank.)

More.

DR. VANCE

No, Frank! Mrs. Maxwell, give him a shot.

Polly opens the little black bag,
and draws some liquid into a
syringe.

MRS. CLARK

(Making funny faces.)

Doctor, look at me!

LINDA

(Tugging Alan.)

Alan!

DR. VANCE

If there should turn out to be anything, Mrs. Clark, that
makes me laugh, it will not be vulgar foolishness.

Clark stops making faces. Polly
approaches Roscoe with the needle.

ROSCOE

Abracadabra candelabra. And your little people all go thump.

ALAN

(Pulling against Linda's hold)

I want my mike!

DR. VANCE

(To Clark.)

What makes me laugh will involve...intellectual greatness, I
think. And...and astonishing achievement. It will be some
sort of...of representation of a...a what? A fusion of

(MORE)

DR. VANCE (cont'd)
 mankind's profoundest understanding with his most potent
 inventiveness.

ALAN
 (Pulling against Linda.)

My mike!

DR. VANCE
 (To Clark.)

Yes! It will be nothing less than a breathtaking vision of
 the consummation of humanity's special mission on this
 Earth!

Polly lunges at Roscoe and misses,
 as Roscoe jumps off the chair and
 exits to the kitchen. Polly, needle
 in hand, pursues.

DR. VANCE
 I suspect, Mrs. Clark, that what we are looking for will be
 in a book.

MRS. CLARK
 A book? I have some books!

Clark exits to the hall, as Roscoe
 enters from the hall, wielding
 Alan's recorder. Polly pursues him.

ALAN
 (Breaking away from Linda.)
 He has my mike!

ROSCOE
 In baseball every catcher has a mitt.

Alan takes the recorder. He holds
 it up to Roscoe's mouth, as they
 exit to the hall, with Polly in
 pursuit.

LINDA
 Alan, come back!

DR. VANCE
 (To Frank.)
 Bring me my hot dog.

FRANK
 Oh, sure!

Frank starts for the kitchen.

DR. VANCE
(Calling after Frank.)

Hey!

Frank stops, and turns back.

Hold the mustard.

DR. VANCE (cont'd)

Hold it? Right!

FRANK

Frank exits to the kitchen. Clark enters from the hall with three books, which she hands to Vance. He glances at the title of the first.

DR. VANCE
(To Clark, quizzically.)
"Ardor of Melba, the Manhandled Maiden"?

Vance shakes his head, then tosses the book over his shoulder, onto the floor. He looks at the second book.

DR. VANCE (cont'd)
This is the Bible, Mrs. Clark.

MRS. CLARK
So?

DR. VANCE
I have read it.

Vance tosses the book over his shoulder, onto the floor. He looks at the last book.

DR. VANCE (cont'd)
(Handing the book back to Clark.)
You read this one.

MRS. CLARK
(Reading the title.)
"How To Clean A House". Hmmm. Where oh where could this ever have come from?

DR. VANCE
Me.

MRS. CLARK

Yeah, that's right! I remember.

DR. VANCE

I gave it to you years ago.

MRS. CLARK

Why?

Clark tosses the book onto the floor with the others.

MRS. CLARK (cont'd)

I'll be at the library.

Clark exits by the front door. Frank enters from the kitchen with a hot dog, which he hands to Vance, then exits back to the kitchen. Roscoe enters from the kitchen as Alan, beside him, holds the recorder to his face. Polly pursues.

ROSCOE

The apple carts go rambling through the meadow.

ALAN

Yes!

LINDA

Love me, Alan!

ALAN

Oh, Roscoe, you are **super!**

LINDA

Love me!

Roscoe picks up the cake, and exits to the kitchen, with Alan and Polly in pursuit. The threesome then re-enter from the hall; Roscoe is stuffing fists full of cake into his mouth.

ALAN

(To Roscoe.)

Stop eating! Talk!

LINDA

(Grabbing Alan.)

Love, Alan! Love! Love! Lo---!

Alan slugs Linda, and lays her out cold. He howls in pain, and cradles the offending hand. Polly brings Roscoe down with a flying tackle, splattering the cake, as Frank enters, with a bottle of mustard, from the kitchen.

FRANK

(To Vance.)

Hold the mustard!

Frank, with one arm out and mustard in hand, stands at attention by Vance's side. Vance gives him a look, then turns and bites into his hot dog.

###END OF SCENE ONE###

SCENE TWO

2

A few days later. No more banner. Vance sits in his chair, reading; several neat stacks of books stand on the floor beside him, and a pile of books sprawls on the floor behind him. After a moment, he tosses the book he's been reading over his shoulder, onto the pile. He picks up another from the stacks, and starts to read as Frank, wearing earpods, enters from the kitchen and presents him with a hot dog. Vance takes it, and munches.

FRANK

I've been discovering all kinds of stuff, Dr. Vance, and the world is full of exploitation and injustice and oppression, and the globe is warming, and temperatures are going down all over the place, too, and---

Clark and Roscoe, both loaded up with books, enter by the front door.

FRANK
 ...and once upon a time
 everybody used to spend
 way, way too much money, so
 now everybody is broke, so
 now everybody has to spend
 lots and lots and lots of
 money so everybody can get
 rich again and---

MRS. CLARK
 (To Frank.)
 Shut up.

Clark pulls the pods out of Frank's
 ears.

MRS. CLARK
 (To Frank.)
 Shut up!
 (To Vance.)
 Any luck?

DR. VANCE
 Not yet.

Clark adds her books to the stacks.

FRANK
 (To Vance.)
 Everything is...Doctor Vance, everything is all screwed up.
 You should be angry. You shouldn't be trying to laugh.

MRS. CLARK
 (To Roscoe.)
 Put 'em down.

Roscoe adds his books to the
 stacks. Throughout this scene, he
 moves rather stiffly, his affect is
 dull, he speaks in a monotone.
 Roscoe exits to the kitchen.

FRANK
 You shouldn't want the doctor's money, Mrs. Clark, because
 only bad people want money, see, because money messes
 everything up, see, and uh, and uh...

Clark stares Frank down. Pause.

MRS. CLARK
 Cat got your tongue?

FRANK
 What...where? What cat?

A knock at the front door. Clark opens it. Alan and Linda enter, dressed as they were when the play began; this time, though, it is he who has the bandaged hand, and she the eye patch. She carries her briefcase.

ALAN

(To Linda.)

Not now!

LINDA

But the bed here is so springy!

Roscoe enters from the kitchen with a glass of water, takes out a pill from the bottle on the chairside table.

ALAN

(To Roscoe.)

Stop!

ROSCOE

Why?

ALAN

Because that medicine makes you weird.

MRS. CLARK

(To Alan.)

But we got those pills for free!

(To Roscoe.)

Take it.

Roscoe swallows the pill, then puts the glass down beside the pill bottle on the table.

MRS. CLARK (cont'd)

(To Linda.)

Where's the new will?

Linda opens her briefcase, pulls out the new will, and hands it to Clark, who looks it over and exits with it to the hall.

LINDA

Oh, come on, Alan. Why not?

ALAN

I have too much on my mind.

LINDA

Your mind! Your mind! What about your *heart*?!

FRANK

(To Alan.)

Sir, may I have more tapes?

ALAN

(To Roscoe.)

That medicine makes you talk like everyone else.

ROSCOE

Yes. Isn't it wonderful?

ALAN

(To Frank.)

You can have all the tapes you want. But they will do you no good, Frank. Because there is a stomach in your mind. A stomach with an appetite for *answers*.

LINDA

Alan, you know very well---

ALAN

(To Frank, while glaring at Linda.)

It is a sexual organ. Women do not have it.

(Turns his gaze to Frank.)

You are a man.

FRANK

I'm a boy.

ALAN

(Slapping Frank on the shoulder.)

You are a stunning specimen of virility! The more of my tapes that you ingest, the emptier your mental stomach will get. So, go ahead, scarf up all the information you can stand. When you have finally had your fill, your entire head will gurgle with hunger, then grumble with famishment, and then take one great big breath and rear back on its hind legs, and it will *growl*. Yes! That stomach in your mind will growl, and it will howl, and it will belch, and then just shrivel up and *starve*!

FRANK

Oh, my!

ALAN

Unless, Frank! Unless, like *me*, you abandon your gluttonous pursuit of indigestible facts and opinions, and chow down on Roscoe's banquet of deep and nourishing truth.

(To Roscoe.)

You gave me great material before, but I haven't cracked your code.

LINDA

Alan, you know you need me.

ALAN

Yes, sure. Of course.

LINDA

(Taking Alan's hand.)

My sweet, sweet man! Say it! Say: "Linda, I need you."

ALAN

Well...okay.

(To Roscoe.)

She *is* the best.

(To Linda.)

Linda, I need you.

LINDA

And tell me, my dearest, my darling...tell me why: why you need your Linda?

ALAN

For the ride.

(To Frank.)

When I get my babe here hot, that powerhouse pelvis of hers just grinds and grinds and never ever quits!

LINDA

Oh, you are filthy! You are foul!

ALAN

Roscoe: give me some clues, man, so I can decipher what you've said.

Polly enters by the front door, carrying a microscope.

LINDA

(Pounding Alan with her fists.)

You degrade me! You debase yourself! You defile the holiest moments of our lives!

Alan turns on Linda, and is about to clobber her, when Polly stays his arm with her free hand.

POLLY

This is a fragile instrument! You can't fight here!

ALAN

(Arm around Roscoe.)

Come on. Let's go for a walk.

Alan and Roscoe exit by the front door.

FRANK

Aunt Polly, see, there are all these crooks out there, and there are all these sleazeballs, too, and they all control the government, and there's racism and there's sexism and everybody is a bigot and hates the Moslems, and the Moslems stone everybody to death and---

POLLY

(Setting the microscope on the large table.)

Come here.

Frank obeys.

LINDA

(Taking Vance's book from his hands.)

Doctor, you are a very attractive man.

Linda tosses the book onto the pile.

FRANK

And...and, Aunt Polly, everybody hates gay people, and they kill all these babies who don't even ever get born and, and---

DR. VANCE

And a plague afflicts mankind. Of poverty and ignorance and disease.

FRANK

A plague! That's right! And...and uh---

POLLY

And they're murdering the whales.

FRANK

The whales, yeah, and the dolphins, and all the frogs are dying, and...and Alan is going to give me lots more tapes.

POLLY

That will not be necessary, Frank.

FRANK

Why not?

POLLY

Phase One has ended.

FRANK

I screwed up, didn't I?

POLLY

You were splendid. Now we move on to Phase Two.

Polly sits and fiddles with the
'scope's adjustment knobs.

LINDA

I want you, doctor.

DR. VANCE

You, Ms. Davis, are...how shall I put it? Rather like a
filly in heat.

LINDA

Dr. Vance! I am your attorney!

DR. VANCE

And *I* am your client, not your stud.

Vance picks up another book, and
starts to read. Polly pulls out a
small bottle, with dropper.

POLLY

This, Frank, is water.

Linda takes the book from Vance,
and tosses it onto the pile.

LINDA

(To Vance.)

You are irresistible.

DR. VANCE

How, then, do you explain the fact that, for the past fifty
years, women have resisted me time and again, and succumbed
only rarely?

LINDA

Fools! They were fools!

DR. VANCE

I will not serve as the instrument with which you rouse your
stallion to jealousy.

Vance picks up another book, and
starts to read.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

This water comes from a pond.

Linda takes the book from Vance,
and tosses it onto the pile.

LINDA

I am a sensational woman.

DR. VANCE

(To Linda.)

I am **not** a sensational **man**.

Vance picks up another book, and
starts to read.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

What does water from a pond contain?

FRANK

Uh...

Linda takes the book from Vance,
and tosses it onto the pile.

POLLY

Think, Frankie.

FRANK

Uh...

LINDA

(To Vance.)

What did you mean by that? Can't you do it any more?

DR. VANCE

I meant, having "done it" on numerous occasions---some of
them memorable, I lament to say, and the rest of which I
have had the great good fortune to have forgotten---I do not
wish to "do it" any more.

Vance picks up another book, and
starts to read.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

Come on, now. What's in the water?

FRANK

Aunt Polly, I'm thinking so hard, but I...I don't know!

POLLY

There is *life* in there, Frankie! This bottle is teeming with life!

Polly opens the bottle, places a drop on a slide, and examines the slide through the 'scope. Linda takes the book from Vance, and tosses it onto the pile.

LINDA

(To Vance.)

You have never had a woman like *me*.

DR. VANCE

Are you anatomically correct?

LINDA

I beg your pardon?

DR. VANCE

If you are anatomically correct, then you are identical to every woman I have ever had.

Vance picks up a book, and holds on as Linda tries to take it.

DR. VANCE (cont'd)

Ms. Davis, I will not let you use me.

LINDA

Oh, yeah?! We shall see about that.

Linda lets go the book, extracts a negligée from her briefcase, and exits to the bedroom. Vance proceeds to read.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

Look.

FRANK

(Looking through the 'scope.)

Wow!

Clark enters from the hall, carrying a hammer, nail, and the will.

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance.)

Well?

DR. VANCE
I haven't even chuckled yet.

FRANK
(Looking through the 'scope.)
All those little animals!

MRS. CLARK
(To Vance, holding out the will.)
I, or Roscoe, will make you laugh. I solemnly swear. So, sign!

DR. VANCE
(Ignoring the will.)
I want another hot dog.

POLLY
With mustard this time, doctor!

DR. VANCE
Mustard? Never!

MRS. CLARK
(Still pressing the will on Vance.)
Sign!

DR. VANCE
Not until I laugh.

MRS. CLARK
When you laugh...

Clark nails the will to the wall.

MRS. CLARK
...you sign on the spot!

Clark exits to the kitchen. Vance resumes reading.

POLLY
(To Frank.)
Tell me what Phase One taught you.

FRANK
That the C.I.A. pushes drugs, and that there are hurricanes and imperialism and drunk drivers and droughts, and that the pigs bust you when you smoke pot, and---.

POLLY
Sum it up.

FRANK

...and that nobody likes to work, and that we have to create more jobs, and that---

POLLY

Enough, Frank! What does all of this *mean*?

FRANK

It means...well, it means there are, uh...there are all...all these, uh...these issues.

POLLY

Yes, indeed.

(Looking through the 'scope.)

Look again.

Frank looks through the 'scope.

POLLY (cont'd)

You see the fellow in the middle?

FRANK

(Looking through the 'scope.)

The one with the wiggly hair?

POLLY

With the flagellae, yes. Do you like him?

FRANK

Oh, I adore him!

POLLY

Why?

FRANK

Because he's alive!

POLLY

Good.

Polly looks through the 'scope.

POLLY

Now, look out toward two o'clock.

FRANK

I don't uh...what, uh...?

Polly postures, extending an arm out at two o'clock relative to the microscope's stage, and waving her hand.

POLLY
 This part of the circle. Out there.

Frank looks through the 'scope.

POLLY (cont'd)
 You see that crescent?

Frank looks up at Polly,
 quizzically.

POLLY
 The bacterium that looks like...like the moon?

FRANK
 The moon?

POLLY
 The **crescent** moon, Frank!

Polly draws a crescent in the air.

FRANK
 (Looking through the 'scope.)
 Oh, you mean the one that looks like a smile!

POLLY
 Do you adore him, too?

FRANK
 Oh, yes! Yes, I do!

POLLY
I despise him.

FRANK
 But...but he's **alive**!

POLLY
 He is a **germ**, Frank. He is out to get us.

FRANK
 You and me?

POLLY
 Every last one of us. We must fight sickness.

FRANK
 Yes, but---

POLLY
 And to fight sickness, Frankie, sometimes we must **kill**. We
 must always do anything and everything that is necessary to
 (MORE)

POLLY (cont'd)

ensure that the greatest species in all Creation survives everlastingly.

FRANK

A species: that's like...like squirrels and ducks and stuff, right?

POLLY

Excellent.

FRANK

I learned that, Aunt Polly. And I learned that there was once a guy named Freud and he was really really dirty, and that in China they make toys out of lead, and that---.

POLLY

Have you learned *which* species *is* the *greatest* in all Creation?

FRANK

Uh...

POLLY

Guess.

FRANK

I, uh...I bet it's uh...it's *us*, huh?

POLLY

I am *so, so* proud of you.

FRANK

You mean I was *right*?!

POLLY

You certainly were. And what must we therefore do?

FRANK

We, must, uh...must fight sickness?

POLLY

We must fight *human* sickness.

FRANK

Even if we have to kill other species to do it.

POLLY

Very, very good.

FRANK

But that makes me sad.

POLLY

Toughen up, boy. Once again, now: what must we do?

FRANK

We must fight human sickness.

POLLY

Great! Now, let's move on.

FRANK

We must fight just like Dr. Vance.

POLLY

Watch out for that man!

FRANK

But you said I should let his spirit touch me.

POLLY

That was before I knew he ate his hot dogs with no mustard.

FRANK

You mean I shouldn't eat hot dogs plain?

POLLY

Absolutely you should not! **No one** should! It...it simply **is not right!**

Polly looks through the 'scope.

POLLY (cont'd)

Okay, how many organisms do you see?

FRANK

(Looking through the 'scope)

One, two...uh...maybe, uh...maybe...jillions?

POLLY

And how many "issues" are there on Alan's tapes?

FRANK

Ooh. Hmmm. I think...maybe, uh...jillions and...and jillions and---

POLLY

Human destiny depends upon two things:

Polly leads Frank to the extreme down right corner of the stage, and plants him on the spot.

POLLY (cont'd)

The well-being of each of us as individuals...

She leads Frank to the extreme down left corner of the stage, and plants him.

POLLY

...and the well-being of all of us as a group.

She leads Frank center stage.

POLLY

Between these pillars of our survival lies a sea that embraces all lesser living things, and every issue but two. There are jillions of organisms, and jillions of issues, in every drop in that sea.

She leads Frank down left, hands him the water bottle and dropper.

POLLY (cont'd)

Count how many drops it takes to get from here to there. When I get back, we start Phase Three.

Polly exits by the front door. Frank gets down on his knees and proceeds, drop-by-drop, from left to right. Linda, in negligée and bandages, enters from the bedroom. She takes the book from Vance, and tosses it onto the pile. She tries to sit in his lap.

DR. VANCE

You can't sit in my chair!

LINDA

I don't want to sit in it. I want to sit on you.

DR. VANCE

Get off!

LINDA

You are a dormant volcano. Let me make you erupt.

DR. VANCE

I require no spasm, Ms. Davis, except it be a gargantuan guffaw. Frank, come here.

Frank gets up, goes to Vance.

DR. VANCE (cont'd)

(To Frank.)

Do you like girls?

FRANK

I like *everybody*.

DR. VANCE

(To Linda.)

He's all yours.

LINDA

But he's a *kid*!

DR. VANCE

Of all the participants, my dear, in our sublunary frenzy of begetting and getting got, no one is as horny as a teen-age boy.

LINDA

Good point.

(To Frank.)

Come with me.

FRANK

But Aunt Polly said---

Linda takes Frank's arm, and pulls him toward the bedroom.

FRANK (cont'd)

Aunt Polly said to count how many---

Linda pulls Frank into the bedroom. Vance picks up a book and resumes reading. Alan and Roscoe enter by the front door.

ALAN

Tell me about this fellow Whirley.

ROSCOE

Who?

ALAN

Horace Whirley.

Roscoe shakes his head in bewilderment.

ALAN

All right, later. Now: tell me about that Mississippi worm.

ROSCOE
You say the most peculiar things.

ALAN
It's a phallic symbol, right?

ROSCOE
Dr. Vance?

DR. VANCE
Yes, Roscoe. How have you been?

ROSCOE
Very well.

DR. VANCE
I am so pleased to hear that.

ROSCOE
But I still am sick, you know.

DR. VANCE
Though no longer suffering, as you were before.

ROSCOE
I am very, very sick, but even *I* can *laugh*.

ALAN
(To Roscoe.)
As for your apple carts---

ROSCOE
I have no apple carts.

ALAN
But Roscoe, they go rambling through the meadow!

ROSCOE
Doctor, this man needs help.

ALAN
I need *your* help, Roscoe! Explain! What is the meaning of your cartloads of forbidden fruit?! What should I make of that penis in the mud?!

Linda, in negligée and bandages,
enters from the bedroom. Frank,
stepping into his pants, follows.

LINDA
What a disaster!
(She notices Alan.)
Oh, Alan!

ALAN

Were you in bed with Frank?

LINDA

I...I didn't know you were coming back.

ALAN

Frank, what happened?

FRANK

Uh...

LINDA

(To Alan.)

Don't fly into a jealous rage!

ALAN

(To Frank.)

Exactly what were you doing in there?

FRANK

I...I, uh...

LINDA

Oh, Alan, you are livid with anger! Your love for me has driven you wild!

ALAN

Frank, did you come?

FRANK

I came...came from the mountains.

LINDA

(Holding Alan, as if to restrain him.)

Don't kill him! Don't kill him! I'll never betray you again!

ALAN

Frank, I want the truth.

FRANK

Sir, I...I came one time.

ALAN

(Slapping Frank on the shoulder.)

Way to go, Frank! Way to go!

LINDA

(To Alan.)

But..but aren't you simply furious?!

ALAN

I told you, Frank! I told you you were a man!

FRANK

No. No, I'm not a man.

ALAN

But you filled up Linda with your seed!

LINDA

No he didn't. He shot it all into the sheet.

ALAN

Frankie! Go strip the bed!

FRANK

But I have to count how many water drops---

ALAN

Bring me that sheet! Quick! Before it dries!

Frank exits to the bedroom.

ROSCOE

(To Vance.)

Laughing is easy, Dr Vance. Here's how...

Frank enters from the bedroom with the sheet. Alan takes it, and examines it frantically.

ALAN

Where is it?! Where is the spot?!

ROSCOE

(To Vance.)

First, you go like this.

Roscoe grins broadly.

ALAN

I found it! Give me a slide!

Frank hands Alan a slide. Alan dabs at the slide with the sheet, then sits down at the 'scope.

ROSCOE

(To Vance, speaking through his grin.)

Then you breathe in.

Roscoe breathes in.

ALAN

(Looking through the 'scope.)

Frank! Look!

ROSCOE

(To Vance.)

Then...

FRANK

(Looking through the 'scope.)

Holy cow! Did **I** do that?!

ALAN

Yes, you did! What a **man** you **are**!

ROSCOE

(Flat, without feeling.)

Ha! Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! Ha!

Clark enters from the kitchen with
a hot dog.

MRS. CLARK

Atta boy, Roscoe!

FRANK

(Looking through the 'scope.)

Look at all those little guys swim!

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance.)

You follow my grandson's instructions, hear?

DR. VANCE

(Taking the hot dog.)

One will not be enough, Mrs. Clark. Go boil me another.

Clark turns and heads for the
kitchen as Roscoe picks up the
water glass, and takes a pill.

ALAN

Your grandson is turning into an addict! He has got to quit
gobbling those pills!Alan follows Clark off to the
kitchen.

LINDA

(To Vance.)

Where is your linen closet?

Vance points to the hall, and Linda exits there. Vance picks up another book, and resumes reading. In a moment, Linda returns with a fresh sheet.

LINDA (cont'd)

(To Vance.)

Okay, it's **your** turn.

Linda takes the book from Vance, and tosses it onto the pile.

LINDA (cont'd)

Come on.

Vance picks up another book, and starts to read. Linda takes the book from him, and tosses it onto the pile.

LINDA (cont'd)

What ever happened to chivalry?

DR. VANCE

Leave me alone. Ask Roscoe.

LINDA

(To Roscoe.)

Hmmm, you...you're not like Frank, are you?

ROSCOE

In what way?

LINDA

A virgin?

ROSCOE

Oh, no. No. I'm just a schizophrenic.

LINDA

Roscoe, you're on!

Linda takes Roscoe's hand, and they exit to the bedroom. Vance picks up another book, and resumes reading. Alan enters from the kitchen.

ALAN

Women!

(Slapping Frank on the shoulder.)

Oh, Frank, it is so great to have a real man around!

(Looking through the 'scope.)

(MORE)

ALAN (cont'd)

Just look at those little guys go!

(Slapping Frank on the shoulder.)

It won't be long before you have gorged yourself to the gills with worldly nothingness. You will then come to value Roscoe as only a real man can. Where did he go?

FRANK

In there.

ALAN

With Linda?

FRANK

Uh-huh.

ALAN

All *right!*

Alan pulls out his recorder, and exits to the bedroom. Frank resumes looking through the 'scope. Pause. Linda, in negligée and bandages, drives Alan back into the living room.

LINDA

(Beating Alan.)

Be jealous! Be jealous!

Roscoe, stepping into his trousers, enters from the bedroom.

ALAN

Roscoe! Take her back to bed!

LINDA

(Beating Alan.)

Go green with envy! Turn purple with rage!

ALAN

(To Roscoe.)

Take her! I want to record you in the primal act.

LINDA

There is nothing to record.

ALAN

I don't believe you. Tell me: what does he blurt out when he's doing it?

LINDA

He doesn't blurt squat.

ALAN

I did not ask you what he **doesn't** blurt.

LINDA

It would be a mischaracterization, Alan, to say the sounds he produces constitute articulate utterance. He **pants**.

ALAN

Is that **all**?!

LINDA

And grunts.

Polly enters by the front door. She carries a pamphlet, and a CPR mannequin.

FRANK

Aunt Polly! Look what **I** did!

POLLY

Did you count the water drops?

FRANK

Some.

POLLY

How many comprise the sea between our pillars of survival?

FRANK

Oh, **oodles**! Come look at this slide!

POLLY

If there are jillions of issues, and jillions of lesser creatures, in every drop, then how many issues, and how many creatures, does that sea contain?

FRANK

Heaps and heaps and heaps and...and **gobs**! Please! Please look!

POLLY

Phase Two is over.

Polly takes the slide off the 'scope, and tosses it onto the book pile. Clark enters from the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance.)

Still nothing?

DR. VANCE

(Tossing his book onto the pile.)

Zilch.

MRS. CLARK

(To Alan.)

Were you recording Roscoe again?

ALAN

I wish.

Alan stashes his recorder.

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance.)

Those are the funniest books in the world.

DR. VANCE

They exploit misfortune and stupidity. It is obscene: the way your so-called "comic" writers revel in the wretchedness of human existence.

Vance takes a bite of his hot dog.

POLLY

(To Vance.)

How can you eat that thing that way?!

DR. VANCE

Mrs. Maxwell, I simply do **not** like **mustard**.

(To Clark.)

I will laugh, Mrs. Clark, when, and only when, I chance upon some visionary representation of mankind's utter and everlasting eradication of suffering.

MRS. CLARK

(Handing Vance a book from the stacks.)

Just don't you give up.

Clark exits to the kitchen. Vance reads.

POLLY

Frank, the world offers you an infinity of choices. What must you do?

FRANK

I must, uh...

POLLY

This is Phase Three!

FRANK

Sure, well, then I must...uh, uh...

POLLY

You must **discriminate!** That bottomless grab-bag of issues which the sea contains, and that multiplicity of lesser forms of life, are nothing but distractions. Forget them. Dedicate yourself to the two issues that matter:

Polly leads Frank down right.

POLLY

The well-being of each of us as individuals depends upon this dummy.

Polly drops the mannequin on the floor, then leads Frank down left.

POLLY

Taking heed of the admonition this pamphlet presents, we can ensure the well-being of all of us as a group.

Polly leads Frank down right, and picks up the mannequin.

POLLY

This dummy...

Polly drops the mannequin, then leads Frank down left.

POLLY

...and this pamphlet, represent the pillars of our survival. You must devote yourself to...

(Slapping the pamphlet into Frank's hand.)

...issue number one: the circumvention of the annihilation of the human race, and...

Polly heads down right. Frank follows.

POLLY

Stay there.

Frank goes back down left.

POLLY (cont'd)

(Picking up the mannequin.)

...and to issue number two: resuscitation! Read that. We will deal with the dummy tomorrow.

Polly drops the mannequin down right, picks up the 'scope, and exits with it by the front door. Frank stands down left, reading.

ALAN

(To Roscoe.)

What bric-à-brac, exactly, **do** those shop girls tout?

ROSCOE

Why don't you go...go to bed with Linda?

Clark enters from the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

I got it, doctor! I got it! Funny stuff doesn't make you laugh!

DR. VANCE

(Tossing his book onto the pile.)

Is my hot dog ready?

MRS. CLARK

Just about.

Vance stands.

MRS. CLARK (cont'd)

So your problem obviously is: you are inside out and upside down and backwards!

Vance dumps the remaining stacked books onto the pile, and heads toward the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

So what we gotta **do** is: not bring you books that are **funny**, but books that are **serious**! C'mon, Roscoe.

Vance exits to the kitchen. Clark exits by the front door, as Roscoe follows.

ALAN

Roscoe, wait!

Roscoe stops, and turns to Alan.

ALAN

Those old-fashioned sardine cans they used to sell: remember them?

FRANK

(Reading the pamphlet.)

Alan! Read this!

ALAN

(Reading over Frank's shoulder.)

"Conflict, yadda yadda...warfare, yadda...obliteration, incineration...yadda, yadda, yadda..."

(To Roscoe.)

You know: those cans that came with a key? Without that key, you could not open them.

FRANK

And golly, look at the picture! What is *that*?

ALAN

It's called a mushroom cloud, Frank.

(To Roscoe.)

Well, Roscoe, your wisdom is precisely like one of those sardine cans. It will not nourish if you do not give me the key.

Roscoe turns, goes to the table, and takes another pill. Then he puts the pill bottle and glass back down, and exits by the front door. Momentary pause. Alan goes to the table, snatches the pill bottle, and pockets it. He turns to Linda; she opens her arms. Alan and Linda embrace, then exit to the bedroom. Frank stands alone, reading the pamphlet.

###END OF SCENE TWO###

SCENE THREE

3

Next day. Vance sits in his chair, reading. There are fresh stacks of books on the floor beside him, and a mountain of them behind. The mannequin lies on the floor down stage. Frank, kneeling on one side of it, bends over its mouth expectantly, while pinching its nose shut. Polly, kneeling on the mannequin's other side, thrusts downward on its breastbone with interlocked hands and unbent arms.

POLLY

(With each downward thrust.)

...two one thousand, three one thousand, four one thousand,
five one thousand.

Frank blows once into the
mannequin's mouth.

POLLY

(Thrusting.)

Change! one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand,
four one thousand, five one thousand.

Polly moves up to the mannequin's
head. Frank blows once into the
mannequin's mouth, then moves down
to its chest. Polly takes a few
seconds to feel the side of the
mannequin's neck.

POLLY (cont'd)

Still no pulse!

Polly blows once into the
mannequin's mouth.

FRANK

(Thrusting.)

One one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand, four
one thousand, five one thousand.

Polly blows once into the
mannequin's mouth.

FRANK (cont'd)

(Thrusting.)

One one thousand, two one thousand---

POLLY

Enough! Frank, you have mastered two-person resuscitation!

Polly stands.

POLLY

Now, do it on your own.

FRANK

(Thrusting.)

One one thousand---

POLLY

No, no, no! What do you do first?!

FRANK

Oh, gee, I, uh---.

POLLY

The Heart Association guidelines, Frank! Remember the guidelines.

FRANK

Oh, yeah, I...I check to see if the dummy's all right.

POLLY

Do it.

Frank stands up, and strolls away, his hands clasped behind his back, as he looks up at the ceiling and whistles a bar or two. Then he turns back, to discover the mannequin.

FRANK

Goodness, gracious me! Somebody has passed out!

Frank kneels, then shakes the mannequin by the shoulders.

FRANK

Dummy! Dummy! Are you all right?!

He puts his hand in front of the mannequin's mouth.

FRANK

(To Polly.)

The dummy isn't breathing.

POLLY

Go ahead, then.

FRANK

(Thrusting.)

One one thousand---

POLLY

Frankie, no! What do the Heart Association guidelines say?!

FRANK

Oh, I...uh, I call for help.

POLLY

Show me.

Frank gets up and walks around, calling.

FRANK

Help! Help! Somebody call an ambulance!

Clark runs in from the kitchen.

MRS. CLARK

What happened?! What's the matter?! Is the doctor dead?!

FRANK

No, the dummy is.

MRS. CLARK

(To Frank.)

You don't look it.

FRANK

Watch me bring it back to life!

Frank kneels by the mannequin.
Alan, in nought but his patchwork
of bandages, enters from the
bedroom.

ALAN

No ambulance! No ambulance!
Roscoe isn't crazy!

FRANK

(Thrusting.)
One one thousand, two
one thousand, three one
thousand...

POLLY

Frank, stop!

FRANK

(Thrusting.)
...four one thousand, five
one thousand...

ALAN

(Calling.)
Roscoe! Where are you?!

FRANK

(Thrusting.)
...six one thousand, seven
one thousand...

ALAN

(Calling.)
Roscoe!

FRANK

(Thrusting.)
...eight one thousand...

POLLY

Stop!

FRANK

(Thrusting.)
...nine one thousand...

MRS. CLARK
 (To Vance.)
 Don't you dare die, doctor!

FRANK
 (Thrusting.)
 ...ten one thousand, eleven
 one thousand, twelve one
 thousand...

ALAN
 (Calling.)
 Don't be afraid! I won't
 let them take you!

FRANK
 (Thrusting)
 ...thirteen one thousand,
 fourteen one thousand,
 fifteen one thousand...

Alan exits to the hall.

MRS. CLARK
 (To Vance.)
 Don't you die until you've
 signed that will!

FRANK
 (Thrusting.)
 ..sixteen one thousand,
 seventeen one thousand,
 eighteen one thousand,
 nineteen one thousand...

Clark exits to the kitchen.

POLLY
 Frank!

FRANK
 (Thrusting.)
 ...twenty one thousand...

POLLY
Frank!

FRANK
 (Thrusting.)
 ...twenty-one one
 thousand...

POLLY
 That dummy's heart is no damn good!

FRANK
 (Stops thrusting.)
 I know, Aunt Polly. That's why I'm massaging it.

Linda, in negligée and bandages,
 looks out from the bedroom doorway.

POLLY
 You are massaging it to move the blood around.

Alan enters from the kitchen.

ALAN

False alarm, Linda. His grandma says he's at the library.

Alan and Linda exit to the bedroom.

POLLY

If the blood is no good, then the heart is no good, massage it though you may. How can you make the blood good?

FRANK

By uh...by...

POLLY

By enriching it, Frank! What with?

FRANK

With uh...

POLLY

With oxygen!

FRANK

Oh, yeah! I have to blow!

Frank blows once into the mannequin's mouth.

FRANK

(Thrusting.)

One one thousand---

POLLY

Not yet!

Frank stops thrusting.

POLLY

Four breaths before you pump.

Frank blows into the mannequin's mouth three more times.

FRANK

(Thrusting.)

One one thousand---

POLLY

Wait!

Frank stops thrusting.

POLLY (cont'd)

The dummy's chest didn't rise. You got no air into its lungs.

FRANK

But, Aunt Polly, I blew real hard!

POLLY

You did not tilt the head back, Frank. The dummy's tongue blocked off its windpipe.

FRANK

Oh.

Frank tilts the mannequin's head back, then starts breathing into its mouth as Polly's phone goes off.

POLLY

(Looking at her phone.)

Stop! The new Heart Association guidelines just came in!

FRANK

What do they say I should do?

POLLY

(Looking at her phone.)

First, you quit breathing...

Frank takes a breath and holds it.

POLLY

(Looking at her phone.)

...and, says the Heart Association, you simply pump.

FRANK

(Thrusting, and slowly letting out his held-in breath as he vocalizes.)

One one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand, four one thousand, five one thousand, six one thousand---

(Stops thrusting.)

But I have to breathe. I can't keep counting if I don't breathe.

POLLY

(Looking at her phone.)

According to the new guidelines, there is no need to count at all.

Frank takes a deep breath, holds it, and goes a-pumping. At last, he noisily expels the air from his lungs, and slumps over the mannequin.

POLLY

Why did you stop?

FRANK

(Gulping air.)

Because when I hold my breath---

POLLY

(Looking at her phone.)

Let me see...there is nothing in these new guidelines that requires you to hold your breath.

FRANK

You said they said: "first, quit breathing."

POLLY

(Looking at her phone.)

I said "first," but **they** said...hmmm. Frank, this Heart Association bulletin commands you only to pump. And keep pumping. Nothing else.

FRANK

Then when can I enrich the dummy's blood with oxygen?

POLLY

(Looking at her phone.)

Never.

Frank thrusts, and goes on thrusting. Clark enters from the kitchen. She presents Vance with a hot dog. Vance tosses his book over his shoulder, onto the mountain.

DR. VANCE

It isn't working, Mrs. Clark.

Polly watches as Vance takes the hot dog; she then exits to the kitchen.

DR. VANCE

To be sure, these serious authors feel. They suffer, as I do, with all mankind, but they are devoid of spirit. Their turgid renderings of this, our doleful earthly plight, do not admit of risibility.

Polly enters from the kitchen with a mustard bottle. She smears mustard on Vance's hot dog.

DR. VANCE (cont'd)

No! You've ruined it! Mrs. Maxwell, you have ruined my hot dog!

(Handing Clark the hot dog.)

Throw this out. Boil me up me another.

MRS. CLARK

(Handing Vance a book off the stacks.)

Keep reading!

Clark exits to the kitchen with the hot dog. Vance resumes reading.

FRANK

(To Polly, as he keeps thrusting.)

Can I stop now?

POLLY

No.

Frank goes on thrusting for another ten or fifteen seconds, as Polly watches.

FRANK

(Thrusting.)

How long do you want---

POLLY

Keep going.

Frank goes on thrusting for another ten or fifteen seconds, as Polly watches.

FRANK

I'm getting tired, Aunt Polly.

POLLY

Tough it out. Bring that dummy back from the dead.

Frank goes on thrusting for another ten or fifteen seconds, as Polly watches.

POLLY (cont'd)

Frank! What is the matter with you?!

Frank looks at Polly in bewilderment, as he keeps pumping.

POLLY
Why on Earth are you still pumping?!

FRANK
Because you told me--.

POLLY
But can't you see?! The dummy has come **back** to **life**!

FRANK
When...when did it come back to---?

POLLY
What has Phase Three taught you?

FRANK
How could you tell the dummy has...has come back to---?

POLLY
Stand up.

Frank stops pumping, and stands.

POLLY (cont'd)
Answer my question.

FRANK
Phase Three taught me that they are going to annihilate us.

POLLY
Wrong!

FRANK
(Pulling out the pamphlet.)
But this pamphlet says the human race is going to go poof,
and germs will take over the world.

POLLY
That will only happen, Frank, if we do not prevent it.

FRANK
But what can we do?

POLLY
Alert people. You must present that pamphlet to everyone you
see.

FRANK
Oh. Okay. Dr. Vance! Dr. Vance, I have this pamphlet,
and---.

POLLY

Not now, Frank.

FRANK

But I have to alert him, Aunt Polly! I have to---!.

Polly suddenly grabs her throat,
gags, stumbles around.

FRANK (cont'd)

Oh, no! Help! Dr. Vance! Help! Aunt Polly is choking!

POLLY

(Instantly back to normal.)

Excellent, Frank! This...

(Putting her hand to her throat.)

...is the universal sign of choking. Before you go off sounding the alarm about impending human annihilation, let us attend to that fundamental maneuver in resuscitation: getting the airway open.

FRANK

Why? The new Heart Association guidelines say "just pump."

POLLY

When your victim is on the floor, Frank, and **already dead**, **that** is when you pump.

FRANK

To bring him back to life!

POLLY

Clearly. Now, let's pretend, just for the fun of it, that you're still **not** dead, and a hunk of food gets stuck in your windpipe. What would you do?

Frank grabs his throat, gags,
stumbles around.

POLLY

I want to help you. What should **I** do?

FRANK

Uh...whack me! Whack me on the back!

POLLY

(Whacking Frank on the back.)

There! Better?

FRANK

Uh-huh.

POLLY
You try it.

Polly grabs her throat, gags, stumbles around. As Frank approaches her, she flails and slugs him. He screams and goes down.

POLLY (cont'd)
What were you trying to do?!

FRANK
Whack your back!

POLLY
I was choking, Frank! In a panic! Never come near anyone who is choking, unless you are sure he will cooperate! Gag. I'll show you.

Frank grabs his throat, gags, and stumbles.

POLLY (cont'd)
Can you talk?

FRANK
What do you want me to say?

POLLY
You **can't** talk! You're **choking**! Come on, Frank! Do this right! Can you talk?

Frank, gagging, shakes his head no.

POLLY (cont'd)
That is because you are choking. I can help. Will you let me help?

Frank nods. Polly approaches him cautiously.

POLLY (cont'd)
Be calm. I know resuscitation. Take it easy, now. I am going to whack you on the back.

Polly whacks Frank on the back.

FRANK
You did it, Aunt Polly! You opened my airway!

POLLY

What if I whacked and whacked, but the food stayed stuck?

FRANK

Gee, I don't know.

POLLY

Abdominal thrusts, Frank! If the whacks don't work, you try this.

Polly gets behind Frank, clenches her hands together just below his rib cage, and thrusts them repeatedly up and in.

FRANK

What if the thrusts don't work?

POLLY

You would collapse.

FRANK

Then what?

POLLY

I would whack some more. I would do more thrusts. I would stick my finger down your throat. I would turn you upside down and shake. I would try anything, Frank. Because if that airway doesn't open, you die.

FRANK

But then you can start pumping.

POLLY

No. When you have not taken one single breath for five whole minutes, pumping will not help. At that point, you have become utterly and completely and thoroughly dead.

FRANK

Forever?

POLLY

Yes.

FRANK

And ever?

POLLY

After three hundred measly seconds with a plugged up airway, it is totally curtains.

Polly picks up the mannequin.

POLLY

You were super. Your education is complete.

FRANK

Can I show Dr. Vance the pamphlet now?

POLLY

It won't do any good.

FRANK

Why not?

POLLY

What does his distaste for mustard tell us?

FRANK

That...that, uh...

POLLY

That there is rot in his soul.

FRANK

But we have to circumvent the annihilation of the human race! We have to make him aware!

POLLY

Good luck.

Polly exits with the mannequin by the front door.

FRANK

Uh...Dr. Vance...uh...

VANCE

(Tossing his book over his shoulder, onto the mountain.)

I give up!

FRANK

(Offering Vance the pamphlet.)

Read this.

Clark enters from the kitchen with a hot dog, as Roscoe enters by the front door with an armful of books.

ROSCOE

(Flinging books around.)

Suckle up, you salty dogs, and never mind the wind.

CLARK
Roscoe!

ROSCOE
(Flinging books.)
Stop whistling, you. It expiates the window-dressing.

CLARK
You stack those books up neat!

ROSCOE
(Flinging books.)
My pulpit sails proudly to Portsmouth.

Roscoe exits to the kitchen.

DR. VANCE
(To Clark.)
Where is his medicine?

MRS. CLARK
(Handing Vance the hot dog.)
It disappeared.
(Picking up books, stacking them by the chair.)
You got more samples?

DR. VANCE
Give me my bag.

Clark hands Vance his bag, then resumes stacking books.

DR. VANCE
(Rummaging through the bag.)
No...no samples, and...and no injectables. We can't even give him a shot. Mrs. Clark, you had better go buy some pills.

MRS. CLARK
Buy?! With *what*?!
(Handing Vance a book.)
Keep reading.

Vance reads. Roscoe enters from the hall.

FRANK
I have a pamphlet here, Roscoe.

ROSCOE
No hanky-panky, Frankie.

Roscoe takes the pamphlet, hands it to Clark, and exits to the bedroom.

FRANK

Mrs. Clark, you have to read that.

Clark gives the pamphlet a momentary look-over.

MRS. CLARK

(Handing the pamphlet back to Frank.)

No I don't.

FRANK

But---

MRS. CLARK

I got the picture.

Roscoe enters from the bedroom. Alan, in his patchwork of bandages, follows, recorder extended.

ROSCOE

There is thunder in the grapefruit groves.

ALAN

Yes!

MRS. CLARK

(To Alan.)

Give me that mike!

Linda, in negligée and bandages, enters from the bedroom, stands in place, and observes. As Roscoe speaks, he rambles around the room, with Alan by his side. Clark keeps grabbing for the recorder, and Alan keeps dodging her.

ROSCOE

The fault may lie, and it may not.

CLARK

Roscoe, shut up!

ROSCOE

With the generous concurrence of you all, I propose a resilient recapitulation of otherwise reliable approaches, ever mindful that---

Roscoe exits to the hall with Alan, who is recording him.

MRS. CLARK
 (Calling after.)
 Every word you tape is stolen money!

Clark exits to the hall.

FRANK
 (Offering Linda the pamphlet.)
 Read this, Linda!

Linda takes the pamphlet, looks it over. Roscoe, Alan with his recorder, and Clark, trying to grab the recorder, enter from the kitchen.

ROSCOE
 ...and notwithstanding that hairdressers are in that regard cantankerous like astronauts. If I am wrong---

ALAN
Wrong?! No, no! You could not be more *right!*

ROSCOE
 Howbeit, whenever the selfsame archetype raises its haunches up---

Roscoe, Alan and Clark exit to the hall, as before.

LINDA
 (Handing Frank the pamphlet.)
 Yech-ch-ch. Take this thing back!

FRANK
 But Aunt Polly said---

Polly enters by the front door.

POLLY
 Frankie, go get your pack.

Frank exits to the bedroom as Roscoe, Alan, and Clark enter from the kitchen, as before.

ROSCOE
 ...since it takes a herd of cattle, and it gives aplenty 'ere the dawn. They tell me ancient scribes did oft hypothesize---

Roscoe, Alan and Clark exit to the hall, as before, while Frank enters from the bedroom with his pack.

POLLY

(To Frank.)

Put it on.

Frank puts on his pack.

POLLY (cont'd)

I hereby certify you a warrior in the Army for the Preservation of Human Life! Leave this house, Frank! Sally forth and save mankind!

Roscoe, Alan, and Clark enter from the kitchen, as before.

FRANK

(Holding up the pamphlet.)

Last chance to read my pamphlet!

ROSCOE

You can squat, you can squinge, but you can not budge the crux.

FRANK

(Holding up the pamphlet.)

Last chance before I sally forth!

Vance tosses his book over his shoulder, onto the mountain.

ROSCOE

(Grabbing the pamphlet from Frank.)

You can not spin the hinges.

Roscoe slaps the pamphlet into Vance's hands, and exits to the hall, with Alan, as before. Vance lifts the pamphlet, so as to toss it over his shoulder.

MRS. CLARK

(To Vance)

Stop! Don't toss that away!

VANCE

But it's hopeless, Mrs. Clark.

MRS. CLARK

Read the pamphlet.

Brief pause, as Vance peruses the pamphlet, then tosses it onto the mountain.

MRS. CLARK

Well...why aren't you laughing?

DR. VANCE

You must be kidding! Mrs. Clark, do you know what that pamphlet **says**?

MRS. CLARK

It says you're gonna get what you want. It says the end is in sight for all of...all that dreary ol' **suffering** you can't stop yammering about.

DR. VANCE

Hmmm.

FRANK

Dr. Vance, what you just did---

Roscoe and Alan enter from the kitchen, as before.

ROSCOE

...and, I dare say, at the most contemptuous of pinnacles. This applies, too---as if you didn't know--- to the very zaniest elevations as well.

MRS. CLARK

(To Alan.)

Give me that mike!

FRANK

Dr. Vance, what you did wasn't nice.

DR. VANCE

Hmmm, hmmm, hmmmmm.

ROSCOE

Those perturbations, those perturbations, those incantations.

MRS. CLARK

(To Alan.)

Give me---!

Clark lunges at Alan. He dodges her.

DR. VANCE

(To Frank.)

Young man, I do believe---

FRANK

But why...*why* did you---?!

DR. VANCE

I do believe, Frank, that that ridiculous woman has a---.

FRANK

You...*you* tossed away my *pamphlet*!

ROSCOE

By the way, when acrobats insist upon persisting, they desist, but nevertheless nor nevertheless go happily about, splattering up the countryside.

Roscoe exits to the kitchen. Alan starts to follow.

DR. VANCE

Yes. Yes! She *does*!

Clark jumps Alan.

MRS. CLARK

Thief!

DR. VANCE

Mrs. Clark *has* a *point*! Ha!

MRS. CLARK

(Pommeling Alan.)

Stop stealing my grandson's words!

DR. VANCE

Ha!

ALAN

Get off!

MRS. CLARK

(Pommeling Alan.)

Give me that mike!

DR. VANCE

Ha, ha, ha!

FRANK

Aunt Polly, the doctor is laughing!

DR. VANCE

Ha, ha, hoo, ha, ha...

POLLY

I knew it!

DR. VANCE

...ha, ha! Ha, ha...

Clark, seeing Vance laugh, climbs off Alan.

FRANK
But why is he laughing at
the impending annihilation
of the human race?!

DR. VANCE
...ha, hee, ha! Ha, ha, ha!

POLLY
Because he eats his hot
dogs with no **mustard**!

DR. VANCE
Hee, ha, hee, ha, ha...

Roscoe enters from the hall.

MRS. CLARK
(Hugging Roscoe.)
We did it, Roscoe!

DR. VANCE
...ha, ha, ho, ha...

ROSCOE
Epistemology, pure and
simple.

DR. VANCE
...hoo, ha...

MRS. CLARK
We did it! We're rich!
(Ripping the will off
the wall.)
A pen! I need a pen!

DR. VANCE
...hoo, ha, hee, ha, ha,
haw, ha...

Clark exits to the hall.

ALAN
Roscoe, you have been
giving me top-notch
stuff. But **now** I **need** to
understand it all! So it
is **time** that we got back to
Whirley!

DR. VANCE
...haw, ha, haw, haw, ha,
ha, haw, ha, ha...

Roscoe exits to the kitchen. Alan
follows him off. Clark enters from
the hall with a pen.

POLLY
That's right, doctor! **Eat**
that hot dog!

DR. VANCE
(Raising his hot dog to
his mouth.)
...haw, ha, haw, ha, haw...

FRANK

Sir! Uh...Dr. Vance! Can you talk, sir?!

Vance shakes his head no.

FRANK (cont'd)

That is because you are choking, sir.

Roscoe and Alan enter from the hall.

FRANK (cont'd)

I can help, sir. Will you let me help?

Vance nods urgently.

ALAN

(To Roscoe.)

I want to hear about **Horace Whirley!**

Frank approaches Vance cautiously.

FRANK

Be calm, now, sir. I know resuscitation.

MRS. CLARK

Good, Frankie!

Roscoe exits to the kitchen, and Alan follows him off.

FRANK

Take it easy, now.

CLARK

Frankie, you're doing good!

FRANK

Be calm. I am going to whack you on the back, sir. Be real, real calm.

As Frank closes in for his whack, Vance flails and clobbers him. He goes down. Polly enters from the kitchen with the mustard.

FRANK (cont'd)

Aunt Polly! Help!

POLLY

This is how you eat a hot dog!

Polly picks up Vance's hot dog, and smears it with mustard.

FRANK
Help me resuscitate the doctor!

POLLY
(Biting into the hot dog.)
Mmmmm! Scrumptious!

Polly perches up on the back of Vance's chair, as Roscoe and Alan, recorder in hand, enter from the hall.

ALAN
Whirley, Roscoe! Whirley, Whirley, **Whirley!**

Roscoe and Alan exit to the kitchen. Linda follows them off.

MRS. CLARK
(To Polly.)
Get down off that chair and help Frank out!

FRANK
(Approaching Vance.)
Okay, sir! Relax! Relax! Calm down! I will now do abdominal thrusts!

Frank closes in on Vance, who clobbers him. Frank screams. Vance reels, then collapses.

FRANK (cont'd)
(Looking at his watch.)
Three minutes to go!

CLARK
(To Polly.)
Help! Help, or he'll **never** sign!

FRANK
Mrs. Clark! Whack him! I'll stick my finger down his throat!

Clark whacks, as Frank fishes with his finger. Roscoe, Alan, and Linda enter from the hall.

ALAN
(To Linda.)
Quit bugging me!
(To Roscoe.)
You have filled my tapes with meaning, but the meaning is all locked up!

Roscoe, Alan and Linda exit to the kitchen.

CLARK

(Whacking.)

It isn't working! It isn't working!

FRANK

You keep whacking! I'll thrust on his front!

Clark whacks, Frank thrusts.
Roscoe, Alan, and Linda enter from the hall.

ALAN

Unlock your meaning, Roscoe! With **Whirley**! Horace Whirley is the **key**!

Roscoe exits to the hall; as Alan pursues, Linda grabs him.

ALAN (cont'd)

Let me go! I have to find out what it's all about!

LINDA

It's about tenderness, you idiot!

Linda stomps on Alan's foot.

ALAN

(Hopping on his other leg.)

Aaaaah! My foot!

LINDA

(Kicking Alan.)

It's about affection!

ALAN

(Hopping, feeling his foot.)

You broke it, Linda!

LINDA

(Smacking Alan around.)

It's about warmth, and gentleness, and kindness, and devotion!

ALAN

(Hopping, feeling his foot.)

The bone is crooked! You broke my foot!

Roscoe enters from the kitchen.

ROSCOE

Whirley is what Whirley was.

ALAN

At last! Hoorah!

Roscoe exits to the hall, and Alan, recorder extended, hops off after him.

CLARK

It isn't working! Frankie, what do we do?!

FRANK

Turn him upside down!

Roscoe enters from the kitchen, and Alan hops in after him.

ROSCOE

Whirley did what Whirley does.

ALAN

Atta boy, Roscoe! Keep it up!

FRANK

(Looking at his watch.)

Forty-nine seconds left! Roscoe, count down!

ROSCOE

Forty-eight, forty-seven, forty-six...

Roscoe proceeds to ramble around, as he counts down.

ALAN

No!

ROSCOE

...forty-five, forty-four, forty-three...

Clark and Frank each take one of Vance's legs; they upend him.

ALAN

Roscoe! Don't change the subject!

ROSCOE

...forty-two, forty-one, forty, thirty-nine...

FRANK

(To Clark.)
Shake him!

ROSCOE

...thirty-eight, thirty-seven, thirty-six...

Clark and Frank shake Vance.

ALAN
Stop counting!

ROSCOE
...thirty-five,
thirty-four,
thirty-three...

ALAN
(To Linda.)
Damn! And he was *just*
beginning to open *up*!

ROSCOE
...thirty-two, thirty-one,
thirty...

LINDA
(To Alan.)
Oh, my poor, poor baby...

ROSCOE
...twenty-nine,
twenty-eight, twenty-seven,
twenty-six, twenty-five...

CLARK
(Shaking Vance.)
Cough it up, Vance! Cough
it up!

ROSCOE
...twenty-four,
twenty-three, twenty-two,
twenty-one...

ALAN
Roscoe! Stop being coy!

ROSCOE
...twenty, nineteen,
eighteen...

LINDA
(To Alan, kissing him
on the cheek.)
...I will be waiting for
you in there.

ROSCOE
...seventeen, sixteen,
fifteen, fourteen...

Linda exits to the bedroom, then
sticks out her head to watch.

ALAN
(To Roscoe.)
Tell me! Tell me! **Tell**
me...

ROSCOE
...thirteen, twelve,
eleven...

MRS. CLARK
(Shaking Vance.)
I want what's mine!

ROSCOE
...ten, nine, eight,
seven...

ALAN
*...who the hell is Horace
 Whirley?!*

ROSCOE
 ...six, five, four...

CLARK
 (Shaking Vance.)
 I want what's mine! *I want
 what's mine!*

ROSCOE
 ...three, two...

Roscoe rambles. Linda watches from the bedroom. Clark and Frank shake the upended Vance. Alan, in his patchwork of bandages, stands helpless on one foot. Polly, atop Vance's chair, munches her mustard-smearred hot dog, smiling as she surveys the scene.

ROSCOE (cont'd)
 ...one---

Blackout.

###THE END###