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D A N D E L I O N, AND OTHER PLAYS

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of one full-length play, Dandelion, and two shorter plays.

Dandelion is a dark farce about a group of people who escape to the "last vacant lot" from a world filled with buildings and pavement. The mad scientist who controls this lot is obsessed with the idea that he can make a brew from dandelions (virtually extinct) which will render humans impotent and stop the growth which is destroying the world. His cohorts include a wife given to burying things, a romantic poet who loves dandelions, a lively lady whose monomania is procreation and a 10-year-old girl who seems to be a representative of the forces of destruction who wants to take over the vacant lot. The play was given a professional performance by the New Play Centre in the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1972.

"One Spring Morning" is a light comedy about the chance meeting of a young woman and a middle-aged man at a bus stop. Spring infects them causing the man to become both light hearted and light headed much to his embarrassment, if not sorrow, in another version of the battle of the sexes. The play was presented by The New Play Centre in the Vancouver Art Gallery in June 1972.

"The Cliff" is a somewhat blacker comedy about belief, doubt and especially self doubt. A young man marks his twenty-first birthday with profound depression and throws himself off a suicide cliff. Miraculously he survives and is named the new messiah by a group of religious fanatics who have been watching the cliff and hoping for a saviour. Through their worship and his playing the role of a saviour, the young man becomes convinced that he is, indeed, immortal. There is one nagging doubt. One of his

disciples is more pragmatic about the need for a leader than about the young man's immortality. To dispel his follower's doubt, the young man leaps a second time from the cliff. He doesn't survive. The play was first presented by the Vancouver Little Theatre in 1970.

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D A N D E L I O N

a full-length play

C H A R A C T E R S

GEORGE, middle-aged

CINDY, about 11

MICHAEL, middle-aged. A seedy poet one-time clerk.

GRACE, middle-aged. George's wife. Gone to seed.

MAPLE, very pregnant, middle thirties

THE TIME: The future. 1980's

THE PLACE: Lot in the middle of the city.

SETTING: A bare stage representing the last lot. Size, about a city block....A crude shed constructed in one corner.

(A bare stage with a crude shed in one corner. There are sounds from within it. Sound of birds chirping.)

GEORGE. (From within) Ah-hah! (Clinking of glass)

(Cindy enters, sucking a huge lollipop. She hears George and goes over and tries shed door. It is locked.)

Who's that! (A slot in the door is pulled back and George looks out.)

CINDY. Me.

GEORGE. Go away from the door.

(Cindy waits, licking lollipop)
(George pulls back slot, comes out cautiously, making certain no-one can see in. He locks shed door puts key in his shoe.)

Who are you?

CINDY. Cindy.

GEORGE. What do you want?

CINDY. You sent for me.

GEORGE. What's the password?

CINDY. Dandelion.

GEORGE. Not so loudly!

CINDY. (Softer) Dandelion.

GEORGE. How did you know?

CINDY. Because I'm the right one.

GEORGE. You came alone?

CINDY. Of course.

GEORGE. How can I be certain?

CINDY. (Licking sucker) Because there's no-one else here.

GEORGE. (Looking around) Are you sure They didn't send you?

CINDY. Who? (Looking around)

GEORGE. Them. Out there.

CINDY. Do you want a lick? (Holding out sucker)

GEORGE. You weren't sent?

CINDY. I read your notice on the fence.

GEORGE. What notice? Oh yes...What did it say?

CINDY. "Wanted...intelligent child for a few hours a day...
 must be dedicated."

GEORGE. I can't remember what I wrote. It's been so long.

CINDY. What's the pay?

GEORGE. Are you sure you're dedicated?

CINDY. I love candy.

GEORGE. Three lollipops a day.

CINDY. In advance?

GEORGE. Later.

CINDY. I want the 8" striped ones.

GEORGE. Are you sure I can trust you?

CINDY. This is a neat empty place. It would be fun to play here.

GEORGE. No playing allowed.

CINDY. Is this what they call "nature?"

GEORGE. Yes.

CINDY. I never knew there was a place like this in the middle
 of the city.

GEORGE. When I bought it, it was 20 miles out of town.

CINDY. What does "out of town" mean?

GEORGE. I haven't time for social conversation. These are
 the rules...listen closely...
 No-ones allowed in my laboratory
 Keep off the flowers
 Walk lightly
 Keep your mouth shut
 Keep your eyes open
 You help me and I'll help you.

CINDY. (Licking sucker) Sure.

GEORGE. You agree? This is what I want you to do.

CINDY. I know what you want me to do.

GEORGE. You do?

CINDY. Yes.

GEORGE. What?

CINDY. You want someone to bring you news of the Outside.

GEORGE. I have someone does that already.

CINDY. But she's slower and less reliable. Also you want
 someone to bring your supplies.

GEORGE. She does that too.

CINDY. But she's getting more and more forgetful.

GEORGE. How did you know?

CINDY. And more and more scared to go out.

GEORGE. So long ago when I put up that notice...wish I could
 remember...

CINDY. I'm the perfect applicant. Give me my first job.

GEORGE. It will be a trial.

CINDY. Okay. (Licking sucker) You want me to get some people
 for you?

GEORGE. You can read my mind!

CINDY. It's easy.

GEORGE. Not ordinary people...special ones.

CINDY. Like you?

GEORGE. We can't afford to be that special. A few high class
 people of quality and dedication.

CINDY. Okay.

GEORGE. ...one other thing...

CINDY. Yes...?

GEORGE. Are you sure you don't work for them?

CINDY. I work for you.

GEORGE. You know too much.

CINDY. Just what you want me to.

GEORGE. Did they send you?

CINDY. No.

GEORGE. You can tell me.

CINDY. I read your notice.

GEORGE. No-one else ever read it.

CINDY. The right person did. And I knew the password.

GEORGE. And you don't work for Grace?

CINDY. I work for you only.

GEORGE. All right. One other small thing...

CINDY. (Licking sucker) Yes???

GEORGE. You must bring me dandelions. All you can find.

CINDY. I should have asked for four suckers.

GEORGE. I know there's not many left...but a child of your abilities...

CINDY. Okay, I'll find you some.

GEORGE. Good. And don't take any chances. If you see anything that looks like a flower bring it...Take it out by the roots... I want it alive...

CINDY. Okay...I'll be back soon. (Kisses him and exits)

GEORGE. A kiss! After ten years. Ahh...well...back to work. Soon my plan will be underway...at last!

(Starts to unlock the shed, then hears Grace offstage singing a dirge.)

She's back at last! Watch it, you're dropping my test tubes!

GRACE. I'm back! I'm back, George.

GEORGE. Yes...yes...welcome home...

(Grace enters, loaded with parcels and bags.)
Give them to me...careful!

GRACE. Look what I found!

GEORGE. Watch that bag!

GRACE. A dead fly.

GEORGE. Did you get everything?

GRACE. Can I bury it George?

GEORGE. Where are my sterilized gloves?

GRACE. I forgot George.

GEORGE. Darn you, you do it on purpose.

GRACE. Can I put these down, George?

GEORGE. Put them behind the shed...

GRACE. Then will you give me my plot, George?

GEORGE. Don't I always?

GRACE. Yes, George.

GEORGE. Careful! You know my gladiola bulbs are planted there.

(Grace takes them back to shed)

Hurry up. Come out from behind there.
Watch my rose bushes!

GRACE. (Coming out from behind shed) I put them down, George.

GEORGE. That's better.

GRACE. Can I have my grave now?

GEORGE. Beside the last one. Don't take an inch more.

GRACE. Thank you, George.

GEORGE. ...were you followed?

GRACE. No.

GEORGE. Anyone ask suspicious questions?

GRACE. No.

GEORGE. Anyone hanging around outside the fence?

GRACE. No, George.

GEORGE. Now then, did you find any dandelions?

GRACE. There aren't any.

GEORGE. But you found a fly. And flies are just as rare.

GRACE. I found a fly. But it's dead. (Cradles fly in her hands and starts to sing a lullaby to it.)

GEORGE. I bet you never looked. (Grace continues to sing.)
I bet you never even tried!

(Grace continues to sing)
Year after year. Will you never forgive!
(Grace continues to sing)
Quiet. (Grace stops)

GEORGE. You should help me, Grace. You should be on my side.
What can you hope to get from Them? They won't let you keep your graveyards, you know.

(Grace whimpers) No, they won't.

GRACE. I want to be buried.

GEORGE. They won't let you.

GRACE. You promised me my own grave!

GEORGE. Not if they take it away from me, Grace...If you help them take it away from me...

GRACE. I won't...George...I won't...

GEORGE. They might promise you a grave now...but when the time comes they'll laugh at you. You should have stuck with me. Grace.

GRACE. Yes, George...

GEORGE. The time is ripe. My experiments are nearly through.
Soon I'll be ready...

GRACE. Can I have my grave, George?

GEORGE. But I have to have more dandelions...

GRACE. Can I have my grave, George?

GEORGE. More dandelions!

GRACE. My grave?

GEORGE. More dandelions first.

GRACE. No, George! I don't want to go back out there.

GEORGE. I need dandelions.

GRACE. There aren't any more George...

GEORGE. There must be some!

GRACE. No! All the dirt's gone.

GEORGE. (Shuddering) Can it have gotten that bad!

GRACE. I want to bury my baby now...

GEORGE. Eight years ago there were still places where a person could find a few surviving dandelions...

GRACE. Come along, baby.

GEORGE. Not yet. I haven't given you permission to go.

GRACE. Lower your voice. You're in the presence of the dead.

GEORGE. I'm a violent man, Grace.

GRACE. The funeral is beginning.

GEORGE. You would do well to remember that.

GRACE. (Starts to hum)

GEORGE. It's only your fear of me that keeps you in line.

GRACE. "This child is not dead, he merely sleeps snug in the bosom of the earth..." (Exits)

GEORGE. Lucky for her she does as she's told.
(Goes into his provisions, carries a bag around to the shed.)
Everything I need for my last experiment...Ah...my new lab coat...
(Pulls out a smock) Now I can do the job properly.
(Puts on smock)

(Grace is heard singing off-stage)

GEORGE. Ah...just right. Let's see. (Rummages through bags)
Turpentine...ammonia...baking soda...good...(Gets out key, looks around, opens shed door and goes in with supplies. Shuts door.)

(Harsh, mechanical noise offstage...sound of construction... Loud and frightening.)

(Michael rushes in, frightened. He is carrying a briefcase very carefully and panting. He looks behind him in terror, stops and notices suddenly where he is...looks around him with surprise and begins to relax.)

MICHAEL. Ah...wonderful...incredible..."Little did I know when the outside I did leave...That I would stumble into this garden of Eve...T'is strange how out of terror springs delight... And pleasant surprise out of fearful flight..."
(Slat opens on shed door and George peers out)
(Cindy enters, carrying a FOR SALE sign and eating a chocolate bar.)

CINDY. Boy, did you run!

MICHAEL. They're after me!

CINDY. Who? (Throwing down candy wrapper and placing sign OVER IT.)

MICHAEL. You didn't see them?

CINDY. (Chewing) No.

MICHAEL. Will I be safe here?

CINDY. Sure.

MICHAEL. Good, Sanctuary at last. (Turns away)
"If I listen very closely who can tell...There might be a small movement in the tree...And out will pop a tiny feathered head... And chirp and warble softly just for me..."

CINDY. (Goes over to shed and knocks on door, softly)
George, I brought you your first recruit. Be sure to look in his briefcase. I'm going to find you another winner now...

MICHAEL. Wo whom are you talking?

CINDY. Make yourself at home. (Kisses him and leaves, skipping)

MICHAEL. A kiss! You angel...
"It's been so long since last that I was kissed...And until now, I didn't know what I missed...How sweet that perfect strangers should so part...I'll carry you forever in my heart."

(George has crept out of shed, shuts door softly)
What's this? (Picks up FOR SALE sign)

(George approaches behind him. He is carrying an axe.)
Don't tell me this lovely place is up for sale!
(Turns and sees George.) Oh no! Caught already! I didn't mean to do it. Nothing ever goes right for me. Please...make it mercifully swift...What are you waiting for? Clever man...You know the terror of waiting is worse than the act. Don't make me suffer...(Kneeling) Do it now!

(George snatches away sign...chops it up...) (Michael watches in amazement.)

GEORGE. (Finally) This is what I do to your kind.

MICHAEL. Without a trial?

GEORGE. Grace paid you to put that up, didn't she?

MICHAEL. What? Who?

GEORGE. You're working for her, is that it?

MICHAEL. I thought I was working for you!

GEORGE. Who are you? What do you want?

MICHAEL. Oh dear, I'm so confused.

GEORGE. Quickly!

MICHAEL. The little girl brought me. She said you were looking for people.

GEORGE. Not people like you!

MICHAEL. What's wrong with me?

GEORGE. That sign.

MICHAEL. I didn't bring it. She did. It was on your lot.

GEORGE. They've done it again! It's the 4th this week.

MICHAEL. Are they after you, too? I know how it feels to be down and out...prosecuted and tormented...

GEORGE. Why did she pick you?

MICHAEL. People of sensitivity have always been prosecuted by the masses. The extraordinary individual is cursed by the times...

GEORGE. Let's see that briefcase.

MICHAEL. No!

GEORGE. (Brandishing axe) Hand it over.

MICHAEL. Never!

GEORGE. You want to work for me or not?

MICHAEL. You don't understand.

GEORGE. If you showed it to Cindy, you can show it to me.

MICHAEL. But I didn't.

GEORGE. You did. Open it or go.

MICHAEL. ...Only an artist or poet would comprehend...careful! Don't jolt them!

GEORGE. (Grabs case) We'll see about that...(Opens case) Ah-hah!

MICHAEL. Give them back - please.

GEORGE. (Carefully taking out a pot of dandelions) In perfect shape...She's worth 4 lollipops!

MICHAEL. Please...treat them tenderly...we've suffered so much together.

GEORGE. You know about the dandelion?

MICHAEL. You mean - you know too? You and I are going to be good friends.

GEORGE. We'll see about that. Tell me what you know.

MICHAEL. When nature started disappearing..no-one ever gave a thought to the dandelion..."Save the roses they all said, Save the orchids before they're dead"...All the other species...carefully tended in the plant reserves...but the dandelion...still considered a weed...slowly died out...horrible mass slaughter...What happened to the cows was nothing compared to what happened to the dandelions...

GEORGE. But you have some dandelions.

MICHAEL. Yes. I began to look upon it as my role in life...to save the dandelion...I preserved a few...as potted plants...But they're a free, wild, flower...They don't thrive in captivity...

GEORGE. That's been my problem.

MICHAEL. I kept the survivors on my window at work. We cheered each other up. At first it wasn't so bad...the sun still got to them once in a while...And if I stood on my desk and held them up over my head...they could just glimpse a sight of the ocean. It gave them a little happiness...

GEORGE. Yes?

MICHAEL. But the sun got weaker...the buildings went up...and the ocean disappeared...

GEORGE. Please...I was a clerk once too...

MICHAEL. We're each doing what we can. Me, by saving a species...and you, by saving this land...We should have both lived in the old days.

GEORGE. Are you going to help me?

MICHAEL. Of course. My dandelions will like it here. "At last my friends we've found a home. Where you can grow and I can roam."

GEORGE. So you know a lot about dandelions...?

MICHAEL. Everything.

GEORGE. I can use you. But first I have to be sure.

MICHAEL. You can trust me.

GEORGE. What's the password?

MICHAEL. Death and destruction to the enemy! No?
Long live nature! No?

GEORGE. I need someone I can trust.

MICHAEL. But no-body told me the password!

GEORGE. What good would a password be if anyone knew it? Out!

MICHAEL. Give me another chance. They'll get me if I go back
out. "An acre a day keeps the bulldozers away..."?

GEORGE. Out!

MICHAEL. "All we really need is dirt."? Is it one word or more?

GEORGE. (Pushing him) Traitor. Off my land.

MICHAEL. Don't...watch my dandelions...!

GEORGE. What did you say?

MICHAEL. My dandelions...

GEORGE. Why didn't you say so in the first place?

MICHAEL. You mean I got it? I can join?

GEORGE. You and me against the world!

MICHAEL. We can do it!

GEORGE. You're game?

MICHAEL. Yes, I'll do anything to help, I'll be your friend.

GEORGE. I don't want a friend. They've tried that before.
Accomplice yes, friend...never. Grace put them up to it. I
chased them off...built up my fences...but they still sneak in
and put up FOR SALE signs on my lot...trying to frighten me.

MICHAEL. You could sue them for trespassing.

GEORGE. I never see them. It's magic how the signs get there.
I'm afraid to go to the edges of my lot any more. They have every-
one on their side.

MICHAEL. Except me.

GEORGE. It must be Grace. And I can't send her away. They're
out to get me, so I have to get them first.

MICHAEL. How?

GEORGE. Wouldn't you like to know? Ask no questions and we'll get along.

MICHAEL. As you say.

GEORGE. Now you must take the oath and then we can get down to business. Speak after me.

"I swear I'll keep my mouth shut and my big feet off the plants.. I swear not to step on anything, litter, or spit...but to keep

my mind on the cause...and my eyes on the ground..." And, finally..

"I promise that I'm an enemy of the System, and a friend to nature.."

MICHAEL. I could put that in rhyme beautifully.

GEORGE. Yes! Now come over to my lab.

MICHAEL. Ah. It feels so good to be safe. Let us introduce ourselves...I'm Michael. And you're George.

GEORGE. How did you know that?

MICHAEL. The girl told me. Is she your daughter?

GEORGE. Don't say that...She's my messenger...

MICHAEL. Sorry...

GEORGE. You're sure you're ready.

MICHAEL. I'm ready...I've been living my whole existence just for this. Wait a moment, while I shed my miserable other half...
(Takes off jacket, tie, shoes and socks.)

GEORGE. Grace will bury them if you leave them there.

MICHAEL. Who's Grace?

GEORGE. Our enemy. Come to my lab.

MICHAEL. (As George unlocks shed)
A fine true friend is very hard to find. I looked for years but might as well have been blind...

GEORGE. You're the first person I've allowed in here...

MICHAEL. "I gave up hope and thought my life was through...
And then, George, just in time, I have met you...

GEORGE. Get ready for a surprise. (Opens door) Have a peak.

MICHAEL. My limbs tremble with anticipation...

GEORGE. The coast is clear. Go in, but take care where you step..

MICHAEL. It's so dark in here...(Enter)

GEORGE. Watch it!

MICHAEL. I can't see anything. (Bumps against shelf, tinkle of glass)

GEORGE. Careful!

MICHAEL. Can it be? Is it possible??

GEORGE. Surprised, eh?

MICHAEL. Oh you beauties...you angels of joy...row upon row of them...Let me touch you...Let me...Ohhh...Oh-oh!

GEORGE. Are they all right?

MICHAEL. No they're ailing.
"My little globes of sunlight don't give up...
There's still hope yet, of nectar for you to sup..."

They're suffering from lack of sunshine and air...
like mine were...But we can fix that...(Coming out)

GEORGE. How?

MICHAEL. With the same fertilizer I used on mine.

GEORGE. What is it?

MICHAEL. I've never told a soul. But you're my friend. Soda pop.

GEORGE. Amazing! You're sure?

MICHAEL. Absolutely. Except for one side-effect.

GEORGE. We can send Cindy for soda pop.

MICHAEL. Actually, they're disasterous side-effects.

GEORGE. What are they?

MICHAEL. You said you knew about The dandelion.

GEORGE. Tell me anyway.

MICHAEL. You haven't asked why they're after me. It's because of the power of the pot.

GEORGE. The what?

MICHAEL. Cindy knew. I don't know how, but she did. It was an accident. She found me on the street and brought me here.

GEORGE. What are you talking about?

MICHAEL. I thought you knew. I told you about my job...and the pots I kept on the window...

GEORGE. So?

MICHAEL. Well they fired me. They said it was either the pots or me. I couldn't give my pots up. I had two then. As I was leaving ...one pot slipped...and fell...shattered into a million pieces. They'd never believe it was an accident.

GEORGE. You mean they're after you for littering?

MICHAEL. No! It exploded when it hit the cement...the whole building went up...25 stories...It was horrible...

GEORGE. A potted dandelion?

MICHAEL. A potted dandelion fertilized with soda pop.

GEORGE. You blew up a 25 storey building!

MICHAEL. My hands were sweaty. It slipped. I wouldn't have stood a chance. I ran away. Then Cindy found me.

GEORGE. What a plan!

MICHAEL. I know I did a terrible thing, but you must let me stay. I'm so happy here.

GEORGE. A man with the guts and know how to blow up a whole skyscraper. Magnificent!

MICHAEL. I didn't do it on purpose.

GEORGE. All those years you must have researched...like me... waiting...dreaming...

MICHAEL. I'm innocent...you must believe me!

GEORGE. What a perfect team we'll make. Don't just get rid of the babies...get rid of the buildings too. My plan would have taken so much more time...but the combination of yours and mine.. It's invincible. (Kissing him) You're a genius!

MICHAEL. I'm glad you still like me.

GEORGE. Now let me tell you what I've found out about the dandelion...

(Grace is heard offstage)

Blast it, Grace is coming back. I'll tell you later.

MICHAEL. What a peculiar sound.

GEORGE. She's winding it up now.

(Grace enters, singing)

MICHAEL. How oddly she's dressed. She's a true child of the earth...primitive...dirty...

GEORGE. Devious.

GRACE. All is over. (To Michael) Have you come to mourn?

MICHAEL. I'm a friend.

GRACE. George doesn't have friends.

GEORGE. The time comes, Grace, when one needs help to carry out one's dreams of a lifetime.

GRACE. (To Michael) It's a shame you missed the funeral.

MICHAEL. Good heavens! Whose?

GRACE. My baby's.

MICHAEL. No!

GEORGE. She lies. A lot.

MICHAEL. How touching.

GEORGE. (Pointing to chopped up sign) More things for you to bury, Little Mother.

GRACE. Goodie. A shroud! (Picks up Michael's jacket and shoes, and puts pieces of the sign in the jacket.)

MICHAEL. What an incredible woman. The stuff of nature.

GEORGE. You don't mind losing your jacket and shoes?

MICHAEL. No, but isn't her hobby messy?

GEORGE. I confine her to a small area.

(Grace exits)

MICHAEL. (Watching her leave.) You child of the earth, I understand... All you desire is a little land..." She's your wife?

GEORGE. She was. Now she's my enemy.

GRACE. (Offstage) Ashes to ashes...dust to dust... Back into the soil from whence we came...

MICHAEL. I can't believe that. I detect the ghost of something tender between you...

GEORGE. Ghosts are dead.

GRACE. (Offstage) Now mommy will wrap you warm and you'll never have to be cold again...

GEORGE. Nine years of this...

(Grace starts singing lullaby)

MICHAEL. Do you have any children?

GEORGE. Why?

MICHAEL. You called her, "Little Mother."

GEORGE. Never mind.

MICHAEL. You must have loved her once.

GEORGE. It was a long time ago. Before the Great Crush.

MICHAEL. Love is beautiful.

GEORGE. Love is destruction.

MICHAEL. No!

GEORGE. Love makes those high-rises, remember.

MICHAEL. But does it have to?

GEORGE. Clever man. Now let me tell you about my project.
My special brew...

MICHAEL. Brew?

GEORGE. Yes...one sip of this stuff and you are permanently sterile. It took me years to develop it. Babies will become a nightmare of the past. The world will slowly die off. There will be room again like before. They will no longer need my lot for low rentals.

MICHAEL. What are you talking about?

GEORGE. I knew you'd catch on instantly. I know where all the public water supplies are located in the city. In one night you and I could get to all of them.

MICHAEL. I love babies...

GEORGE. This brew not only makes everyone permanently sterile but it also induces miscarriages in women already in that unfortunate condition of pregnancy. Eventually we can get to the other cities. Our members will grow...we'll win support from responsible clear-thinking members of society. We'll have teams working in all parts of the world!

MICHAEL. You're not serious...???

GEORGE. I know it works because Grace took it once...

MICHAEL. No!

GEORGE. It's what started me on my project.

MICHAEL. Poor Grace!

GEORGE. If you're for nature...you're against babies...remember?

MICHAEL. It's monstrous...

GEORGE. Nonsense, it's necessary.

MICHAEL. I can't believe you'd do it.

GEORGE. I knew I could count on you. Now all we have to do is find someone to try it out on once more...

MICHAEL. "Rockabye baby on the treetop...

GEORGE. It's a beautiful act...we're saving mankind from itself...

MICHAEL. "When the wind blows the cradle will rock..."

GEORGE. Pioneers of a new science...

MICHAEL. "When the wind blows the cradle will fall..."

GEORGE. Call it, if you like, Dandelionology...

MICHAEL. "And down will fall baby, cradle and all..."

GEORGE. I knew you'd approve...and now, if Cindy would only come back with my other recruit...We can strike tonight. First the sterilization, Second the bombs...

(The noise again, louder...)

Oh no! They'll do anything to scare me!

MICHAEL. They're after me. Don't give me up!

(Grace runs out and huddles close to George)

GRACE. Help! Don't let them get my graves!

GEORGE. The whole earth is shaking!

(Noise stops)

MICHAEL. It's stopped.

GEORGE. For a while.

GRACE. I hope my grave's all right. (Exits)

MICHAEL. What is it?

GEORGE. The sound of destruction. And they won't stop till they get this too.

MICHAEL. Horrible!

(Cindy skips on, eating potatoe chips)

CINDY. Hi! What's wrong with you?

GEORGE. Didn't you hear it?

CINDY. (Dropping chips) Hear what?

MICHAEL. That noise.

CINDY. Want a chip?

MICHAEL. Amazing.

CINDY. I came to tell you that I found another person. She'll be here any minute. Goodbye, I'll be back soon.

GEORGE. Wait! (Cindy exits. Drops bag on way out.)

MICHAEL. I don't understand. Where's she gone now?

(Maple rushes in, dropping things from the enormous load she is carrying. Easel, paints, etc.)

MAPLE. My God what a hideous noise. (Sees them with great delight.) Men!

MICHAEL. Hello.

MAPLE. Two men. Wonderful. This will do very nicely. I8m Maple. My friends call me Maple the Magnificent.

GEORGE. What do you want?

MAPLE. I'm going to get lots of painting done here. You'd never mistreat a lady. Oh dear, I've dropped so many things. My condition makes it very difficult to stoop.

MICHAEL. Allow me...

MAPLE. Thank you, darling. Such a wonderful spot! (Sitting)

GEORGE. I said, "What do you want"?

MICHAEL. You shouldn't harress the poor Lady, George. You should have some consideration for her state.

GEORGE. State?

MICHAEL. Of pregnancy. Surely it's obvious.

GEORGE. Pregnancy!

MAPLE. You dear. Pretending you didn't notice. Men of such tactfulness and charm are extremely rare these days. I am quite small with this one actually. Usually I'm like a tank on these happy occasions. Small babies are so cuddly aren't they? Easier to deliver. too, which must take quite a load off your minds as you'll be helping.

MICHAEL. Helping?

MAPLE. It's an experience you wouldn't want to miss.

GEORGE. Did Cindy send you?

MAPLE. Yes. She said you were looking for an eminent mother.

GEORGE. How did she know? I didn't tell her that.

MAPLE. Very enterprising child. My eldest, you know.

MICHAEL. Your eldest?

MAPLE. I haven't seen her in years. She's gotten very cute. Like her mother.

GEORGE. When are you due?

MAPLE. (Setting up her easel) Any moment. I love the outdoors. It's such a novelty.

GEORGE. Could you accommodate me by telling me the pass word.

MAPLE. I love having my babies in spots like this. The first few weeks are heaven...And then, of course, they take them away... as soon as they're off their dear mother's milk.

GEORGE. The password, if you don't mind...

MAPLE. ...Those darling little mouths at my breasts. I have orgasms three times a day when I'm breast feeding...put my things down there. (To Michael)

GEORGE. I'm waiting for the password.

MAPLE. It's sad, that's progress. What good can you expect from the Organization? They have no passion...

GEORGE. You know it, of course?

MAPLE. Stable, unemotional young adults are the end product... They are reputed to have no hangups, no incestuous phases...such a pity. (Grace crawls out.) What's that!

MICHAEL. That's George's wife, Grace.

MAPLE. How unfortunate for both of us.

GEORGE. Evasions will get you no-where. It's true I was hoping for a pregnant recruit...but she must know the password.

MICHAEL. Ahhh. Eternal mother...Where would we be without you... Strong, capable, but with such tender sentiments...

GEORGE. The password or eviction...

MAPLE. Do you know what I have a craving for right now, darling?

MICHAEL. Babies...ah...motherhood...

MAPLE. Dandelion wine. Do you have any?

GEORGE. What was the first word?

MAPLE. Dandelion.

GEORGE. About time.

MAPLE. Will you get me some? I see you're studying my picture. Do you like it? Flatter me, you devil. It's very artistic, don't you think? I specialize in paintings of nude men. I also paint babies as a sideline. Male babies only of course.

MICHAEL. "With swollen belly, how like a rose is she. Containing there within a sleeping beauty. And suckling tiny child at her breast...Sacred is she and by all mankind blest..."

MAPLE. "Swollen"...What an ugly word. So many nicer words to describe my happy condition. "Swelling" for instance...there's something sensuous about "Swelling". "Belly"...ugh! Sounds so much like a brood mare doesn't it? I have it..."Swelling roundness"...much better. I love ambiguity. "With swelling roundness..." What was the rest, lovey poo?

MICHAEL. (Hurt) Nothing at all.

MAPLE. It's nice to be immortalized in poetry. If, on the other hand, one forgets one's own poetry that quickly...

GEORGE. Now that I have my recruits, I am ready to undergo the final phase in my plan to save my lot and the world.

MAPLE. Babies, of course, are difficult models...but such darlings...so primitive. Do you have any babies? No, I guess not...not with that. (Indicating Grace)

GEORGE. It will take time, of course, but eventually we will be able to return the world to the happy state it once was.

MAPLE. I've had several. I love bearing children. One feels so in harmony with the world.

GEORGE. I would appreciate your undivided attention.

MAPLE. I can tell that my painting has not impressed you, George. It does look frightfully limp...but men find it so hard to manage an erection when I'm painting them. Even if they do, it almost always gives way after an hour or two. Do you know darling, I can tell all about a man just by looking at his genitals? I should have gone into business...there's good money in speculation. Now you...for instance...hmmmm...would you consider modelling for me?

GEORGE. This is my super-plan I'm trying to tell you about! My whole life has been directed toward this project.

MICHAEL. Ah...a true woman...preoccupied with the little things in life..."The issues of state may pass her by...But she can tell you how to make a pie..."

MAPLE. Does the sight of my stomach excite you?

MICHAEL. I...ah...

GEORGE. If you work for me you've got to listen to me!

MAPLE. I used to make love in a place like this...Please... Georgie...take off your clothes....

GEORGE. Stop that! It's only a matter of time until they get here.

MICHAEL. We mustn't let them. They'll get me!

GEORGE. Not if we get them first. But we must act now!

MAPLE. Let it all hang out, Georgie...

MICHAEL. What must we do?

GEORGE. It's about time you listened! First, you must have your baby...

GRACE. Baby?

MICHAEL. What about medical attention?

GEORGE. She'll have it here.

GRACE. I want a baby...

MAPLE. Of course. I've delivered all my own babies with the help of my friends.

MICHAEL. There might be complications. After all..."To have a baby might be a common thing...But one never knows what dangers it can bring..."

GEORGE. Shut up!

MAPLE. I love rude, forceful men. I hope my child takes after you, Georgie. I firmly believe that a child is influenced by the first things he sees in life...

GRACE. Oh look!

MAPLE. I hate people who hog the conversation. I knew a friend who had this perfectly marvellous baby on her balcony...Well, when this child grew up...he moved out...got his sleeping bag, tent, camp stove and utensils and went out to seek his fortune on the balcony.

MICHAEL. Where is she going? (Grace has left)

GEORGE. I hate to think.

MAPLE. He even had a little tree in a pot. It was marvellous to go over there to visit and to watch him, stooping over the camp-stove brewing coffee...

MICHAEL. Why did she go out there?

GEORGE. I don't want to know...but I do...

MAPLE. In the end, of course, they tore down the balcony to make room for another apartment, and he went crazy. Lovely child...

MICHAEL. George, are you all right?

GEORGE. They've done it again.

MAPLE. Would you like a snack? I have all manner of goodies with me...pretzels, dates, apples...synthetic of course, but quite natural tasting. Also I have lovely flowered toilet paper and room deoderizer, I always bring the necessities. One never knows...

MICHAEL. Such femininity...such charm...

(Grace begins her service, offstage)

MAPLE. What is that awful noise?

MICHAEL. Is it another service?

GEORGE. At this rate, it'll soon be mine...

MAPLE. I hope she's not coming back.

MICHAEL. She is...and she's carrying something, George.

MAPLE. I detest other women.

GEORGE. I knew it.

MAPLE. It's a crime the way baby girls have to grow up and become competition.

MICHAEL. It's another sign, George.

GEORGE. (Shaking) Yes...I know.

MICHAEL. But you haven't looked.

MAPLE. I hate sharing. The ratio should be three to one.

GEORGE. It's always the same.

MAPLE. Or better still...ten to one...

MICHAEL. She's bringing it here.

GEORGE. Don't let her.

MAPLE. Or best yet...thousand to one...

MICHAEL. She's coming.

(Grace enters, still singing, half dragging large sign with FOR SALE on it.)

GRACE. Clear the path please, this is a funeral procession.

GEORGE. Take it back, Grace.

MAPLE. A funeral procession?

MICHAEL. Easy...George.

GEORGE. Get me the axe, Michael.

MICHAEL. Never.

GRACE. Ashes to ashes...dust unto dust...

GEORGE. The axe!

MAPLE. Where?

GEORGE. By the shed...

MICHAEL. You're not going to hurt her!

GEORGE. Let go, Grace. (Struggling with her to tear away sign)

GRACE. No, let go!

MAPLE. (Handing him axe) Here...Tarzan...

MICHAEL. Careful...

GRACE. (Letting go of sign) Give my coffin back!

GEORGE. (Starting to chop sign) Hold her, Michael.

MICHAEL. (Holding Grace, who is sobbing and trying to get free)
It's all right, Grace...

GRACE. He's smashing it!

MAPLE. How exciting.

MICHAEL. It's only a piece of wood, Grace.

MAPLE. That's it. Chop, chop, chop! Up and down, up and down...
Oh, do it again...do it again.

GEORGE. Finally...one more...destroyed...

GRACE. My coffin...

 (George staggers away from sign)

GEORGE. You can let her go now.

 (Grace runs over to sign, weeps over the pieces)

MICHAEL. How sad.

MAPLE. I love violent men. There's a strong correlation between
a man's violent tendencies and the size of his organ.

GEORGE. It's time to get down to business. The next person
interrupting me will have their head chopped off.

MAPLE. How exhilarating...

MICHAEL. Shhh. Quiet, Grace...

 (Silence)

GEORGE. That's more like it. Now, you were probably wondering
why you were brought here...Why you were chosen...

MAPLE. I've always been popular with men.

GEORGE. Silence!

MAPLE. Brute.

GEORGE. You are probably also wondering what the password means.
I'll tell you. It's our last hope...the Dandelion!

MICHAEL. Ah...my babies...

GEORGE. Michael was chosen because of his knowledge of the dandelion. He is my assistant. Maple, because she is pregnant... she is my subject...

MAPLE. Of course...the children are our future.

GEORGE. And both of you share a common love of nature and dislike for the Outside, which is necessary as we are going to change it.

MICHAEL. I love you dandelion, I really do, Without you life is nothing and skies aren't blue...(George raises axe) Oops... sorry...I got carried away...

GEORGE. It goes without saying that I am the leader and that you will obey me without question.

MAPLE. I've always been subservient.

GEORGE. Anyone not doing their job will be thrown out to the mercies of the establishment.

MICHAEL. Not that!

GEORGE. Any questions?

GRACE. Can I bury now?

GEORGE. Not until I'm finished. You're my prisoner. Any other questions?

GRACE. When can we make love, Georgie?

GEORGE. Any other Questions? It's important that this isn't overheard by enemy ears. (Drops voice) Over the years, I've been experimenting in my lab and I have discovered things... because of the dandelion soon there's going to be rivers and forests again, and you'll all play a vital part in helping it happen very soon...

MAPLE. What does the dandelion do, Georgie?

GEORGE. (Whispering) It makes that wine you were craving...

MICHAEL. No, Georgie...!

MAPLE. Yummy.

GEORGE. And it's not ordinary wine. Come closer...

MAPLE. With great pleasure.

GEORGE. It turns you on.

MAPLE. An aphrodisiac!

GEORGE. Among other things, yes.

MAPLE. Wheel! Can I have some now?

MICHAEL. I won't permit it! Dear Maple, you know not what awaits you...

MAPLE. What do you mean, sweetie?

GEORGE. You can try some very soon. But now I must speak to my assistant. Alone. Go and paint until I'm ready for you.

MAPLE. You've become so masterful. I'm beside myself with passion for you. I'll attack my painting with great ardor but I warn you it won't drain my energies. Sublimation has never worked for me. (Goes back to her easel)

GEORGE. Now, Grace, you can go and bury.

GRACE. Thank you, George.

GEORGE. Don't try to escape, I warn you.

GRACE. Don't send me back out there again, George!

GEORGE. You're a great actress, Grace.

GRACE. Yes, George...(Exits)

MICHAEL. I think you're wrong about Grace: "Her soul is that of innocence and grime...She isn't capable of any crime..."

GEORGE. Never mind that stuff. Let's get something straight... Are you for me or against me?

MICHAEL. What do you mean?

GEORGE. Are you going to help me with my plans?

MICHAEL. You don't mean trying the brew on Maple!

GEORGE. That's the object.

MICHAEL. I can't permit it.

GEORGE. Then you'll have to leave.

MICHAEL. You can't do that to me!

GEORGE. I can. I'm a desperate man.

MICHAEL. No...please...

GEORGE. Keep your voice down. Remember, it's harmless to adults, and much nicer than blowing up buildings. Maple will thank us in the end.

MICHAEL. Oh dear...oh dear...

GEORGE. I'll give you till five. Help me or go. One...two...

MICHAEL. It's horrible.

GEORGE. Three...

MICHAEL. It's criminal...

GEORGE. Four...(Advancing)

MICHAEL. I can't...

GEORGE. Five!

MICHAEL. No...please...all right...all right...! (Collapses)

GEORGE. (Helping him up) I know how you feel but you must realize we have no choice. Control yourself, Maple is watching. Remember, Churchill had no choice either...attack or be attacked... Now, if we could only get some soda pop to perk up that last batch of dandelions.

(Grace enters, hugging Cindy, who is drinking pop and also carrying a case of pop.)

GRACE. I found my baby.

CINDY. Yes, mother. (Kissing her)

GRACE. My baby kissed me. (Beaming)

MAPLE. Don't kiss that disease, child.

GEORGE. She kissed me before. (To Cindy) Where did you go to?

CINDY. I carried out your orders. See. (Showing pop)

MICHAEL. She brought the fertilizer.

GEORGE. But I never told you to!

MAPLE. Dear Cindy, my oldest child.

CINDY. But I work for you. Where's my sucker?

GEORGE. Later. There's work to be done now. Seeing as we're all together, all the members of the dandelion brigade...I think we should pledge our allegiance. Together now...(Handing out the bottles of pop) "We pledge ourselves to the king of flowers."

ALL. "We pledge ourselves to the king of flowers."

GEORGE. We pledge our allegiance to me.

ALL. "We pledge our allegiance to you."

CINDY. Here's to the old dandelion and here's to the brew...
Here's to this lot and to everyone of you.

GEORGE. Here's to the dandelions that soon will change the scene..
Here's to the special brew and you know what I mean...
(Winking at Maple)

MAPLE. Here's to a real good time and lots more of the same...
Here's to super Georgie and also what's-his-name...

MICHAEL. Here's to Maple, and here's to her child...
Here's to dandelions that will soon be growing wild...

GRACE. Here's to the dandelion
Sing a lullaby for my baby...
And here's to its grave...

MAPLE. Ugh.

MICHAEL. It doesn't rhyme.

GEORGE. Never mind. Here's to everyone of us, that we get the
job done well...And here's to the golden future that will come
sooner than we can tell...

Here's to the dandelion!

ALL. The Dandelion!

CINDY. That was fun - now aren't we going to drink some dandelion
wine?

MAPLE. What a good idea!

GEORGE. How did you know about the wine?

CINDY. I'm your helper. Get the wine ready. Time to prepare for
fun.

GEORGE. All right, good idea. (To Maple) You stay there and stay
pregnant. (To Michael) Watch them for me. (Enters into shed)

CINDY. (Draining pop to Michael) She's my mother, isn't she
nice? Do you want a sip?

GRACE. I'm glad you came back, baby.

MAPLE. Don't touch my child you unplowed acre!

CINDY. It's O.K. mommy (Winking at Michael). My mother is sweet and nice and loves babies and poetry. You'll love her baby too.

MICHAEL. Please - I don't want to hear.

MAPLE. What's wrong, darling?

CINDY. She's kind and she loves her babies very much. It would break her heart if anything happened to them, wouldn't it mommy?

MICHAEL. (Tortured) Stop it!

MAPLE. Nothing ever happens to my babies.

CINDY. (To Grace) Come on mommy. I'll help you bury.

MAPLE. Do you have to humor that sow? Don't break your fingernails!

(Cindy leads Grace to the side)

Isn't she a sweet child?

(George is heard singing in shed, Michael trembles)

What's wrong, sweetie, are you ill?

MICHAEL. Not me, it's you.

MAPLE. I feel fine - how sweet of you to be concerned.

MICHAEL. You're such a nice lady.

MAPLE. You devil!

MICHAEL. Your heart is full of innocence and charm, Heaven forbid you come to any harm!

MAPLE. Nonesense. I'm a strong healthy woman.

MICHAEL. I don't know what to do!

MAPLE. Then kiss me, you tease!

(George comes out, shaking large bottle)

GEORGE. It's ready!

CINDY. (Dropping pop bottle and leaving Grace)
Good. Can I have it?

GEORGE. Why?

CINDY. Because I know what to do. (Takes bottle, in barker tones)
Gather around folks - It's turn on time.

MAPLE. Super!

CINDY. You see here...the one...the only...wonder drug at a
price you all can afford. (They gather around) Let me tell you,
Ladies and Gentlemen, you cannot afford to be without Dr. George's
latest discovery. What can Dr. George's dandy drink do for you?
Everything. Now who's going to be the first lucky one to try?
The first bottle free to the one who'll demonstrate right here...
the wonderous properties of Dr. George's wonder drug.

MAPLE. Me, Miss. I'll take a bottle.

CINDY. The first bottle to this little lady...Now, who's next?

GRACE. Will it give me a baby?

CINDY. It will do anything, my dear. (Gives Grace a bottle,
to George) And, you, sir?

GEORGE. Me? Well...ah...actually...

CINDY. Don't be bashful, don't be shy. Why not give Dr.
George's a try? (George takes it)

MICHAEL. That's good! "Don't be timid, have no fear...
Now that Dr. George is here."

CINDY. That's right, so take a bottle, Everyone relax...it's
try out time.

(They all sit down)

Maple first....

MICHAEL. No! (George threatens him)

MAPLE. Hooray...(Takes drink) Hmmm/Good.

CINDY. Turn, turn on!

MAPLE. Your turn, super-balls. (To George)

GEORGE. Yummy...(Takes a drink)

MAPLE. (To Michael) Get with it, Lover.

(George nudges Michael)

MICHAEL. I don't want to.

MAPLE. Turn on, turn on!

CINDY. Turn on, turn on! (together)

MICHAEL. What can I lose now...(Drinks)

(To Grace) Your turn, now.

MAPLE. Turn on, turn on!

GEORGE. Turn on, turn on! (Together)

GRACE. No, I took it before...(Pushes bottles away)

GEORGE. (Quickly) She won't take it. Maple's turn!

MAPLE. Great. (Drinks)

(Michael rises - George pulls him down)

GEORGE. (Threatening) Turn on, turn on!

(When Maple's finished) Well?

MAPLE. Oh!

GEORGE. What is it?

MAPLE. (Writhing) Oh...Oh!

MICHAEL. Are you all right, Maple? (He bends over her, she grabs him)

MAPLE. Oh, fantastic. Oh!

MICHAEL. Help!

MAPLE. Oh, DON'T, don't...ohhh.

MICHAEL. She's choking me!

GRACE. Is the baby all right?

GEORGE. It's working, it's working, Michael!

MAPLE. Stop, stop!

GEORGE. This isn't going to be pleasant, Michael, turn your back.

MICHAEL. I can't get away. My throat!

GRACE. Is it all right?

MAPLE. (In convulsions) I'm dying...oh!

GEORGE. What's keeping her!

MICHAEL. I can't breath...

GEORGE. It should be over by now.

MAPLE. Ohhh. (Goes limp)

GRACE. Don't let it be dead!

GEORGE. Shut up, Grace, it's too late now.

(Michael makes tortured noises, finally frees himself)

Get on your feet, Michael!

(Cindy has taken gum from her pocket, thrown the wrapper down, and is blowing bubbles, as she watches.)

MICHAEL. Thank Heavens she released her hold...just in time.

GEORGE. It didn't work, Michael.

MICHAEL. Thank God! Is she sleeping now?

GEORGE. We've killed her.

MICHAEL. Killed her!

GRACE. I'll make a big grave for mother and child...I wish I could have been buried with my child.

MICHAEL. She's dead! Oh no...you said...!

GEORGE. A great experiment is seldom successful the first time.

MICHAEL. (Weeping over Maple) Oh no, my poor Maple...my baby...

GEORGE. I suppose you could stretch the point and call it a sort of miscarriage. It's not really a complete failure...

(Maple sighs and stretches, Michael jumps up in terror)

MAPLE. Ahhh. Multiple orgasms...beautiful...

MICHAEL. Are you all right?

MAPLE. Worn out, darling, but otherwise great...

GRACE. So much for the big grave...

GEORGE. (Examining the bottle) How could it have happened?

MICHAEL. (Helping Maple up) Thank God you're all right.

MAPLE. Did you have the same erotic experience?

MICHAEL. Well...I did experience a choking sensation.

GEORGE. What went wrong?

CINDY. Try the baking soda in it this time.
(Grounds the bubble gum into the stage)

GEORGE. Do you think that's it?

MICHAEL. Please...not again. Give it up, George.

GEORGE. You're straining my patience, Michael...

CINDY. I'm sure that's it.

GEORGE. I think you're right.

CINDY. And there's no time to lose.

MICHAEL. Please...George...listen to me...

MAPLE. Oh George, you're not going into that hole again! I hardly see you anymore.

GEORGE. Enough from you. (To Cindy) Keep a lookout for me.
(Enters shed)

GRACE. (To Cindy) Come sit beside me. I'm going to put you to sleep.

CINDY. In a minute, mommy...

MAPLE. Don't let her maul you child, she's very weird. Come here, your hair needs combing.

MICHAEL. (Cradling his pot) I need your comfort, my lovelies... I don't like what's happening. "How suddenly fear creeps in your mind just when you think you've left it all behind."

CINDY. (As Maple combs her hair) I don't think George likes you, mother.

MAPLE. Men always like me.

CINDY. But he keeps hiding from you.

MICHAEL. (Rocking back and forth with his flowers) I need to feel your petals against my cheek...Especially when I feel afraid and weak.

MAPLE. How peculiar.

CINDY. Yes, but you love men with sexual hangups.

MAPLE. You're right.

MICHAEL. (To flowers) You're all I have.
"When I was born the sun refused to shine
My mother screamed and said she wasn't mine.
My father swore I couldn't be his son
He said he'd never fathered such a one.

MAPLE. How sad.

CINDY. (Eating sunflower seeds from her pocket) But you've always been turned on by insignificant, underprivileged men.

MAPLE. You're right again! (Going over to Michael) And he's such a gentlemen.

CINDY. (To Grace) Let's go and find things to bury, mother.

GRACE. Oh Goody....(Takes her hand and they leave)

MAPLE. I can't understand why I never noticed you before, you adorable mouse...

MICHAEL. Poor lady...what can I do for you...

MAPLE. How about a little hanky-panky. Come closer. They say I'm very good. The final month is when I enjoy it most. One is forced to come up with more original ideas. I've tried out 24 coital positions during my late pregnancies. Would you like a date?

MICHAEL. It breaks my heart to tell you this, but for your own safety, you should leave immediately.

MAPLE. But I couldn't leave you, Michael darling...

MICHAEL. If only the baby would come right now.

MAPLE. It will come soon enough...in fact, I'm going to call it Michael, after you. Please...recite some of your marvellous poetry to me again, you lovely hunk of a man...

MICHAEL. I'm being tortured...

MAPLE. With desire, no doubt. Then why deny yourself...Oh... it just kicked...How exciting. Feel it. Can it feel it kick?

MICHAEL. No! Leave me alone! (Jumps to his feet) "This pounding of my heart, what can it be...T's desire to have a son and live with thee..."

MAPLE. Ah, you cuddly little rabbit, I accept! I've always wanted to be a wife.

MICHAEL. If only I could stay here all my life... With just my dandelions and my wife...

MAPLE. I'M yours. (She gives him a bear hug, shed door rattles and George comes out with another bottle.)

GEORGE. This is it, Michael. Where's Cindy?

(Cindy enters, eating lifesavers)

(Grace trails behind her)

CINDY. I'm here.

GEORGE. Where did you go? I told you to watch.

CINDY. I was watching. And I always come when you need me.

MICHAEL. Put that bottle down, George.

GEORGE. What do you mean?

MICHAEL. I cannot allow what you plan to do today.
My conscience and my heart stand in the way.
(Stands in front of Maple)

GEORGE. You know where You'll be in two minutes...

MICHAEL. Even that is better than what you plan to do.
In every person's life there's a moment of strength.
I've reached mine. (Takes Maple's hand)

MAPLE. Are we getting married?

(Cindy has snuck behind Michael and picked up his pot. She gives it to George, smiling)

MICHAEL. What's that? What have you got?

GEORGE. (Backing towards shed) I'm sorry to have to do this,
Michael.

MICHAEL. (Going towards him) Show...

GEORGE. (Unlocking shed quickly) I'll give them back when you
come to your senses.

MICHAEL. (Looking around) My dandelions...where are they?

(George ducks into shed, puts in pot, locks up shed)
Kidnapper! (Lunges at him)

MAPLE. How exciting. It's been so long since men have fought
over me.

CINDY. Do you want a lifesaver?

GEORGE. (Pulling Michael away from the shed) It's no use.
They're safe...so long as you do as you're told. Once it's
over you can have them back.

MICHAEL. Please...have pity...they're not used to separation...

CINDY. (Picking up bottle and shaking it) It's turn on time
again!

MAPLE. Goody!

GRACE. (Staring at Maple) I want more babies.

GEORGE. Good girl.

CINDY. It's time for another drink of Dr. George's Dandelion
wine...
Drink this wine and you'll sure feel fine...

MICHAEL. (Blubbering) No...no...

MAPLE. But what's wrong with Michael? (Goes to him)

GEORGE. Absolutely nothing.

GRACE. (Following Maple) I want babies! Like you have.

MAPLE. Well dearie, you're in no condition to start now.
Why didn't you think about it ten years ago? I think it's criminal
the way some women renounce their natural functions. What do
you think you were made for?

GRACE. Grave digging.

MAPLE. I've had ten children. It keeps me young and fit.
Look at yourself.

CINDY. The first drink goes to the beautiful lady in the front
row...(To Maple)

 (Michael makes tortured noises, George curtails him)

MAPLE. You sweetheart. (Takes bottle, drinks)
I'll try anything once...or twice...or three times...

GRACE. (Backing away) No...Don't drink...

GEORGE. How do you feel?

MAPLE. Absolutely nothing's happening. No wait...!

GEORGE. Yes?

MAPLE. (Leaping up) Whoooo...peeee!

MICHAEL. Dear Maple!

GEORGE. Leave her alone. This is it!

MAPLE. Yaaaa-hoo! (Begins to dance)

GEORGE. She's gone crazy.

MAPLE. I love to dance, I love to prance.
I love to tease, I love to please...

MICHAEL. That's not good for the baby. Let me stop her.

GEORGE. I wonder if I used too much baking soda?

MAPLE. I love to spin, I love to rock, I love to do it round the clock...

GEORGE. She's ruining my grass, but I can't stop her now.

MAPLE. When you see them shake, you know they're not fake...

MICHAEL. She'll hurt herself!

GEORGE. Any minute now!

MAPLE. (Stops dead, solemnly) And so, I appeal to you all, to have faith and to wait...

MICHAEL. Unbelievable.

GEORGE. Her mind's unhinged. It's bound to be an improvement.

MAPLE. I must ask for absolute silence. Jesus will come. Salvation is near. But only for those who are righteous...only for the abstainers, only for those who have renounced their evil ways and the pleasures of the flesh.

MICHAEL. What will we do?

MAPLE. Silence! I am speaking of religion. I am speaking of the gates of paradise.

(Crumbles to the ground, lies still)

MICHAEL. Have we killed her again!

GEORGE. A second failure. Back to the laboratory.

MICHAEL. Maple...dear...speak to me...(Maple stretches)

MAPLE. What happened?

MICHAEL. You fell. I'm so glad you're all right.

MAPLE. I can't remember a thing. (Getting up) I'm so uncomfortable. When the hell is this baby going to come!

GEORGE. I've been asking myself the same question.

CINDY. The third time will have to be lucky. Let me go for the sulphur.

GEORGE. Do you think that's it?

CINDY. Must be. And I'll buy my suckers too.

GRACE. I don't want you to go.

MICHAEL. (To Maple) I'm so glad you're all right.

MAPLE. Of course I'm all right, silly. Watch when you cross the streets, child...

GEORGE. Be back in ten minutes. (Giving Cindy money) Remember who you work for.

CINDY. Okay. Goodbye, mommy. (Kisses Maple)

MAPLE. Darling child...don't talk to strangers now...

GRACE. Don't go! (Howls and goes after Cindy)

MICHAEL. Will Grace be all right?

GEORGE. She won't go far.

MAPLE. Too bad. It's so nice being alone with my two favourite men.

MICHAEL. Please...George...give me back my pot.

GEORGE. After. I'm not happy with your conduct.

MICHAEL. But you don't understand. When they're out of my sight I have hot flashes, I feel faint...my lifeblood drains away.

MAPLE. Michael, dear, those are sure signs of love...

GEORGE. It's your own fault. Toe the line now, and I'll reconsider...

MAPLE. I'm a pushover for men in control...(Goes to George)

MICHAEL. Stay away from him.
"Jealousy is something I never knew
But I feel the pangs now that I have met you."

MAPLE. (Touched) Ahhh.

GEORGE. I thought you were my perfect partner. You've let me down badly, George.

(The noise again, very loud this time)

MICHAEL. It's the end of the world!

GEORGE. Almost here!

MAPLE. Not that again!

(They huddle together. Grace rushes in and huddles with them too)

GRACE. Help me, George. Protect me.

GEORGE. There...there...

MICHAEL. Will it never stop!

(Noise stops)

At last!

GEORGE. But they're all around us now.

(Cindy enters, licking a popsicle and carrying a bag)

CINDY. I'm back.

GEORGE. What was it?

CINDY. What?

MICHAEL. You didn't hear anything?

CINDY. Just the usual things.

MAPLE. You must have heard.

CINDY. Here's the sulphur.

GEORGE. Ahhh. Good.

(Examines bag)

GRACE. My baby's back.

CINDY. Yes...mommy. (Leading her off to the side)

MAPLE. Georgie, I wish you'd tell that cow to leave my child alone...

MICHAEL. Please...George...open that shed...

GEORGE. Just right...this will do it.

(Cindy has pointed something out to Grace, she looks out, excited)

GRACE. Oh look! (She exits)

GEORGE. What's she looking at?

MICHAEL. Please...George...the key...

GEORGE. I think it's another sign.

MAPLE. I love to watch George chop up signs. Strong, energetic men are my weakness.

MICHAEL. I can't stand it!

GEORGE. Neither can I! She's bringing it here!

MAPLE. Can I get you the axe, muscles?

MICHAEL. No violence!

GRACE. (Entering with sign) The biggest tombstone of all.
For my very own grave.

GEORGE. The axe, the axe!

MICHAEL. No you don't.

(Maple gives George the axe, he pushes Michael aside and grabs sign from Grace)

GRACE. Let, let go!

(George starts chopping)

MAPLE. Such strength! If he attacks a wooden sign that way,
what could he do to a woman!

GRACE. No, my marker!

(Cindy sits, licking popsicle and watching)

MAPLE. That's right, George. Hit it! Oh...I felt that!
It was good. Do it again, do it again!
Over already? What a pity.

GEORGE. (Exhausted) There's no time to lose...

MAPLE. Lovely...I adore desperate brooding men...

MICHAEL. "Oh fickle woman, what a soul is thine.
To pretend love for him when thou art mine."

CINDY. You're right, George.

GEORGE. I know, I know. This time don't leave. I need you.

CINDY. This time will do it, George...

MICHAEL. You wouldn't try again!

GEORGE. Remember your dandelions, Michael?

MICHAEL. You wouldn't hurt them!

GEORGE. I'd do anything if crossed. (Enters shed)

MAPLE. He goes in there so much. Do you think that's wise?

GRACE. (Weeping over the pieces of the sign) He did it again.
Destroyed...

MICHAEL. Hush, Grace...it'll be all right.

CINDY. Will it?

MICHAEL. What do you mean?

CINDY. How do you know what he's doing to your flowers in there?

MICHAEL. He wouldn't harm them...he loves them too...

CINDY. He could be making wine out of them...like with all the others...

MICHAEL. No!

MAPLE. (Watching Grace) When is the last time you had a body wave, dear?

CINDY. If I were you, I'd get my pot back...

MICHAEL. But how...how...?

CINDY. And I'd also switch bottles so that Maple doesn't drink the wrong stuff...
You don't want anything to happen to her baby do you?

MICHAEL. No, I don't!

MAPLE. What kind of toothpaste do you use?

CINDY. I can help you.

MICHAEL. Can you?

CINDY. Sure.

MAPLE. You really should update your grooming habits.

GRACE. Yes, George.

MICHAEL. How?

CINDY. I have an extra key...see? (Shows him key)

MICHAEL. Give it to me.

CINDY. Have you got any candy?

MICHAEL. No...

CINDY. Give me some money for candy then.

MICHAEL. Here...here...

CINDY. Okay. (Gives him the key)

MAPLE. It's impossible to carry on a civilized conversation with that woman!

MICHAEL. I've got it!

CINDY. You sure have.

(George comes out of shed)

GEORGE. Ready at last! Are you ready, Maple?

MICHAEL. Wait!

GEORGE. You again.

MICHAEL. It's not that...I'm on your side...It's just that...
Maple has something to tell you first...

GEORGE. Well? (To Maple)

MAPLE. What am I supposed to tell him, Michael?

MICHAEL. Use your imagination. Please...

GEORGE. Time is of the essence.

MAPLE. Georgie...you've been avoiding me lately...I must know why...

(Cindy quietly leaves...Michael starts sneaking up to shed)

GEORGE. Keep your distance.

(Michael sleathily unlocks shed door, slips in)

GRACE. (Tugging at his sleeve) (She has seen Michael)
Look, George...George...

GEORGE. Quiet Grace (To Maple) What do you want? We have no time to lose.

MAPLE. You're such a cruel man. I don't know why you turn me on. But you do.

GEORGE. (Darkly) Is that all?

GRACE. George...your shed...look, George.

(Michael comes out of shed with his pot, locks door.)

GEORGE. Speaking of turning on...

MAPLE. I adore difficult men...

GEORGE. It's time again. Michael, where are you?

(Michael has hidden his pot behind the shed, comes out)

MICHAEL. Here, George.

GEORGE. What are you doing?

MICHAEL. Mourning my dandelions...

GEORGE. This is it, Michael. (Goes into shed, brings out bottle)

GRACE. (To Michael) You went in George's shed.

MICHAEL. Shhh.

GRACE. I saw you.

MAPLE. I want a white wedding, Michael, with all the trimmings.

MICHAEL. I've saved you, my sweet...

"I've risked my life for you

I'd do it again

For you I'd suffer all hardships

and all pain..."

GEORGE. Okay, Maple, this is it. Drink.

MAPLE. Do I have to again?

MICHAEL. Go ahead, dear, this stuff's okay.

GEORGE. (To Michael) That's more like it!
Drink.

MAPLE. (Drinks) Ugh...tastes horrible...

GEORGE. Drink again.

MAPLE. Tyrant...

GRACE. I don't drink that.
You shouldn't drink that.

MICHAEL. Wuiet, Grace...It'll be all right...

GEORGE. Well, how do you feel?

MAPLE. I'm dizzy...oh my! (Reels)

GEORGE. It's happening.

MICHAEL. Nothing can be happening.

MAPLE. I'm burning...I'm on fire...

GEORGE. Promising symptoms...

MICHAEL. It can't be.

MAPLE. I think my baby's going to come...Oh, I can't move my legs...(Sitting down)

MICHAEL. Are you all right?

GEORGE. It'll be over soon. Grace is a good midwife...

GRACE. Yes...I'll help...

MAPLE. I have ten fine children. Soon I'll have eleven. Then I can start in on the twelfth. Don't leave me. I'm not old yet. I'm still beautiful. I know how to please...Tell me you want me...

GEORGE. Help me get her behind the shed, Michael...

MICHAEL. My dearest, are you all right...Oh dear...

(They carry her off)

MAPLE. Tell me you love me...Ohhh!

GRACE. More babies gone...

GEORGE. (From offstage) Grace, come and help.

GRACE. I won't help...(Picks up the pot of dandelions behind the shed...)

Pretty...pretty flowers...

Pretty...pretty...babies...

All dead.

(Cradles pot)

(Maple screams)

GEORGE. It worked!

MICHAEL. No...it can't have...I changed bottles...it has to be all right...

GEORGE. Success at last!

MICHAEL. I did it! I did it! Oh my God...

GRACE. "Rockabye baby on the tree top...

When the bow breaks the cradle will rock...

(Rocking pot in her arms)

GEORGE. Grace...come here...(Enters) Grace, give those to me!

GRACE. (Backing away) "When the bow breaks the cradle will fall and down will fall baby, cradle and all..."

GEORGE. Michael, come and help me, she's got your bomb...
Grace...give it to me...come on now, Grace...

(Grace backs behind shed) Grace...watch out!

Michael help me! Michael!

GRACE. (Repeating) Down will fall baby...down...

GEORGE. No...Grace...don't drop it...!

(They are both behind shed...sound of pot breaking, and then explosion...shed collapses)

SILENCE. STAGE IS FULL OF DEBRIS AND GARBAGE.
CINDY SKIPS ONSTAGE WITH FOR SALE SIGN, PLACES IT
IN CENTRE STAGE AND SKIPS OUT.

ONE SPRING MORNING

a one-act play

C H A R A C T E R S

MAN, about 40 - conventional dress

GIRL, about 10

OLD LADY

YOUNG WOMAN, (20)

THE TIME: The present.

THE PLACE: Bus Stop on the edge of the forest.

SETTING: Bare stage. A bench.

(Man sits on bench reading a newspaper. After a short time an old lady hobbles in. He doesn't look up. She comes over and stares down on him.)

OLD LADY. Young man, is there no room for me?

MAN. Beg your pardon. (Moves over without looking up.)
didn't hear.

OLD LADY. (Sitting) Of course you did. Are you deaf?

MAN. (Reading) Sorry.

OLD LADY. I don't believe you, young man. (He reads) Where is that bus?

MAN. Don't know.

OLD LADY. Why not?

MAN. Never waited here before, lady.

OLD LADY. Nonsense. You must have waited somewhere.

MAN. Not here, lady.

OLD LADY. Where?

MAN. Somewhere else.

OLD LADY. How long did you have to wait there?

MAN. It was for a different bus.

OLD LADY. How absurd. (Silence) This is intolerable. Young hooligans. No respect. Talk in riddles...Never listen.... Don't care...Young man!

MAN. Yes?

OLD LADY. How long have you been waiting?

MAN. Few minutes.

OLD LADY. That's not much help then, is it? (Silence) Is it?
In my day, a gentleman would never read in front of a lady.

MAN. (Lowering paper) Lady, there are a lot of things gentlemen are now permitted to do in front of ladies.

OLD LADY. What do you mean by that?

MAN. Would you like to look at a section of my paper?

OLD LADY. I certainly would not!

MAN. Do you mind if I read?

OLD LADY. I certainly do mind! It's just what I've been saying.

MAN. Excuse me, then. (Rising)

OLD LADY. And just what do you think you're doing!

MAN. Good-day, ma'am.

OLD LADY. Where are you going!

MAN. Good-bye.

OLD LADY. You'd leave a defenseless lady alone in a place like this? (No answer.) A deserted place like this. And at this unsafe time of day...And in the Spring!

MAN. Lady, you're safe.

OLD LADY. You'll be sorry if you leave me here. Alone. Common courtesy demands that you stay. Respect for the elderly. (He has gone. She breaks off, stands up and watches him, then hobbles off, cackling.)

(The man returns to the bench from the other side. He looks around, sees he is alone, and settles comfortably on it. Opens his paper. Reads.) (A young girl enters skipping.)

LITTLE GIRL. Hi mister!

MAN. (Annoyed) Hmm.

LITTLE GIRL. Waiting for a bus? Are you? Are you?

MAN. Yes.

LITTLE GIRL. Here?

MAN. Yes.

LITTLE GIRL. Are you sure you're waiting in the right place for the right bus at the right time? Are you?

MAN. Yes.

LITTLE GIRL. Are you going to work, so early in the morning? Are you going to work, so early in the morning? (Sings and starts skipping around the bench) It's morning, it's morning, and everyone is snoring...Are you going to work? Yes you are, no, you're not...You are...you aren't...you are...you aren't...you are...you aren't...

MAN. I am. Be quiet.

LITTLE GIRL. Why? Why? Why? (He ignores her. SHE flicks her rope at his paper. He jumps.) Why, huh mister? Why?

MAN. What the hell! Brat! What did you do that for?

LITTLE GIRL. Awww. Don't be mad, mister.

MAN. (Studying her) I think I just met your grandmother.

LITTLE GIRL. "Roses are red, violets are blue...
When I grow up, I won't be like you..."

MAN. Go home.

LITTLE GIRL. I'll tell my grandmother.

MAN. Schooo.

LITTLE GIRL. I don't want to.
"Roses are red, violets are purple...You look like a mashed up
old gurple..."

MAN. Good God...can a person have no peace any more...!

LITTLE GIRL. Don't make me go home. You don't really look like a
gurple...(giggling).

MAN. Just leave me alone. That's all I ask.

LITTLE GIRL. OK.

(He starts to read again. She watches him for a while smiling.)
But the bus won't come you know.

"Roses are red, and skies are blue..." The bus won't come, and
the grass will grow all over you...

(She begins to skip, faster and faster.)

"Roses are red, and horses are brown, You look funny when you frown..."

"Roses are red, dandelions are yellow..."

You sure are a funny old fellow..."

MAN. For Chrissake, shut up!

LITTLE GIRL. Don't yell...

MAN. (Rising) Scram!

LITTLE GIRL. Don't chase me away.

MAN. Five seconds...

LITTLE GIRL. (Backing away) I'll call the police...I'll tell my
teacher...

MAN. Three...!

LITTLE GIRL. No! I'm bringing my daddy back. This is my place.
(Crying) I'll tell them!

MAN. Don't be silly...calm down...

LITTLE GIRL. You scared me away...You said bad things...You hurt me...
(Sobbing)

MAN. What do you mean? Wait a minute. (She has gone)
Listen to that racket. My God! That's all I need. I'll be
lynched by the whole neighbourhood. (Hurriedly gets up)
(Leaves.) This is getting ridiculous.

(After he's gone. Little girl's sobbing offstage turns to giggling.)

(Man enters again from other side. Sits down on bench with a sigh.)

Ah...I thought I'd never find it.

(Opening paper) Should be nice and quiet here. Secluded. Just
time to finish my paper. (Reads.)

(Young woman enters, quietly. She is fresh and pretty, he doesn't notice. She stands beside him.)

GIRL. Hello.

MAN. (Jumps.) Good grief!

GIRL. Did I startle you?

MAN. A little. (Returns to his paper)

GIRL. (After a while) May I sit down?

MAN. Of course.

GIRL. (Sitting down) Could I trouble you for a little more
room?

MAN. What?

GIRL. More room.

MAN. Oh (Moves over, doesn't look up)

GIRL. Thank you. (Pause) Have you been waiting long?

MAN. Seems like forever.

GIRL. How long?

MAN. 5 - 10 minutes.

GIRL. That's not long. It could be a long wait. It's still so early, and it's still spring. (Silence) So I hope you're not in a hurry. I hope you're a patient man. Because not many people use this stop. You're going to need patience. But then, you don't look like you're in a hurry anyway...reading your paper like that...Are you in a hurry? (No answer) Are you a patient man? (No answer) Do you like me?

MAN. What!

GIRL. Is your paper interesting?

MAN. I must have been hearing things. (Reading again)

GIRL. What are you reading?

MAN. Nothing in particular.

GIRL. But what?

MAN. At this time in the morning I have always finished my paper. Always. That will teach me to try a new bus route.

GIRL. You won't be sorry. This is a beautiful route.

MAN. I've never met such females! Please have some of my paper.

GIRL. I'd much rather you put it down.

MAN. You don't have that right!

GIRL. Why not?

MAN. This is my paper. This is my bench. These are my eyes. I like reading the paper. I'm going to read the paper. Now... if you don't mind...

GIRL. But I do. I said...I do mind...

MAN. I heard you.

GIRL. Well?

MAN. Well what?

GIRL. Why don't you put it down.

MAN. And do what, miss?

GIRL. Talk to me, of course. It's impossible to do both.

MAN. What if I don't want to do both?

GIRL. I knew you didn't really want to read the paper.
(Taking off his glasses) You'll ruin your eyes. What silly old glasses. Oh...what lovely eyes you have. You should never again hide them in a newspaper. You could dazzle the world with them.

MAN. Good God! (Grabbing his glasses and putting them in his pocket.)

GIRL. What are you doing?

MAN. (Rising) Looking for the bus.

GIRL. Then you must be in a hurry after all. What a pity.
(Silence) No bus?

MAN. No.

GIRL. Are you going to stand there and wait?

MAN. Probably.

GIRL. Do I frighten you?

MAN. Don't be silly!

GIRL. Why don't you come back and sit down then?

MAN. Leave me alone, damn it!

GIRL. Why snap at me just because you're in a hurry and the bus won't come?

MAN. I wasn't snapping. And I'm not in a hurry.

GIRL. Oh good. Then you can relax.

MAN. I am relaxed!

GIRL. You seem very stiff to me. Don't you like me?

MAN. I wasn't hearing things!

GIRL. Don't you?

MAN. What's liking you got to do with anything? Good God; a perfect stranger and she asks do I like her!

GIRL. At least you think I'm perfect.

MAN. I can't believe it.

GIRL. I'm only trying to be nice.

MAN. Why?

GIRL. Why not? Here we both are...all alone...waiting for a bus that may not come for ages. Should we spend all that time pretending we don't notice each other? Don't you think that would be phoney and awkward?

MAN. That's what people do everyday. (Sitting down)

GIRL. Why?

MAN. If people wanted to do it, they would. For your information most of us are just not interested in talking to all the strangers we run up against.

GIRL. Do you classify yourself with the masses?

MAN. You mean to tell me that you talk to everyone you meet? If I was a drunkard sitting here...all covered in sores and vomit ...would you sit down beside me, start up a conversation? Ask if I liked you?

GIRL. But you're not!.

MAN. That's not the point. You said that you think everyone should talk to everyone else, and I was trying to point out to you that....oh hell. This is ridiculous!

GIRL. (Taking off his hat) Such a silly hat. You look like such a fuddy duddy. There. Look at your fantastic curly hair. It looks so soft. I bet lots of women have played with that hair!

MAN. My God!

GIRL. You must know you have wonderful hair.

MAN. Young lady. All I want to do is be left in peace. If you want to talk to strangers and shock people and upend the old conventions, I'd suggest you try another stranger at another bus stop. This sort of thing doesn't interest me in the least.

GIRL. What sort of thing?

MAN. You know what I mean. (Retrieving his hat, but leaving it on his lap.)

GIRL. But there are no other bus stops like this...and there are no other strangers like you.

MAN. Are you trying to pick me up? (Looks at her closely for the first time, starts.) Good grief, have you got a little sister?

GIRL. I'd like to get to know you.

MAN. But I don't want you to get to know me. I don't approve of this. (Rising)

GIRL. You're not leaving?

MAN. Unfortunately, yes. Again.

GIRL. I'm not driving you away am I? I want you to stay.

MAN. Thanks anyway, It is flattering if unrespectable...
(On the point of going)

GIRL. Besides...there's no other bus stops.

MAN. (Returning) What?

GIRL. (Patting the seat beside her) No more bus stops.

MAN. No more....?

GIRL. End of the line.

MAN. I don't understand.

GIRL. There's nothing beyond this. No body to catch any buses.
No bus stops. No buses. Just this.

MAN. The...last...?

GIRL. Or the first, if you like. Come and sit down.

MAN. I didn't realize I'd come so far. Are you sure the
bus comes here?

GIRL. Eventually...Are you going to stay?

MAN. Do I have any choice?

GIRL. You always have a choice.

MAN. (Returning) Young lady, if you were my daughter...I
would have taught you the correct behaviour.

GIRL. You could never have a daughter my age.

MAN. (Sitting down) Have the dangers of this habit never
occured to you?

GIRL. You mean am I afraid of getting kidnapped or raped or
murdered or robbed or something?

MAN. Or mistaken...for something you're not...

GIRL. You mean for a lady of the streets? (He nods) It's
what might happen to me if I don't speak to strangers that should
concern you. Imagine going through life rubbing hips and elbows
and never speaking. All the nice people I'd never know.

MAN. And the ones that aren't so nice...

GIRL. I don't know any of those.

MAN. Then you've been lucky. Believe me, there's lots of them around, young lady.

GIRL. Elsie.

MAN. What?

GIRL. My name is Elsie.

MAN. There you go. You see. That sort of approach gives a bad impression.

GIRL. Then don't call me young lady so patronizingly, as if you were ever so much older and wiser.

MAN. Aren't I?

GIRL. Not a bit.

MAN. (Laughing) I bet you think life's a rainbow...full of sugar and spice and adventure...

GIRL. And I'll bet life has disappointed you.

MAN. Elsie, I'm 40, and you're probably not 20...

GIRL. And?

MAN. That's all there is to it. Life fades.

GIRL. It doesn't have to.

MAN. I wish you were right. But you're not.

GIRL. You're married?

MAN. (Gently) That's not really any of your business now, is it?

GIRL. You have a wedding ring.

MAN. Yes.

GIRL. It's much too tight. Children?

MAN. If you must know...two.

GIRL. Don't you sometimes get yearny feelings? Wish you could run away with someone like me...into an enchanted forest...like this one?

MAN. Now that's quite enough.

GIRL. Don't you want the freshness back again? The passions?

MAN. You're impossible. I should have known better than to have encouraged you. (Picks up his paper)

GIRL. And so you still want to hide behind your paper?

MAN. I want to read, yes....

GIRL. All right.

(Silence. He reads. She watches him. After a while he becomes uncomfortable. Looks up. She is smiling.)

MAN. What are you smiling at?

GIRL. Your stomach growled. (Laughing)

MAN. What a girl! (Laughing)

GIRL. It's funny. Think of all the people all over the world... ignoring each other...their stomachs friendlier than they are... growling away...and everyone pretending not to notice.

MAN. You do have a way of making things seem ridiculous.

GIRL. Because they are. And you're just beginning to realize it.

MAN. But wait a minute...Suppose I'm in the habit of speaking to everyone I meet...including lots of pretty young girls like you ...girls passing me in the street...sharing my bus stop...in cafes ...in theatres...What would happen? Would they believe that I just wanted to be pleasant...spread good cheer and happiness? No. Most of them would ignore me...insult me...or even complain to someone. I would get thrown out of cafes...kicked out of theatres...chased away from my bus stop. Beat up and cast away by angry husbands, boyfriends, fathers...even arrested by the law. And just suppose that one of these sweet young things doesn't ignore me or get insulted. Suppose she smiled back at me. What would I do then? She'd expect me to pick her up.

GIRL. I didn't expect you to pick me up.

MAN. That's because you're different...innocent...trusting... But most of them would, believe me. You're laughing again.

GIRL. It sounds like you've tried it.

MAN. In my younger days, maybe.

GIRL. Before you were married?

MAN. Yes.

GIRL. And not once since?

MAN. And now you want to find out about my love life, you devil!

GIRL. This is a lovely place for make-believe, isn't it? Why don't you make believe you're bringing me flowers because you're madly in love with me? I'll bet you could find some back in the trees.

MAN. That's crazy.

GIRL. Why?

MAN. Ridiculous.

GIRL. You never know till you try it, and I bet you never have.

MAN. That'd look really great if the bus came.

GIRL. It won't.

MAN. Never?

GIRL. What do you think?

MAN. It does seem an unlikely spot...

GIRL. Get me flowers.

MAN. Just suppose I did...

GIRL. Yes...?

MAN. I went and got you flowers...and one of my neighbours or friends walked by...or someone from the office...

GIRL. So?

MAN. And sees me on my knees presenting flowers to a beautiful young lady...

GIRL. Go on...

MAN. He tells his friends. The neighbours find out...my wife is told by a gossiping friend...the scenes...the fighting...the dirty jokes...and all because of a little make believe...

GIRL. Tell me more...

MAN. She kicks me out...throws my suitcase after me...The children call their daddy unprintable names...

GIRL. Wow!

MAN. I'm wandering the streets...penniless and unwanted. The out-raged Christians stone me...the dogs chase me through the streets...the old ladies point at me and batter me with their crutches...Still...I manage to hang on to the flowers...I die with them clasped to my heart...moaning..."Elsie my love..."

GIRL. Fantastic!

MAN. You see what can happen?

GIRL. You're good. Go fetch me a flower.

MAN. There aren't any, you hussy.

GIRL. But you're an actor.

MAN. Is that one over there?

GIRL. Millions...fresh and blooming.

MAN. Just one?

GIRL. Oh yes...the reddest one.

MAN. (Picks the imaginary rose, on his knees) Here you are, my darling Elsie. See what I have for you. I bought it with my last penny. My children haven't eaten for three days...the wind whistles through the holes in the walls...but what is that to me when I have you? Hey...what's wrong? (She's turned away from him) Isn't this what you wanted?

GIRL. After what you've done...do you really think you can buy back my love?

MAN. What do you mean?

GIRL. There can be no reconciliation for us. I saw you with HER.

MAN. (Catching on) But darling, it's not what you think. The girl you saw me kissing was...my sister!

GIRL. Oh Hector, is it true?

MAN. But trust me, my dearest Rosaline.

GIRL. All the suffering I've gone through...oh my love.

MAN. You should never have doubted me. You are the only one I've ever loved.

GIRL. Oh...Harry...

MAN. Esmerelda...

GIRL. What lovely flowers...for me?

MAN. Forgive my forwardness. Perhaps I've been too bold?

GIRL. You do jepardize a young virgin's honor.

MAN. Forgive me...I could not help it. The minute I saw your lovely face through the rose bushes in your garden...I lost control of my senses. I must know your name!

GIRL. But I hardly know you!

MAN. (Getting up, brushing off his pants) If people could see us now, what would they think?

GIRL. They'd think, "how sweet".

MAN. They'd think, "how nasty. Look at that disgusting man trying to seduce that young girl."

GIRL. Everybody likes playing games.

MAN. But people have no imagination. They wouldn't believe we were playing.

GIRL. Of course they would. You have a wonderful sensitive mouth. I could sit and watch you talk forever.

MAN. A sensitive mouth?

GIRL. Yes. Few men have.

MAN. No-one's ever said that before.

GIRL. I don't miss such things.

MAN. I'm not used to being flattered, especially by such gorgeous girls.

GIRL. Do you really think I'm gorgeous?

MAN. Do you really think the bus may never come?

GIRL. I certainly have that feeling, don't you? Tell me how gorgeous I am again. I love it. You flatter me and I'll flatter you. It's a game I like.

MAN. Silly girl. With another man it could be a dangerous game.

GIRL. It's only words.

MAN. You're too niave. You don't know how dangerous the world is. Still, it's refreshing..."My pure, untainted Madonna, you are too pure for this festering world." I can scarcely bear the thought of that moment you will lose your innocence...and yet...

GIRL. Oh Edward...the things you are doing to my poor heart...

MAN. Reveal your agonies to me, my dearest...

GIRL. That's not what I had in mind...

MAN. Don't misunderstand.

GIRL. Silly. I would like something a little more sincere...

MAN. I was too theatrical?

GIRL. Hammy.

MAN. How sincere then?

GIRL. Just...sincere...

MAN. But would you take it the way it would be meant?

GIRL. What way would that be?

MAN. You know...in fun...innocently...

GIRL. What else?

MAN. You're so innocent. People might, for instance, think I was trying to make a pass.

GIRL. I wouldn't. Come on, let's start.

MAN. Well...ah...Elsie...I think that you're...I mean... you're...No. I can't.

GIRL. Why not? Can't you think of anything sincere that's nice?

MAN. Of course that's not it. The whole thing is ridiculous, we've gotten carried away. It must be this place...It makes one feel somehow disoriented...

GIRL. I suppose you want to go back to your paper now.

MAN. I seem to have surpassed myself in certain directions, and now I suddenly feel a little foolish.

GIRL. I liked you when you were "surpassing yourself."

MAN. The bus will come any moment. I think it's time we ah...snapped out of this, that's all.

GIRL. All right. Back to your paper. Back to your little world. The bus will be coming soon. You certainly don't want to drop the pose...you don't want to start enjoying yourself and acting natural after all these years, do you, Mr. Minor Executive Family Man Bread Winner Lawn Mower? Don't get honest now, you're right. It would probably kill you.

MAN. Elsie!

GIRL. Goodbye. Enjoy yourself. (Rising) I'm going to enjoy myself in my way...on a bench even further in...a quiet lonely place...only the bench is not for commuters like you...no buses come there...only people like me...who like honest places...real places...places for love...Have fun.

MAN. Elsie, I didn't mean to hurt you. (She exits)
Don't go! Damn it, Elsie! Stop!
(He stands there undecided, finally...)
Oh hell! (Drops paper, follows her out.)

(Girl enters from other side. Sits on bench, picks up paper and starts reading.) (Man enters, panting.)

There you are. Thought I'd lost you. Elsie? Elsie, please. I'm sorry. Talk to me.

GIRL. Are you addressing Me?

MAN. Put that paper down, Elsie.

GIRL. Certainly not.

MAN. You're right you know. You're more right than I wanted to admit to myself.

GIRL. Please leave me alone. I don't speak to strangers...especially in deserted places.

MAN. I deserve that.

GIRL. Are you trying to pick me up? Shame on you, you're old enough to be my father.

MAN. Elsie, that's enough. Two strangers and already we're fighting. Can this be happening?

Girl. I guess I'll have to call the police.

MAN. What more can I do? (She ignores him. He pretends to pick a flower.)
Only turn your lovely head and see the orchid I've gotten for you at great peril to my life. I swam from Hawaii with it in my teeth...pursued by giant sharks...buffeted by perilous seas...only turn your head and I know your cold, cold heart of ice will melt...If not, I will stab myself with it's steely blade...there will be no point going on...life without you would be meaningless...In fact, I have already drank the root of the hemlock. I am dying an agonizing death. Only turn and hold me in your arms before I die and I will go with a smile on my lips...tell me...you forgive me before...gasp...the poison...reaches...my....heart. (She is smiling) Listen to..my last...words...(Whispering)
You...must...know...The girl you saw me kissing...was...my sister...(She laughs) Take my orchid...please...

GIRL. (Smelling it) Ugh. It smells like fish. What's your name?

MAN. My name is Ernest. Have you forgiven me?

GIRL. With a name like that I feel I must forgive you. Will you live now?

MAN. Your smile has arrested the spread of the poison... now...if I could only...sit beside you...

GIRL. I'm glad you followed me.

MAN. It looks like the same bench.

GIRL. The story goes that years ago two ardent lovers carried it off from a downtown bus stop and brought it in here to enact their rites of love in the deep dark forest...Oh, look at your hand. You have nice hands.

 (Holding it.) Beautiful and slender...like a pianists. Not hairy. Have you got hair on your arms?

MAN. Ahhh...I don't remember. I liked your story about the lovers.

GIRL. Let's see. (Rolling up his sleeve)

MAN. (Helping her.) It's definitely not a bus stop then, is it?

GIRL. Good Heavens no. Just as I thought, lovely arms... Nice...

MAN. You're very kind.

GIRL. And yet you refuse to say anything nice about me.

MAN. You misunderstand my motives. It's not that I won't but I think I shouldn't.

GIRL. Which means....?

MAN. Of course I think you're a very attractive young girl.

GIRL. Why not "woman"?

MAN. It's obvious you're a woman. One can't help but notice. Those...ah...your bloom...even though...of course...they have honorable intentions...

GIRL. I'm 36.

MAN. What?

GIRL. My chest. 36

MAN. Yes...well..one really shouldn't discuss those things but then of course...it's all right with me...I mean...we both know...We both understand each other...I mean, there are no misunderstandings...But someone else may, you know, get the wrong idea...

GIRL. But I knew you wouldn't misunderstand.

MAN. It's good to know you trust me. Still...people do think the worst all the time. It's impossible for anything to be innocent any more...everyone thinks the worst.

GIRL. I don't.

MAN. People always form the wrong impressions. Like now, for instance, if they could walk by and see you holding my hand like that...playing with my buttons...in this deserted spot...they'd probably think I was...ah...don't be offended...trying to make you. You're not embarrassed are you?

GIRL. I like your buttons...they open so easily.

MAN. I hope you don't mind my talking to you like this, but I feel someone has to make you aware of the evil in the world before you get hurt. Does anyone ever come here?

GIRL. Never.

MAN. (Moving closer) Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you? I would hate to see anyone take advantage of you. You're much too sweet...a young girl has to watch herself...right?

GIRL. I'd rather you watched me.

MAN. I am...I mean, I'm waiting for your answer...

GIRL. I understand what you're saying and I confess what you say sounds right.

MAN. Then I'm winning you over?

GIRL. You are very convincing...

MAN. If I could do that I'd feel a lot better. I feel that in some small way I've helped to save you. A desirable girl like yourself...should be saved...saved...from all the rotten people in the world with dirty minds...

GIRL. You have a broad chest. I bet you don't have much hair there.

MAN. I've always been ashamed of not having much hair.

GIRL. You shouldn't be. Smooth chests are beautiful. (unbuttoning his shirt.) Let me see.

MAN. People would certainly get the wrong idea if they could see us now.

GIRL. It just goes to show how deceiving appearances should be. It pays to keep an open, clean mind.

MAN. Yes but...oh...that's nice. You have warm hands.

GIRL. Just as I thought. Beautiful.

MAN. Really?

GIRL. What's your back like?

MAN. I don't think I've ever looked.

GIRL. Well, why don't we? I'll bet it's as perfect as the rest of you.

MAN. You're certainly an inquisitive little delight, aren't you?

GIRL. I don't often meet much nice men.

MAN. Have you done this with strangers at bus stops before?

GIRL. Done what?

MAN. Well...ah...checked for hair...

GIRL. You're the first.

MAN. The first? (Excited)

GIRL. Yes, the first to convince me that my views of people are wrong.

MAN. I'm glad. I'm so glad. You're too trusting for this world. Now I feel you'll be able to cope with life.

GIRL. You have soft little hairs in the curve of your back. I wonder what they'd feel like on my tongue.

MAN. Don't stop!

GIRL. You have such a nice flat stomach too. Lots of men get soft and flabby in the stomach...such a shame...

MAN. I'm not so old. By body's in perfect shape.

GIRL. So's mine.

MAN. I can see that. I mean I can guess. Very well developed. Beautiful...desirable...(Grabs her)

GIRL. But perhaps you shouldn't do that. I know it's perfectly innocent and meant in good friendship but you know what people are like. If they could see us now...but of course they can't... they'd think terrible things. They're so dirty minded. One must be on one's guard.

MAN. I've convinced you! (Kissing her neck) I'm so glad.

GIRL. I'll bet you have legs like a baby's.

MAN. Do you want to see them?

GIRL. Oh I'd love to. If you don't think people would misunderstand...

MAN. There's no-one...no-one...(Tearing off his shoes and socks)

GIRL. Even you're feet are artistic. That arch. The tiny little hairs on the top...

MAN. You don't know how gratifying it is...to be appreciated at last...

GIRL. Please hurry. I can't wait to see your legs. Let me help...

MAN. Yes...yes...help me...

GIRL. (On her knees in front of him) Faster...hurry...faster...
(She pulls his pants over his ankles.)

MAN. And now...you...

GIRL. Yes. Close your eyes. I'll show you how perfect I am too.
(He closes his eyes.)

MAN. (Panting) Hurry my darling...hurry...

GIRL. It'll be over in a minute my love...
(The girl smiles, exits with his clothes.)

MAN. Can I open them now? Elsie? Now?
I can't wait any longer.
(Opens his eyes.) Elsie? Where are you?

Where are my clothes? (He rises, alarmed.)

(Sound of approaching bus)

THE CLIFF

a one-act play

C H A R A C T E R S

WILLIE, 21

1ST MAN, mature. the leader

2ND MAN, Willie's age. the rebel

3RD MAN

4TH MAN

MOTHER, Willie's

FATHER, Willie's

CROWD, four women in the audience, who come onstage
during the sermon; and at least six others, seated in the audience,
with loud voices.

THE TIME: The present.

THE PLACE: (a) A cliff in the mountains; a cave.

(b) Willie's parent's home.

SETTING: Bare stage, except for a raised platform in the centre of the stage which represents the cliff.

(Curtain rises on the four men, who are watching offstage.)

2ND MAN. It's been a long wait.
3RD MAN. That's true.
4TH MAN. I agree.
1ST MAN. Quiet.
2ND MAN. We should move on.
1ST MAN. We'll stay.
2ND MAN. Why?
1ST MAN. It's a good spot. There's action.
3RD MAN. He's right.
4TH MAN. Already another is coming.
3RD MAN. A girl.
4TH MAN. A pretty girl.
1ST MAN. Quiet. Watch.

(Girl enters, weeping)

2ND MAN. It's about time!
3RD MAN. She's climbing.
4TH MAN. She'll soon be ready...
2ND MAN. And she'll die.
3RD MAN. You're right.
4TH MAN. It wouldn't be a woman.
1ST MAN. What was the Virgin Mary? Quiet!
2ND MAN. Why doesn't she jump?
1ST MAN. Learn patience. Prepare yourself for the long wait. Our grandfather's have watched...and their grandparents before them. Watched...and waited...and died...without ever seeing what they watched for. Learn patience, or leave us.
2ND MAN. I'll stay. Despite you.

3RD MAN. She is praying.

4TH MAN. She is ready to jump.

2ND MAN. Then jump!

3RD MAN. There she goes!

(Girl walks up on platform, screams and jumps. She falls to the ground. Lies still.)

2ND MAN. I knew it wouldn't be her. It's too bad.

3RD MAN. Not pretty now.

4TH MAN. It's a long way down.

1ST MAN. Help me remove her. (To 2ND) What did I tell you?

3RD MAN. Where else can you find such action?

4TH MAN. Twenty-seven suicides in the last week, and the spring rush just starting.

(1ST, 3RD and 4TH carry off the body)

2ND MAN. Still, it's a waste of pretty girls. They should only allow males to jump.

1ST MAN. (Offstage) Quickly. Another one is coming.

2ND MAN. Good.

1ST MAN. Throw her with the others.

3RD MAN. 28 now!

1ST MAN. Back to your places. Hurry. Watch.

(They enter and watch offstage)

2ND MAN. We are watching.

(Willie enters)

WILLIE. There it is. It's high. It should do it.

2ND MAN. Less talk and more action.

1ST MAN. Quiet!

3RD MAN. Why is he stopping?

4TH MAN. He'll never do it.

2ND MAN. Jump!

1ST MAN. Will you be quiet and let nature take its course?

2ND MAN. Is it wrong to hope?

1ST MAN. It's wrong to be impatient, friend.

3RD MAN. At last!

4TH MAN. He's climbing.

3RD MAN. There he goes!

(Willie jumps, lies there for a moment, then begins to stir)

1ST MAN. At last!

3RD MAN. He is alive!

4TH MAN. He is moving!

2ND MAN. Is it possible? Did he jump from the right place?

(Willie gets up)

1ST MAN. Any place is the right place. The miracle our father has promised us has at last occurred!

WILLIE. What happened? How can I be here?

3RD MAN. We saw a miracle.

4TH MAN. The promise has been fulfilled!

WILLIE. I felt myself falling very swiftly. I have to be dead.

1ST MAN. Why do we wait here?

WILLIE. I must end this weird dream. (Approaches the ramp once more)

2ND MAN. He will jump again. Then we will be certain.

1ST MAN. No. Once is enough.

2ND MAN. Twice is better.

1ST MAN. (To Willie) Stop! You are proven. We acknowledge you.

2ND MAN. Damn!

1ST MAN. Come with me, please. (To others) You will meet him.

WILLIE. Who are you?

3RD MAN. We will meet him.

4TH MAN. Thank God for our eyes!

2ND MAN. He should have jumped again.

WILLIE. I don't understand.

1ST MAN. Here he is.

2ND MAN. I would like to examine him.

1ST MAN. It is not necessary. There are no marks.

2ND MAN. (Examining Willie) Still we must be certain...as you
have always taught us.

1ST MAN. And you have always learnt the wrong things...

3RD MAN. Well?

4TH MAN. What can you see?

1ST MAN. Nothing, of course.

2ND MAN. He appears to be all right.

3RD MAN. I can't see anything.

4TH MAN. Perfect condition.

1ST MAN. As I said. It's HIM.

3RD MAN. Yes.

4TH MAN. It's him.

WILLIE. Yet I wanted to die. Today's my birthday. I'm 21.

2ND MAN. What would birthday's matter to him?

WILLIE. To Hell with Birthdays!

3RD MAN. Would he talk that way?

1ST MAN. No-one knows how he would talk. We were often told we
might not recognize him after so long a wait.

4TH MAN. We should tell the others!

2ND MAN. Not yet!

1ST MAN. Why not?

3RD MAN. Do you doubt?

WILLIE. When I was a kid they told me I could be anything I
wanted to be when I grew up.

2ND MAN. I only want to be certain.

1ST MAN. You should be certain.

4TH MAN. Hesitation is sinful.

3RD MAN. Doubt is an enemy of faith.

WILLIE. They told me I wasn't like other kids. It's my birthday.
They lied to me.

1ST MAN. Remember. There is no other explanation. If he wasn't
the One...He would be smashed like the others...

WILLIE. "Don't cry, son," they said. "Pretty soon, you'll be a
man, a great man."

3RD MAN. We would have carted away his body...

4TH MAN. Raised the count to 29.

WILLIE. "The world will sit up and take notice of you. We know
you son, trust us." Lies!

2ND MAN. He should have jumped again.

1ST MAN. He is the one.

3RD MAN. He has the face of a saint...

WILLIE. On my way here, I tried one last thing.

4TH MAN. The body of a saint...

WILLIE. I stepped on every possible foot...

1ST MAN. The bearing of a saint...

WILLIE. Spat at every possible face...

3RD MAN. We needed him...

WILLIE. Shouted curses and obscenities at every possible pair
of ears...

4TH MAN. And at last he came to us!

WILLIE. Finally...I pulled down my pants and exposed myself...

1ST MAN. When our need was so great.

WILLIE. And still nothing...Nothing!

1ST MAN. I acknowledge the saviour. (Kneels)

3RD MAN. I acknowledge the saviour. (Kneels)

4TH MAN. And I. (Kneels)

1ST MAN. (To 2ND) We wait for you. As always.

3RD MAN. Stubborn.

4TH MAN. Always the last.

WILLIE. They never saw me at all. They never saw the 20 year old with his pants down on his way to commit suicide. Why are you kneeling?

1ST MAN. In order to worship you.

WILLIE. What!

1ST MAN. You are the one we have been watching for.

3RD MAN. And now you have arrived.

4TH MAN. To lead us at last.

WILLIE. Me?

1ST MAN. You revealed yourself to us through a miracle.

3RD MAN. Yes.

4TH MAN. That's true.

WILLIE. I did?

1ST MAN. You jumped...but you didn't die.

3RD MAN. As all the others died.

4TH MAN. True.

WILLIE. It is strange.

1ST MAN. More than strange.

3RD MAN. Much more than strange.

4TH MAN. True.

1ST MAN. You are immortal.

2ND MAN. It could be just an accident.

1ST MAN. An accident? Look at that cliff!

WILLIE. Me, immortal? Never.

1ST MAN. Would you like to see the bodies of the 28 who jumped before you this week?

3RD MAN. Or the graves of the hundreds before them?

4TH MAN. Or the thousands before them?

1ST MAN. And this is only one cliff.

WILLIE. (To 2ND) And no-one has ever lived before?

2ND MAN. Not that we know.

1ST MAN. Believe in yourself now. As you always wanted to.

WILLIE. Yes, I always wanted to.

1st MAN. Believe in yourself because we believe in you.

WILLIE. Do you?

3RD MAN. Yes.

4TH MAN. We do.

1ST MAN. (To 2ND) And so do you.

2ND MAN. Of course I'd like to.

WILLIE. What happens if I go along with this?

1ST MAN. You'll come with us.

3RD MAN. To the millions of others.

4TH MAN. Who are waiting for you.

1ST MAN. They must be told the joyeous news.

WILLIE. It's too much. I...don't know.

1ST MAN. (To 2ND) Ask him to come. Do you want to let him go?

2ND MAN. No.

3RD MAN. Of course not. We have recognized him.

4TH MAN. We know who he is.

WILLIE. And who am I?

1ST MAN. Our saviour.

WILLIE. It can't be.

1ST MAN. We have made plans for you.

3RD MAN. All mankind awaits.

WILLIE. I know all about mankind. They don't give a damn.

1ST MAN. They will now.

3RD MAN. Now that they know who you are.

4TH MAN. They will worship you.

WILLIE. (To 1ST) Do you really believe I'm the saviour?

1ST MAN. I believe that if you're not the saviour, then we'll wait in vain forever.

WILLIE. I'm confused.

1ST MAN. But excited too. Come with us. You have nothing to lose.

2ND MAN. I'd like to see his origin.

WILLIE. I should tell my parents.

3RD MAN. Yes, let's meet his parents.

4TH MAN. Let's see his home.

1ST MAN. And then you will come with us?

WILLIE. Why not? My life means nothing to me.

1ST MAN. But everything to us.

2ND MAN. Let's go.

3RD MAN. The whole world waits.

WILLIE. I'll come. I'm starting to dream again.

1ST MAN. Go to his home. I'll tell the others and I'll wait for you here.

2ND MAN. You won't come?

1ST MAN. No, I don't need to.

2ND MAN. (After a pause) As you like. (They exit, 1ST man last)

4TH MAN. Hurry!

(Willie's father and mother enter, wheeling a tea wagon, carrying cups, etc.) (He carries two chairs)

MOTHER. Time for tea. I must ice Willie's cake.

FATHER. With chocolate icing. It's Willie's favorite. I can't stand chocolate. One lump, as usual.

MOTHER. He's a good boy. A real credit to us. I'm so glad we only had one. Lemon biscuit?

FATHER. He'll marry a fine girl and have dinner with us every Sunday and name his children after us and do well for us, won't he? Yes, please.

MOTHER. Don't you worry, father. He's a fine investment.

FATHER. He's coming.

MOTHER. Who are your friends, dear?

(Willie and the three men enter)

2ND MAN. Excuse this interruption during tea-time.

3RD MAN. But there is no time to lose.

WILLIE. I jumped off a cliff.

4TH MAN. He is no longer merely your son.

3RD MAN. He is the second saviour.

4TH MAN. Whom we recognized through a miracle.

FATHER. What?

MOTHER. Willie?

WILLIE. I've been trying to tell you...

2ND MAN. A humble beginning. (Examining the room)

3RD MAN. As is proper.

MOTHER. Father?

FATHER. Don't you see, mother? Our son has at last been recognized. It's true. I haven't done too well. But I gave Willie all I could. Please, feel free to look around.

MOTHER. We sent him to camp when we couldn't afford a vacation for ourselves.

2ND MAN. Quiet. What about his childhood?

MOTHER. Oh...ah...he was a good child.

2ND MAN. Anything unusual?

FATHER. Oh yes. He was a very unusual child.

2ND MAN. How unusual?

MOTHER. Well...he never picked his nose...like other children.
He was toilet trained by the time he was 13 months.

FATHER. He used to always try to climb out the window. He
thought he could fly. I never let him, of course. I never
realized.

3RD MAN. What's your occupation?

FATHER. I...I'm a painter.

4TH MAN. That's close.

2ND MAN. Conception?

(Shocked silence)

MOTHER. (Finally) The...usual one.

2ND MAN. Not immaculate?

FATHER. We're respectable people!

MOTHER. We don't go in for that sort of thing.

2ND MAN. Think carefully!

3RD MAN. Wasn't there anything unusual about it?

4TH MAN. A slight hint of strangeness?

2ND MAN. Quiet!

(Silence. Father, prompting)

FATHER. Mother, don't you remember?

2ND MAN. Yes?

MOTHER. What, dear?

FATHER. The night I was away.

3RD, 4TH. Yes, yes...

FATHER. Nine months before Willy was born...You had the window
open. Couldn't it have been that night?

MOTHER. Oh, that night!

WILLIE. Mother, what!

2ND MAN. What happened?

3RD, 4TH. Tell us!

MOTHER. I had nearly forgotten. During that night...I hate to sleep alone...I was restless. Suddenly I could hardly breath. There was this pressing weight on my chest.

WILLIE. Mother!

2ND MAN. Quickly!

MOTHER. Well...I was frightened. I thought it was a heart condition.

FATHER. Mother, you did not! You told me the next day...It was as if you'd been...ravished.

MOTHER. Well...like I'd been...entered. Something started to tickle. I could feel it travelling. All the way up...right up to my womb.

FATHER. Right up to her womb.

WILLIE. Why didn't you tell me!

2ND MAN. Woman, you've slept with the Holy Ghost!

MOTHER. Oh!

FATHER. It's all right, dear. I forgive you. I always knew he was something more than my son.

3RD MAN. God led our footsteps in the right direction when he brought us here.

4TH MAN. Blessed be this home.

3RD MAN. Blessed this father and mother.

2ND MAN. (To father) Anything else?

FATHER. What more do you need?

MOTHER. Wait a minute. He wasn't born in the hospital. We couldn't get there in time. He was born in the back of the car in a garbage ground.

WILLIE. Why wasn't I told this before?

FATHER. We were passing by the dump when the labor got worse. I pulled over...and out he came.

MOTHER. As I lay there...looking out the window. There was this bright light.

WILLIE. Yes...yes...

2ND MAN. I'm waiting...

MOTHER. They were burning the garbage...the light seemed to glow all around us.

3RD MAN. Miraculous...

4TH MAN. Blessed...

2ND MAN. This is more than I had hoped for.

WILLIE. And that's why you always told me I would grow up to be great!

MOTHER. Yes, dear.

2ND MAN. Anything else?

FATHER. Yes! Remember, mother? As soon as Willie was born, I started the car, to drive to the hospital. Remember who came?

3RD MAN. The wise men!

4TH MAN. With gifts!

WILLIE. Led by the light.

FATHER. They came up to the car, and they knocked on the window, and one of them shone a light into the back of the car, and they said - remember mother? They shone this light into the back of the car, and they said, "You can't do this sort of thing in the garbage dump."

2ND MAN. That's all?

MOTHER. Well they escorted us to the hospital.

FATHER. And one of them did give me a ticket.

WILLIE. I've heard all I need. I'm ready to go with you.

2ND MAN. Yes. We'll go now. (To mother) We are taking your son from you. He now belongs to the world.

3RD MAN. We'll tell the others.

4TH MAN. He never kept a donkey?

FATHER. He had a pet turtle.

2ND MAN. We have heard enough.

3RD MAN. Did he ever confound his elders?

MOTHER. We never understood his talk when he was 15 months.

2ND MAN. Enough.

WILLIE. Good-bye mother. Good-bye father.

FATHER. After his feeding, when I burped him, it always came out so miloudious...Profound.

2ND MAN. Good-bye. This visit has helped.

MOTHER. When I used to change him at night...there was a strange glow from his diaper.

2ND MAN. We need hear no more. Come.

FATHER. As a baby, he used to drool so much...but it wasn't like ordinary saliva. It smelt like flowers.

WILLIE. To have kept me in the dark for so long!

MOTHER. When he spit out his pablum, it wouldn't stick to his face, the way it did with other babies.

2ND MAN. Farewell. Thank you.

WILLIE. Goodbye.

3RD MAN. He's off to glory.

4TH MAN. And so are we.

(They exit)

FATHER. When we took him out of his basinette...the water was even cleaner than when we had put him in it...

MOTHER. They've gone, father. Help me with the tea things.

FATHER. Didn't I tell you, Willie would turn out to be a fortress to us in our old age?

MOTHER. To think that all his peculiar behaviour as a child turned out to have a divine purpose!

FATHER. We'll be famous for this dear. Tea was very good today, as usual.

(They exit, with table, chairs, etc.)

(Willie enters, with 2ND, 3RD and 4TH watchers.)

WILLIE. People follow us already.

2ND MAN. Thousands.

3RD MAN. And there will be more.

4TH MAN. We're almost there. To the cave.

WILLIE. Where's the other man?

2ND MAN. Don't worry. He'll be near.

3RD MAN. He is back with the crowd. Leading them.

4TH MAN. Rather he leads them than us.

2ND MAN. (To 3RD and 4TH) Go back and help direct them to the cave, or we'll lose some of them.

3RD MAN. As you say.

4TH MAN. To follow you is a pleasure. (They exit)

WILLIE. I know that cave. I played there as a child.

2ND MAN. Did you?

(1ST man enters)

1ST MAN. They need you out there. Go help them.

2ND MAN. It is no longer for you to give orders. The true leader of all of us has arrived, remember?

1ST MAN. I am not the one who is in danger of forgetting.
(To Willie) Tell him to go. He is good with words. They will follow him.

WILLIE. (To 2ND) Go and tell them who I am.

2ND MAN. I will. When I am certain. (exits)

WILLIE. What did he mean?

1ST MAN. He is a rebellion.

WILLIE. Why didn't you follow us to my home?

1ST MAN. I had no further need of secondary proofs. Did it go well?

WILLIE. They told us of fantastic things I never knew.

1ST MAN. And everyone was impressed?

WILLIE. Yes. And now I'm hungry. I didn't sleep too much either.

1ST MAN. It's fortunate that saints do not require much of either.
There is no time now.

2ND MAN. (Entering with 3RD and 4TH) I have spoken to them.
But they are restless.

1ST MAN. Tell them to spread out and rest. We've reached the
holy ground.

2ND MAN. I've told them that already.

3RD MAN. They've followed an unseen source for many miles.

4TH MAN. They wish to see this saviour.

1ST MAN. Tell them the saviour needs rest but will speak to them
very soon.

2ND MAN. You can no longer give commands. I'll listen only to
him. (Indicating Willy)

1ST MAN. I hope he will teach you obedience. (To others) Go.

3RD MAN. We will do our best for you.

4TH MAN. As we always do. (They exit)

1ST MAN. (To Willie) The crowd must be reassured.

WILLIE. (To 2ND) Please go. Tell them I just need a little time.

2ND MAN. They won't be satisfied with me for long. (Exits)

WILLIE. You do give a lot of orders.

1ST MAN. Only until you are ready to give them yourself. How
quickly can you grow a beard?

WILLIE. What!

1ST MAN. You must appreciate the importance of growing one
immediately, for the image.

WILLIE. Are you serious?

1ST MAN. You must be altered to fit the image of the first
saviour. People accept new concepts with difficulty. Why make it
difficult? I have something for you. (Goes into cave, returns
with robe and sandals.) These are your new clothes. I suggest
you put them on before the crowd sees you.

WILLIE. Forget it. No way!

1ST MAN. You'd be surprised at how different these new clothes
will make you feel. Give them a try. Allow me.

WILLIE. Back off. If you really want to help me, get me some
food. I'm hungry.

1ST MAN. Let me explain. They've all waited so long. They're not certain anymore what it is they're waiting for. It would help them to adjust to you easier if you looked and acted as the first saviour did. They don't realize that even saints and saviours alter with the times. They want tradition in their religion, so why not comply? Listen to them. They all want you. Please, put your arm through. Later on, I'll come back with some food after they've gone. But not now. When you're in their presence, I'd suggest a little bread...; a little wine...but try not to let your stomach growl. Don't burp. Control your bladder. You understand...in the Bible...there's no mention of Christ relieving himself. Now please...the other arm.

WILLIE. You're kidding!

1ST MAN. Listen to them. Please...the sandals...

WILLIE. You don't believe in me. If I really were Him, you know all that crap would make no difference.

1ST MAN. Yes, it would. I know these people. Accept me as your advisor. I can make it easier for you. There is not much time.

WILLIE. Look at me! They'll laugh at me in this outfit.

1ST MAN. You'll see differently. They grow impatient. Listen. They are all calling out for you. No-one else matters now but you. You are everything. Put on the sandals.

WILLIE. (Accepting) They all wait for me? It's an old dream of mine.

1ST MAN. It's not a dream. Are you ready for them now?

WILLIE. I don't know what to say.

1ST MAN. I'll help you. Just a little will be enough for now.

2ND MAN. You'll have to speak to them now. Can't you hear?

(There is a lot of stirring and calling in the audience.)
(Individual voices call out, "Where is he?", etc.)(General unrest)

3RD MAN. Only your voice will still them.

4TH MAN. Listen.

CROWD. (In audience) Speak! Speak! We must hear you! We wait! Where is the saviour?

1ST MAN. It is time.

WILLIE. I'm scared.

1ST MAN. I'm right here.

CROWD. A message! A message! Now! Now!

3RD, 4TH. Yes, yes, a message. Now!

2ND MAN. Give us direction, if you can.

3RD, 4TH. Direction. We must have direction!

WILLIE. What do I do?

1ST MAN. Tell them you are tired and must have peace for tonight.

2ND MAN. We must have answers to burning questions!

3RD, 4TH, CROWD. Yes, yes! Answers!

2ND MAN. We have confessions that have to be heard.

3RD, 4TH, CROWD. Yes, yes, confessions! Must be heard!

1ST MAN. See how he's stirring them up. Rise to the occasion.
Show him. Show them all.

WILLIE. Then what?

2ND MAN. We have sins that have to be cleansed.

3RD, 4TH, CROWD. Sins that have to be cleansed!

1ST MAN. You must let them see you. Come forward. (To all)
Clear the way. Your saviour will speak.

CROWD. Hooray! Our Saviour!

WILLIE. I can't!

1ST MAN. Yes, you can. All eyes are on you now, as You've always
wanted.

WILLIE. But if you're wrong?

1ST MAN. Can so many be wrong? Look. Listen to them. How can
you deny yourself when you are needed so badly?

2ND MAN. Will he speak to us?

3RD, 4TH. He must speak!

CROWD. Speak! Speak!

1ST MAN. Now is the time. I will help you. Friends, our Lord
will now address you. Silence, please.

(A great hush)

1ST MAN. (To Willie) In front. Where they can see you. That's right. See? They like your appearance. Now speak. Tell them you cannot help them tonight. You need peace. Go on.

WILLIE. Friends...I cannot give you much help tonight. I need peace...(Falters)

1ST MAN. (Prompting) "I am not yet ready".

WILLIE. I am not yet ready.

1ST MAN. "You must give me time to be alone with my Father".

WILLIE. You must give me time to be alone with my Father.

1ST MAN. For I love you too much to give you a less than perfect saviour.

WILLIE. For I love you too much to give you a less than perfect saviour. (Pause)...Please...wait until tomorrow...You have waited this long already...wait a little more...Wait until tomorrow...and then...and then...I will be yours. Till then, my friends...please go in peace and leave me.

(The crowd stirs and calls out)

1ST MAN. That was fine. Permit me. (Addressing crowd) You have heard Him. We must begin by practising obedience. Our Lord has shown us that we are over-impatient. Let us learn our first lesson well. We will return tomorrow.

2ND MAN. He has told us nothing. How do we know he will be here tomorrow?

1ST MAN. You will come to no good. Will you be quiet?

WILLIE. (To 1ST) Let me. (To 2ND) Look, if you don't believe in me, why hang around and cause trouble? What have I done to you? I don't intend to take off. Why should I? I have everything. If you're jealous, or if you doubt me, why don't you jump from the cliff yourself? If you live, I'll step aside for you. Fair is fair. Don't you think you could at least give me the courtesy of a trial? You'd do as much for anyone else.

2ND MAN. You have a point.

3RD MAN. Why not run him out?

4TH MAN. We don't need his sort among us.

WILLIE. On the strength of your opinion? It changes every minute. I want him to stay here.

2ND MAN. (Surprised) Thank you.

WILLIE. Would you help the crowd to break up? I have to be alone.

2ND MAN. Yes, I will. Till tomorrow then. (Exits)

WILLIE. (To 2ND and 3RD) Will you go, as well?

3RD MAN. Please...may I? (Approaching)

4TH MAN. May we touch you?

WILLIE. Why not?

3RD MAN. (Touching his robe) Thank you. I cannot wait till tomorrow.

4TH MAN. (Likewise) Thank you. It will be a long night.

1ST MAN. It's over. You did all right.

WILLIE. Not much.

1ST MAN. Enough. But you'll have to be prepared for tomorrow. I have some suggestions for speeches...

WILLIE. You're not going?

1ST MAN. Not yet.

WILLIE. I'd like to be alone.

1ST MAN. I could get you some food now.

WILLIE. I don't feel hungry now.

1ST MAN. You'll need your strength for tomorrow. You should eat.

WILLIE. No thanks.

1ST MAN. Even Jesus accepted food.

WILLIE. I'd like to be alone.

1ST MAN. I think we should talk a little, first.

WILLIE. About what?

1ST MAN. What you'll say to them tomorrow.

WILLIE. Why?

1ST MAN. We need to say the right things. Tomorrow they'll be more critical.

WILLIE. We?

1ST MAN. What's happened to you?

WILLIE. I'd like you to go.

1ST MAN. I had planned to stay with you.

WILLIE. Why?

1ST MAN. I thought you needed help.

WILLIE. Afraid I'll run off?

1ST MAN. Of course not.

WILLIE. You're so careful to make certain the others believe in me...what about yourself??

1ST MAN. Why do you think I don't believe?

WILLIE. Why don't you? A miracle is a miracle. Why shouldn't it be me?

1ST MAN. You're right, you don't need me anymore.

WILLIE. Do you think you've made me up?

1ST MAN. I've tried to help you adjust to your new role. Make it easier for everyone. And now that you have, you don't need me any further. I'll still be there if you should ever need me again. (Starts to go)

WILLIE. (Stopping him) That's not enough. Do you believe in me?

1ST MAN. Yes, I do. I believe in you as much as I'd believe in anyone who had just performed a miracle. I hope you have a good rest. (Exits)

WILLIE. Come back. I don't like that answer. Everything is so confusing. At this moment my parents should be weeping over my smashed body in a funeral home, making arrangements with the church, accepting condolences. Instead I'm here. Like in my old dreams, I'm someone with a destiny. Is it really all part of a divine plan?

(Mother and father enter with birthday cake and gifts)

MOTHER. Willie?

WILLIE. Who's that?

MOTHER. Your mother, dear.

FATHER. And your father, too.

WILLIE. What for?

MOTHER. You see, father, I told you he'd be glad to see us.

FATHER. We weren't sure if you'd come back for your birthday!

MOTHER. So we brought the birthday to you.

WILLIE. How did you know where to come?

MOTHER. Everyone knows where you are, Willie.

WILLIE. Do they?

FATHER. Oh yes, son. You've become very important. We're so proud.

WILLIE. And does everyone know who I am?

MOTHER. You've become famous in a matter of hours. It's a new record.

WILLIE. And you believe in me?

MOTHER. I always knew there was something different about you.

FATHER. We believe in you 100%, boy.

MOTHER. And look at your birthday cake. Your favorite icing. "Happy Birthday Willie" in white icing. Won't you open your presents now?

WILLIE. No, I couldn't.

FATHER. We had already bought them before we heard that you were the new Messiah. Consider it a symbolic birthday, boy. Dig in.

WILLIE. No, father. This is so unimportant. There are other things now...

FATHER. You need me for anything, son?

WILLIE. What shall I do, dad?

FATHER. The way ahead is clear, Willie. You're the new saviour. You've never been one to turn away from your responsibilities.

WILLIE. And my responsibilities are...?

FATHER. To go ahead in this. You were there this afternoon, not I. You're the one who knows whether it was a miracle or not.

WILLIE. It was. You should have seen where I jumped.

FATHER. Then why be uncertain? This is a great thing that has happened to you...

MOTHER. And to your family...

FATHER. You are now a man of destiny. It is now possible for you to do great things...like you've always dreamt of...like every man has always dreamt of. You are the one...Walk tall, son. Hold your head high. You are now the most important man in the world...perhaps in history. Live your moment!

WILLIE. And those things you said about my childhood?

MOTHER. Every one of them true, and much more. Haven't we always told you, you would be noticed? We knew...we always knew something like this would happen...and we tried to prepare you for it.

FATHER. You were never an ordinary child.

WILLIE. Mother, father! (Embracing them) Thank you. Thank you.

FATHER. And now we'll leave you with your true father...

MOTHER. We'll give you up to higher things, dear.

WILLIE. Thank you for what you've done.

FATHER. We leave you to your new life.

WILLIE. Goodbye (Exits into cave)

MOTHER. You see? I told you he'd be getting cold feet.

FATHER. It's lucky we came. Now we're on our way to becoming saints.

MOTHER. People will open their doors to us everywhere. We can stop your old age pension contributions.

FATHER. The possibilities are unlimited. All of Willie's things are now worth a fortune.

MOTHER. Do you think Willie will be all right now?

FATHER. He won't back out. We brought him up to be an opportunist.

MOTHER. What shall we do with these presents?

FATHER. They're worth money to us now. No-one will know he never really owned them.

MOTHER. And the cake?

FATHER. Throw it away. You know I hate chocolate icing.

(They exit)

(Time passage. Next morning. The four men enter.)

3RD MAN. We must walk softly.

4TH MAN. We are on holy ground.

1ST MAN. It's so early. He may not be ready.

2ND MAN. It's never too early for the Lord.

1ST MAN. Even the Lord, needs rest, my friend.

WILLIE. (From within) Who's there?

3RD MAN. Your humble servants.

4TH MAN. Assembled for your word.

1ST MAN. Are we too early?

2ND MAN. The Lord knows no hours.

1ST MAN. Will you be quiet?

3RD MAN. His impatience will ruin us all.

4TH MAN. He has no control.

2ND MAN. (To Willie) Will you come out? The crowd is waiting.
Many of them slept in the fields.

1ST MAN. Why will you not learn?

2ND MAN. Perhaps because I have nothing to learn.

(Willie enters. He is more confident. Looks more "the part")

WILLIE. I heard you and I'm here. Please. Get up. All of you.

2ND MAN. Are you ready?

3RD MAN. We have wandered without you for too long.

4TH MAN. Bring us back to peace.

WILLIE. I will lead you back. Give your life direction. Relax.

2ND MAN. At last!

WILLIE. I will change your lives.

3RD, 4TH. Yes, change us!

WILLIE. There are so many out there. Can you all see me? Can
you all hear me?

CROWD. Yes, yes!

3RD MAN. Will you give us Paradise.
4TH MAN. Will you banish war?
2ND MAN. Lord, we wait. Millions of us wait.
3RD MAN. Yes, your sermon.
4TH MAN. We are ready.

(Willie comes forward. He looks out at the crowd, and stops, nervously. He looks for the 1st man. They look at one another. Awkward pause.)

1ST MAN. (sensing his need) Quiet! We will now have the sermon.
3RD MAN. The sermon on the mount!
1ST MAN. Quiet! The Lord will now speak!

WILLIE. (Nervous, uncertain) Well...first of all...ah...Let's look at Christ. He was...ah...the first of them...I mean...the first of the saviours. What I mean is...there were two. I'm the second one. We have to realize, though, that there is no way we can be really certain that there weren't more. Unrecognized ones, I mean. Say...people...who...ah...jumped off cliffs and didn't die too. There may have been lots of them, who knows? Who knows if there were miracles performed every day, but no-one to know it cause there was no-one to see it. What I'm trying to get at is that you've made the difference. You, with all patience and faith. ...waiting...watching...and finally...recognizing!

1ST MAN. Yes, we recognized!

(He has gone down among the audience and is trying to stir up the crowd.)

2ND, 3RD. We recognized!

4TH MAN. Yes!

1ST MAN. Yes! Yes!

CROWD. Yes!

WILLIE. (Gaining confidence from this) So we don't know how many of those saints there may have been. Saints only to themselves because no-one else ever knew. But I'll tell you one thing. ...there was Christ...for sure...and now there is Me. If you'll believe that...you'll have it made. Because I know it is me. Because I survived...and you watched me survive...I know it's me!

1ST MAN. Yes, it's you!

3RD, 4TH. It's you, you!

CROWD. You!

WILLIE. The world will now change forever!

1ST MAN. Yes, forever! Let's hear it, let's hear it. Forever!

CROWD. Forever!

WILLIE. (More confident) The horrors and uncertainties of life will fade out...Man will recognize Me...and through me he will recognize himself. Because...friends...Man is not just a passing phase...He's not a total wipeout. Man is forever!

1ST MAN. Forever!

CROWD. Forever!

2ND MAN. Yes, yes! You're right. It's true.

CROWD. It's true!

WILLIE. Yes, follow me, mister. Believe me! Why not? Have you got anything better going for you? No? Then why not? I'm a sure thing. Why not?? (Specifically to 2nd man)

1ST MAN. Why not?

2ND MAN. Yes, why not? Why not?

WILLIE. (Going strong now) Man really is what he always hoped he was...Man is not a speck of dust in a frogs eye...man is not a pile of crap rotting on the pasture. Man has a destiny.

2ND MAN. Yes, a destiny. (He comes down into the crowd. 1st man, Noticing him and also Willie's mounting confidence, now takes a back seat.)

3RD, 4TH. A destiny!

CROWD. Yes, yes!

WILLIE. Man is not a bad scene. Man knows where he's at. He's at the right place, man. The right place!

2ND MAN. We are at the right place!

CROWD. Were there!

WILLIE. We've arrived!

2ND MAN. We've arrived at last!

WILLIE. Man is not a moth hanging on to a coat that is being torn down to make room for a wider hall. Man is not a fish that gets all racked up trying to lay its eggs only to get caught on a fisherman's hook five feet from its goal! Man is more, let me tell you! More!

2ND MAN. More! More!

3RD, 4TH. Man is more!

WILLIE. Praise God man is more!

CROWD. Praise Good! Praise God!

WILLIE. Praise God, who made all things possible...The big things and the small things. The petty things and the ultimate things... the trivialities and the mind-blowers. Praise God!

2ND MAN. Praise God! Praise God!

ALL. Praise God!

WILLIE. Who makes the pop fizz and the gravy thicken and the coffee perk? God. Who passes around the collection plate in order to aid missionaries in Indo-China, and drives the cows out of the storm into the barn? God.

2ND MAN. God!

ALL. God!

WILLIE. Who puts jewelled collars on Siamese cats and mosquitoes on bodies in the grass? God.

2ND MAN. God!

CROWD. God!

WILLIE. Who lets flowers grow on the graves of men who were hanged for murdering their mothers? Who puts ice on the stairs where grandmother has to go down to pick up the milk? Cancer on the bones on the milkman's retired old horse...and pimples on the face of the fattest girl in school?

2ND MAN. God!

ALL. God!

WILLIE. And me! And me!

2ND MAN. God and me! God and me!

WILLIE. Who puts lumps in the mashed potatoes on Thanksgiving... flies in the hamburger for the Sunday cook-out?

2ND MAN. God and me! God and me!

ALL. God and me! God and me!

WILLIE. Who puts food between the teeth that have to smile for the people? Wax in the ears...fungus on the feet?

2ND MAN. Godenmy! Godenmy!

ALL. Godenmy! Godenmy!

WILLIE. Yes, yes, yes!

2ND MAN. Yes!

ALL. Yes!

(Pause, then Willie begins again more slowly)

WILLIE. My friends, Love is the answer. Gather around. Listen to me.

(He steps down and walks around among the men.) Come closer.

2ND MAN. Come closer. We heard you, Lord. We heard you.

(The four woman in the audience rise and go onstage)

1ST W. We heard you, Lord.

2ND W. We'll come closer to you.

3RD. W. Close enough to kiss your feet.

4TH W. We're here, Lord!

WILLIE. That's right, closer. We're talking about love here, people. Nothing but love. Come as close as you can. Smile at your neighbour. Nothing but pure plain love.

2ND MAN. (Back onstage now) Yes, love.

(The 1st man is also onstage and becomes one of the crowd in responses.)

ALL. Love!

WILLIE. Love will put us on the right track. Love will bring us peace of mind. Everybody love. Everybody love everybody.

2ND MAN. (Embracing one of the woman) Yes, everybody love.

ALL. Everybody love. (The other three men embrace the woman)

WILLIE. That's right. Kiss everyone. Love everyone. Everybody love your friendly loan company.

CROWD. Our friendly loan company.

WILLIE. Everybody love our friendly police...

CROWD. Our friendly police.

WILLIE. Everybody love your friendly door-to-door magazine seller.

CROWD. Our friendly door-to-door magazine seller.

(Men and women continue to fondle and hug each other)

WILLIE. Everybody love. Everybody love your wife. Everybody love everybody's wife.

CROWD. Everybody's wife.

WILLIE. That's right! That's right! You've got it now. Love, love, love! Love will save us all!

CROWD. Love will save us all!

WILLIE. Love everything!

CROWD. Love everything!

WILLIE. Burnt toast...rising taxes!

CROWD. Burnt toast...rising taxes!

WILLIE. Unwashed armpits...greasy hair...

CROWD. Unwashed armpits...greasy hair...(Picking up the rhythm and beginning to dance.)

WILLIE. The fly in the pie!

CROWD. The fly in the pie!

WILLIE. The flea in the tree!

CROWD. The flea in the tree!

WILLIE. The glass in the grass!

CROWD. Glass in the grass!

WILLIE. The tar on the car!

CROWD. Tar on the car! (The men and women onstage are dancing, more and more abandondly.) Tar on the car!

WILLIE. Bug on the rug!

CROWD. Bug on the rug! Bug on the rug! Bug on the rug!

WILLIE. The gore on the floor.

CROWD. Gore on the floor, gore on the floor, gore on the floor!

WILLIE. Dog on the log!

CROWD. Dog on the log, log on the dog, dog on the log!

WILLIE. The milk on the silk!

CROWD. Milk on the silk! Silk on the milk! Gore on the floor.
Whore on the floor. More, more more!

WILLIE. (All join in) Whore on the floor. Whore at the door.

log on the dog. Dog on the log...log...log...log on the dog...
hog...hog...hog in the bog...bog...bog...bog in the gog...

fleas in the trees...trees on the fleas...fleas...fleas...
fleas in the breeze...more...please! Tar on the car..Car in the
tar...tar...car...tar...tar on the star...fleas...floor...

bog...hog...gog...gore...floor...whore...more...more,more!

(They collapse on one another, Heavy breathing.)

(Willie remains standing. Looks around him, now convinced of his
omnipotence. Calmly, quietly, he begins again.)

WILLIE. Very much like the final ecstasy of copulation is the
pleasure that makes you scream with pain...the scream of the
squashed cucumber...the stubbing of a very delicate blue-veined
toe against unrelenting concrete. Pleasure...and pain...that
old mocking pair...Hot and cold sometimes come together to form
a union neither hot nor cold, but rather an unsatisfying, teasing,
frozen burn that pinches, tingles, and leaves you feeling cheated.
In my opinion, however, the most intense cold is not a union.
It is the cold that comes directly after the realization that the
cold is cold...For example, the cold that follows the realization
that the fog is fog...the voice is only a foghorn...and that you
are the smallest fogclot...of them all. Finally, I believe that
the ultimate realization is not that of the departure of loved ones,
nor that of past youthful joys and memories, nor of the great
Paradise to come, but that of electricity bills rising...hamburgers
left too long in the fridge...underwear left unwashed...and mirrors
left staring...

Let us pray. Our Father

CROWD. Which art in Heaven.

WILLIE. Thy kingdom has come.

CROWD. Thy will...

WILLIE. Is being done.

CROWD. Give us this day.

WILLIE. Faith in our new saviour.

CROWD. And forgive us...

WILLIE. For your doubts during your long wait for me.
CROWD. As we forgive those...
WILLIE. Who still doubt.
CROWD. Lead us not...
WILLIE. Off the true path. For we have arrived.
CROWD. Forever and ever.
WILLIE. Ever and ever. Amen.
CROWD. Amen.

(A great silence)

2ND MAN. A saint. A true saint.
3RD MAN. Beautiful.
4TH MAN. Possessed by God.
1ST W. Such a powerful voice.
2ND W. Such a magnificent stature.
3RD W. Such a pretty face.
4TH W. Please...let me touch you.
WILLIE. That's enough. (To women) Please. Go back.
1ST W. Please, bless us first.
WILLIE. I bless you all. Go in peace.
2ND W. We'll follow you forever.

(They go back into audience)

2ND MAN. Must we go too? (Throwing himself at Willie's feet)
Oh Lord, please forgive me. I doubt no longer. Never again.
Please...your sermon has won me over completely. Don't send me away.
WILLIE. Please...get up. I forgive you. You're welcome to stay.
2ND MAN. You must let me serve you. I must prove myself to you.
Let me be your disciple. I will follow in your footsteps... I
will suffer all humiliation...insult and deprivation...if you
will only let me follow you.
3RD MAN. Yes, we must be your disciples!
4TH MAN. We saw you first. It is only right that we should be
named as those closest to you.

2ND MAN. Master, honor me. You will never find a more devoted follower from this moment on. You must give me a chance.

WILLIE. Please...this is too much. You are my disciple.

2ND MAN. Dear Master, thank you. You will never regret it.

3RD MAN. And me Lord. And me.

WILLIE. Yes, you as well. (To 4TH) And you too.

3RD MAN. I am honored.

4TH MAN. I will never forget this moment.

WILLIE. (Who has been watching the 1ST MAN) And you?

1ST MAN. Lord?

WILLIE. So quiet?

1ST MAN. I am overwhelmed.

WILLIE. With what?

1ST MAN. Your greatness.

WILLIE. Will you be my disciple?

1ST MAN. Yes, if you wish.

WILLIE. Do you wish?

1ST MAN. Lord, my wish is your wish.

WILLIE. But this doesn't satisfy me.

2ND MAN. He has always been like that.

3RD MAN. Unpleasant.

4TH MAN. Overbearing.

WILLIE. Commit yourself. You doubt me.

1ST MAN. I never said that.

WILLIE. But you think that.

1ST MAN. This is so unimportant. Look. They all grow restless. They want you among them. You have been so successful. Your success is what is important.

WILLIE. Your faith is what is important.

1ST MAN. Then you have it, for God's sake!

WILLIE. No. I never have.

1ST MAN. Please...leave it alone.

2ND MAN. He displeased you. Let us drive out away. He is not worthy of your concern.

3RD MAN. He is a degenerate.

4TH MAN. There is no soul in him.

WILLIE. And yet...before...he was your leader.

1ST MAN. Before...when we had no faith...

3RD MAN. Not now.

4TH MAN. He is easily replaceable.

1ST MAN. They're right. If I displease you, let me go.

WILLIE. You can't go. I know you.

2ND MAN. Lord, may I speak? Most of the crowd out there has seen nothing. If it is so important for you to convince this man; wouldn't another miracle do it? At the same time the rest of the people would see it as well and their faith would be doubled.

3RD MAN. Yes, another miracle!

4TH MAN. To double our faith!

1ST MAN. Fools!

2ND MAN. Jesus...you remember...walked on the waves...stilled the angry seas...distributed bread and fishes to the crowd when they were hungry...after the sermon, you remember? Don't you think that something of this sort may be needed?

1ST MAN. He has already given us the greatest miracle of all. The one Christ saved for the last.

2ND MAN. I would alert the crowd.

3RD MAN. All the doubters would be there.

4TH MAN. They would see and tremble...just as we have.

2ND MAN. Not for us...who already know...but for the multitudes...

1ST MAN. The multitudes followed Jesus through faith...

2ND MAN. We'll prepare the unbelievers and reporters so that they can tell of this miracle to all of the world.

1ST MAN. You'll go nowhere. Don't give the people any more,
my Lord. You have given enough, believe me.

WILLIE. So, once more you wish to give orders. (To 2nd) Go.

2ND MAN. I am going, Lord. It is your greatest command.

3RD MAN. We will prepare everyone.

4TH MAN. All the world will be convinced.

1ST MAN. No!

2ND MAN. You will never give orders to me again. (Laughs and
Exits with 3rd and 4th)

1ST MAN. They are fools! Call them back. Don't make this mistake.

WILLIE. Mistake?

1ST MAN. It is a mistake to be tempted.

WILLIE. You will watch again, and you will believe this time.

1ST MAN. Don't do it for me. It's unnecessary.

WILLIE. I do it for you.

1ST MAN. But I'm begging you not to!

(The men circulate among the audience)

2ND MAN. The miracle is to be repeated!

3RD MAN. Everyone prepare yourselves.

4TH MAN. Bring your friends!

CROWD. The miracle!

2ND MAN. It won't be long.

3RD MAN. Watch the cliff!

CROWD. Horray...the miracle again!

1ST MAN. Don't do it!

WILLIE. Soon you'll believe like the others...and when you do...
only then will I be certain.

1ST MAN. But is it not better to be 99% certain of a thing, than
to take a chance in order to make it 100%?

WILLIE. There is no chance.

1ST MAN. Is it not better to be almost certain of a thing and to have everything than to take a chance in order to be completely certain and to lose all?

WILLIE. You think I'll die?

1ST MAN. All the possibilities have to be considered.

CROWD. The miracle. Where is he?

(The men return)

2ND MAN. Everything is ready, my Lord.

3RD MAN. They are overcome with excitement.

1ST MAN. (To 2nd) You've made a circus out of this.

2ND MAN. But you're the one who started it all.

3RD MAN. Let's run him out!

WILLIE. Quiet. I need him here.

(Willie's father and mother enters, loaded with toys, etc.)

FATHER. Son, this is a proud moment for your old dad.

MOTHER. We'll be right up front, dear.

1ST MAN. It can still be stopped. Reconsider.

FATHER. This is the great event we've been waiting for.

MOTHER. All those people. It's so exciting.

2ND MAN. Are you ready, Lord?

WILLIE. In a minute...In a minute...

1ST MAN. Call it off, now.

WILLIE. I don't know.

FATHER. Willie. I'd like to speak to you. (Taking him aside)
You bending under the burden of fame...already...son?

1ST MAN. (To Mother) If you love your son, don't let him jump.

MOTHER. Who do you think you are? We've been living for this moment.

FATHER. This is the great test, son. This is the supreme moment. You have to prove yourself. You're too much a man to back out on all this now. You can't turn back. Press forward...son...bravely...You can do it.

2ND MAN. Lord, are you ready?

FATHER. He's ready. We'll be watching, Willie.

MOTHER. Don't let us down, dear.

FATHER. That's my boy! (They exit)

WILLIE. Even my parents believe in me.

1ST MAN. If it's anyone, it's you.

WILLIE. Then why shouldn't I do it again?

1ST MAN. Why tempt fate? I wouldn't.

WILLIE. You're not the saviour.

2ND MAN. The crowd is restless, Lord.

3RD MAN. Faces...from one hill to another.

4TH MAN. Straining to see...

2ND MAN. Listen to your mother and father.

FATHER. (Who is circulating in the audience) Step right up.
Be one of the first to own a holy relic!

MOTHER. (Following) Miracle cures...made by the saviour himself.

2ND MAN. The time is now, Lord.

WILLIE. Yes, I'm going.

1ST MAN. Please...don't.

2ND MAN. Let me help you. This is the greatest moment of all.

WILLIE. No, I will go alone, as before. (To 1ST) Good-bye.

1ST MAN. Good-bye, My Lord.

WILLIE. I'll be back. Watch me.

FATHER. There he goes! In a minute these precious keepsakes
will be worth three times their present value. Buy now!

MOTHER. Miracle airplanes...each tiny part glued by his own hands.
They also fly!

FATHER. You're the disciples, aren't you? You, of all people
should set an example. You must own a holy souvenir for the
sake of the people.

MOTHER. Own the sacred words themselves, as written in the school-books of the holy child himself. There, folks, he's climbing! In a few seconds no-one will be able to afford these museum pieces.

(The 1ST man detatches himself from the others, turns away)

2ND MAN. I'll have one of those books. Maybe after he'll sign it for me.

WILLIE. I am at the top. Watch me!

(Cheers)

MOTHER. Now is the moment. Buy! Buy!

FATHER. And for you, the chain he wore about his neck as a child. Hurry, hurry, hurry, folks. The great moment is nearly upon us.

WILLIE. Are you ready for me?

2ND MAN. Yes, yes, yes!

CROWD. Yes!

FATHER. Last chance! Last chance to be the proud owner of the saviour's own tee shirts.

MOTHER. Cut rate prices! We can't guarantee them after the jump!

1ST MAN. Jump, jump, jump, jump, jump!

CROWD. Jump, jump, jump, jump, jump! (A great chant and stamping of feet.)

WILLIE. I know who I am! I finally know who I am! (Jumps)

FATHER. There he goes!

2ND MAN. Let me help you up, Lord.

3RD MAN. I'm afraid.

4TH MAN. Me, too.

(Willie is lying still)

2ND MAN. (Kneeling) Get up Lord. Get up...please...You've hurt yourself. Let me help you rise. Make your body whole again... Please!

1ST MAN. (Walking over to the body, and looking at him) He'll never get up again.

3RD MAN. We almost had a saviour.

FATHER. (Entering onstage) Drink from the same cup that touched
the precious baby lips of our Lord.

MOTHER. Use the same fork that was clutched by the tender,
chubby hands of the holy child...

(Father sees Willie)

FATHER. Willie! How could you let your father down like this!

MOTHER. (Screams) Willy, get up this instant! How could you do
this horrible thing to your mother!

3RD MAN. Give me back my money!

4TH MAN. You know where you can shove this stupid souvenir!

FATHER. Come, mother, time to leave.

(They exit in a hurry)

1ST MAN. (Taking charge again) Let them go. There are more
important things to do. Clear the area. Send the people home.
Get rid of the body. You two, take him out. (3rd and 4th drag
out the body)

(To 2nd) You, tell the people to go home.

2ND MAN. Yes. (To crowd) Everyone, go home. It was a false
alarm. A mistake. Go home.

3RD, 4TH. (Returning) That makes 29 now.

2ND MAN. Look, someone is coming.

3RD MAN. Looks like a suicide.

4TH MAN. He could be the one!

1ST MAN. All right. Quiet. Watch.

(They stand in the same pose as before and watch)
