

SOMEBODY ELSE'S PLAY

by Michael Soetaert

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SOMEBODY ELSE'S PLAY

A Full Length Comedy

by Michael Soetaert

SYNOPSIS: The playwright has died, and now there's nothing stopping every bad character he's ever created from coming on stage. And they will. Join the bizarre cast of Vikings and nuns and pirates and Zombies, and a whole lot more, as they come to terms with the realization that they're all just bit actors in *Somebody Else's Play*.

DURATION: 90 minutes.

TIME: A week ago last Thursday, or maybe it was Friday.

SETTING: What Rowena and Jasper Phoot always thought was their living room.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 female, 6 male, 12 either, 3-20 extras)

ROWENA PHOOT (f)..... Mid-thirties, she's the wife of Jasper. She believed herself to be happily married, happily middle class, and happily... well, whatever else there is to be happy about. But things can change in a hurry, can't they? *(149 lines)*

JASPER PHOOT (m)..... Also mid-thirties, he's the husband of Rowena. He's not quite as happy as Rowena. *(271 lines)*

EDDIE (m/f) He's a Brooklyn plumber, including the accent, advancing on 40. *(108 lines)*

HOOT (m/f) It's hard telling how old Hoot is. He's an Owl Groomer—one who grooms owls for a living, though it's not much of a living.

	He has lived his entire life in abject terror of owls. It's going to take a while for him to relax, but he will. Not that it's terribly important, but he is referred to as a "little guy" numerous times in the play. <i>(80 lines)</i>
RUFUS T. SPADE (m/f)	He's a singing cowboy, but not a very good one, all the way down to his bowed legs and jangling spurs. Naturally, he has a Western twang. <i>(31 lines)</i>
COP 1 (m/f).....	He's a cop. <i>(42 lines)</i>
COP 2 (m/f).....	Same as the others, but with a different name badge. <i>(9 lines)</i>
COP 3 (m/f).....	Ditto, only her name badge says "Cop 3." <i>(50 lines)</i>
LARRY THE AMAZING (m/f)	50ish and rotund, he knows everything. He really does. <i>(41 lines)</i>
STEVE (f).....	She is in her mid-twenties, if that. She's the assistant manager of a pirate-themed fast food restaurant. <i>(37 lines)</i>
GOOEY (m/f)	His full name is Gooley Von Terpetine. He is not a character that has escaped his folder; he is an editor trying to fix the play. Somewhere near middle age. <i>(108 lines)</i>
MELODEUM DAVENPORT (m/f)	30ish, she is the host of a home remodeling show. <i>(40 lines)</i>
SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE (m/f)	He is somewhat elderly, and to use the vernacular, bloody rich. And British. <i>(12 lines)</i>
MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE	
TEMPLETON BROWNING (m/f).....	Older than thirty, younger than ninety, she's a minimalist poet

- who takes herself very seriously,
as most minimalist poets tend to
do. (23 lines)
- CHIEF WISHIHADANAME (m/f) (pronounced: Why-she-ha-dah-
nah-may) He's an actor playing
an Indian... poorly, who in the
full time of 312 moons became
the Chief. (45 lines)
- SISTER TERESA (m/f) She's a nun, and, really, who
knows how old any nun is? If
she's truly religious, she's saving
it for later. What she's not
saving for later are bad jokes.
Bad nun jokes. (53 lines)
- SISTER MARIE (m/f) Ditto. (45 lines)
- HILDA (f) She is a Viking. (20 lines)
- HORSGARTH (m) Like Hilda, he, too, is a Viking.
He goes between being a mighty
Viking and just a regular guy.
(22 lines)
- MRS. GRIMALKIN (m/f) She's an old lady who has a lot
of cats. She has them on her
shoulders (which may require
pinning them there), and in her
pockets, and peeking out of her
gown, and she is holding one or
two. I'd probably use fake cats.
I suppose you could use real
ones, but they're not going to
like it (especially if you use
pins), and they'll probably never
hit their cues. (27 lines)
- KNUCKLES (m/f) He is a clown. (8 lines)
- BUCKLES (m/f) Also a clown, she's the same as
Knuckles, only different. (7
lines)
- ZOMBIE 1 (m/f) All three of the Zombies are
pretty much the same. Don't

	make them scary or too disgusting, though. They're not those kinds of Zombies. They'll spend most of their time bumping into each other. (5 lines)
ZOMBIE 2 (m/f)	Another Zombie. (5 lines)
ZOMBIE 3 (m/f)	Yet another Zombie... like the first two. (5 lines)
LUIGI (m/f)	A chef. He has really bad Italian accent, and he's not afraid to use it. (1 line)
ESSENTIAL NON-SPEAKING ROLES & EXTRAS:	
THE WRITER (m/f)	A writer of indeterminate age, but he is probably closer to 60 than he is to 30. He will spend most of the play dead, hidden in a cushion fort. (<i>Non-Speaking</i>)
PELLET THE WONDER HORSE (m)	He is a horse. Pellet will never speak. The extent of his lines will be one stomp for yes, two stomps for no, as well as neighs and whinnies and other assorted horse noises. Or maybe it's two stomps for yes, and one for no. Not that it matters, because everybody will understand exactly what he's saying, every time. (<i>Non-Speaking.</i>)
FRED THE GORILLA (m/f)	She will act somewhat gorilla-like... poorly—you know, dragging knuckles, pounding chest, scratching head, climbing on the furniture, enjoying bananas... that sort of thing. (<i>Non-Speaking.</i>)
EXTRAS (m/f)	Suggestions for the other characters are a large chicken, an

astronaut, aliens, a scuba diver, a nurse in whites and cap, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, a superhero, and a shepherd (sheep optional). The more the merrier. (*Non-Speaking.*)

CAST NOTE

There are 29 essential characters, 26 speaking roles, and extras—lots of extras (as many as you want.) However... of those 29, only three need to be males—Jasper, Pellet the Wonder Horse, and Horsgarth—and only three need to be females—Rowena, Steve, and Hilda. Everybody else can be played by any gender with very minor changes. Heck, even the Nuns can be played by guys.

COSTUMES

ROWENA PHOOT – Dresses like June Cleaver – nicely coifed, ankle-high dress, high heels, and pearl necklace.

JASPER PHOOT – Dresses like Ward Cleaver, in a business suit that is void of any colour – only black and white.

EDDIE – Wears coveralls with his company name on the back: "Faucet and Son." And his name on the front: "And Son." Go with the cliché. He has a plumber's helper that he carries around on a belt loop, which, I suppose, technically makes it a prop.

HOOT – Supports a myriad of band aids on his arms and face and neck. As well, his clothes are fairly well shredded. He's a bit of a mess.

COP 1 – All of the cops are dressed alike, like cops, which involves a lot of blue. None has a gun, or body armour, or the intimidating sunglasses, or handcuffs, or anything that could even remotely be used as a weapon. In fact, they don't look dangerous in the least. And they're not. They wouldn't be mean even if they had to, but they won't have to. So it doesn't really matter if they're not very good cops... and they're not. Number One will be wearing a name badge that says, "Cop 1."

COP 2 – Same as the others, but with a different name badge.

COP 3 – Ditto, only her (or his) name badge says "Cop 3."

LARRY THE AMAZING – He wears a lot of brightly coloured layers, most of them satin, and none of them that matches. He has a very tall turban on his head with a large plastic "jewel" set in the center, a cape, and all the trim. He is a circus performer, which is a lot better than saying he's a freak, but he is a bit freaky.

STEVE – She wears a pirate costume, which is pretty standard, except her hat is ridiculously big, and she wears a real eye patch (or pretends to), which means she has no depth perception, causing her to constantly run into things, after which she will always take off the patch and look around. She also has a plastic hook on one hand, the kind you can hold onto inside the handle. Nevertheless, she will always be poking herself with it. As well, she has a pathetic stuffed parrot sewn poorly on her shoulder.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT – Brightly coloured horn rimmed glasses, and other clothing as appropriate. The more garish she's dressed, the better.

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE – He dresses like 19th Century aristocracy, complete with a monocle and a teacup and saucer. And he really needs a big, droopy, mustache.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING – She's the kind of woman who wears lots of plaid, and sensible shoes.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME – Dressed in full tribal costume, including an outrageous headdress, loin cloth, colourful warpaint and lots of beads and feathers.

SISTER TERESA – She's dressed in the traditional black habit.

SISTER MARIE – Ditto.

HILDA – She is a Viking, which means lots of hair tied up in two long braids, long furry robes, and a helmet with horns. The hair for both Hilda and Horsgarth (including the beard) needs to be attached to the horns, so when the horns come off, so does the hair.

HORSGARTH – Like Hilda, he, too, is a Viking. The only difference is that he has a beard... a really good beard, and no braids (except maybe in his beard), but lots of hair nonetheless.

MRS. GRIMALKIN – An old lady. Her hair is up in a bun, and she is wearing a dressing gown – the kind with fur around the trim. She is also wearing fluffy house shoes and wire-rimmed glasses.

ZOMBIE 1, Zombie 2, Zombie 3 – All three of them are pretty much the same. They are in tattered clothes with all the appropriate Zombie make-up – darkened eyes, blood... that sort of thing.

RUFUS T. SPADE – His costume will involve a lot of leather fringe, and a lot of sequins. And of course boots and a cowboy hat. A very tall cowboy hat. He will also have a guitar that he can't play – so it doesn't matter if it's in tune... and it's not; and a lasso (that he's no good at, either).

KNUCKLES – Big feet, crazy hair, red nose, make up... you know. A clown.

BUCKLES – Same as Knuckles, only different. After all, clowns are never costumed the same. He will carry a bicycle horn, the kind with a rubber bulb that he pushes to honk.

GOOEY – Somewhere near middle age, he needs to be wearing a suit jacket with enough inside pocket space for his props. Other clothing will probably be necessary.

LUIGI – A chef, he will be dressed all in white with a tall chef's hat.

THE WRITER – He's dressed a bit frumpily. Blue jeans, coffee-stained sweatshirt, old tennis shoes. It's how you'd dress, too, if you never had to go out.

FRED THE GORILLA – This is somebody in a gorilla suit, unless you can borrow a real one from the zoo. A gorilla, that is, not just the suit.

PELLET THE WONDER HORSE – It should be fairly obvious that he is somebody in a horse costume – the kind of costume where the horse walks upright on its back feet, but not the kind where you can see the person's face. There is a rope tied loosely around Pellet's neck, too short to be tied to anything else. There is a nametag on that rope.

EXTRAS – They can be costumed any way you like, as long as the costumes are obvious, and not those scandalous things some people like to wear at Halloween. As well, nothing should be violent or scary.

PROPS

JASPER – A pipe (the kind you smoke with, but he won't smoke it).

ROWENA – A basket of laundry (very large men's boxer shorts) and an iron (no cord) and ironing board.

EDDIE – A plumber's helper, which he carries around in a belt loop.

COP 1 – A badge in one of those wallets that flips open that cops put badges in.

COP 3 – Playing cards.

PELLET THE WONDER HORSE – A square graduation cap and tassel; a rolled-up diploma, with "Diploma" written across the top large enough to be seen from the audience; rather large television remote control (which will be hidden behind the sofa) – seriously, it needs to be at least four feet long.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT – A little black book and a pencil.

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE – A teacup and saucer, and some Earl Grey to go in that cup would be splendid. He also has a monocle, unless you count that as part of his costume.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING – Two blank sheets of paper; a hard-bound book with nothing written on the cover and every page inside blank.

HILDA – An empty paper grocery sack.

MRS. GRIMALKIN – As many cats as she can carry (none of which is real), including one that will be hidden by the sofa near the Kitchen door; a pencil and a paper.

RUFUS T. SPADE – A guitar; a lasso; two stuffed cats – one hidden inside his vest, the other in his hat; a stuffed rabbit (also in his hat – it's a big hat).

BUCKLES THE CLOWN – A bicycle horn.

FRED THE GORILLA – A plastic banana (which he will take from the fruit bowl UL, or wherever that fruit bowl might be).

GOOEY VON TURPENTINE – A notebook with lots of pages – it's the text of the play (though he will never say that's what it is, and there's nothing written on the cover); a contract (a piece of paper that has "Contract" written in very large letters across the top and then smaller print below that, which will be inside the notebook); tape measure; pencil; conical-shaped horn with an elastic strap on it (to make Pellet into a unicorn); a large pencil eraser; a piece of bubble wrap big enough to tap dance on (but don't get too carried away).

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME – A handful of glitter.

LUIGI – A large casserole dish full of – assumedly – cannoli.

SET

One set, fairly uncomplicated. The stage is the living room of Middle Class America. Nice tastes, generally good ideas, but a limited budget.

There is a large sectional sofa that fits in the UR corner, stretching toward the door UC that leads to the Kitchen, or so they think, and back toward the fireplace DR. The sofa needs to have removable cushions, the more, the better. Enough to make a really good cushion fort with. A coffee table is in front of the sofa, and there can be tables on each end of the sofa, if room allows. The door UC needs to be practical. There is nothing behind that door but darkness.

The front door is LC. It has a small window set toward the top, typical of outside doors. It will open in, downstage. It's important that no one in the audience can ever see what is outside of either door.

There is an additional seating area with a small end table in the UL corner, between the Kitchen door and the front door – a place where four people could pull their chairs around and play cards. One of those chairs will be used (temporarily) to block the Kitchen door shut by hooking it under the doorknob.

On one of the end tables, it really doesn't matter which one, there needs to be a basket with plastic fruit in it – especially plastic bananas.

There also needs to be a floor lamp in the UL corner with a big enough shade that a gorilla could put it over his (or her) head if he (or she) were trying to hide.

DL there is a small table facing the audience, on top of which is a desktop computer. Truly, all you need is a monitor, a keyboard, and a mouse; you don't even need cords – the older the computer, the better. There is an overflowing waste basket on the floor, and more than one coffee cup littering the table, along with various note pads and ink pens and paper wads. All the debris of a writer.

There needs to be an ironing board, complete with iron and laundry in a basket (mostly underwear, the sillier the better), DC, more or less. The iron is obviously not practical; it has no cord.

On the wall behind the sectional sofa there is a large, framed wedding picture. However, it is not the couple in the house. The picture can be flipped over and hung back on the wall. On the back there is another wedding picture – this time of a woman in a wedding dress, and a horse in a tuxedo.

There are no windows, and there is no TV.

All the rest is Frou Frou – lamps and rugs and magazines and the detritus of style.

All actors, except for Gooley, will enter from the Kitchen.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

You are going to end up with a lot of people on stage, and they all need to be doing something while the main action is taking place. Some won't need anything extra to do. The cops will be playing cards. Hoot and Eddie will be messing around with the computer. The Vikings will be kicked back on the couch. Rowena and Pellet the Wonder Horse will be off in their own world by the fireplace. And the Zombies will mostly be bouncing off each other. The others will form into little groups where they will be quietly conversing, much like you might see at a party. Those groups should be fluid, with characters moving from one to another, and nobody really staying still for very long. Overall, it's quite congenial, much like a polite party might be. The important thing is that they all should remain low key. You don't want them upstaging the main action.

You probably don't want the Vikings truly tossing The Writer into the Kitchen. The easiest thing to do would be to have them carry him in the Kitchen, and then, unseen by the audience, have them count to three, and then drop something heavy on the stage.

Getting Gooley Von Terpentine to just "appear" on stage should be easy, especially if you have an Intermission. If not, he could comfortably hide behind the sofa during the first half of the play, and then have other actors "screen" him as he gets up and mingles with them.

Getting everybody off stage – both times – shouldn't be that hard. First, you must make sure your backstage area (both UC and LC) is big enough to fit 30 or more actors, and they can do it quietly in the dark.

When everybody exits the first time, in the Kitchen (UC), they will need to come back on in a slightly different order than they came off. So it's important that they're in the right order to come back on. The simplest is for the actors to line up, remembering who they need to follow back on stage.

In the closing scene, everybody will be gathering by the LC door. It shouldn't look too much like they're waiting in line. As well, make sure those people who have lines are on the outside, closest to the audience.

When they are exiting through the Front Door at the end (LC), there's no need to get them back on in any particular order, unless you want to (such as for curtain calls). If that's the case, pretty much do the same thing you did exiting UC. A little practice and it should go well.

And for fun, consider serving cannoli during the intermission.

AT START: ROWENA and JASPER are on stage. JASPER is standing by the fireplace, toying with a pipe he will never light, and ROWENA is DC, ironing underwear. THE WRITER, unnoticed by either ROWENA or JASPER, is sitting at the computer station DL intently typing, never taking his attention off the screen in front of him. All the dialogue up to THE WRITER'S "exit" should sound really stilted. It's not necessarily that they're bad actors; they just have really bad lines.

JASPER: Mrs. Phoot. Mrs. Rowena Phoot. My wife of eight years, whom I met in college while studying to be an Encyclopedia Salesman.

ROWENA: Jasper, my husband, also for eight years, why are you telling me this? I know my name. I know when we met, and I know how long we've been married.

JASPER: I don't know. It somehow seemed important. *(Beat.)* Rowena, we need to talk.

ROWENA: Isn't that what we're doing now, dear?

JASPER: I mean a serious talk.

ROWENA: Does that mean I need to stop ironing your underwear and listen more intently?

JASPER: I'm afraid it does. *(Beat.)* Rowena, I want a divorce.

ROWENA: Right now?

JASPER: If not, shortly hereafter.

ROWENA: Well, I guess that means I don't need to finish the ironing. But why, dear? Why? Is there another woman?

JASPER: Quite possibly, yes.

ROWENA: Quite possibly? Don't you know?

JASPER: Well, now that you mention it, that does seem like the sort of thing I should know.

THE WRITER, who has been quietly typing, completely unnoticed through all of this, suddenly clutches his chest, half rises from his chair, and then falls face first onto the stage. THE WRITER is dead from a heart attack. When THE WRITER hits the stage, both JASPER and ROWENA will suddenly notice him, each letting out a short shout of alarm. From this point on, both JASPER and ROWENA will no longer

be overacting, but now are simply two people trying to figure out why everything is suddenly... wrong.

JASPER: *(After a beat; trying to get his composure, but obviously still shook up; pointing.)* Who... who is that?

JASPER and ROWENA both cross to THE WRITER, where JASPER gently taps him with his foot.

ROWENA: I don't know who he is. I've never seen him before in my life.

JASPER: What's he doing in our home?

ROWENA: I don't know. Has he been here all this time?

JASPER: I... I don't know. Where did that desk come from? And the computer?

ROWENA: They weren't here this morning. And neither was he... at least... I don't think they were.

JASPER: Don't you think that's something you would've noticed?

ROWENA: Like you're one to talk. You don't even know if you're seeing another woman.

JASPER: Then you tell me. What's he doing here?

ROWENA: I'm not sure he's doing anything anymore.

JASPER: I meant besides lying here on our floor.

ROWENA: This just makes no sense. How can somebody be sitting at a desk in our living room... and we've never noticed him?

JASPER: I don't know.

JASPER once more nudges THE WRITER with his toe. THE WRITER doesn't budge.

ROWENA: Is he... Is he dead?

JASPER: *(Reaching down and touching THE WRITER'S neck, then checking his wrist, which he lets drop with just the slightest of heebie-jeebies, because, after all, he's dead.)* There's no pulse. And he's not breathing.

ROWENA: Should we do something?

JASPER: *(Nudging THE WRITER once more with his toe.)* It won't help. This guy's dead.

ROWENA: Oh. (*After a beat.*) Do you think we ought to call somebody?

JASPER: And tell them what? That some dude we have never noticed has died in our living room? And how is that possible? Why didn't we ever notice this before?

ROWENA: Well... we were busy. We were getting a divorce.

JASPER: Well, yeah. But still. You'd think that's something we'd notice.

ROWENA: (*Looking over the computer table; picking up various items while speaking.*) He seems to have been here awhile. Look. His coffee's still warm... kind of. It's just nothing but notes and trash. A lot of trash. (*Beat.*) I think he might've been a writer.

JASPER: (*Starting to suspect something... really bad.*) What was he writing?

ROWENA sits down in front of the computer and plays around a bit with the mouse.

ROWENA: It looks like some kind of story.

JASPER: What kind of story. Read it to me. Read the last thing he was writing.

ROWENA: (*Reading back the last lines before The Writer died; flat.*)

"ROWENA: Well, I guess that means I don't need to finish the ironing. But why, dear? Why? Is there another woman? JASPER:

Quite possibly, yes. ROWENA: Quite possibly? Don't you know?

JASPER: Well, now that you mention it, it does seem like the sort of thing I should know." And then he died.

JASPER: What? He wrote that he died?

ROWENA: No. That was just me.

JASPER: Oh, well... that's good, because it would've been very strange otherwise.

ROWENA: You think it could've been any stranger than it already is? On a weirdness scale of ten, this whole thing goes to eleven... and a half.

JASPER: (*Nudging ROWENA out of the chair and sitting there.*) Here, let me see. (*After a beat.*) We're in a play!

ROWENA: You can't be serious.

JASPER: Sure I can. (*Pointing at the screen.*) Look! This is Act One, Scene One. Don't you see? The life we are living is Act One, Scene One, of somebody else's play. It's right there at the top of the page. Listen: "At curtain, Rowena and Jasper are on stage. Jasper is standing by the fireplace, toying with a pipe he will never light, and Rowena is Down Center, ironing underwear." Does that make any sense to you?

ROWENA: Ironing your underwear never made sense to me.

JASPER: Never? How can it be "never"? This is the first time you've ever done it... maybe.

ROWENA: It seems I've been doing it for a lot longer than that.

JASPER: Just look around. It all makes sense.

ROWENA: How can any of this make sense?

JASPER: It makes sense precisely because none of it does make sense.

ROWENA: Is this a Zen thing?

JASPER: No. Don't you see? You're wearing pearls while you iron my underwear. I have a pipe I never smoke. And I have a degree in Encyclopedia Sales.

ROWENA: You do?

JASPER: At this point, who's to say? I mean, seriously? Encyclopedia Sales? You don't need a degree to sell encyclopedias! Nobody even buys encyclopedias anymore. It all makes perfect sense. Only something this stupid could happen in a play.

ROWENA: Does that mean we don't have to get divorced?

JASPER: I think it means we were never married.

ROWENA: (*Pointing at the wall.*) But... but look. We have wedding pictures.

JASPER: (*Examining the picture on the wall, as if for the first time.*) That's not even us. It's a stage prop. From forty feet away, the audience can't tell.

ROWENA: How do you know that?

JASPER: I... I don't know.

ROWENA: Is there anything else.... Did he write anymore?

JASPER: (*Crossing back to the computer and checking.*) That's it. When he died, it ended.

ROWENA: But we're still here. (*Beat.*) Jasper... what are we going to do?

JASPER: What makes you think I'm the smart character?

ROWENA: It's just that... I don't want to get divorced. I never did.

JASPER: (*A bit too forceful.*) Would you stop worrying about getting divorced?!

Just in time to hear JASPER'S last line, EDDIE enters UC from what JASPER and ROWENA used to think was their Kitchen, and he takes a look around. Both JASPER and ROWENA see EDDIE at the same time and, startled, JASPER and ROWENA let out a short shriek.

EDDIE: Pardon me. (*Beat.*) How ya doin'? I hope I wasn't disturbin' nothin' personal.

ROWENA and JASPER quickly move in front of THE WRITER, trying to hide him from EDDIE.

ROWENA: What were you doing in my kitchen?

EDDIE: Kitchen? Lady, that ain't no kitchen.

ROWENA: What do you mean? That's always been my kitchen.

EDDIE: Trust me. I know kitchens, and that ain't no kitchen. It ain't no bathroom, either. Much more than that, I can't speak with no degree of confidence. But it ain't no kitchen.

ROWENA, more worried about her Kitchen than a dead body in her front room, crosses to the UC door and looks out. After a beat, she pulls her head back inside and cautiously closes the door. After another beat, she looks out the door again, and then once more closes the door. Beat.

ROWENA: Dear?

JASPER: I really wish you wouldn't call me that.

ROWENA: Yes, dear. But our kitchen is missing.

JASPER quickly crosses to the Kitchen door and has a look for himself, closing the door when he's through.

JASPER: Well, that's odd. I wonder where the Frigidaire has gone.
(*JASPER notices EDDIE, seemingly for the first time; a bit dazed.*)
Oh. Hi. I'm Jasper. And this is Rowena.

EDDIE offers JASPER his hand, and JASPER obliges with a shake.

EDDIE: How ya doin'? I'm Eddie. I'm a plumber. Yeah. I know. A Brooklyn plumber. Can a guy be any more clichéd than that? Every time they show a plumber on the TV, the guy's got a Brooklyn accent. But whacha gonna do when you really are a Brooklyn plumber? I mean, it's not like you can change your accent, is it? You might've had seen our trucks around: Faucet and Son Plumbing. (*Pointing at his name on his coveralls.*) I'm the son. (*In confidence.*) There ain't really nobody named "Faucet." That was just somethin' my father thought up. He could come up with stuff like that all the time, right off the top of his head. He didn't even have to think or nothin'.

JASPER: What are you doing here? We didn't call for a plumber. (*To ROWENA.*) Did we?

ROWENA: I didn't. And even if we did, it still doesn't explain what happened to our kitchen. (*To EDDIE.*) What did happen to our kitchen?

EDDIE: What? How should I know? It was that way when I got here. Me? So there I was, just sittin' at Luigi's, like I always do, having their cannoli, which, I might add, is a pleasure. And then the lights go out. And I'm thinkin' it couldn't be that Luigi didn't pay his bill, because Luigi pays his bills. He's that kinda guy, if you know what I mean. And then I'm thinkin' that maybe somebody is playin' some kinda joke on me. But I know that's not right, either, because nobody plays them kinda jokes on me. So I'm thinkin' that I don't have a clue what's going on, you know, sittin' there in the dark. I mean, I couldn't see a thing. Nothin'. Not even a noodle. But then a door opens where there never was a door before. It's all light comin' through. I don't know what's back there, but I'm thinkin', "Hey, it's gotta be better in the light than sittin' there in the dark," so here I am.

JASPER: That's amazing.

EDDIE: You're telling me! You got any idea how long I was sittin' in that restaurant? Don't get me wrong. I like Luigi an' all. But I been there for a long time.

JASPER: You must be a character, too.

EDDIE: Hey! You don't know me well enough to be callin' me no character! (*Notices THE WRITER.*) Or maybe not. (*Crosses over and nudges THE WRITER with his toe. After a beat.*) Hey... you all knows you's gots a stiff over here?

JASPER: Of course, we know there's a dead person in our living room.

ROWENA: (*A bit too quickly.*) We didn't kill him.

JASPER: (*Also really sounding guilty.*) He just died.

EDDIE: Not that it probably makes no difference to him. Look, I'm just sayin', you know, that there might be other folks who don't take findin' a stiff so calmly, if you get my drift.

JASPER: No. I don't get your drift.

EDDIE: I mean, it's up to you. After all, it's your stiff. But if it was me, I think I'd drag him off and hide him somewheres.

ROWENA: Maybe we should, dear.

JASPER: Please don't call me "dear."

ROWENA: (*To EDDIE.*) Where do you think we should hide him? You seem like a man with experience in these things.

EDDIE: What? With stiffs? No. If you got a clogged toilet, I can help you. You got a stiff, call Green Lawn and let them worry about it. They did a great job with my Aunt Dorothy. You couldn't even tell she was a hundred and three. A hundred and two, tops.

JASPER: You want us to call a funeral home? Wouldn't they ask questions?

EDDIE: I'm thinkin', yeah. And then the cops are gonna be askin' questions. And then a court appointed lawyer is probably gonna be askin' questions. And then the guy you're gonna be sharin' a cell with for the next 15 to 20 years is probably gonna be askin' some questions. Before I got any of them folks involved, I mean, if it was me, and I'm just sayin', but the two's of you's probably should get together and come up with some answers first. If you know what I mean.

JASPER: I'm afraid I do.

EDDIE: I think bein' afraid is probably a good idea.

ROWENA: *(To JASPER.)* We can't get the police involved. At least, not until we figure out what's going on.

EDDIE: See? It does make sense.

JASPER: No, it doesn't. None of this makes sense. Don't you realize that none of this is real? We're all characters in a play. I don't know what play you came from, but my wife and I were in a play called... *(Crosses to the computer; reading.)* "Untitled."

EDDIE: I'm just sayin', but if it was me, that's not the story I'd tell to the cops.

ROWENA: *(After looking around the room for a hiding place.)* I've got an idea. *(To JASPER as she grabs THE WRITER'S feet.)* Grab his hands.

JASPER: I don't want to grab his hands. I already touched him once. You grab his hands.

ROWENA: Oh, comon! Would you just grab his hands already?

JASPER: Why can't I grab his feet and you grab his hands?

ROWENA: Because I already have his feet.

JASPER: Oh. *(A bit disgusted having to touch anybody that's dead, he grabs THE WRITER'S hands.)* Where are we going?

ROWENA: Let's stuff him behind the couch.

With a lot of effort, and a lot of grunts, and a lot of bumping into things, ROWENA and JASPER manage to drag THE WRITER over to in front of the couch.

ROWENA: *(After assessing the situation.)* Oh, this isn't going to work! We can't stuff him behind the couch unless we move him back first. And then we have to drag the couch out and then we have to lift him up over the couch.

JASPER: This guy's heavy!

ROWENA: *(To EDDIE.)* Maybe you could help us?

EDDIE: I got a personal motto. It's done me good so far. Never get involved with somebody else's stiff.

ROWENA: *(Coming up with a quick solution.)* OK. Fine!

ROWENA takes the cushions off the couch and builds a cushion fort around and over THE WRITER.

ROWENA: There. He's hidden.

EDDIE: You know. We got nicknames for guys like you: Inmates. You know, not that it's none of my business, but it kind of is anyway... what's up with the stiff?

ROWENA: (*Once more a little too quickly.*) We didn't kill him.

JASPER: (*Ditto.*) No. He just died.

EDDIE: Yeah. I got that. But who is he?

JASPER: We don't know.

EDDIE: How did he get here?

ROWENA: We don't know.

EDDIE: How did he die?

ROWENA and JASPER: We don't know.

EDDIE: Just a word of advice... When they tell you ya got the right to be silent, take it. Don't say a thing. And then ask for a lawyer. A good lawyer. A really good lawyer.

JASPER: You don't understand.

EDDIE: And mind you, I don't need to.

ROWENA: Listen. You have to understand. We were just sitting here, talking.

JASPER: We were getting a divorce.

ROWENA: That doesn't matter. We were talking, when suddenly this person drops dead. He was sitting right in that chair all along, and we never knew it.

EDDIE: (*Taking a step back from THE WRITER'S fort.*) You don't think it's catchin', do ya?

ROWENA: We had never seen him before in our lives. We had never seen this desk. And suddenly, out of nowhere, he was there. Dead.

EDDIE: (*Taking a peek at THE WRITER under the cushions.*) Well, at least you got that part right.

ROWENA: I'm being serious! Look! Look at the screen.

EDDIE: Yeah? So?

JASPER: He was writing the things we were just saying.

EDDIE: What? What are you tryin' to tell me here?

JASPER: I know this sounds crazy...

EDDIE: What? Crazier than the lights all goin' off at Luigi's and me ending up in your kitchen? Try me.

ROWENA: We think he was a writer. He was writing a play...

JASPER: ...and we were in it.

ROWENA: And now that he's dead... we don't know what to do.

EDDIE: What about me?

JASPER: Maybe you were in another play, and when he died you were able to come here.

EDDIE: Well, that does explain why the service was so bad at Luigi's.

HOOT enters through the UC door, looking about a bit dazed. He pushes the door behind him, but it will not latch. It is obvious that HOOT is a bit... disturbed. As HOOT enters the room, both ROWENA and JASPER jump back from where they've just hidden THE WRITER, a bit disturbed themselves. ROWENA and JASPER are trying not to act guilty, and doing a wonderfully awful job of it.

EDDIE: (To ROWENA and JASPER.) Hey! More people. Maybe this guy knows what's goin' on. (To HOOT.) How ya doin'?

HOOT: (Not noticing anything going on around him; near tears.) I did it! I got away! I finally got away.

EDDIE: Ehh... then again, maybe he doesn't know what's goin' on.

ROWENA: (Crossing toward HOOT.) Excuse me... but who are you?

HOOT: (After a moment's indecision; still a bit wild-eyed.) They call me Hoot.

ROWENA: Who calls you "Hoot"?

HOOT: They do.

JASPER: Is that really your name?

HOOT: Who's to say?

HOOT notices that the UC door has swung open. In a near panic, crosses to it and pushes it shut.

HOOT: We have to keep the door closed! They could be following me!

JASPER: Who could be following you?

HOOT: It's not who, it's what. (Beat.) Owls.

ROWENA: Owls? Are you serious? I think they're cute.

HOOT: (*Grabbing ROWENA by the shoulders with both hands.*) You don't know them like I do! (*Realizing he's holding on to her and letting her go, a bit embarrassed; backing off a step.*) I'm sorry. (*Beat.*) But it was horrible! I was an owl groomer. It was a horrible job, but it was my job... so I had to do it. Don't you understand? I had no choice.

EDDIE: I'm sorry. Back me up here. Did you say you groomed owls?

HOOT: Shhh! They can hear you. They can hear everything. They can hear a mouse sneeze a mile away. But you can't hear them. Until it's too late...

EDDIE: But... you groomed these birds.

HOOT: Nasty, horrible birds. Have you ever tried to sharpen an owl's talons?

EDDIE: Can't say that I have.

HOOT: They don't need to be sharpened! Look at my arms! Do you think I'm wearing all these band aids as a fashion statement?! And do you think their beaks need to be waxed?

EDDIE: I'm thinkin'... no?

HOOT: You're right! But I had to wax them just the same!

ROWENA: Why?

HOOT: Because... it was my job.

EDDIE: That sounds like one stupid job.

HOOT: It is a stupid job.

JASPER: Dumber than selling encyclopedias?

HOOT: Your books don't attack you, do they?! (*Beat.*) It doesn't matter! (*After another beat; pathetic.*) Can I... can I just stay here for a little while?

EDDIE: Stay as long as you want. The rent's on me.

JASPER: But you aren't paying rent.

EDDIE: I know.

ROWENA: Do you know where you came from?

HOOT: Down... there....

ROWENA: But where is down there?

HOOT: In the Folder.

EDDIE: The folder?

HOOT: With a capital "F." Ain't you figured it out yet?

JASPER: Figured what out?

HOOT: Look around you! We're just characters. We were created by some demented writer, and then, when he couldn't use us, he stuck us all in a Folder... to wait... forever... with the owls.

EDDIE: Makes me glad all I had to deal with was cannoli.

ROWENA: But we weren't in a folder. We were in a play... my husband and me.

JASPER: I'm not really her husband.

HOOT: Oh, yeah? I was in a play, too. That's how it started. But he never finished that play. So he put me... in the Folder. *(Has an epiphany.)* So... why aren't I still in that Folder?

ROWENA: He died.

HOOT: Who died?

EDDIE: The stiff under the cushions.

HOOT: *(Crosses to the cushions and peeks under them. After a respectful pause.)* Who is he?

JASPER: He was the writer. We didn't even know we were in a play...

ROWENA: We didn't even know he was in the room...

JASPER: Until he dropped dead.

HOOT: *(Reverential.)* Is that really him?

ROWENA: Yes.

HOOT: Can I kick him?

JASPER: After he's already dead?

HOOT: Just once. Maybe... more.

EDDIE: I mean, far be it from me to tell anybody what to do with a stiff, but if you want my professional opinion, and mind you, my profession's got nothin' to do with stiffs, but I'm of the opinion that it's not a good idea to go around kickin' dead people. I mean, just supposin' he's not really dead, and all you do is wake him up?

HOOT: *(Peeking again.)* He sure looks dead to me.

EDDIE: And it sure looked like I was sittin' in Luigi's just a few minutes ago. At this point, I'd say that nothin' is to be trusted, if you know what I mean.

HOOT: What if I didn't kick him very hard?

EDDIE: Hey, I ain't one to say, but I'm just sayin', I wouldn't.

HOOT suddenly notices that the door has swung open again and quickly grabs a chair to jamb it shut.

ROWENA: What are you doing?

HOOT: We've got to keep the owls out!

ROWENA: What if somebody else wants in?

HOOT: Then they can knock!

There is an immediate knocking at the door.

HOOT: *(Backing away from the door.)* Don't open it!

There is another knock. HOOT quickly crosses DL and tries to hide behind THE WRITER'S desk... poorly.

HOOT: If it's an owl, tell her I'm not here.

There's another knock.

ROWENA: *(Through the door.)* Who is it?

COP 3: *(From behind the door.)* It's the police.

ROWENA: *(Panicked; to JASPER, in a hushed shriek.)* It's the police!

Did you hear that Jasper?!

JASPER: Of course, I heard it!

ROWENA: Then what are we going to do?!

EDDIE: I'd say goin' to jail is probably at the top of the list.

More knocking.

JASPER: Don't open the door!

More knocking.

ROWENA: But I have to!

JASPER: Why?

ROWENA: Because they're knocking!

They knock once more, and ROWENA cautiously opens the door.

COP 1 and COP 3 both enter, shouldering their way into the room.

COP 1: Hey, thanks for letting us in.

COP 3: We were just sitting down at the precinct, doing what we always do...

COP 1: Playing cards.

COP 3: And then the door behind us opened all by itself.

COP 1: Which was really strange, because there isn't normally a door behind us.

COP 3: So we're thinking, "Hey. Why not check it out?"

COP 1: So we... followed the light.

COP 3: And when we got here, it wasn't like we could really turn back.

COP 1: Or wanted to...

COP 3: So, yeah, it's a good thing you let us in.

ROWENA: So you're not here on official business?

COP 1: Naw.

JASPER: And nobody called you about a dead body?

ROWENA: Not that there is one.

COP 3: Nah.

COP 1: But then, nobody calls us about anything.

EDDIE: *(Stepping up.)* Hi, how ya doin'? I'm just wantin' you's to know that even if there was a dead body hidden in the room, I had nothin' to do with it.

HOOT: *(From behind the wastebasket, where he's trying to hide.)* And neither did I.

COP 3: Oh, that's a relief.

ROWENA: *(Opening the door while trying to shuffle them back out.)* Well... then... I suppose you ought to be running along. There's nothing illegal going on here. You probably have lots of crimes that need to be solved. Can't waste your time in the one place where nobody ever mysteriously dropped dead.

Neither COP 1 nor COP 2 is budging.

COP 1: *(While gently pushing the door back shut.)* I appreciate your community spirit, but you don't understand. We've never had a crime that needed to be solved.

COP 3: Ever.

ROWENA: And wouldn't you like to keep it that way!

COP 3: All we do is sit in the station. Day after day.

COP 1: Night after night.

COP 3: The phone never rings, nobody ever comes in.

COP 1: Nothing.

COP 3: Don't you think that's strange?

JASPER: Lately, no.

COP 3: If you don't think that's strange, you should hear our names.

COP 1: I'm Cop Number One. That's really my name. See... here on my badge? *(Finally finds his badge, but only after searching in several pockets, then he looks at it; to COP 3.)* Wait. That's not my badge. It's yours. *(Hands the badge to COP 3.)* Do you have my badge?

COP 3: *(After searching in vain.)* No.

COP 1: It doesn't matter. See? On my nametag. It really is my name. "Cop Number One."

COP 3: And I'm Cop Number Three. Right there on my badge and everything.

EDDIE: Is there a Cop Number Two?

COP 1: Yeah. He said he'd catch up with us.

COP 3: But you know...

COP 1: ...frankly...

COP 3: ...he's not the most dependable of guys.

COP 1: So I say we just start without him.

JASPER: *(Alarmed.)* Start what?

COP 3: Who cares?

COP 1: Anything beats hanging around the station.

COP 3: You know, there's only so many cards you can play.

COP 1: And then it starts to get really boring.

COP 3: *(Indicating the sofa.)* Mind if we sit?

EDDIE: You know, jus' sayin', but I think for everybody involved, it would probably be better if you didn't.

COP 1: Hey, it's no problem. I'll just put the cushions back on the sofa. *(Picks up a cushion and sees THE WRITER; beat.)* Hey. Do you all know there's a Dead Guy under your cushions?

ROWENA: We can explain!

JASPER: We can?

COP 3: *(Looking for himself.)* I'll be darned. There really is a Dead Guy under there. *(Puts the cushion back over THE WRITER.)*

JASPER: We didn't kill him!

ROWENA: He just died.

EDDIE: Well, don't look at me. He was already dead when I got here.

HOOT: I never kicked him!

COP 1 motions for COP 3 to join him, and they step away from the others, crossing DR to discuss in confidence what to do.

COP 1: I think there may be something funny going on here. What do you think?

COP 3: Yeah. Take that little guy trying to hide down front.

COP 1: I was thinking more about the Dead Guy they've got hidden in the pillow fort.

COP 3: Oh, yeah. What do you think we ought to do?

COP 1: I don't know. Do you think... maybe we ought to arrest them?

COP 3: Which ones?

COP 1: I don't know. I'm thinking... all of 'em?

COP 3: And take them where? You want to go back to the station?

COP 1: You got a point there.

COP 3: *(Finally, after a few moments of pondering.)* Hey, I got an idea! *(To everybody.)* OK! Listen up. Everybody here is under house arrest! Got that? You have to stay right here, in this room, until we get to the bottom of this.

COP 1: Now somebody want to try and explain what's going on here?

JASPER: We're all characters in a play.

COP 3: Now that's original.

ROWENA: No. Really. We are. And so are you.

HOOT: *(Coming out of hiding.)* We're all forgotten characters. We've been left in a Folder in the Dead Guy's computer.

EDDIE: You were both back at the Precinct. I was at Luigi's. That little guy over there was locked in a room full of owls.

HOOT: Vicious, nasty birds.

EDDIE: And these two lived here.

JASPER: We were getting a divorce.

ROWENA: Well, maybe not.

JASPER: What difference does it make? We were never married to begin with. Not for real.

COP 1: You guys are serious?

ROWENA: I'm afraid so. We really are supposed to be getting divorced.

COP 1: Not you, well, not you alone. Them, too?

COP 3: Yeah. That whole bit about being characters in a play...

COP 1: Seriously?

JASPER: We're all serious.

HOOT: It's true. We're all just... unwanted characters. And you are, too.

COP 3: There goes my self-confidence.

JASPER: Just look at your names. You don't even have real names.

You're basically the same character.

COP 3: Now that you mention it, that always did seem a bit... suspect.

HOOT: But at least you weren't named by an owl.

COP 1: So we're not really cops...?

COP 3: We're just characters from some play?

EDDIE: Crazy, huh?

COP 1: That's probably going to affect our retirement.

COP 3: Undoubtedly. *(Beat.)* But what about the Dead Guy?

ROWENA: He just died.

JASPER: We didn't kill him.

COP 1: We got that.

JASPER: He was the writer. He was the writer who created all of us.

COP 3: What a sick individual.

COP 1: Hey, speak for yourself.

ROWENA: We think he had a heart attack or something. And when he died, he was no longer writing our lines. We could say and do whatever we wanted. And we could see him.

JASPER: And all of you started coming out of our kitchen.

COP 3: So what are we supposed to do now?

ROWENA: We don't know. Don't people usually call the police when things like this happen?

COP 1: We're not that kind of police.

COP 3: Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do.

ALL: *(Except COP 3.)* What?

COP 3: *(Happily.)* Let's play some cards!

COP 1: Deal me in!

COP 3: *(As they're crossing to UL.)* Any of you want dealt in?

ALL: *(Except COP 3 and COP 1.)* No.

COP 3: Suit yourselves.

COP 1 and COP 3 cross to the UL corner, where they'll turn the chairs to face the end table. They'll place the basket of plastic fruit on the floor out of the way, if the basket of fruit isn't on another table. COP 3 will take a deck of cards out of his pocket, and after shuffling them, he'll deal them out, and COP 1 and COP 3 will both lose themselves in their card game. In the meantime, HOOT has sat himself in front of the computer and is now quietly playing around. EDDIE crosses to DL, where he looks over HOOT'S shoulder.

EDDIE: *(After a beat.)* Does this thing have Tetris on it?

HOOT: No. Only Solitaire. We can take turns if you want.

EDDIE: Naw. I'm never any good when I play by myself. I'm much better when I look over somebody else's shoulder and tell 'em what they should've done.

HOOT: OK.

PELLET peeks through the UC door, and then enters, trying not to bring attention to himself, which is a bit hard to do when you're a horse.

ROWENA: *(Melts with delight.)* Oh, look! A horse.

PELLET shakes his mane while whinnying, and then stomps once.

ROWENA: I know it was obvious, but I felt like I had to say something. Look, everybody. A horse.

COP 1 and COP 3: *(Barely looking up from their game.)* Hey.

EDDIE: How ya doin'?

JASPER: A horse?!

ROWENA: Yes. A horse. Oh, look. He has a name badge. *(Reading.)* "Hello. My name is Pellet the Wonder Horse. But you can call me Pellet for short." Pellet, that's such a nice name. *(Noticing.)* Oh, wait, there's more on the back. *(Reading.)* "Can I please, please, please pleas-s-s-s-e, stay here with you. I've been in the same barn for so-o-o long. I don't eat much, and I promise to pick up after myself."

During the above lines, PELLET has been holding his hoofs in front of him, pleading.

ROWENA: Why, of course you can stay.

PELLET, in relief, lays his head on ROWENA'S shoulder, while ROWENA lovingly pats his head. JASPER then grabs ROWENA by the arm, pulling her away from PELLET, and leads ROWENA hurriedly DC.

JASPER: He can stay?! Are you crazy?!

ROWENA: Quite possibly. After this morning, who's to say?

JASPER: You can't keep a horse in an apartment!

ROWENA: Why not? I can keep you in an apartment.

JASPER: He can't stay here! None of these people can! And that's final!

ROWENA: *(Cheerful.)* OK.

JASPER: OK?

ROWENA: Absolutely.

JASPER: Then... you agree with me?

ROWENA: Why, yes. Of course not. Whatever gave you that idea?

JASPER: *(After a moment of puzzlement.)* You did... I think. You said, "OK."

ROWENA: I know. I just like saying "OK." I find it makes people less angry. See? You were all, *(Trying to sound like JASPER.)* "And that's final!" And now you're just confused.

JASPER: But... but these people can't stay here.

ROWENA: Nonsense. They're already here, and they seem to be doing a pretty good job of staying. Besides, we can't just throw them all out.

JASPER: Why not?

ROWENA: Because I don't think they'd go. After all, there's more of them than us. Besides, where would they go? Back into the kitchen?

JASPER: Well... yes. Or wherever. I don't care. They can just go back to wherever they came from. It's not our concern.

ROWENA: Of course, it's our concern. They're here, and you're concerned.

JASPER: That's not what I meant.

ROWENA: This conversation would make a whole lot more sense if you said what you meant. Besides, if everybody left, that would mean Pellet would have to go back to his barn, too.

PELLET, hearing his name, takes a step toward JASPER and ROWENA.

JASPER: It's just a stupid horse!

PELLET, obviously not happy, stomps up to JASPER and looks him in the eyes with his hoofs akimbo. PELLET then reaches inside his costume and takes out a graduation cap, complete with tassel, which he puts on his head, and a rolled up document that he unrolls and shows to JASPER. Across the top, in letters large enough to be seen from the audience, is written "Diploma." PELLET rolls the diploma back up and puts it away, along with the hat. He then crosses his arms, as if to say, "So there!"

JASPER: What am I doing? I'm arguing with a horse! And I seem to be losing.

EDDIE: *(Crossing, to JASPER.)* You know, if it'll make you feel any better... and mind you, I ain't no expert on these things, bein's I always lived in the city, so I don't know a whole lot about farm animals and such, but I don't think that's a real horse.

PELLET shakes his mane angrily, whinnies, and then stomps twice.

EDDIE: *(To PELLET.)* Hey, I didn't mean nothin' by it. Please accept my apologies. If you identify as a horse, far be it from me to say nothin'. As far as that goes, I really don't think I'm a plumber. I'm not really sure what a pipe does, much less how to fix one.

HOOT: I don't care what it is, as long as it's not an owl.

PELLET nods his head and whinnies.

HOOT: See? I'm not the only one who thinks they're nasty.

EDDIE crosses back to HOOT while JASPER, exasperated, turns and walks toward UL.

ROWENA: (To PELLET.) Can I get you something to eat?

PELLET shakes his mane "Yes" and neighs.

ROWENA: Oh, I'm sorry, but we're all out of sugar. You see, we're all out of kitchen.

PELLET shrugs, as if to say, "Eh, it's no big deal."

ROWENA: Oh, just to let you know, there's a Dead Guy hidden in the cushion fort... but we didn't kill him.

PELLET peeks under a cushion, stands back up, and simply shrugs his shoulders, as if it's no big deal.

ROWENA: You see, he was a writer. He created all of us. He put Jasper and me in this house, but he threw you in a folder and left you there.

PELLET angrily stomps twice, and then kicks THE WRITER through the pillows. ROWENA will straighten the pillows, if necessary.

HOOT: (Standing.) Hey! How come the horse gets to kick the Dead Guy, and I don't?

ROWENA: It's OK. He's not going to kick him again... (To PELLET.) Are you?

PELLET, contrite, stomps twice.

ROWENA: See. (To PELLET.) But it's OK now because the writer died. Everything's OK. You can come out of the barn now.

HOOT: We can all come out.

ROWENA: Except for Jasper and me. We were already here. We're getting a divorce.

PELLET stomps twice.

ROWENA: Oh, it's not that bad. Now that I think about it. Why would you want to stay with somebody you don't really know, and probably wouldn't like if you did? I mean, if you have a choice? And we do have a choice. At least, I think we do. Really, though, I don't think we were ever married. Not really. (*Seeing PELLET'S collar in a new light.*) Would you like me to take that off of your neck?

PELLET whinnies and shakes his head "Yes." ROWENA then removes the collar and lays it on the coffee table.

ROWENA: I guess I don't have to wear one, either.

ROWENA takes off her necklace and lays it on the coffee table, too. ROWENA then loops her arm through PELLET'S front leg, and the two of them cross to the fireplace, where they will quietly converse, which will be mixed with quiet laughter and neighing while the two of them move closer than what would be appropriate for a casual relationship. The two of them will increasingly become oblivious to everything else. Before all that, though, LARRY THE AMAZING, complete with turban and cape, enters with a flourish.

LARRY THE AMAZING: (*Taking the stance.*) Ta-Daaa!

JASPER: What?!

LARRY THE AMAZING: You know. "Ta" and "Daaa." As in... (*Once more taking the stance.*) Ta-Daaa!

JASPER: Who are you?

LARRY THE AMAZING: I'm Larry the Amazing!

JASPER: Larry the Amazing?

LARRY THE AMAZING: Yeah. It is my name, and I am amazing. For two bits you can be amazed, too.

JASPER: Two bits?

LARRY THE AMAZING: It's a quarter. Comon. Certainly being amazed is worth a quarter. I mean, really amazed, not all that stuff that's not amazing in the least, but just the same everybody says, (*Falsetto.*) "Oh! That's amazing!"

JASPER: Listen...

LARRY THE AMAZING: Larry. You don't have to add the "Amazing" part. Unless you want to.

JASPER: Listen, Larry... I'm Jasper. This is my house. My wife and me.

ROWENA: (*From across the room.*) Hello. Welcome to our home. We're getting a divorce.

JASPER: We are? (*Beat.*) Listen, Larry... These other people...

PELLET neighs.

JASPER: And the horse...

PELLET stomps once.

JASPER: You see... they don't belong here. You don't belong here. You have to understand. None of this is real. We're all just characters from plays... apparently very bad plays.

LARRY THE AMAZING: I know that. I know everything. It's what makes me amazing. Go ahead and try me.

JASPER: What?

LARRY THE AMAZING: Oh, comon. That's not a real question. Ask me anything.

JASPER: I don't want to ask you any questions. I don't want to be amazed. I've had all the amazement I can handle for a Tuesday.

HOOT: I think its Thursday.

COP 1: I thought it was Friday.

JASPER: It doesn't matter! I want you to go away. All of you. I want everybody to go away!

ALL characters onstage pretty much ignore JASPER.

JASPER: (*Almost an aside.*) I just want things to get back to normal again.

LARRY THE AMAZING: Yeah. Like they ever were normal? OK. If you don't want to be amazed, how about the rest of you?

ROWENA: No, but thank you for asking.

PELLET neighs and stomps a few times.

LARRY THE AMAZING: That's easy. Trust me. Nobody cares.

PELLET shakes his head and neighs again, apparently satisfied with the answer.

EDDIE: OK... I got one. What's the square root of 1,432?

LARRY THE AMAZING: *(Without hesitation.)* 37.8417759.

EDDIE: Wow. That's pretty good.

LARRY THE AMAZING: You want me to go past seven decimal points?

EDDIE: No. That's close enough for me.

HOOT: Wow. Was he right?

EDDIE: How should I know? But he sure sounded right.

HOOT: OK. I got one. Are the owls still following me?

LARRY THE AMAZING: Nope. They're owls. They don't like the light.

HOOT: *(Standing; ecstatic.)* Did you hear that! Did you hear that!? I'm free! No more owls!

HOOT will spontaneously hug EDDIE in joy. EDDIE, not used to that sort of thing, won't know what he's supposed to be doing with his hands; he will finally, a bit reluctantly, pat HOOT'S back.

EDDIE: *(While looking over HOOT'S shoulder at the computer screen.)* Hey, you know you can move that whole column on the King?

HOOT quickly lets go of EDDIE and returns to his game, with EDDIE still watching.

LARRY THE AMAZING: Anybody else?

COP 3: *(To LARRY THE AMAZING.)* Yeah. You know what Cop Number One has in his hand?

LARRY THE AMAZING: *(Without hesitation.)* Three nines, a two, and an ace.

COP 1 throws his cards on the table in disgust.

COP 3: That's... amazing!

LARRY THE AMAZING: See? I told you you'd be amazed.

JASPER: OK. I have a question. If you really have the answers.
What should we do?

LARRY THE AMAZING: You mean with the rest of your lives?

JASPER: Yes.

LARRY THE AMAZING: I haven't a clue.

JASPER: I thought you said you knew everything.

LARRY THE AMAZING: And I do. *Everything*. If it's a fact, I know it.
But what you do with those facts, I haven't a clue. You want to know
the answer to world peace? I can't do it. Want to know why people
aren't happy? I can give you a list.

JASPER: What good is that?

LARRY THE AMAZING: That, I can answer. Very little. The best I
can do with the Knowledge of the World is to perform in a carnival
sideshow. Ehh... I have no complaints. At least I have a job.

STEVE, dressed as a pirate, throws open the UC door.

STEVE: Ahoy, me maties!

*STEVE then enters, but her pirate hat is so wide it catches on the door,
forcing her to back up and turn a bit sideways to get through. She then
immediately trips over the chair that HOOT had used earlier. She gets
up and tries to take off her eye patch using the hand with the hook, and
ends up bonking herself with the hook. She then takes the hook off,
lifts up the eye patch, and looks around.*

STEVE: *(Finally.)* Arrrr!

JASPER: Oh, great! Now we have pirates!

STEVE: *(Confidentially.)* I'm not really a pirate.

JASPER: *(Sarcastically.)* Really?

STEVE: *(Not cottoning to the sarcasm.)* Naw. It's just my work outfit.
I work at the Chip Ship, at the store down on Ar-r-r-r-guson. We
serve Fish and Chips. Except we really serve potato chips, not
French fries, like everybody else. That's our angle. Real fish. Real

chips. That, and we dress up like pirates. You know, Chip Ship... Pirates...? Arrr?

JASPER: Why pirates? Why not just regular sailors?

STEVE: *(While straightening the stuffed parrot on her shoulder.)* Are you kidding? If we dressed up like that we'd look stupid.

JASPER: *(Noticing her name badge.)* And your name is "Steve"?

STEVE: Yes, it is. Well, now it is. Actually, my name used to be Suwanee. *(Beat.)* My mother had a thing for Stephen Foster. So it's kind of weird that now I'm named Steve. Although I don't think Stephen Foster ever went by "Steve." But he might've. You'd have to ask him. It's not a name I would've chosen, though. Steve or Stephen. But what was I to do? You see, I forgot my name badge. Normally it would be no big deal to forget my name badge. But I hadn't been working there very long... see? And we got a call that the District Manager, Mr. Arflark, was on his way over. I'd never met Mr. Arflark before, and I didn't want the first time we ever met for me not to have my nametag on. That could be my career right there. Little things like that... they matter. But I don't have to tell you that.

JASPER: You probably do.

STEVE: So I grabbed one of the nametags by the timeclock, where the part-timers leave them. And I grabbed Steve's. And, of course, once Mr. Arflark thought my name was Steve... if I would've ever worn my real nametag and he was to see it... then he would know that I had been lying. And if he knew I was lying... well... kiss a career at the Chip Ship bon voyage. So I had it legally changed.

JASPER: ...to Steve?

STEVE: To Steve. Hey, people don't tend to forget my name. *(Looking around.)* So... where am I?

JASPER: You're in my house. Now you need to go.

STEVE: *(Ignoring JASPER.)* I mean, last thing I remember I was at work in the freezer getting more fish. They're frozen, see? We say they're fresh. But they're not. Well... they're freshly frozen, so it's not like we're really lying or anything. But when I stepped back out of the freezer... I was here. I know there was talk about remodeling our store, but this isn't the look I would've gone for.

LARRY THE AMAZING: *(Shouldering JASPER aside; with no enthusiasm, and no stance.)* Ta-Daa.

STEVE: Pardon me?

LARRY THE AMAZING: You know, "Ta-Daa." It's a... oh, never mind. Listen, Steve, there's something you need to know. And who better than me to tell you? I won't even charge you two bits.

STEVE: Two bits?

LARRY THE AMAZING: It's a quarter. But that's not important. You missed my entry. I'm Larry the Amazing. I know everything.

STEVE: Everything?

LARRY THE AMAZING: Well, within limitations. See, the thing is... Well... You see... Have you ever felt like everything – life, you, me, your dog – everything is just a little bit strange?

STEVE: I don't have a dog.

LARRY THE AMAZING: I know. But if you did, he'd be strange, too.

STEVE: Yeah. Now that you mention it, life is weird. Like when people put on their turn signals when they're getting on the freeway. As if they have a choice! As if the people who are already on the freeway are looking at this car coming down the entrance ramp and they're thinking, "I wonder where they're going?"

LARRY THE AMAZING: Weirder than that.

STEVE: Oh. (*Beat.*) Yeah. Like how we use quarters and halves with time, but not thirds? We say it's half past six, or it's a quarter 'till three, but nobody ever says it's a third after four. Why not? I mean, I can see why we don't use twelfths. But we could.

LARRY THE AMAZING: Really weird.

STEVE: Weirder than that?

LARRY THE AMAZING: That doesn't even come close.

STEVE: You mean like how I'm a girl, but I'm named Steve? And I always dress like a pirate? Even when I'm not at work? And I actually think the words "career" and "fast food restaurant" go together? I always thought that was a bit weird.

LARRY THE AMAZING: You're on the right track.

STEVE: (*After waiting.*) And?

LARRY THE AMAZING: Well, you see... Have you ever thought that for your entire life you were just a bit actor in a really bad play?

STEVE: No.

LARRY THE AMAZING: Well... you have been.

STEVE: (*Taken aback.*) Wow. You know, now that you mention it, it all makes sense. I guess that explains why I never got promoted.

LARRY THE AMAZING: Yeah. Pretty amazing, huh?

STEVE: *(With no enthusiasm.)* Arrrr.

LARRY THE AMAZING: Now you see why they call me "Larry the Amazing." Well, nobody actually calls me that... except for me. Most people just call me Larry. If they call me anything at all. So, what else would you like to know? I can tell you anything.

STEVE: You know, I think that's... that's going to cover me for today. If you know what I mean.

LARRY THE AMAZING: Yes, I do. But then...

STEVE: Yeah. You know everything.

LARRY THE AMAZING: Within limits.

As STEVE and LARRY THE AMAZING start to move downstage, STEVE once more trips over a chair. This time she'll be caught by LARRY THE AMAZING, who'll set her back upright. Once again, STEVE will peek out from under her eye patch to get her bearings.

LARRY THE AMAZING: You do know they make eye patches you can see through...

STEVE: Yeah, but they're not authentic.

STEVE will continue to occasionally bump into things and then will peek out from under her eye patch to see ahead. As LARRY THE AMAZING and STEVE are wandering off, MELODEUM DAVENPORT enters UC. Sporting severely bobbed black hair, outrageous, brightly coloured horn-rimmed glasses, and other clothing as appropriate, each piece of which seems to be trying to outdo the others for garishness. MELODEUM DAVENPORT immediately pushes past JASPER, crossing DC. MELODEUM DAVENPORT will be addressing the audience, as if she is on TV... because she thinks she is. And she may be. She uses her hands while talking... a lot.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Oh, what a lovely set! All it needs is some paneling to darken things up, switch out the fixtures... *(To the fourth wall.)* and I'd close off this wall here for privacy.

JASPER: *(Catching up with MELODEUM DAVENPORT.)* What are you talking about?

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: I'm talking about taking this worn out set and giving it some "pop!" We'll block everything off to give you that closed concept, add popcorn ceilings, put wall to wall carpeting over these ugly wood floors, and there, all along the top of the wall, cows, lots of cows. Cows are the latest rage.

JASPER: No! That sounds awful!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: It does?

JASPER: Yes!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Even the cows?

JASPER: Especially the cows.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: What about shi lap?

JASPER: No!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: (*Taking out a little black book and pencil; speaking as she writes.*) No cows... and no shi lap... (*Then puts the book and pencil away.*). You have no idea how long I've been in that folder. (*Beat.*) But that doesn't mean we still can't makeover this set! You may know me.

JASPER: I don't.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Then now you do. My name is Melodeum Davenport, like a musical couch, and I'm the host of "Nailing It!" "There's no set that can't be made better." That's my tagline.

JASPER: You have a tagline?

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Doesn't everybody?

JASPER: I don't.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Well, you should. Without one I would never stand out on the Don't You Wish You Had All That Money Television Network. And if you don't stand out, then you're canceled. That's not a tagline. Just good words to live by.

HOOT: No owls.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Pardon me?

HOOT: That's my tagline.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: And a fine one at that... unless you're an owl.

JASPER: (*To HOOT.*) Stop it. Don't encourage her.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Oh, don't be a spoil sport. (*Beat.*) Hey, that could be your tagline.

JASPER: No!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: How about: "No longer contagious"?

JASPER: No!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: "Recently acquitted"?

JASPER: No!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Ok, then. Suit yourself.

JASPER: For the last time, No!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: That last one wasn't a tagline.

JASPER: Just stop it! (*Beat.*) You do know that none of this is real?

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Of course it's not real. It's television!

JASPER: No. It's worse than that. We're all just characters from stupid plays... apparently some plays a lot more stupider than the others.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Nonsense! Look out there. Lights. Audience. The smell of popcorn wafting in from the lobby. You can't get any more real than that! We're on the air! Live!

JASPER: No, we're not. I'm serious. Everything you've ever known... it's all wrong.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Well... now that you mention it... I was never a fan of avocado coloured bathroom fixtures. But that can be fixed! It all can be fixed!

JASPER: Would you just stop?

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Never!

JASPER: I'm serious. You don't have to do this anymore. You don't have to remodel anything.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Well... yes. But if I don't, then I won't have anything else to do.

JASPER: Fine! What do I care? You can do whatever you want... as long as you don't do it here.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: You don't get rid of me that easily! Once I start on a set, I don't quit. That could be a tagline, too.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT heads DC, planning on what changes she's going to make. JASPER starts to follow her, but then his attention is immediately turned away as COP 2 finally arrives, looking around as he or she enters.

COP 2: (*To JASPER.*) Hey, have you seen a couple of cops?

COP 1 and COP 3: Hey! Number Two. You made it!

COP 2 crosses to COP 1 and COP 3, where there is jovial hand shaking and back slapping, and then COP 2 quickly joins their game. Meanwhile, SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE enters, puts his monocle in, looks around the room, then removes it and takes a sip of tea from his ever-present cup before noticing JASPER, who has just noticed SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE.

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE: Oh, splendid! You're at home.

JASPER: Do you know me?

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE: I find that quite unlikely.

JASPER: Then how do you know this is my home?

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE: What? It isn't your home?

JASPER: Well... yes, it is. At least, I used to think it was.

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE: Splendid! Then you're at home. It's always nice to be at home. May I come in?

JASPER: No!

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE: Nonsense! (*Moves into the room.*)

I'm Sir Basil Thackelthistle. I was knighted by the Queen herself, you know. Rather charming lady. I was knighted because I have money. Loads of it. A rather smashing amount, I'd say. If it were to fall on you, I'd quite imagine you'd be rather smashed. But what a smashing way to go, well, if one must go, and one must be smashed while going. I imagine that's why anybody gets knighted.

JASPER: To get smashed?

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE: Heavens, no, my boy! They get knighted because they have money. I don't even know where I got all that money. Not that it matters. All I know is that I don't have to do a bloody thing all day long except wait for tea. And then drink that tea. And then wait for more. Even then, somebody else does all the work. I know people do that sort of thing... work, you know. But the truth of it is, I really haven't a clue what it is those people do. But it does give me a lot of time to putter. That's what I do, you know. Putter. It's a splendid way of saying that life is dreadfully dull. But it could be worse. I could be an accountant. (*Beat.*) What a charming home. (*Noticing the sofa.*) And you've built a charming pillow fort. Splendid!

Before JASPER can react, SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE crosses to the fort and looks under a pillow.

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE: And I see you've got a charming Dead Person under here.

JASPER: I can explain.

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE: No need! It's not that I don't care about your problems, but... well... I really don't. *(Beat.)* Right! Get on with it.

SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE heads off to mill about the room, sipping tea and listening in on conversations while moving, never staying anywhere for too terribly long, but generally finding everything to be quite jolly. Once SIR BASIL THACKELTHISTLE wanders off, MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING enters. UC. MELODEUM DAVENPORT, who has made her way back UC, will listen in.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: *(To JASPER.)* Excuse me, but is this the poetry reading?

JASPER: Poetry reading? No! Does this look like a poetry reading to you?

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: That's only because nobody is reading poetry. Yet. Let me introduce myself. My name is Mrs. Elizabeth Louise Templeton Browning, and I am a minimalist poet.

JASPER: A what?!

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: *(With great theatrics, which means a lot of hand waving and moving about.)* The representation of life, of art, of beauty in the written word. Poetry! I sing thee of life! But life is brief. It is but a flicker, and the fire is gone, lost forever into the blackness of the void. And like life, good writing should be concise. It should use as few words as possible. Or less. And that is why I am a minimalist poet. Let me show you. Here. This is the first draft of a poem I call "Nothing."

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING hands JASPER a blank sheet of paper.

JASPER: (*Turning the paper over.*) There is nothing.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: (*Switching the sheet of paper JASPER has for a new one.*) And here's the final draft.

JASPER: There's nothing here, either.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: Yes, but I feel I convey that nothingness so much better here, don't you think?

JASPER: No!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Oh, I do. That makes perfect sense.

JASPER: No, it doesn't, and don't pretend that it does. If that actually makes sense to you, then you're just as loopy as she is.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: On the contrary. Just look at all the great poets, like Pound and Eliot. They don't make a lick of sense, but they must be good because everybody says they are.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: Indeed!

JASPER: Oh, comon! This isn't poetry! It's just... stupid!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Or clever. It's often hard to tell. No matter what, it's original.

JASPER: I don't care what you say. I'm not buying it.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: (*Taking back her poem.*) And that's fine, because I'm not selling it. (*Beat, pulls out a book.*) Not by itself. If you are interested, this is my latest volume. I call it Blank Pages. (*Hands the book to JASPER.*) It includes my poem "Nothing," both versions. I accept cash and all major credit cards.

JASPER: (*After quickly thumbing through it.*) I'm not paying for this! There's nothing here!

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: But nothing is something.

JASPER: No, it's not!

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: I disagree. You can't have nothing unless you first had something, so nothing must be something, too.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Oh! That makes so much sense!

JASPER: It doesn't make any sense at all! (*Beat.*) Wait... why am I arguing with you? Either one of you? I don't care. I really don't. Please. Take your poems and leave. (*To MELODEUM DAVENPORT.*) And you can go with her.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT and MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING will take a step or two downstage over the next few lines, totally ignoring JASPER.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Some people just can't appreciate the arts.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: Absolutely. As I've often said, "Art is the wallpaper of life."

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: A kindred spirit! With such a wonderful tagline! How refreshing it is to find somebody who understands set makeovers! And taglines.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: And how refreshing it is to find somebody who appreciates the arts.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: What else can you do with the arts?

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: Make money. You know what they say: You can fool all of the people in an election year, but if you can fool the critics, then you can have a career in the arts.

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Or your own TV show.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: Would you like to not hear some more of my poetry?

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Do you have anything about set makeovers?

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING and MELODEUM DAVENPORT wander off, quietly talking, except for those times when MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING is reciting her poetry. CHIEF WISHIHADANAME (pronounced Why-She-Ha-Da-Nah-May.), wearing a full Indian headdress, among other things that involve beads and feathers, enters UC. CHIEF WISHIHADANAME is immediately followed by SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE, two nuns wearing traditional black habits. SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE and CHIEF WISHIHADANAME head off in different directions,

unnoticed by JASPER. HORSGARTH and HILDA, two Vikings, then enter.

HILDA: *(As enters; on a rising beat.)* Yo ho!

HILDA and HORSGARTH: *(Throwing their arms over each other's shoulders; sing-songy.)* It's the call of the Viking!

HILDA: *(Holding up a grocery bag.)* We are here to sack...

HORSGARTH: And plunder! *(Beat.)* Sorry, I don't have a prop.

HILDA: *(Noticing the couch; as she tosses her grocery bag aside.)* Or we can just kick back on the sofa!

JASPER: No! You can't do that!

HORSGARTH: What?! I am Horsgarth! I am a Viking! Feared throughout the Frozen Wastelands of the North, and the Mushy Places just south of there! Nobody tells me what to do! *(In confidence.)* Except for Hilda.

HILDA: *(Has found THE WRITER.)* Hey... look what I found.

JASPER: I can explain.

HORSGARTH: What? You think you need to explain dead bodies to a Viking? *(Beat.)* But what a lousy place to hide it.

JASPER: We were in a bit of a hurry.

HORSGARTH: A hurry?! These things can't be rushed!

HILDA: This man needs a Viking funeral!

HORSGARTH: You wouldn't happen to have a canoe and some lighter fluid, would you?

JASPER: No!

HORSGARTH: Pity. Probably for the best. You know, that's a lot of work. *(Beat.)* We'll have to settle for second best. *(To HILDA.)* Grab his legs.

HILDA and HORSGARTH pick up THE WRITER with no difficulty – or hesitation, make the short trip to the Kitchen door UC, and throw him into the Kitchen with a thump, closing the door when they're through.

HORSGARTH: So much for the Dead Guy.

HORSGARTH and HILDA quickly put the cushions back on the sofa.

HILDA: (*Taking a stance.*) In the name of Odin and Thor and Freya, and all those other gods that I never can remember, I claim this couch!

HORSGARTH and HILDA: Yo ho!

HILDA and HORSGARTH both flop onto the couch and put their feet up on the coffee table. In the meanwhile, MRS. GRIMALKIN has entered, unnoticed by JASPER. MRS. GRIMALKIN is dressed in a housecoat and fuzzy slippers with her hair up in a bun. MRS. GRIMALKIN has cats everywhere you can put a cat, including in her pockets, on her shoulders, and, of course, in her arms. The cats are obviously not real. MRS. GRIMALKIN taps JASPER on the shoulder, who spins around, a bit startled, but not startling MRS. GRIMALKIN in the least.

MRS. GRIMALKIN: Excuse me, young man, but have you seen my cat?

JASPER: Your cat?!

MRS. GRIMALKIN: You know, short, furry, says "Meow," and scratches things?

JASPER: No!

MRS. GRIMALKIN: It seems I've lost Number 14... or maybe it was number 12. They both look a lot alike, you know. He... or she... seems to have wandered off. They do that, you know.

JASPER: No! I haven't seen your cat.

MRS. GRIMALKIN: Oh, that's OK. It's not like I really know the difference, anyway.

MRS. GRIMALKIN wanders off DL, more or less looking for her cat.

MRS. GRIMALKIN: (*To EDDIE.*) Excuse me, but you haven't seen my cat, have you?

EDDIE: What? You's gots more?

MRS. GRIMALKIN: I think so.

EDDIE: You know, lady, far be it from me to say, but I don't believe that none of them cats is for real.

MRS. GRIMALKIN: I know. But I don't think I'm real, either. So we get along fine. (*While wandering off looking for her cat.*) Here Kitty, Kitty, Kitty.

Meanwhile, ZOMBIE 1, ZOMBIE 2, and ZOMBIE 3 have entered, UC. Startled, JASPER quickly moves out of their way as the ZOMBIES shuffle in.

ZOMBIE 1, ZOMBIE 2 and ZOMBIE 3: Lines! Lines!

ZOMBIE 1, ZOMBIE 2, and ZOMBIE 3, who are completely harmless and not very disgusting, will wander around the stage, continually bumping into each other, turning around, and bumping into each other again. Once the ZOMBIES have moved on, RUFUS T. SPADE enters, a singing cowboy in full regalia, complete with guitar and lasso and more sequins than Roy Rogers on a good day. He'll strut DC, take a pose, and then commence to yodel... loudly... and poorly.

RUFUS: Yodel-lay-he-hee! Yodel-lay-he-hi! I'm a singing cowboy, a singing cowboy am I! I Yi Ye-e-e-e-e-e-e!

RUFUS takes his last note as high as he can go, and then higher, until he finally coughs and sputters. He quickly recovers and then hits a sour cord on his guitar.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: (*There will never be any attempt on his part to sound like a Native American stereotype.*) Paleface out of tune.

RUFUS: Tune? What's that?

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: You don't know how to play that thing at all, do you?

RUFUS: Nope. Not a lick. But that doesn't stop me. (*Hits another discordant note.*)

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: It should.

RUFUS: (*Handing his guitar to CHIEF WISHIHADANAME.*) Here, padner. Hold on to this for a spell. I'm a fixin' on doin' a rope trick.

While RUFUS is carefully unwinding his rope from his belt, CHIEF WISHIHADANAME will take the guitar and immediately take an Elvis stance. With the classic windmill strum, he strikes two cords, holds the last note, and then does it again. Just think about songs about jailhouses and rocks.

JASPER: *(Hurrying over and clamping his hand on the guitar's neck.)*
Stop that! Are you out of your mind? We can't afford the rights to that song!

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Sorry.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME will hand the guitar off to HORSGARTH.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Here. Put it out of its misery.

HORSGARTH: Yo ho!

HILDA: Plunder!

HORSGARTH: Easy for you to say.

HILDA: *(Taking the guitar from HORSGARTH and holding it like a boat going over waves.)* See! It's a boat!

HORSGARTH: It's a pathetically small boat. Not one fit for a Viking. At least, not a very big Viking.

HILDA: Wait! It's an oar. *(Jumps on the couch and pretends to be rowing with the guitar.)*

HORSGARTH: *(Taking the guitar from HILDA and holding it by the neck.)* Nonsense. It's a battle whumper! *(Whumps the couch a couple of times, and then takes a mighty swing with the guitar, causing HILDA to dodge it.)*

HILDA: *(Taking it back and holding it in front of her.)* Or a shield... from a battle whumper!

HORSGARTH: *(Taking it back and then strumming it.)* Or it's just a lousy out of tune guitar.

HORSGARTH then rather nonchalantly places the guitar behind the couch, and both HORSGARTH and HILDA flop back down on the couch with their feet back up on the coffee table.

RUFUS: *(Finally.)* You all through, now? Because I wouldn't want to upstage nobody.

HORSGARTH: *(Standing and thrusting his fist in the air for emphasis.)*

A Viking cannot be upstaged! *(Calmer, sits back down.)* But, yeah. We're done.

RUFUS: Good. Because I'm a gonna be doin' that rope trick now.

RUFUS takes the rope and begins with small loops, which will quickly digress into dangerously swinging it around, causing everybody to duck and/or generally get out of the way. If you can cue a lamp to get broken, so much the better. CHIEF WISHIHADANAME will time the loops and quickly stop RUFUS.

RUFUS: *(Relieved.)* Thanks, padner. I can get it goin', but then it sorta gets a life of its own, ifin's you know what I mean.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: You don't know how to swing a rope, either, do you?

RUFUS: Nope. Not a lick.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Doesn't that make it a bit hard to be a singing cowboy... I mean, if you can't sing, and you can't play a musical instrument, and you can't throw a lasso? You don't even have a horse.

PELLET will loudly neigh and shake his head "No."

RUFUS: *(To PELLET.)* Don't you worry your mane, there, my horse friend. Just because I have spurs don't mean I know how to use them, either. *(To CHIEF WISHIHADANAME.)* Let me tell you, padner. Ever since I was knee-high to a pollywog, my most favouritist wish was to become a singing cowboy. And I'll be hornswoggled if that wish didn't come true. In retrospect, I probably should a wished to be a good singing cowboy. But that's all mud under the chuckwagon. I reckon it'd be in pretty poor taste to regret the good things I have simply because they could a been better. As my granny use ta say, "If you're given thistles, then make a thistle sandwich." Between you an' me, though, I'd much rather have her biscuits.

RUFUS and CHIEF WISHIHADANAME will wander off in the same direction. Meanwhile, BUCKLES and KNUCKLES, the two clowns, enter and start DR before JASPER catches up to them and blocks their progress.

JASPER: Clowns?!

BUCKLES will give his bicycle horn an affirmative honk. Unnoticed to JASPER, FRED THE GORILLA enters and is standing in the doorway, looking around.

JASPER: No! That's where I draw the line! No clowns!

BUCKLES gives his bicycle horn another honk, which will cause FRED THE GORILLA to pound on his chest while roaring as only an angry gorilla can. Both KNUCKLES and BUCKLES will jump in the air in surprise, as only clowns can do. JASPER, also startled, will spin around to see what's up. This allows BUCKLES and KNUCKLES to waddle off Down Right. FRED, no longer scary, will scratch his head and wander off Left. Eventually FRED THE GORILLA will find the basket of fruit, especially the plastic bananas.

Then enter ALL EXTRAS, which can be anything you want – the more bizarre the better, and the more the better... just as long as they are not violent in the least. JASPER will be frenetically running about, getting more panicky with each new character. JASPER will be trying to stop them, but to no avail.

JASPER: *(Running about.)* Wait! You can't be here! You'll have to go back! Please! Leave. We don't have room for everybody. This is our house!

Finally, JASPER runs over to ROWENA and pulls her away from PELLET to DR. PELLET will follow, crossing his arms and tapping his hoof while impatiently waiting.

JASPER: This is wrong.

ROWENA: What?

JASPER: All of this. This isn't what I wanted. Just a few minutes ago we were living a quiet, happy life... well, except for the divorce. And now... Look at all this! Look at all these people...

PELLET stomps his foot twice.

JASPER: And animals. They're everywhere. We don't know these people!

PELLET stomps his foot again.

JASPER: *(To PELLET.)* Oh, give it a rest, already! *(To ROWENA.)* Look! We've got Vikings on our sofa...

HILDA and HORSGARTH: Yo ho!

JASPER: We got Clowns!

BUCKLES honks his horn.

JASPER: We've got a pirate...

STEVE: Arrr!

JASPER: And some guy in a turban...

LARRY THE AMAZING: Ta Daa!

JASPER: We've got Cowboys and Indians...

RUFUS: Yee Haw!

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Ditto!

JASPER: *(While indicating MELODEUM DAVENPORT.)* ...and I don't even know what that is! For crying out loud! We've got a Dead Guy where our kitchen used to be while the cops who couldn't care less are playing cards on our end table. The only thing missing here is Rod Serling!

ROWENA: I'm sorry... but... what?

JASPER: If our day were an airplane, it would be on fire! But listen. It doesn't have to crash. I figured out how to make it all go back to normal. Back to the way it was.

ROWENA: But it never was normal.

JASPER: It was a whole lot more normal than this. *(As ZOMBIE 1, ZOMBIE 2 AND ZOMBIE 3 walk by.)* Normal doesn't have Zombies!

ZOMBIE 1, ZOMBIE 2 and ZOMBIE 3: Lines! Lines!

ROWENA: But they're not mean Zombies, now, are they?

JASPER: That's not the point! It would be a whole lot more normal if they were! Don't you see? I don't want any of this!

ROWENA: But I do. I like the way my day is turning out.

PELLET steps forward and ROWENA takes his arm... or leg... or hoof... whatever.

JASPER: You're only saying that because you believe it's true. Listen. I've figured it out. I'm going to finish the play. It's the only way. But I can't do it by myself. I need your help. You see, I can only think up my own lines... and what I'd like you to say... but you have to say it. Then I can write it down.

ROWENA: What do you want me to say?

JASPER: Tell me that you love me.

PELLET gives a startled whinny.

JASPER: (To PELLET.) Not you. Her.

PELLET blows through his lips in relief... you know... like a horse.

ROWENA: What?

JASPER: You tell me that you love me, and then I'll say that I love you, too, and that I'm sorry I ever asked for a divorce.

ROWENA: But... but I don't love you.

JASPER: It doesn't matter!

ROWENA: I think it does.

PELLET whinnies in agreement.

JASPER: If you say, "I love you," then we can hug, curtain, and the play's over. All of these people...and horses... and whatever... can all go away, and we can live happily ever after, but I don't have to write that.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Hey, what about me?

JASPER: What? Who are you?

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: I'm Chief Wi-shi-ha-da-nah-may. Do I get a part?

JASPER: No! I can't deal with multiple characters.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Ah, comon. Just make me an extra. I don't mind being an extra. Here. Write it down: "Enter Chief Wi-shi-ha-da-nah-may. He crosses to the couch, where he sits next to the Vikings and will remain oblivious to everybody until the end of time. He truly serves no purpose whatsoever." Yeah. I'd be good with that.

HORSGARTH and HILDA: *(From the couch.)* Yo Ho!

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: See? They don't mind.

JASPER: You call that a life?

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: It sure beats where I used to be.

JASPER: But it could be better!

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Or worse. Hey, do what you want. But I'm fine with mediocre.

JASPER: No. You're on your own. Come on, Rowena. Tell me that you love me!

ROWENA: I'm sorry... but I don't.

JASPER: You can pretend that you do.

ROWENA: Pretend?

JASPER: Yeah. What's wrong with that? I'm willing to pretend that I love you.

ROWENA: *(Once more taking PELLET'S hoof in her hands.)* I'm sorry. I can't. I just don't feel right saying it. I don't have any motivation.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Seriously, I'll say it. *(Quickly taking JASPER into his arms and then dipping him; with emotion, and a leading man accent.)* I love you, Cassie!

JASPER: *(Struggling to get free.)* My name's not Cassie!

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Seriously? Don't stop the action. Just go with it. The audience will never know the difference.

JASPER: No! Now let go of me!

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: OK.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME lets JASPER fall, but not too hard, mostly just ungracefully.

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: But I think you're making a mistake here. You have to admit that was a better ending than what you had in mind.

JASPER: (*Getting back up.*) I don't have to admit anything! (*To ROWENA.*) Fine! If you don't want to tell me that you love me, then don't. You don't have to be in the play. None of you has to be in my play. I'll write you all out of it. It will just be me! (*Quickly crosses to the computer. To HOOT.*) You're going to have to move.

HOOT: Why?

JASPER: Because I need to use the computer.

HOOT: How come?

JASPER: It's the only way. I've got to end the play myself!

HOOT: (*Not moving.*) You know, I've just been sitting here... thinking. (*Beat.*) It's wonderful to have just one moment where you can think. Where you don't have to worry every second that something is going to tear open the fleshy part of your wrist or rip a hole in your cheek. It's hard to get that to look right again, you know. But I was thinking... all of these other characters... from down in the Folders... none of them is from a finished play. Some of them are so underdeveloped they wouldn't even know what a finished play is.

ZOMBIE 1, ZOMBIE 2 and ZOMBIE 3: (*As if on cue.*) Lines! Lines!

HOOT: See? The point I'm trying to make here is... I mean... how do you know that the only reason why any of us still exists is because our play was never completed?

EDDIE: (*To JASPER.*) Let me answer this one for you: You don't.

HOOT: I mean... look around you. This isn't bad. Really. Anything's better than grooming owls. We've got a good thing here. Why mess it up with an ending?

JASPER: You call this a good thing!? This is it! This is our entire Universe. Four walls... (*Looking out at the fourth wall, and just a tad bit out of character.*) ...more or less. There's nothing to do! There will never be anything to do!

MELODEUM DAVENPORT: Nonsense! With a tired old set like this, we'll always have something to renovate!

JASPER: (*To MELODEUM DAVENPORT.*) Stop it! Just... just... stop it!

HOOT: I'm of the opinion that having nothing to do is a good thing.

MRS. ELIZABETH LOUISE TEMPLETON BROWNING: Less is always better.

JASPER: Would you please!

HOOT: But here's something else to consider...

ALL in the room will stop whatever they're doing, lean forward, and listen intently to HOOT.

HOOT: *(Standing.)* What if none of this is what it seems? What if this is the play? What if we're all just characters in a stupid play about characters in a stupid play, and all of us are doomed to the same stupid ending?

ALL ON STAGE: *(Beat; don't worry about staying in character.)* Naw!

ALL on stage goes back to whatever it was they were doing.

EDDIE: You know, I'm siding with my buddy here. This ain't so bad. I mean... we got friends.

HOOT: Thank you.

EDDIE: Think nothin' of it.

HOOT: But it is something.

EDDIE: No argument here.

JASPER: *(Shoves HOOT out of the way and takes his seat.)* Who cares what everybody else wants to do? If you don't want the play to end, then write your own stupid play. *(JASPER starts processing words, speaking while doing so.)* I'm free! Free at last! Free to live my own life! Free to make my own decisions. Free... free to do whatever free people do, because... because I'll be free to do it. For free! *(With a final flourish.)* The End!

JASPER looks around and, of course, everybody is still there, most of them not even paying attention to what he's doing.

JASPER: *(While once more typing.)* Everybody exits.

Nobody goes anywhere.

JASPER: *(While typing.)* Lights! *(Beat.)* Curtain! *(Beat; no longer typing.)* Why isn't it working?! *(Standing; to the audience.)* Why are you still here?

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: *(Having crossed over to JASPER.)* You know, I didn't think that would work.

JASPER: What are you talking about?

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: You can't end a play without tying up all the loose ends.

JASPER: What do you know?!

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: Oh, I don't know. It just seems pretty obvious.

JASPER: I don't care! Now leave me alone!

CHIEF WISHIHADANAME: I was only trying to help.

JASPER turns around and almost bumps into the two nuns, SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE.

JASPER: Oh, comon! Nuns?!

SISTER TERESA: Actually, I'm not sure if we're really nuns at all.

SISTER MARIE: We just started wearing the outfits one day, and before we knew it, it became a habit.

SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE both titter.

SISTER MARIE: That's nun humour.

SISTER TERESA: *(Barely able to keep from laughing – after all, she knows the punchline.)* Knock! Knock!

JASPER: What?

SISTER TERESA: No, not, "What." You're supposed to say, "Who's there?" *(Beat.)* Knock! Knock!

JASPER: No.

SISTER TERESA: Oh, my. That's not right, either. Let's try it one more time. Knock! Knock!

SISTER MARIE: *(Without hesitation, jumping to the rescue.)* Who's there?

SISTER TERESA: *(Happily facing SISTER MARIE.)* Nun.

SISTER MARIE: Nun who?

SISTER TERESA: That's nun of your business!

SISTER MARIE and SISTER TERESA both titter some more.

SISTER TERESA: *(To JASPER.)* You see, when somebody says, "Knock! Knock!" you're supposed to say, "Who's there?" That's why they call it a "Knock! Knock!" joke.

JASPER: I know what a "Knock! Knock!" joke is. Everybody knows what a "Knock! Knock!" joke is. I just didn't want to do it.

MRS. GRIMALKIN: *(Stepping up.)* Isn't it wonderful to be able to say, "No"?

JASPER: No!

MRS. GRIMALKIN: Is it just me, or does that not make any sense?
(Wanders off again.)

JASPER: I don't care if it makes sense. I don't have to make sense. I don't want anything to do with any of you. *(To SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE.)* Now, both of you... just go!

SISTER TERESA: Oh, please, don't throw us out.

SISTER MARIE: We especially don't want to be chucked out...

SISTER TERESA: *(Starting to crack up.)* Because then we'd be...

SISTER MARIE and SISTER TERESA: Nun chucks! *(Break down laughing.)*

During all this, EDDIE has crossed over to JASPER.

EDDIE: How ya doin'?

JASPER: What?!

EDDIE: You know... How ya doin'?

JASPER: How am I doing? How am I doing!? I'll tell you how I'm doing!

EDDIE: You know, just some friendly advice... somethin' I learned as a plumber. You get all clogged up like this... it ain't no good. You gotta learn to go with the flow, if you know what I mean.

JASPER: *(A bit maniacal.)* Oh, yeah. I know what you mean.

JASPER suddenly grabs for EDDIE'S plumber's helper.

EDDIE: Hey! Whacha doin'?!

After a brief tussle, JASPER manages to get the plumber's helper, holding it menacingly, suction side toward EDDIE, who puts his hands up defensively and takes a step back.

EDDIE: Hey, put down the plumber's helper. You don't know where that's been.

JASPER: Yeah? Well, I know where's it's going to be... if you don't leave... now! *(Swinging around on the others – especially SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE.)* And that goes for all of you!

SISTER TERESA: *(Trying not to laugh.)* If we got flushed down the drain...

SISTER MARIE: *(Trying not to laugh.)* ...Then we'd be Sisters in a cistern!

SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE both once again break down laughing.

JASPER: That's not even funny!

RUFUS: I kinda liked it.

JASPER spins on RUFUS. Over the next few lines, JASPER will quickly point the plumber's helper from one person (or animal) to another. Nobody will be concerned in the least. HILDA and HORSGARTH, for instance, will look up, but not take their feet off the coffee table, and COP 1, COP 2, and COP 3 won't stop playing cards, even though they will look around – and then look at each other's cards.

JASPER: *(To RUFUS; a bit maniacal.)* I don't care if you liked it. I don't care if any of you liked it. *(Spinning on SISTER MARIE and SISTER TERESA.)* And you! Stop laughing!

SISTER MARIE: *(Trying, but not too hard, to stop laughing.)* Oh, my, Sister! It's a good thing he doesn't have a gun, because if he shot us...

SISTER TERESA: *(Barely able to get out the punchline.)* ...Then we'd be holy!

SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE both laugh even harder, having to lean on each other to keep from falling on the ground in hysterics.

JASPER: *(Still waving the plumber's helper.)* I'm serious! This is my house. Now get out! Every last one of you! *(To ALL COPS.)* Take your cards... *(To MRS. GRIMALKIN.)* ...and your cats... *(To FRED THE GORILLA.)* ...and your bananas and just get out!

RUFUS takes a step toward JASPER, and JASPER swings around and points the plumber's helper at RUFUS. RUFUS isn't scared in the least.

JASPER: I'm serious! A guy can only be pushed so far! Now take your spurs and your sequins, and just mosey right on out of here. All of you!

RUFUS: *(Taking a few steps back and holding out his arms in the classic "draw" stance...though no gun.)* Well then there feller, I guess it's come down to this.

JASPER won't have a clue what to do as RUFUS stares him down, preparing to draw. Everybody in the room will become quiet, looking back from one to the other.

RUFUS: *(Finally.)* Draw!

JASPER really does nothing, but RUFUS will clutch his chest as says...

RUFUS: Pow! *(Beat.)* You got me!

RUFUS falls to the stage, coughs and kicks his boots while JASPER looks at the plumber's helper, understandably puzzled.

RUFUS: *(Beat.)* Tell... tell my mama that I'm awfully fond of her. *(Coughs and kicks some more.)* I'm a headed for that big round up in the sky! *(More coughing and kicking.)* Yippee Ki Yay... *(With a final kick and a cough, dies, and none too soon.)*

STEVE: *(After a somber moment.)* Avast! Ye killed the lubber.

HILDA and HORSGARTH stand and take off their horns – along with their hair. HILDA and HORSGARTH will reverently hold horns and hair over their hearts, and everybody else on stage – except for MRS.

GRIMALKIN – will stand and either hold their hands or their hats or their teacups, as the case may be, over their hearts as they sadly bow their heads. There is some quiet sniffing from SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE. During this, MRS. GRIMALKIN will be quickly drawing on a piece of paper, which should not be overly obvious.

JASPER: *(Finally.)* What?!

SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE break into full-fledged sobs, crying on each other's shoulders.

JASPER: *(Holding up the plumber's helper.)* For crying out loud! I didn't shoot him! It's not even a real gun!

RUFUS: *(While quickly getting up and dusting himself off.)* Of course it's not real. If it was real... why somebody would a likely got hurt. *(Slapping JASPER on the shoulder.)* But that was a lot of fun! You played right along.

EDDIE takes back his plumber's helper from a defeated JASPER while everybody else puts their hats back on, or what have you. HILDA and HORSGARTH will bump each other as HILDA and HORSGARTH try to put their hats and hair back on, dropping them in the process and picking up the other's hat and hair and putting them on. HILDA and HORSGARTH will both look at each other and just shrug, not switching them back. Then SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE will cross to JASPER.

SISTER TERESA: That was exciting!

SISTER MARIE: Just like the Wild Northwest.

SISTER TERESA: I think it just the West, dear.

SISTER MARIE: I've heard the Northwest is pretty wild, too.

SISTER TERESA: Well... I suppose you're right. *(To JASPER.)*

Nevertheless, we're glad we didn't have to give that nice cowboy his last rights...

SISTER MARIE: *(Laughing.)* Because that wouldn't've been right!

SISTER TERESA and SISTER MARIE, laughing, will wander off, while everybody else, more or less, will go back to what they were doing before, if only for a short while.

MRS. GRIMALKIN: *(Crossing to RUFUS and showing him the picture she's been drawing.)* Here you are, young man.

RUFUS: *(Taking the picture and holding it at different angles.)* Well, what a we got here?

MRS. GRIMALKIN: It's a picture of a cat.

RUFUS: *(Turning it again.)* Why... I reckon it is.

MRS. GRIMALKIN: You said to draw. So I did.

RUFUS: I reckon so. But beggin' your pardon, ma'am, but you seem to have mis-interpreted my mis-interpretations. Though it is a right nice renderin' of a cat. Oh! And that reminds me... *(Takes a cat out of his vest.)* Is this one a yourin's?

MRS. GRIMALKIN: Why it is! That's Number 12. *(Holds the cat up to her ear.)* Oh, sorry. It's Number 14. Thank you, young man.

RUFUS: *(While touching the brim of his hat.)* Think nothin' of it, ma'am.

MRS. GRIMALKIN: Just in time for intermission!

Curtain.

END OF ACT ONE

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