

3 STORIES FROM MIDDLEVILLE

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ACT I

ALL BEFORE DINNER

LIGHTS UP

The scene is a family living room. There is a couch, two chairs, a coffee table in the foreground with a well stocked bar along the back wall. Stage right leads to a stairway and the front door. Stage left exits to the kitchen. MARTHA, a housewife in her early 40's is on the phone. MARTHA is dressed like a Donna Reed clone. Apron, dress, pearls and well done hair. She is speaking on the phone to BRADLEY, a younger man in his early 20's.

MARTHA:

I don't know my darling, I'm starting to have second thoughts.

BRADLEY:

(vo) What's there to have second thoughts about? You still love me don't you?

MARTHA:

Of course I do. But, you know.

BRADLEY:

Oh that?? Don't worry about that, I already told you I'd put it to rest.

MARTHA:

But what if he finds out before you're done?

BRADLEY:

I'm prepared for that as well. Just leave everything to me Martha and by this time next year all of this will just be an unpleasant memory.

MARTHA:

Bradley, you make it all sound so simple.

BRADLEY:

Because it IS so simple Martha. Look, you love me and I love you. The only logical thing to do is get married. Right?

MARTHA:
I suppose.

BRADLEY:
And in order to get married, first we have to... Kill Your Husband.

MUSIC CUE "Dun-dun-dun!"

MARTHA:
Well, when you put it so plainly, I guess you're right.

SFX "Bzzzzz!"

MARTHA:
Oh Bradley dear, that was the oven, I have to go put the roast in. I'll talk to you tonight.

BRADLEY:
I love you.

MARTHA:
I love you too.

SFX more insistent "Bzzzzzz!" MARTHA hangs up the phone. HAROLD ENTERS on his line. HAROLD is MARTHA's husband, in his mid 40's. He dresses like Bing Crosby, with sweater and tie.

HAROLD:
Martha? Marrrrrthaaaa? Martha! The oven is buzz- oh, here you are.

MARTHA:
Yes, I heard dear. I'm just about to put the roast in. How's the door coming along?

HAROLD:
Good, good. I just came in for a screwdriver.

HAROLD crosses to bar and mixes himself a drink. He downs it all in one long pull, and lets out a sigh of relief.

HAROLD:
Now I just need a hammer and the job will be dibbity-dabbity-done, but I seem to have

misplaced the darn thing.

MARTHA:

You loaned it to Richard dear, he needed it for his fence.

HAROLD:

Richard. He calls me Harry.

MARTHA:

I know dear.

HAROLD:

I hate that.

MARTHA:

I know dear.

HAROLD:

Well, once I get the hammer back you'll never even know an earthquake hit three weeks ago. I apologize for the delays my dear, but that door has been a bear to put in.

MARTHA:

That's all right darling.

HAROLD:

I told you we shouldn't have bought anything made in Ohio.

MARTHA EXITS into the kitchen. HAROLD begins EXIT, then spies the phone and stops

HAROLD:

Say Martha.

MARTHA:

(off stage) Yes dear?

HAROLD:

Who was that on the phone?

MARTHA:

Nobody dear.

HAROLD:

Nobody?

MARTHA:

Yes dear.

HAROLD:

You were on the phone for an awfully long time with nobody.

ENTER MARTHA with a dish in hand

MARTHA:

I suppose you're right dear.

HAROLD:

I thought it might have been that Bradley fellow calling for you.

MARTHA:

What ever would make you say that?

HAROLD:

He called for you yesterday while you were out at the store. I thought that might have been him calling back.

MARTHA:

Well that's a fine thought, but it wasn't Bradley.

EXIT MARTHA

HAROLD:

I see.

HAROLD sits, thinks for a moment

HAROLD;

Martha, are you planning on murdering me?

MARTHA sticks her head out from the kitchen

MARTHA:

I'm sorry dear, did you just say murder you?

HAROLD:

Yes. It's a perfectly legitimate question. I think in every couple's life, especially a married

couple, there comes a point in time when you consider murdering the other.

MARTHA:

I suppose that's true.

HAROLD:

So, are you?

MARTHA:

No dear.

HAROLD:

Just paranoia then I guess. Well, here's to paranoia.

HAROLD pours himself a drink and takes a big gulp before sitting back down.
MARTHA EXITS. HAROLD thinks again for a moment, then begins to pepper
MARTHA with questions. MARTHA exposes her head each time to answer, then
ducks back into the kitchen.

HAROLD:

We're having roast for dinner?

MARTHA:

Yes dear.

HAROLD:

With those little potatoes I like?

MARTHA:

Yes dear.

HAROLD:

Rebecca will be home soon?

MARTHA:

Yes dear.

HAROLD:

Are you planning on murdering me?

MARTHA:

Yes dear.

MARTHA ducks her head back into the kitchen. A beat passes, then she ENTERS

MARTHA:

Oh shoot. I knew I'd never be able to keep it a secret.

HAROLD:

It's not one of your strong suits.

MARTHA:

Still, almost three weeks, that's a personal record I do believe.

HAROLD:

Gadzooks! So you've been planning this for three weeks?

MARTHA:

Why yes Harold. Ever since the earthquake. I didn't just come up with it as I was putting the roast in. Oh! The roast.

EXIT MARTHA

HAROLD:

Might I ask why?

MARTHA:

(off-stage) Oh why does any wife murder her husband? I've fallen in love with someone else and wish to leave you.

HAROLD:

Bradley.

ENTER MARTHA

MARTHA:

(pleased) Well done Harold. Yes, I'm in love with Bradley. I have been for months now, but I was content with simply seeing him behind your back. But after that horrible earthquake I realized life was too short for sneaking around. I want some happiness in my life and I want it now.

HAROLD:

So, in a nutshell, almost dying in the earthquake inspired you to kill me?

MARTHA:

If you wish to nutshell it, darling.

HAROLD:

Well, that does explain the phone calls, and the late nights, and the sudden urgency to have me fix the upstairs door. And the holes in the backyard?

MARTHA:

Test graves. When the time came I didn't want to look like a ninny in front of Bradley.

HAROLD:

That's a relief. I was worried it was Mole Men again.

MARTHA:

You really need to stop reading that magazine Harold. It gets you all worked up over nothing.

HAROLD:

I just renewed my subscription too. Well, maybe Rebecca will want them. Where is that girl anyway?

LIGHTS DOWN ON LIVING ROOM

LIGHTS UP ON HOUSE EXTERIOR and BECKY and MICHEAL. BECKY is the teenage daughter of HAROLD and MARTHA, dressed in a skirt and pearls, hair in a ponytail. MICHEAL, also a teenager, wears a letter sweater and slacks. He is holding both of their schoolbooks.

MICHEAL:

(nervously) Are you sure Becky?

BECKY:

Of course I am Michael.

MICHEAL:

But I mean, couldn't you be wrong?

BECKY:

I took a test during lunch today. It's true.

MICHEAL:

But, we didn't mean to.

BECKY:

I don't think that matters much.

MICHEAL:

Oh man, what are you going to do?

BECKY:

What am I going to do?? You're in this just as deep as I am Michael.

MICHEAL:

I mean, what are we going to do?

BECKY:

We'll have to tell our parents. There're going to find out soon enough.

MICHEAL:

Oh man, my folks are going to be plenty sore when they find out. I mean, they are going to go ballistic.

BECKY:

That's nothing compared to what my parents are going to do. At least your parents like me. My dad hates you.

MICHEAL:

No he doesn't. Does he?

BECKY:

He says it all the time. Maybe that's why I like you so much.

BECKY kisses MICHEAL on the cheek and takes her books from him

BECKY:

I'll sneak out to see you tonight?

MICHEAL:

Do you think we should?

BECKY:

I think it's the least of our worries right now.

BECKY waves to MICHEAL as LIGHTS FADE.

LIGHTS UP on LIVING ROOM MARTHA is still in the kitchen. HAROLD is sitting in his chair reading the paper and enjoying another drink.

BECKY:

(off-stage) Mother? Father?

HAROLD:

In here Rebecca! Was that the Mitchell boy you were talking to outside?

ENTER BECKY

BECKY:

Yes Father, and he's not "the Mitchell boy", he has a first name you know.

HAROLD:

Yes, Trouble.

BECKY:

Michael!

HAROLD:

Well, Trouble suits him better. Have I told you I hate him?

BECKY:

(resigned) Yes Father, many times.

HAROLD:

Good.

BECKY:

Father, where's Mother? I have something I have to tell the both of you.

HAROLD:

Princess we've got some bad news on the home front as well, and as I'm your father, I'm going to go first. (BECKY sits) Now, Rebecca you know your mommy and daddy love you very much, right?

BECKY:

Of course Father.

HAROLD:

And even if we fight with each other over things from time to time it doesn't mean we love you any less.

BECKY:

You mean because you're an alcoholic and she's habitually unfaithful?

HAROLD:

The reasons for the fighting are not what is important, what is important is that you realize that we both love you very much. Do you realize that?

BECKY:
Yes Father.

HAROLD:
Good. Now I don't know any other way to say this than to just say it, so that's what I'm going to do, and what I'm about to say, though shocking to you, must be said. Your mother... Wants To Murder Me.

MUSIC CUE

BECKY:
Gasp! MOTHER!

MARTHA:
(off stage) Coming my dear. (MARTHA ENTERS) Harold, the roast is going to be an extra twenty minutes.

HAROLD:
Well fine and dandy, an extra twenty minutes of pre-dinner drinks.

HAROLD finishes his drink and rises to pour himself another

BECKY:
MOTHER, HOW COULD YOU?

MARTHA:
Rebecca Jean, let's not forget to use our inside voices.

BECKY:
You told Father you're going to murder him?

MARTHA:
Well it's not like I meant to tell him, it just slipped out in conversation.

BECKY:
Just slipped out?

MARTHA:
Why yes princess. You'll understand better when you're married.

HAROLD:

(sitting) But it better not be to that Mitchell boy.

BECKY:

I can't believe you, Mother. You just let the cat right out of the bag. After all the plotting and planning and secrecy and coded messages and signal flags and-

HAROLD:

(bolting to his feet) Wait a minute! You Knew!?

BECKY:

I'm terribly sorry for not telling you sooner Father, but Mother said it would only upset you if you knew.

HAROLD:

Really? Quite considerate of you Martha, it'd be a really pretty pity if I'd had this hanging over my head for too long.

BECKY:

And I do feel terrible about the whole thing Father, don't think I don't, but you have to admit, it is rather romantic, isn't it?

HAROLD:

I can't say I've had time to consider the romanticism of my demise just yet angel. So you knew too. Well that makes three of us now.

MARTHA:

Four dear, don't forget Bradley.

HAROLD:

Ah yes, Bradley. That makes four. You won't tell the neighbors, will you Martha? I'd hate to have them thinking we weren't getting along.

MARTHA:

I wouldn't dream of it Harold.

HAROLD:

Good. Rebecca, I hope you haven't told that Mitchell boy.

BECKY:

sigh Michael! And no, I haven't.

BECKY slowly grows more agitated during HAROLD's rant

HAROLD:

Well that's a mighty mini-miracle. Because if he was part of this whole plot it would really steam my slacks. Have I mentioned yet today that I hate him? Because I do. Did I tell you I think he's the one that's been stealing our newspapers? I don't have any proof yet mind you, but when I do, and I certainly will have proof, that little rat is going to be in for... something, I don't know. But it won't be good. I can promise you that, oh most certain-

Unable to contain herself, BECKY bolts up to her feet, dropping her books to the floor

BECKY:

FATHER! MOTHER!

HAROLD:

-ly. Becky, what did your mother just tell you about inside voices?

BECKY:

I'm sorry Father, but there's something I must tell the both of you and I feel like if I don't say it soon I'm just going to burst!

MARTHA places a comforting arm around BECKY and leads her to the couch where they both sit

MARTHA:

Now now dear, we understand what it's like to be your age, so full of emotion and hormones. And your father does tend to go on and on and on.

HAROLD:

Well seeing as I have very few speaking opportunities left in this life I thought I'd get as many words in edge-wise as I could. But please Rebecca, go ahead with your "big news."

BECKY:

Mother, Father, you don't know this, but I've been sneaking out of my bedroom at night and spending the evenings somewhere else. I didn't think anything bad would come of it, but then today at lunch I took a test...

HAROLD:

I'm sorry to interrupt princess, but is this a grade thing? Because if you're still getting C's in Algebra I can stop you right now and say that we're not going to allow you to go on that trip to Cedar Point. Well, your mother and BRAD aren't. I don't suppose I'll have much say in the matter by then.

BECKY:

Father, I don't think I'll be going much of anywhere this summer.

MARTHA:

Tsk tsk this is what happens when we're too lenient on her about her studies Harold.

HAROLD:

Don't blame yourself Martha, it was my responsibility to keep her nose to the grindstone while you were off cavorting with Bradley.

MARTHA:

No, really, I could have at least helped her more while I was here.

BECKY:

MOTHER! FATHER!

MARTHA:

Rebecca Jean Miller, I am only going to remind you one more time-

BECKY:

It was a pregnancy test! I'm going to have... a baby!

MUSIC CUE

MARTHA:

Oh.

HAROLD:

Well, I guess that is big news. Sorry for doubting you princess. (beat as he rises) Well this is just a fine how-do-you-do. Now, not only am I doomed to certain death by an unfaithful wife, but I go to my grave knowing that in 9 months time my daughter's going to bring a bastard grandchild into the world with my last name hanging around it's neck.

MARTHA:

Who's the father?

HAROLD:

Darling, I was in mid-soliloquy, don't change the subject. Oh, wait, sorry, that's a good question my love.

HAROLD and MARTHA sit down on either side of BECKY waiting in anticipation for the answer

BECKY:
Michael.

HAROLD:
whew At least it's not that Mitchell boy.

MARTHA:
Michael is the Mitchell boy, Harold.

HAROLD:
No.

MARTHA:
Yes.

HAROLD:
No.

BECKY:
Yes.

HAROLD:
Yes?

BECKY/MARTHA:
Yes.

HAROLD:
I see, that's very...

MARTHA:
Interesting.

HAROLD:
Yes, interesting. Would you both excuse me for a moment?

MARTHA:
I'll be right back as well.

EXIT HAROLD and MARTHA. HAROLD to adjoining room, MARTHA to kitchen. Muffled screams of anger start pouring out of both rooms along with the sounds of objects breaking and pots and pans being slammed around. The yelling stops for a moment, the starts right back up. It stops a second time and begins

again. A third stop, a long pause, one last dish breaks and then both HAROLD and MARTHA RE-ENTER as calmly as they left. MARTHA sits on the arm of HAROLD's chair, HAROLD heads to the bar

HAROLD:
Drink?

MARTHA:
Yes please.

HAROLD:
Ice?

MARTHA:
No thank you dear.

HAROLD:
Glass?

MARTHA:
No thank you dear.

HAROLD carries over two rather full bottles of liquor. He hands one to MARTHA and keeps the second for himself. The two sit in silence as they chug the entire content in one breath. Finishing, HAROLD calmly takes the empty bottles and replaces them at the bar. He returns to sit in his chair, MARTHA next to him.

HAROLD:
Yes, well, this is certainly unexpected.

MARTHA:
It certainly is.

HAROLD:
You know, I had always hoped, that when the day came that our daughter had a load of dough dropped in the old bun maker she would be married. Or barring that, she'd have the smarts to be knocked up by someone with potential

MARTHA:
I always had my eye set on that Donald Appleblossom from up the road. He's a reporter you know.

HAROLD:

Appleblossom? Why he's all knees and elbows.

MARTHA:

He's just gangly Harold, but he's bound to grow out of it. All boys go through that gangly stage, Lord knows I did. The point is, now is not the time for wishful thinking. Now is the time for you to get the car, Rebecca to get her coat and for the three of us to get to the nearest doctor for an (whispered) abortion.

HAROLD:

Capital idea Martha. Let me just mix one for the road.

BECKY:

What are you two talking about? I'm not getting an abortion.

MARTHA:

Rebecca Jean!

BECKY:

Sorry, an (whispered) abortion. I'm having this baby, and Michael and I are going to get married.

HAROLD:

Ho-ho-hold on there young lady, you're still our daughter, and as our daughter you'll abide by our rules. Rule one, no dating the Mitchell boy. Broken. Rule two, no sex before marriage. Broken. Rule three, no having freak babies. And by gum I will not see that rule broken.

BECKY:

I can't believe how cruel you two are. Just because you don't like Michael, you can't call our baby a freak.

MARTHA:

Tsk tsk. I tell you Harold, this is Mortimer all over again.

BECKY:

Who's Mortimer?

HAROLD:

It's worse than Mortimer. At least Mortimer never slept with... his brother.

MUSIC CUE

BECKY:

What are you talking about?

HAROLD:

What am I talking about? I'm talking about the terrible truth princess. The truth that Michael is your long lost brother!

BECKY:

I didn't even know I had a brother.

MARTHA:

Of course not dear, that's why he's "long lost." But facts are facts and the fact remains that you and Michael are brother and sister. And brothers and sisters can't have each other's babies. What would the Middleville bridge club think?

BECKY:

Who cares what they think?

MARTHA:

Who cares?!

HAROLD:

We'll chalk that one to the hormones.

MARTHA:

Darling, you're very young, so you don't understand how this world works. Everyone cares what people think of them. If your father and I didn't care about what the neighbors think we'd have gotten divorced years ago.

HAROLD:

Better to be murdered by your wife, than gossiped about by the bridge club, I always say.

SFX doorbell

MARTHA:

Speak of the devil, I hope that's not them.

HAROLD EXITS

HAROLD:

(off stage) Well hello there! If it isn't the Grim Reaper himself. Come on in Bradley, come on in!

ENTER BRADLEY, he is wearing a sweater and fashionable pants. He is almost out of breath. MARTHA rises to her feet to embrace him

MARTHA:

Bradley? What are you doing here? I thought we weren't going to meet until tonight?

BRADLEY:

I had to come Martha. I've just had a sudden revelation. An epiphany out of the blue. And because of this sudden realization I can't run away with you.

MARTHA:

But all of our plans!

HAROLD:

(crossing to the bar) That's right Brad-my-boy, don't forget your plans to murder me.

BRADLEY:

You told him?

MARTHA:

He tricked it out of me!

HAROLD:

That's right, I'm a regular Sherlock Holmes.

BRADLEY:

Martha, I can't run away with you and be your husband because I can't love you like you deserve to be loved. I can't love any woman that way. Not any more. Not since I've realized... I'm Gay!

MUSIC CUE

HAROLD:

Quite an interesting predicament, certainly explains the sweater.

MARTHA:

You're gay!?

BRADLEY:

Yes my former love, I've tried to deny it for so long, but finally it just struck me like a bolt of lightning. The sensitivity, the interior decorating, the sexual fantasies about the Middleville men's lacrosse team...

HAROLD:

Don't forget your sweaters.

BRADLEY:

It all shines like a bright beacon of truth through the fog of hetero lies I've become lost in. I Am Gay. I'm sorry Martha.

MARTHA:

Oh, but don't you see my darling? We Can still be together.

BRADLEY:

Well, yes, as friends. But never as anything more.

MARTHA:

But that's not true Bradley. There's something I must tell you, something wonderful that I've never told anyone else before.

HAROLD:

Now hold on a ding-dang-dong minute. If you've got something big to say at least let me get in a drink to fortify myself.

HAROLD cross to bar where he mixes another drink

MARTHA:

Bradley, I knew there was a reason I was drawn to you. I knew there was something special about you that made you different than all the other men I had been with.

HAROLD:

ALL the other men?!?

MARTHA:

Not now Harold. We can still be together Bradley, and the reason we can still be together is because... I am a Man!

MUSIC CUE

BRADLEY:

A man??

HAROLD:

Gadzooks! (crosses back to his seat) How in 25 years of marriage did I not notice that?

BECKY:

I don't understand. How can Mother be a man? It just doesn't make any sense?

HAROLD:

Explains why my razors are always so dull.

BECKY:

If you're a man, and Father's a man, where did I come from?

MARTHA:

You tell her Harold. You're so good with words.

HAROLD:

Am I now? When you were looking to murder me with the Sweater wearing Swisher, no offense Brad-my-boy, I was an over talkative alcoholic. Now I'm good with words. You tell her woman, I mean fellah, I mean darling. I already told her about being related to her baby's father.

HAROLD and MARTHA play rock, paper, scissors.

BOTH:

One! Two! Three! Shoot!

HAROLD beats her rock with paper.

HAROLD:

Ha!

MARTHA:

Oh shoot. (beat) Becky, your father and I love you more than anything and we've always thought of you as our own daughter. But that's not true. You're not our daughter. Becky... You are Adopted!

MUSIC CUE

BECKY:

Adopted!

HAROLD:

You see, even without your mother being a man, we could never have children on our own because... I am Impotent! (pause) Really thought that that would get more of a reaction. Oh well, here's one to the old ego.

HAROLD finishes his drink

BECKY:

But, then how can Michael and I be brother and sister?

MARTHA:

That's simple dear, you're fraternal twins.

BECKY:

Fraternal twins? Gadzooks! But then why separate us?

MARTHA:

Because the Mitchell family wanted a little boy so much, and they weren't able to conceive either.

HAROLD:

Thought I bet it's not on account of Mrs. Mitchell being a man, that's for ring-tum-tiddly-aye-ay.

BRADLEY:

No, Mrs. Mitchell isn't the problem. Believe me.

MARTHA:

And the man who sold the two of you to us was so nice, he didn't even charge for your brother.

BECKY:

I was a Two for One deal?

MARTHA:

I know! You don't expect to find a deal like that buying straight from a man in an alley.

BECKY:

An Alley!?!

HAROLD:

Now hang your hat back on the rack princess, I know what you're thinking and I assure you, we had you properly checked out by a legitimate doctor before buying. We learned that lesson the hard way with Mortimer.

BRADLEY:

Who's Mortimer?

MARTHA:

He was Becky's other brother.

BECKY:

I have another brother??

MARTHA:

HAD, darling.

HAROLD:

Right you are love. Poor Mortimer was a stark raving looney-tune.

MARTHA:

And he had a limp.

HAROLD:

He did at that. But it's more the stark raving part that's of importance. One day he was playing in the kitchen, quiet as a mute angel wrapped in cotton balls. Next thing you know, he's trying to strangle your mother with her own apron. Luckily Martha was doing the ironing at the time, so she just pressed that hot iron against his little hands till he let go. I still don't know why you didn't use your knife.

MARTHA:

What knife Harold?

HAROLD:

The big one, the one that's always in your front pocket. (beat) Gadzooks!

MARTHA:

Anyway, your father and I realized we couldn't keep Mortimer around anymore, but we didn't want to see him taken away to a horrible insane asylum.

HAROLD:

And we couldn't just send him back to man in the alley, what would the bridge club think? Better to live with a murderous child than have the bridge club know you're shooting blanks, I always say. So, your mother and I did the most humane thing we could think of.

MARTHA:

We Killed Him!

MUSIC CUE

HAROLD:

And Made Him Into Stew!

MUSIC CUE

MARTHA:

And Sold Him To Hungry Towns People On Cold Winter Days!

MUSIC CUE

BECKY:

How is that humane?

HAROLD:

We used the profits to build a nice little monument for the boy. It's that tall horse up on the hill at the cemetery.

MARTHA:

I wanted to get him a trio of angels. But your father said a horse was a better bargain for our buying dollar.

HAROLD:

Yes, and now I can see it wasn't the last time you've wanted something different than I did.

BRADLEY:

I'm sorry, but this is a lot to take in.

While they have been talking HAROLD has mixed three drinks

HAROLD:

Quite right Brad-my-boy. Now then I think that's quite enough talk about infanticide and twins having each other's children. What we need now is a nice drink.

BRADLEY:

I could certainly use one.

MARTHA:

Yes, thank you Harold.

BECKY:

Don't I get any?

HAROLD:

I think we'll consider this your punishment for not telling us about your whole sordid affair sooner. Now, off to your room. Knocked up or not, you still have a semester left of

school.

BECKY:

(over dramatic sobbing) I wish you HAD left me in that alley! A two for one sale!

BECKY EXITS out front door, slamming it behind her.

MARTHA:

We don't slam doors Rebecca Jean! (to HAROLD) She has been so moody lately.

HAROLD:

I tell you Brad-my-boy. I don't envy you when that little bastard she's brewing really starts making her hormones swing.

HAROLD sips drink

HAROLD:

Oh. That reminds me.

MARTHA:

Yes dear?

HAROLD:

I do have some surprising news. Martha... I'm Leaving You.

MARTHA:

No Harold, I'm leaving you. Right after I murder you.

BRADLEY:

After WE murder you. We agreed we'd do this together Martha.

MARTHA:

Quite right. I'm sorry Bradley. We'll be murdering you Harold dear. So you can't possibly leave me.

HAROLD:

Oh-ho-ho-ho. But I believe I can. You're not the only two with a clever plot. Those drinks you are both having? I'll have you both know that those drinks are...

MARTHA/BRADLEY:

Poisoned.

HAROLD:

Now see, this is hardly fair. Yes, yes they are poisoned. I was hoping for a bigger reaction from the two of you.

MARTHA and BRADLEY look at each other, shrug, look to HAROLD and gasp

HAROLD:

Oh you're just humoring me.

BRADLEY:

Sorry Harold.

MARTHA:

We didn't mean to be rude my dear.

HAROLD:

No, no, it's quite all right. What gave it away? Was it the taste? I've heard arsenic goes better with wine, but then I thought, what if Bradley doesn't drink wine, I can't just hand him a bottle of arsenic. Then I supposed I could always disguise the bottle, but as what? And then the earthquake came up, and there was repair work to do so I didn't have time to toss it about that much. So finally-

MARTHA:

Harold, my pet?

HAROLD:

Yes Martha, my girl?

MARTHA:

You're rambling again. Just tell me why you did it.

HAROLD:

Sorry my love. Why? Because I too have fallen in love with someone else, the widow Martha Madsen. And she, my friend for life, is most assuredly a woman.

HAROLD knocks on the wooden table

BRADLEY:

Isn't she also the sole heiress to Madsen's Malt Liquor Company?

HAROLD:

That did help sweeten the deal.

MARTHA:

Ha! Look at us, both of us ready to murder the other because we've fallen in love with someone else. Maybe we should have just gotten divorced after all.

HAROLD:

Perhaps my dear, but what would the bridge club have said?

MARTHA:

Oh shoot. I'd forgotten about the bridge club.

HAROLD sits back in his chair.

BRADLEY:

It's not over yet. I still have one revelation left.

HAROLD:

You're a Communist!

MARTHA:

You are??

BRADLEY:

What? No! What gave you that idea Harold?

HAROLD:

Sorry old boy, there just seems to be a lot of that going around lately.

BRADLEY stands and pulls out a gun. Points it at HAROLD.
MUSIC CUE

HAROLD:

A gun? (laughs) Well that's much better. Sorry Brad, not laughing AT you. But what are you planning on doing with that? Shoot me?

BRADLEY:

Why, yes.

HAROLD:

Gadzooks! You're serious! You actually mean to shoot me!?

MARTHA:

We did say we'd be murdering you darling.

HAROLD:

I know that. But I just assumed I would be killed in a far less violent way. Drowned in the bathtub perhaps, or struck from behind with a frying pan. I, excuse the phrase, sure as shooting wasn't planning on being shot! After all, I was considerate enough to get poison for the both of you. That's fine consideration for your partner's feelings after 30 years of marriage.

MARTHA:

I'm sorry my love, I never realized it would mean that much to you? Murdered is murdered after all.

HAROLD:

Semantics!

BRADLEY:

No, Smith and Wesson.

HAROLD attempts to flee the room with BRADLEY in pursuit, they run around the living room and in and out of the kitchen. Eventually HAROLD grabs the serving tray off of the bar and holds it up like a shield. BRADLEY fires. The bullet bounces off the tray, leaving HAROLD unharmed.

HAROLD:

Send me to a casino in Hell, I am one lucky devil.

MARTHA:

Oh shoot.

MARTHA collapses, shot.

BRADLEY:

Martha!

HAROLD:

Darling!

BRADLEY and HAROLD rush to her side

BRADLEY:

You killed her!

HAROLD:

I killed her?! You're the one with the gun Brad my boy.

BRADLEY:
But you deflected the bullet!

MARTHA stirs

BRADLEY:
Martha!

HAROLD:
Quick, get her something to drink.

BRADLEY hands HAROLD poisoned drink

BRADLEY:
Drink this Martha, you're going to be okay.

MARTHA drinks

HAROLD:
That wasn't the poison was it?

MARTHA dies

HAROLD:
I guess it was. An entire bar right behind you and you pick the one thing with poison in it. (beat) (stands) Well, no use dwelling in the very recent past. The question becomes, what do we do now?

BRADLEY:
I should probably finish murdering you.

HAROLD:
Ha! Murder me? Then you've murdered both your lover and the husband, gaining nothing. What would people say about that? They'll say you're a crazy, cold-blooded killer, that's what they'll say about that. Good luck being invited to another pot-luck dinner after that got out.

BRADLEY:
I hadn't thought about that.

HAROLD:
On the other hand, I was intending to kill both you and Martha today, and since Martha is already dead, I think it is only fair that I finish the job you started.

BRADLEY:
WE started.

HAROLD:
Fair enough.

BRADLEY:
But I have the gun.

HAROLD:
Nitpicking! Here, we'll rock, paper, scissors for it. Agreed?

BRADLEY:
Okay.

BRADLEY sets down gun. HAROLD picks it up.

BRADLEY:
Hey! I thought we were going to shoot for it.

HAROLD:
Well you were half right my boy. That and a cup of sugar will get you a toothache.

HAROLD pulls the trigger. Nothing happens.

HAROLD:
Shoot. That was such a good line too.

HAROLD examines gun

HAROLD:
ONE bullet?

BRADLEY:
I thought that's all I would need.

HAROLD:
One bullet?

BRADLEY:
Repeating it isn't going to make new bullets appear.

HAROLD:
Maybe if I hit you with it—

KNOCK at the door

RICHARD:
Hello? Anybody home?

HAROLD:
(looks at door) Gadzooks, it's Richard! (looks at Martha) Gadzooks! (looks at gun)
GAD-ZOOKS!

BRADLEY:
This is worse than the time at the roller rink!

HAROLD and BRADLEY cover up MARTHA, then BRADLEY rushes into the kitchen. HAROLD notices the gun and calls BRADLEY back. BRADLEY grabs the gun. HAROLD motions for him to hide in the kitchen.
ENTER RICHARD. Throughout the conversation HAROLD attempts to usher RICHARD back out the door, but RICHARD, obliviously, keeps moving further into the living room.

RICHARD:
Hello? Harry, you old scallywag, I've got your hammer! There you are! Harry!

HAROLD:
Richard

RICHARD:
(poking Harold playfully) Took you forever to get the door so I let myself in. Must be slowing down in your old age huh? Want me to take it to your work bench for you? That way it'll get there before New Year's.

HAROLD:
(annoyed) That's very considerate of you Richard, but- oh will you stop that!- But it's not necessary.

RICHARD:
Say, where's Martha?

HAROLD:
Martha? Why, Martha's in the kitchen. Isn't that right dear?

BRADLEY:

(falsetto)(unexcited) Yes darling!

RICHARD:

Martha, come on out here, I've got to tell you how amazing those brownies were.

HAROLD:

Yes dear, come on out here, so Richard can see you. My lovely, living wife.

ENTER BRADLEY wearing a tablecloth as a skirt and holding a piece of cookware
in front of his face

BRADLEY:

(falsetto) Here I am.

RICHARD:

Martha I swear you get lovelier every day. How this poor schmoe ever landed you.
Ahhhh, I'm just kidding you Harry! Say, you two are coming to the pot-luck tomorrow
right?

HAROLD:

We wouldn't miss it for the world.

RICHARD:

Great! I'm setting up the badminton net, so don't forget to stretch beforehand Harry.
Don't want you popping out your hip. Ahhhhhh, I'm just kidding you. Party starts at 2
sharp. Be there, or be gossip fodder!

HAROLD:

We'll be there with bells on.

RICHARD:

Oh, and Martha, don't forget to bring that delicious 5 layer salad you make. I think I
almost ate the whole thing last time by myself. No wonder old Harry here's packing a
spare tire. Ahhhhh, I'm just kidding you! See you tomorrow!

EXIT RICHARD

HAROLD:

That was close.

BRADLEY:

I know what you mean. Help me out of this would you?

HAROLD:

Ho-Ho-Hold the sleigh Santa, what do you think you're doing?

BRADLEY:

I'm changing clothes. We fooled your neighbor, now he's gone. Crisis averted.

HAROLD:

Crisis not averted, crisis not even close to averted. Crisis momentarily postponed. As far as the rest of the block knows Martha is still alive, and what's more, she and I are attending the pot luck tomorrow at 2 sharp. We can't not show up now, we've agreed to come! What would people think?

BRADLEY:

So I have to do this through tomorrow?

HAROLD:

No, through forever.

BRADLEY:

Forever?!

HAROLD:

Until we both die or the entire neighborhood does. It's either that or let the neighbors find out what happened here today.

BRADLEY:

(pause) I better start practicing that salad.

BRADLEY begins to exit

HAROLD:

Good idea darling- I mean dearest- I mean- Oh you know what I mean.

EXIT BRADLEY and HAROLD into kitchen

ENTER MICHAEL, sneaking into the living room

MICHAEL:

(whispered) Becky? Becky? (yelling) REBECCA!

ENTER BECKY from front door

MICHEAL:

Becky!

BECKY:

Michael? What are you doing here?

MICHAEL:

What am I doing here? What were you doing out there?

BECKY:

It's a long story. A lot has happened since I talked to you this afternoon.

MICHEAL:

Oh man, that's why I came here. I have something to tell you Becky. I've been going through some changes lately, changes you may not have noticed. But they have led me to realize something about myself. Something huge, something earth shattering, something that will turn your very sense of self topsy-turvy! Golly Becky, I have to tell you that I-

BECKY:

Stop. Right. There. Do you love me?

MICHEAL:

What?

BECKY:

Do you Love me?

MICHEAL:

Well, I mean, of course I do..

BECKY:

Do you plan on helping me raise this baby?

MICHEAL:

Oh man, of course I do Becky.

BECKY:

You're not planning on murdering me are you?

MICHEAL:

Murdering you? What kind of question is that? I mean-

BECKY:

Just answer the question Michael.

MICHEAL:
Of course not!

BECKY:
Good. Then that is all I ever wish to know about you.

MICHEAL:
But Becky, what I have to tell you-

BECKY:
My sweet, darling Michael, I have come to the conclusion in the last half hour that sometimes sharing one's darkest secrets with another is the absolute worst thing one can do. Sometimes, if you really love some one, you'll keep your mouth shut and just go on with your life.

BECKY and MICHEAL embrace
SFX Oven Timer

BRADLEY:
(falsetto) Dinner's ready!

LIGHTS DOWN

ACT II

MONKEY-NAPPED!

LIGHTS UP

Scene opens in Middleville Roller Rink. Two doors, one to the outside, one to an office. There's a counter in the room with a phone. There's minor damage to the building by the recent earthquake, but it's mostly cosmetic.

ENTER OSCAR O'SHAY, the owner of the roller rink. He begins cleaning up around the room.

OSCAR:
(voice over) It was August. Rarely does anything good happen to me in August. When I was six, my dad broke my hand trying to teach me how to catch. When I was 14, the doctor told me my tonsils would have to come out. When I was 21, I met a farmer's daughter. But, since it was August, I soon met her father and his trusty 12 gauge. No, August and I have never gotten along.

Today was August the second. The month had, naturally, been ushered in by an earthquake. August wouldn't have it any other way. The Middleville Roller Rink hadn't been hit as hard as some of the other parts of town, but Benny and I were still stuck with a lot of cleaning up to do.

ENTER BENNY

OSCAR:

(voice over) That's Benny there. A little lazy, a little cheap, a little reckless, but a better friend you couldn't find. Trust me, I've tried. You'll notice he's swinging a broom. You'll also notice he isn't actually sweeping anything. That's Benny for you. As for me, I'm Oscar O'Shay. Take it easy ladies, I'm married. Or was, another fine August idea. My friends call me O.K. Partly because it rhymes, partly because I end up agreeing to a lot of things. And seeing that it was August I should have known I was about to agree to a world of trouble. This is how it started.

BENNY:

Would you just admit that it's possible?

OSCAR:

No.

BENNY:

I'll take that as a maybe.

OSCAR:

Take it as a no.

BENNY:

You don't think, even for a moment, that this earthquake could have been caused by the American government while testing a secret new subterranean weapon?

OSCAR:

No.

BENNY:

How about Mole Men?

OSCAR:

How about no?

EXIT OSCAR and BENNY into office.

ENTER JERIMIAH COLETRAIN into the Roller Rink

COLETRAIN:

Habersham! Habersham! Hey Habersham? Habersham!

OSCAR

(vo) The kid came storming in like he owned the place. Turns out, he could have if he wanted to.

COLETRAIN wanders around the rink area yelling for HABERSHAM. OSCAR and BENNY ENTER.

OSCAR:

Excuse me, can I help you?

COLETRAIN:

Are you Habersham?

OSCAR:

No I'm not. I'm Oscar O'Shay, I'm the manager here. Can I help you?

COLETRAIN:

Manager? Habersham has a manager? Dad didn't say anything about a manager.

OSCAR:

I'm the manager of the roller-rink.

BENNY:

The one you're standing in right now. Mr. Crazy guy.

COLETRAIN looks around, as comprehension dawns on him. He then begins to laugh.

COLETRAIN:

(laughing) Pip-pip-pip-pip

OSCAR:

(Politely) Ha-ha.

BENNY:

Yes. Ha-ha. (to OSCAR) What is going on?

COLETRAIN:

Pardon me fellahs, I must have gotten turned around. I tell you, that darn driver doesn't know a street sign from a street sweeper. I was looking for 1217 Greene Street.

OSCAR:
That's us.

COLETRAIN:
Really? Huh. Well, that's gonna complicate things. Sorry about the shouting a minute ago. I'm in a bit of a bind and I was trying to find Habersham, P.I.

BENNY:
We don't know any regular Habershams, let alone Habersham, P.I.

COLETRAIN:
Really? I don't suppose Habersham left a forwarding address?

BENNY:
Again, we don't know any Habersham.

COLETRAIN:
Yes, I get that. I've got a degree from Harvard, so it's not like I can't follow the conversation. But I'm in the middle of something here and I need some help. You're positive you don't know where Habersham is?

BENNY:
(aside) Maybe the earthquake got him. Could be hip deep in Mole Men as we speak.

COLETRAIN:
(oblivious) Well this stinks. Unless... I don't suppose you fellahs would like to lend a hand?

BENNY:
Oh, would you look at the time?

BENNY EXITS into OFFICE

OSCAR:
I'm really sorry. But we're pretty busy today, what with clean-up and all.

COLETRAIN:
Yes, yes, I can understand that. No offense taken.

COLETRAIN begins to EXIT

COLETRAIN:

Shame though, it would have been an easy way to make \$10,000.

OSCAR:

Ten thousand dollars?

BENNY:

(poking head out) American dollars?

COLETRAIN:

Indeed. And Indeed.

OSCAR:

You know what? I think we just had an opening pop up in our schedule. So what can Benny and I do for you....

COLETRAIN:

Coletrain. Jerimiah Coletrain.

BENNY's head pops back out of the office

BENNY:

The millionaire industrialist Jerimiah Coletrain?

COLETRAIN:

That's my dad, I'm Jerry Junior. Benny, right? Oscar?

OSCAR:

That's right. What can we do for you?

COLETRAIN:

I need you to find Chester.

OSCAR:

Okay. And Chester is-

COLETRAIN:

Chester is a Cebus capucinus. [see-boos cap-oo-see-nus] (pause) A capuchin. [kah-poo-chin] (pause) A monkey, fellahs.

BENNY:

Oh right, right, right. A monkey. Did you hear that Oscar? Chester is a monkey.

COLETRAIN:

Look, believe me I know, but Dad loves the thing. It's like his best friend. Here's a recent picture, Dad threw him a birthday party at the Marina.

OSCAR:

Awww, he's wearing a little cowboy hat.

BENNY:

(whistle) Check out that collar. It looks like an iceberg hit him the neck!

COLETRAIN:

A gift from Dad. He picked it up in Istanbul or somewhere foreign. Now, listen up because my driver's not a patient guy and I don't make a habit of repeating myself. Did you notice the earthquake that hit the city yesterday?

OSCAR and BENNY look around the room

OSCAR:

We might have noticed it.

BENNY:

Slightly.

COLETRAIN:

Good. Well what you may not have noticed is that the city zoo was hit especially hard. It must have been built right on top of a fault line because the place is in absolute shambles. Most of the animals are still free and running around all over the place.

BENNY:

I thought that hippo in the intersection seemed out of place.

COLETRAIN:

Yeah, I saw that too. That's not the point. The point is, earlier this summer, our FORMER family publicist came to Dad with the idea of putting some of his private collection on display at the zoo. I thought, great, free advertising right? So I convinced Dad to do it, and as a crown jewel sort of thing I got him to loan Chester for a long weekend. Of course this is the weekend the earthquake hits. Now Chester's out and loose.

OSCAR:

And the police haven't been able to find him?

COLETRAIN:

Dad doesn't want the authorities involved because they do things in their time. Dad wants it done in Coletrain time, which is to say as immediately as possible. So this whole thing has fallen on my shoulders, but I have no idea where to start, so I thought I'd get Habersham. 'When in a jam, get Habersham!' That's what Dad always says. But as you've made painfully clear, Habersham isn't here. So I've got a monkey to find and precious little time to do it in. Dad's leaving for Europe today on business and if I don't have Chester back before he goes, he doesn't go. And if he doesn't go, then this business deal is done. If the deal is done, then we're going to have start scaling back some of our companies here in the States. And that means cutbacks. And that means worker strikes. And that means Strike Busters and scabs and it's a whole thing I don't even want to get near, you understand what I'm saying. So you've got thirty minutes.

BENNY:

Thirty minutes!

COLETRAIN:

Habersham could do it in ten. You've got three times that amount and there's two of you. That's almost a full hour when you think about it. So, we have a deal?

BENNY:

Well, we're flattered but-

OSCAR:

But we'd better get started if we want to find Chester.

COLETRAIN:

Excellent. I think you've got all the information you need, contact me as soon as you've found him. Good luck, God Bless, and the clock is Tick-tock-tick-tocking fellahs. Good day.

EXIT COLETRAIN

OSCAR:

(v.o.) And like that, our mysterious, wealthy benefactor was gone. Maybe this job was going to be a little difficult, but when someone walks into your building and offers you \$10,000 to find a cebus caposeatus- a cebus capacheno- a monkey, you don't just show him the door. Even if you don't know what you're doing.

OSCAR:

Benny, we're about to become rich.

BENNY:

Yes! (beat) Or buried alive.

OSCAR:

What are you talking about?

BENNY:

That was Jerimiah Coletrain Junior.

OSCAR:

I know, I was standing right here when he introduced himself.

BENNY:

Jer-I-miah Colllllllletrain Juuuuuuuuuunior.

OSCAR:

Standing riiiiiiight heeeeeeeere.

BENNY:

I'd like to read to you from an article I read last month.

OSCAR:

Not your crackpot conspiracy magazine again.

BENNY:

“Fantastic True Stories” is a legitimate publication, not a “crackpot conspiracy magazine”. And they said you’d say that. Here we are, The Dark Tale of Jerimiah Coletrain. The Coletrain family fortune is believed to have been earning interest before the Jamestown colony was established. A Coletrain has had a hand in every major war since 1812 and a finger in most of the minor skirmishes. The latest patriarch, Jerimiah, uses his money and power to influence everyone from kings and queens to the presidents of local PTAs.

OSCAR:

That’s just silly. Jeremiah Coletrain is just an odd old man with a lot of money, who apparently really likes monkeys. Some of that money, I might add, he used to build those parks you’re no longer allowed in to.

BENNY:

(reading)An odd old man you say? Didn’t he donate all that land for parks? Some say it was to repay a city that has treated him so very well. Others, though, believe the parks serve as secret nighttime meeting places between Coletrain and his more shadowy associates including the Mafia, The Clan of the Flying Dragons and the Fraternal Order of

the Mongoose.

OSCAR:
Fraternal Order of the-

BENNY:
Still others claim that it is unlikely Coletrain himself uses these properties as meeting places, as he is too busy using them as private graveyards for those who fail him. By all conservative estimates, upwards of 70 bodies, not counting women, children and minorities, may be buried in the tri-county park system. (to OSCAR) Five will get you ten that's where he put the publicist.

OSCAR:
So, just to get this straight, you're saying his dad is a shadowy, corrupt, cold-blooded killer?

BENNY:
He's also a homosexual.

OSCAR:
(pause) What does that have to do with Anything?

BENNY:
It's just, you know, in the article. As is this final tidbit, "His son, Jerry Junior, is every bit as ruthless as his namesake, often blaming his own errors on others, leaving them to take the full brunt of Coletrain's legendary wrath."

BENNY puts magazine in his back pocket

OSCAR:
So what you're saying is, Jerry wants us to find a monkey for him, but if we don't find it, then he's going to blame everything on us. And then we're going to be buried in a park by Mongoose?

BENNY:
Mongese.

OSCAR:
But, if we succeed, we're going to get \$10,000?

BENNY:
Yup.

OSCAR:
\$10,000

BENNY:
\$10,000

OSCAR:
Ten thousand

BOTH:
Dollars!

OSCAR:
I'll go find a cage!

BENNY:
I'll go get some bananas and a net!

OSCAR:
(vo) We ran off as excited as two kids on Christmas morning. A Christmas morning that was coming in 27 minutes whether we were ready or not. Christmas, I might add, does not normally come in August. This is when she entered.

ENTER NATALIA.

OSCAR:
(vo) A woman like that only brings two things with her: heartbreak and trouble. Her I would have shown the door, but I wasn't the one about to be properly introduced.

NATALIA looks around the room as BENNY ENTERS. He's wearing a hard hat with a banana taped to the top and carrying a net on a pole. He's singing "We're in the Money"

BENNY:
We're in the money, we're in the money. We've got a lot of money. A lot of... (whistle)

NATALIA:
Hallo. Are you Mr. O'Shay?

BENNY:
Lady, I'm who ever you want me to be.

NATALIA:

My name is Natalia Vavoomavitch.

BENNY:

It most certainly is.

NATALIA:

Vas Mr. Jerimiah Coletrain just in here?

BENNY:

He most certainly vas. I mean was. I mean yes. Sorta

NATALIA:

Really? And vhat brought him to this...

BENNY:

Roller Rink.

NATALIA:

Ahhh, yes, Rrrroller Rrrink.

BENNY:

hoy boy. Well *gulp*, I'd tell you, but it's kind of confidential. Very hush-hush. Top secret even.

NATALIA:

I can assure you, my lips are sealed (breathy) Mr. O'Shay..

OSCAR:

Are you calling for me Benny?

BENNY:

NO! I mean, no, no I'm not. You just keep, doing your thing in there Oscar.

BENNY kicks the door shut, right into OSCAR's face.

OSCAR:

OW!

BENNY:

Now you were saying... something... about your lips...?

NATALIA:

I was asking you what you and Mr. Coletrain were talking about.

BENNY:

I was just thinking, I probably shouldn't talk about that around here. Maybe we could continue this conversation tonight. I know a club that's out of the way. Well, it's not really a club, more a basement. Well, a hollowed out area under a basement. But I THINK there's a radio, so...

NATALIA gives her hair a toss and kisses BENNY on the cheek.

BENNY:

Millionaire Industrialist Jerimiah Coletrain lost his pet, a three year old Cebus capucinus, a monkey to the lay person, named Chester and his son just hired me to find it for \$10,000.

NATALIA:

Interesting.

BENNY:

You can say that again.

NATALIA:

His son you say? Well I am glad I came by when I did, Mr. O'Shay. Mr. Coletrain's son is not what he appears to be.

BENNY:

A Communist!

NATALIA:

(shocked) What? Who said anything about-

BENNY:

I knew there was something fishy about that guy. He's a Communist.

NATALIA:

(recovering) Ohhh Coletrain, da, da, he IS a Communist. Da, boo that boy. Boo him and his father. They are regular Stalin lovers. They have tea party twice a month with Trotsky.

BENNY:

I thought Trotsky died in exile?

NATALIA:

Nyet, is just Communist propoganda.

BENNY pulls out “Fantastic True Stories” and slaps it against his hand

BENNY:
Knew it!

NATALIA:
I am secret agent for United States America.

BENNY:
Of America.

NATALIA:
Da. Is what I said. You are quizzing secret agent on grammar?

BENNY:
Sorry. Continue.

NATALIA:
The monkey is no ordinary monkey. The necklace he wears contains nuclear missile program secrets.

BENNY:
Amazing!

NATALIA:
And inside monkey himself? Microfilm with key to decoding secrets.

BENNY:
Devious!

NATALIA:
So you see Mr. O’Shay, is most important for Mother America to recapture this Chester before that boy can get his dirty, filthy, lying, penny pinching, cold hearted... Communist hands on him. The fate of the free world rests on this.

BENNY:
Well you can count on me Natalia. I’ll make sure that monkey ends up in the right hands.

NATALIA:
Good. But I must warn you, there will be other men after this monkey as well. Dangerous men. You will know who you can trust with this password. You say “the black ape howls at midnight.”

BENNY:

The black ape howls at midnight.

NATALIA:

And they will reply “But the banana tree does not bend.” You say it too.

BENNY:

I thought they said it.

NATALIA:

Da, but you repeat it so you remember it.

BENNY:

I’ll remember it.

NATALIA:

Really.

BENNY:

Yes.

NATALIA:

Then what is it?

BENNY:

But the banana... tree... eats bread?

NATALIA:

But the banana tree does not bend.

BENNY:

But the banana tree does not bend. Got it. Black ape, banana tree, got it.

NATALIA:

Good. When you find Chester, contact me at this number. Your government will be most appreciate Mr. O’Shay. As will I.

NATALIA pulls BENNY in for a passionate kiss before EXITING. BENNY watches her all the way out the door.

BENNY:

God Bless America.

OSCAR ENTERS holding his face.

OSCAR:

Do you know why the door hit me in the face?

BENNY:

Tsh darn faulty doors. That's what you get when you don't buy American. Where's this thing made? Cleveland? More like Cleveland, Japan.

OSCAR:

I'm going outside to look around the neighborhood.

BENNY:

That's good, that's a good- a good idea. I should probably stay here. Watch the phone. Jerry Junior might call with more information.

OSCAR exits. BENNY sits on the desk, grabs a banana and pulls out his magazine.

BENNY:

(singing) We're in the money, we're in the money. We're gonna get the money, then we'll be in... it.

ENTER BRADLEY.

BRADLEY:

Hello?

BENNY:

It's a like Grand Central Station around here. Hi, rink's probably not going to open today.

BRADLEY:

Oh, pardon me. I'm not here to skate, but the door was open and well, I'm looking for Mr. ...O'Shay.

BENNY:

You just missed him.

BRADLEY:

Hmmm, I was sent here to find him. I have important business to discuss with him.

BENNY:
Really? Sent here, huh?

NATALIA:
(vo) There will be other men as well. Dangerous men.

BENNY:
Doesn't look that dangerous.

BRADLEY:
Excuse me?

NATALIA:
(vo) Do not be fooled by his looks. Ask him the code phrase.

BENNY:
The black ape howls at midnight.

BRADLEY:
Okay.

BENNY:
But....

BRADLEY:
But....

BENNY:
The black ape howls at midnight, but....

MAN stares at BENNY without a clue. BENNY leans in closer and begins making monkey noises as a prompt.

BENNY:
Ooh ooh ooh? (confidently) Ah-ha!

BRADLEY:
I think I've got to go.

MAN begins backing towards the door before BENNY cuts him off

BENNY:

What's your rush comrade? I know what you're here for.

MAN:

You do? Good because I was sent here to-

BENNY:

It's right here!

BENNY beats up BRADLEY and tosses him behind the desk

BENNY:

Mother Russia will just have to wait Ivan.. USA 1, Russia 0.

ENTER OSCAR

OSCAR:

Were you just slamming something around in here?

BENNY:

Nooooo. You might want to get your ears checked. I hear the government has been experimenting with sonics in radios in order to-

OSCAR:

Stop right there. Just skip to the last three words.

BENNY:

Colonization of Venus.

OSCAR:

Okay. (pause) I checked all around the north side of town, you can look around the south side.

BENNY:

But the phone-

OSCAR:

I'll watch the phone.

OSCAR EXITS into office

BENNY:

Okay. I'm just going to go behind the desk with this rope for a minute....

BENNY ducks behind desk with rope.. Sounds of a scuffle as he ties up BRADLEY. BENNY rises dusting off his hands.

BENNY EXITS.

SFX of scratching in the vent.

ENTER HEATHER. She is obviously looking for someone, but has enough training to not be obvious about it. She begins to look around and then hears the noises in the vent. Looking up she begins tracing the vent's route with her hand. Engrossed in this she walks right into the office door, slamming it into OSCAR's face.

OSCAR:

Ow!

ENTER OSCAR

OSCAR:

Hi.

HEATHER:

Hello.

OSCAR:

I'm O.K.

HEATHER:

I'm fine too, thanks for asking.

OSCAR:

My name.

HEATHER:

Yes?

OSCAR:

No, my name is O.K. Well it's Oscar, but some of my friends call me O.K.

HEATHER:

My name is Heather. There's no abbreviation, so everyone calls me Heather.

OSCAR:

That's good. Heather. That's a good name. For a girl.

HEATHER:

Well my folks were pretty pleased with it. Wait, Oscar O'Shay?

OSCAR:

(confused) Yes. (realization) Heather Hildebrant?! I haven't seen you in ages! How are you?

HEATHER:

I'm good, I'm busy. I travel a lot for my job, but I just got back into town and thought I'd see some of the old sites. When did you move to Middleville?

OSCAR:

Oh, I moved out here when I got married, so I've been here 6 years. Which is just 4 years longer than the marriage lasted.

HEATHER:

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

OSCAR:

So was I. It's interesting, marriage. You say "will you marry me?" and the girl says "Yes!" You say "I do" and the girl says "I do." You say "I want to go into business for myself and buy a roller rink" and the girl says "I'm going to stay at my mother's indefinitely." (pause) So, are you here to skate? Of course, you are, why else would you come to a roller rink?

HEATHER:

I'm not here to skate.

OSCAR:

Of course you're not. Why else would you come to a roller rink?

HEATHER:

Have you seen a woman come in here lately? About this tall, wearing a red dress. She'd be Russian.

OSCAR:

Why, what's her hurry? (pause) Cause she's (ahem) Russian and that sounds like... no, I haven't seen her.

HEATHER:

Didn't think so. Oh well, it didn't hurt to ask. (checks watch) Look at the time, I've got to

go. It was great seeing you again Oscar.

OSCAR:

It was nice seeing you too.

HEATHER:

Oh, and I'd keep an eye on your vents, you never know what gets up there after an earthquake.

EXIT HEATHER

OSCAR:

(vo) Heather Hildebrant, there was a face I hadn't seen since high school. I'd had a crush on her for years before her father picked up the family and moved them out of town. That was in August too. Now she'd come stumbling back into my life. Things were starting to look up for our protagonist, other than the fact that I had only 10 minutes (checks watch) make that 6 minutes, before Jerry Junior returned and we still hadn't found Chester. But Benny was out there looking, and maybe he'd come through. I was being optimistic.

ENTER BENNY

BENNY:

This job is for the birds!

OSCAR:

(vo) A little too optimistic.

OSCAR:

You're back already? You were gone ten minutes.

BENNY:

Ten of the most fruitless minutes of my life. I didn't see a single bit of evidence. No paw prints, no banana peels, nothing.

OSCAR:

Well did you look up?

BENNY:

It's a monkey O.K., not a bird.

OSCAR:

Up in the trees, Benny.

BENNY:
(stroking chin thoughtfully) Noooooo.

OSCAR:
But you looked in windows and garages, right?

BENNY:
(stroking chin) That would have been a good idea toooooooooo.

OSCAR:
So what'd you do? Just walk around staring at the sidewalk?

BENNY:
Hey, don't get mad at me because you're poor at giving instructions. 'Look around the south side' is open to a lot of interpretations.

OSCAR:
Well this is open to only one, you're an idiot.

BRADLEY groans from behind the desk

OSCAR:
And what IS that noise?

BENNY:
(buying time) It's probably Chester!

OSCAR:
You think so?

BENNY:
Of course. Why would he NOT come here? It makes perfect sense when you think about it. Quick! Go get a net!

OSCAR EXITS

BRADLEY rises from behind the desk to find BENNY waiting for him.

BENNY:
Trying to set up an ambush were you Comrade?

BRADLEY:
(confused) Comrade?

BENNY:
(enraged) Comrade!? You're no Comrade of mine!

BRADLEY tries to run away, but he is still tied up. BENNY catches him easily and throws him back behind the counter, again dusting off his hands.
ENTER OSCAR with a net

OSCAR:
Where'd he go?

BENNY:
Where'd who go?

OSCAR:
Chester!

BENNY:
False alarm.

OSCAR:
False alarm?

BENNY:
Yeah, it was a ... mole man.

OSCAR:
(bitter) Whatever.

BENNY:
What? C'mon, that was funny.

OSCAR:
Yeah, real funny. Hilarious even.

BENNY:
What's that supposed to mean?

OSCAR:
It's just that once again I've been doing all the work while you've been screwing around.

Sure, you were all gung-ho for \$10,000 but when it came time to actually put in some effort you ducked out like you always do. You think I enjoy rooting through dumpsters and climbing trees, cause I don't, okay? But we both agreed to find this stupid thing and so we both need to be working it. This is 9th grade science all over again.

BENNY:

I thought I had polio.

OSCAR:

And when you talked me into buying this place, but where were you when it was time to move in?

BENNY:

I had to be out of town that month for work.

OSCAR:

And when we put in the new rink floor.

BENNY:

I thought I had polio again.

OSCAR:

You always have an excuse for everything don't you? And when it's not a valid excuse it's mole men and invaders from Venus. Look, don't commit to something just to do me a favor, all right? Commit to it because you actually want to see it through.

OSCAR storms into office, slamming door.

OSCAR:

(vo) So there we were, monkeyless, clueless and utterly hopeless. I didn't even want to be in the same room as Benny at this point, let alone be buried next to him under a swing set. But a wise man once said, it's always darkest before the dawn. Sure, it's a cliché, but it's a cliché for a reason.

Scratching noises start up again in vent.

BENNY:

Well whatever's banging up there in the vent, THAT's not my fault.

Realization hits BENNY square between the eyes. He does an excited dance before rushing into the office and dragging OSCAR out by the sleeve

OSCAR:
Will you let go of my-

BENNY holds up a finger for silence, OSCAR is about to blow up when the scratching starts up again. Realization hits OSCAR and they both begin to dance.

OSCAR:
One of us is going to have to go up there and get him.

BENNY:
After you.

OSCAR:
No, after you.

BENNY:
You're the owner, it's your vent.

OSCAR:
You're my employee, it's your job.

BENNY:
I know, we'll rumble bumble for it.

OSCAR:
Fine with me. Ready?

OSCAR begins a simple "Eney Meeny" game while reciting the following line

OSCAR:
Rumble bumble stir the pot who is in and who is not, flight of fancy ship of fools hand of fate chooses you. (points to Benny)

BENNY:
You did that on purpose.

OSCAR:
I'll do it again. Rumble bumble stir the pot who is in and who is not, flight of fancy ship of fools hand of fate chooses you. (again points to Benny)

BENNY:
Rumble bumble stir the pot who is in and who is not, flight of fancy ship of fools hand of fate cho-ses (points to self) dah!!

BENNY goes off stage, sound of a scuffle, CHESTER comes flying out of the vent and lands on O.K's face. OSCAR struggles with the animal and stumbles back into the Office. OSCAR comes dashing out, with CHESTER still in the office.
ENTER BENNY

BENNY:
Where is he?

OSCAR:
I lost him.

BENNY:
You lost him? I herded him right at you.

OSCAR:
I know. Okay, the doors are locked, he can't get out except through-

BOTH:
THE WINDOW!

OSCAR:
I'll go block the windows, you keep an eye open in here.

OSCAR EXITS
BENNY grabs the telephone and dials the number NATALIA gave him.

BENNY:
Hello Natalia? It's Benny. I mean Oscar O'Shay. Yeah, that's what I said. Really?
Benny? Must be something wrong with your end. You know, the government lately has been using phone lines- what? Oh yes, we found Chester, so if you want to come- hello?
Hello? Natalia?

ENTER NATALIA

BENNY:
That was fast.

NATALIA:
Monkey is here, yes?

BENNY:
Yes.

NATALIA:

Thank you Mr. O'Shay, you have done quite the service for your country.

ENTER OSCAR

OSCAR:

He wasn't outside. Who's this?

NATALIA:

Natalia Vovonovitch.

OSCAR:

You certainly are.

BENNY:

She's a secret U.S. agent. She's here for Chester.

OSCAR:

But Chester's going to Coletrain.

BENNY:

But Coletrain's a Communist.

ENTER COLETRAIN:

COLETRAIN:

WHO'S a Communist??!

BENNY:

You are, you Stalin Lover.

COLETRAIN:

Natalia!? I should have known you'd get involved in this.

NATALIA:

Hello my sweet boy. Now you would all stand over there.

OSCAR:

A please would be nice.

NATALIA pulls out a gun

OSCAR:

That's a pretty big please.

BENNY:

Natalia, I don't know how the U.S. Government normally does things, but I'm sure my friend and I are more than willing to cooperate in any way you need.

NATALIA:

Good, then you will stand over there too.

BENNY:

See? Cooperating.

COLETRAIN:

Natalia Vavoomavitch. Dad said you moved back to Russia. We should have known you'd come slinking back around these parts.

BENNY:

You two know each other?

NATALIA:

Da.

COLETRAIN:

Yeah, she's my ex-step mother.

BENNY:

Your Dad was married to HER?

COLETRAIN:

Indeed. And Indeed.

BENNY:

Well, even "Fantastic True Stories" goofs now and again.

COLETRAIN:

Still upset about the Diamonds of the Nile, Mom? Boy, I wish I could have seen the look on your face when you found out.

NATALIA:

That necklace was my wedding gift! And your father takes it and give it to that monkey?

OSCAR:
Ouch.

BENNY:
That's colder than a Eskimo's ice box. Not as cold as pretending to like a guy and then pointing a gun at him after he found a monkey for you! But cold.

COLETRAIN:
Hey, unlike the Trotsky Trollop over there, Chester actually likes Dad. I don't think the old chauffer, accountant, or landscaping crew would not give as flattering a recommendation about Natalia.

BENNY:
(low whistle)

NATALIA:
Where is monkey?

OSCAR:
I don't know.

NATALIA:
You are liar.

OSCAR:
I are not liar.

NATALIA:
Tell me now, or I shoot him.

BENNY:
Sorry buddy.

NATALIA:
Not him, you!

BENNY:
Me? I'm Oscar O'Shay!

OSCAR:
You are?

NATALIA:

Ha! You are easily manipulated buffoon.

BENNY:

I am?

OSCAR:

You are.

COLETRAIN:

Indeed.

NATALIA:

You are having till the count of three. One. Two.

Monkey noises from office.

NATALIA:

Wait here. No funny business. Here Chester, Chester, Chester.

NATALIA enters office and closes door behind her. OSCAR and BENNY sneak up to the door. OSCAR signals for BENNY to help him jump NATALIA when she exits. BENNY is confused and signals his own idea. OSCAR signals back. The signals grow in complexity before there is a scream from the office.

NATALIA:

Ahhhhh!

Gun shots. Then NATALIA stumbles out of the office with CHESTER on her face. OSCAR grabs CHESTER from her while BENNY begins to do "The Charleston"
OSCAR glares at BENNY

BENNY:

What?

OSCAR:

Thanks for the help.

BENNY:

(signing) When she comes out do the Charleston.

OSCAR:

(signing) When she comes out, help me grab the gun!

BENNY:

(signing) Well you should have said so.

COLETRAIN:

Fellahs, great job. I gotta hand it to you on your quick thinking.

NATALIA stands back up, still holding the gun

COLETRAIN:

And I've spoken too soon.

ENTER HEATHER aka HABERSHAM with her own gun drawn.

HABERSHAM:

FREEZE! Put your gun down Natalia.

NATALIA:

Habersham!

COLETRAIN:

Habersham!

OSCAR:

Habersham!?

BENNY:

Habersham's a woman?

OSCAR:

Habersham's YOU?

NATALIA:

(points gun at Benny) I'll shoot him.

HABERSHAM:

Go ahead, see what I care.

BENNY:

Why does everyone want to shoot me?

NATALIA tries to turn to HABERSHAM, but HABERSHAM fires, shooting the gun out of NATALIA's hand. HABERSHAM rushes over and grabs the gun, and then NATALIA

HABERSHAM:

(handcuffing her) You should have stayed in Russia, Natalia. America doesn't need any Communist spies running around.

BENNY:

I KNEW she was a Communist.

OSCAR:

No you didn't.

BENNY:

I knew SOMEONE was a Communist.

BENNY goes off to where CHESTER is sitting on the counter, OSCAR crosses to HABERSHAM

OSCAR:

So you're a private investigator.

HABERSHAM:

I would have told you, but that'd ruin the private part.

OSCAR:

Habersham?

HABERSHAM:

Married name. Only worthwhile thing I got out of it. It's an interesting thing, marriage. I say "can we get married" and he says "Yes." I say "I do" and he says "I do." I say "who's that in our bed?" and he says "Oh, I've been meaning to tell you, I want a divorce."

OSCAR:

(pause)Were you using us as bait?

HABERSHAM:

Yes I was.

OSCAR:

We could have been killed.

HABERSHAM:

Yup. Tell you what, I'll make it up to you by letting you take me to dinner. What do you say?

OSCAR:

I say I'll pick you up at 7.

HABERSHAM:

And I say yes. C'mon Natalia, let's see how you fill out an orange jumpsuit.

EXIT NATALIA and HABERSHAM

COLETRAIN:

Well fellahs, it looks like today was pretty advantageous for all of us. I got Dad's monkey back, Oscar's got himself a date and Benny, well hopefully a life lesson has been learned about Russian women.

BENNY:

Always check for guns.

COLETRAIN:

Ha! Here is your check fellahs, \$10,000, spend it wisely Oscar, spend it well. Come on Chester. Good day.

BENNY:

The black ape howls at midnight.

COLETRAIN looks to OSCAR who shrugs

COLETRAIN:

Yes well, good howling to you too Benny. Good day.

EXIT COLETRAIN with CHESTER

OSCAR:

(vo) And just as quickly as he entered our lives, Chester was gone. The case had tied itself up nice and neat like a pretty pink package, with a pretty pink bow. That's a lot of pink, but what was inside the package was pure Benjamin Franklin green.

BENNY:

(reading magazine) Hey O.K., where'd Jerry Junior say his Dad got that necklace from?

OSCAR:

Turkey I think, why? What now?

BENNY:

Says here that Russian agents had stolen some Allied nuclear codes and engraved them into diamonds. These diamonds were then lost, in a market in Istanbul, Turkey. No one knows what happened to them, but at the time they were lost, they had been made into a small decorative necklace.

OCAR:

You mean to tell me that Coletrain really does...

BENNY:

Had you going for a minute, didn't I?

OSCAR:

(vo) I couldn't help but laugh, despite myself. I had a check in my hand, a date with Heather later tonight, and I most certainly wasn't going to end tonight buried in a park. Despite the scares and the worry, all was well that ended well.

Phone rings

OSCAR:

Middleville Roller Rink. Oh hello Mrs. Miller, no Bradley hasn't stopped by yet. (pause) I know, I was expecting him twenty minutes ago, but he never showed up. (pause) Well, I'll keep an eye out for him.

Sheepishly BENNY helps BRADLEY up from behind the counter.

OSCAR:

(vo) Mostly well. (sigh) August.

ACT III

ATTACK OF THE MOLEMEN!

LIGHTS UP

The MAYOR and her personal assistant BAXTER, are on stage. The MAYOR is seated her desk, while BAXTER takes dictation. The Mayor's office includes a chair for guests and a painting on the wall. There is a door leading out into the hallway.

MAYOR:

Move my luncheon to next week Friday, tell the secretary of transportation I'd like a word with him before the end of tomorrow and Baxter, see if you can get building maintenance in here to look at the phones. The universal translator is acting up again. I was talking to the Vatican earlier and half way through it slipped back into Italian. I had to end the call with "thank you for the beautiful cheese, good-bye." It was embarrassing.

BAXTER:

Fix... translator... yes Miss Mayor. Oh, that reminds me, your 2:30 appointment is here to see you. A Mr. Appleblossom.

MAYOR:

Thank you Baxter, please send him in.

BAXTER opens the door to usher in DONALD Appleblossom, reporter. EXIT
BAXTER

DONALD:

Miss Mayor?

MAYOR:

Donald Appleblossom, I presume. I'm very pleased to meet you.

DONALD:

The pleasure's all mine, Miss Mayor. I'd just like to say thank you for granting me some time to conduct this interview.

MAYOR:

[realization] You're a journalist.

DONALD:

Yes, Miss Mayor.

MAYOR:

Well, won't this be exciting then? Just you and me and your little pencil, writing down every word that I say. I must warn you though that I don't know how interesting this interview will be. Being the mayor of any town, even a town as lovely and vibrant as our own Middleville, can be a rather hum-drum, mundane duty.

DONALD sits

DONALD:

Well my editor thinks your story is worth telling Miss Mayor.

MAYOR:

I see. And what publication did you say you work for?

DONALD:

Fantastic True Stories.

MAYOR:

Really.

DONALD:

It's a perfectly reputable publication.

MAYOR:

So I have heard. Well, you are all ready here, so I might as well humor you for a while, shan't I? You may ask your first question now Mr. Appleblossom.

DONALD:

I guess we should just start with the basics. You were first elected as mayor of Middleville three years ago, correct?

MAYOR:

That is correct. As you undoubtedly know, my opponent, John Winters, disappeared mysteriously two weeks before the election. Dreadful shame that, though I would like it stated for the record that I was leading Mr. Winters in the polls at the time of his disappearance.

DONALD:

Leading in... the polls... And how do you feel being the first female mayor in the entire state? That must be quite an honor.

MAYOR:

I feel that it is a great testament, not only to the open mindedness of the citizens of Middleville, but also to the country's movement towards gender equality. Slowly but surely women are proving that while we may be the fairer sex, Mr. Appleblossom, we are not necessarily the weaker sex.

DONALD:

Can I say gender instead of sex? A lot of kids read this magazine.

MAYOR:

Go right ahead Mr. Appleblossom. I would not want anyone to suffer any embarrassment on my account.

DONALD:

The weaker... gender.... You face re-election this fall. Do have any thoughts about your campaign?

MAYOR:

I'm afraid I have been much too busy concentrating on the every day matters at hand to worry about anything like quite yet, Mr. Appleblossom. I leave most of those matters in the hands of Baxter, my more than capable secretary.

DONALD:

More than... capable... secretary. Just a few more questions Miss Mayor and I think I'll have everything I need.

MAYOR:

Thank you Mr. Appleblossom. And I would just like to say how much I've enjoyed our time together today. I must say, I had my reservations when I learned what publication you were sent by, but this interview has been conducted with the utmost professionalism and respect.

DONALD:

Well thank you. Miss Mayor, how long have you been secretly working with the government to colonize Venus?

MAYOR:

And there's the other shoe.

DONALD:

Miss Mayor?

MAYOR:

I'm terribly sorry Mr. Appleblossom, I had hope that this interview would be conducted without incident and allegation throughout, but I see now that I was mistaken. I apologize but I am a very busy woman with too many tasks and not enough time to spend my day answering libelous and slanderous questions filled with fictional rubbish for a monthly magazine.

DONALD:

We're bi-monthly.

MAYOR:

Touché' Mr. Appleblossom. None the less-

DONALD stands

DONALD:

Please, Miss Mayor, this is first solo assignment and if I don't at least get something for my editor, he's going to have me emptying pencil sharpeners for the rest of my career.

MAYOR:

Very well then, Mr. Appleblossom, please cease your begging. I suppose it would be terribly unbecoming of me to allow you to suffer on my account. However, you must agree to move quickly through these ridiculous questions.

DONALD:

Thank you. Okay then, how long have you been working, in secret, with the government to colonize Venus?

MAYOR:

No Comment.

DONALD:

Well, I was hoping for-

MAYOR:

No Comment, Mr. Appleblossom. I do not know what manner of delusion the rest of your staff at Fantastic True Stories operates under, but there is no secret plan to colonize Venus. Therefore, there is no secret plan for me to comment upon. No comment. Next question.

DONALD:

Is there any truth to the rumor that the government has been using low-level sonics in order to-?

MAYOR:

No comment.

DONALD:

Have the Illuminati ever-

MAYOR:

No comment.

DONALD:

Where did-

MAYOR:
No comment.

DONALD:
Has-

MAYOR:
No comment.

DONALD:
Lovely weather we're having.

MAYOR:
I find it a little too humid for my tastes.

DONALD:
AH-HA! (sheepishly) I'm sorry.

MAYOR:
Are we quite finished then?

DONALD:
I guess we are. Thank you Miss Mayor, I'm sorry to have wasted your time.

MAYOR:
Not at all Mr. Appleblossom, I always enjoy speaking with the press.

SFX CLAXON

DONALD:
What is that?

MAYOR:
Nothing.

LOUDSPEAKER:
Warning Code 9. Warning Code 9.

DONALD:
That sounds serious.

MAYOR:

Well I assure you that it is anything but. Really, you know these bureaucracies, with their many intricate rituals and unnecessary fanfare.

MAYOR pushes a button on her desk, ending the siren

MAYOR:

There now, do you see? A lot of excitement and bother over nothing. Much like your little bi-monthly publication. But deep down, nothing to be concerned about what so ever.

ENTER BAXTER. She is in a panic.

BAXTER:

Miss Mayor! Miss Mayor! Code 9! Code 9!

MAYOR:

Yes, thank you Baxter. That will be all Baxter.

MAYOR herds BAXTER out the door

MAYOR:

Reliable as a golden retriever, but she is prone to over excitement, the poor dear. Now then Mr. Appleblossom, I'm sorry to rush you, but I do have a full day ahead of me that I need to proceed with-

CLAXON SOUNDS. Picture on wall pivots to reveal a map of the city.

LOUDSPEAKER:

Code 10. Code 10. Code 10.

MAYOR:

-Immediately.

DONALD:

Code 10?

MAYOR:

My, my what an exciting day here at the office. I would ask you to stay, but I see that you've already got your hat on.

ENTER BAXTER, again in a panic.

BAXTER:

Miss Mayor! Miss Mayor! Code 10! Code 10!

MAYOR:

Baxter! If you would kindly wait one minute until Mr. Appleblossom has left? There you are, thank you again for stopping in, you've been ever so kind. Ariva Derci, Au Revoir, Parting is such sweet sorrow.

MAYOR ushers DONALD out the door

BAXTER:

I'm sorry Miss Mayor, I didn't mean to panic like that in front of a civilian.

MAYOR:

It is quite all right Baxter, but you must try to remember to always keep your head in these situations. Understand? There's a good girl. Now then, what in heaven's name is all of this noise about?

BAXTER:

Mole Men!

MAYOR:

Mole Men.

ENTER DONALD

DONALD:

Mole Men??

MAYOR:

(pause) Baxter? Take a note for building maintenance, by this time tomorrow I would appreciate it if they would find the time to better sound proof my door.

DONALD:

Please don't kick me out again Miss Mayor. This could be the story that makes my career. Pencil Shavings!

MAYOR:

Very well, your apparent penchant for eavesdropping has already given you too much information to be sent away with. But please, Mr. Appleblossom, if you do wish to stay, have a seat and try to stay out of everyone else's way. Baxter, tell me what we already know thus far.

BAXTER:

First contact was made seven minutes ago out by the old ravine by a road construction

crew.

MAYOR:

Seven minutes, well that doesn't leave us much time. Do we have any idea what they want?

BAXTER:

What do mole men always want?

DONALD:

Dirt?

MAYOR:

Have they made any official demands?

BAXTER:

Not yet.

PHONE RINGS. BAXTER answers it.

BAXTER:

Hello? It's them!

BAXTER puts phone on speaker. GOLE-O's voice is heard over the speaker.

GOLE-O:

Are we speaking to the leader of the city?

MAYOR:

You are.

GOLE-O:

Salutations Miss Mayor. It is a pleasure to talk to you once again.

MAYOR:

The pleasure is all your's Mole-o.

GOLE-O:

I am Gole-o, son of Mole-o! I rule the Mole People now! I demand you relinquish control of this land and return it to its rightful rulers, the Mole Men.

MOLE MEN:

THE MOLE MEN!

MAYOR:

I regret to inform you that I simply cannot do that Gole-o. There are many people who live in this city and I cannot, and will not force them all to leave their homes.

GOLE-O:

You will regret it if you do not reconsider Miss Mayor. Perhaps a demonstration of our power is in order.

MAYOR:

What are you implying, Gole-o?

GOLE-O:

You will see soon enough. When your great clock chimes three times, you will learn how serious are the Mole Men.

MOLE MEN:

THE MOLE MEN!

BAXTER hangs up the phone

MAYOR:

That went about as well as could be expected. What time is it Baxter?

BAXTER:

It's only a few minutes before three Miss Mayor.

MAYOR:

That's not much time, but hopefully it will be enough to call the emergency council. Baxter, quickly gather the members.

EXIT BAXTER

DONALD raises his hand

MAYOR:

You have a question Mr. Appleblossom?

DONALD:

You have an emergency council?

MAYOR:

Yes Mr. Appleblossom.

DONALD raises his hand

MAYOR:

Yes Mr. Appleblossom.

DONALD:

You have a map of the city behind a portrait?

MAYOR:

Yes Mr. Apple-

DONALD raises his hand

MAYOR:

What is it, Mr. Appleblossom?

DONALD:

We have Mole Men?

MAYOR:

Yes Mr. – You can stop raising your hand now.

DONALD:

They have a KING?!?

MAYOR:

More a ruler elected out of the party committee.

DONALD:

Can I sit down?

MAYOR:

You are sitting. Donald, was it?

DONALD:

Yes Miss Mayor.

MAYOR:

Donald, I don't want you to worry. I know this must all seem very overwhelming for you, but the council and I have been through this situation before.

DONALD:

This has happened more than-

MAYOR:

And we have always come out on top, as evidenced by the fact that we are still where we are and the Mole Men are still where they are. Do not worry Donald, all will be well in a moment or two.

ENTER BAXTER

BAXTER:

Miss Mayor! Miss Mayor! The Council! The Council!

MAYOR:

A deep breath Baxter and then proceed.

BAXTER:

No one from the Mafia was able to make it Miss Mayor. They're all at a wine tasting in the Napa Valley. We're currently working on patching a line through to the Flying Dragon Clan and we hope to be able to speak to someone there soon.

MAYOR:

So we have no one then?

BAXTER:

One person was able to make it.

MAYOR:

Not-

BAXTER:

I'm afraid so, Miss Mayor.

BILL:

[off stage] I'm waiting to be announced!

BAXTER:

Miss Mayor... from the Fraternal Order of the Mongoose, they who brought fire to the people and sank the city of Atlantis, fountains of knowledge and pillars of truth, it is my deep honor to present Brother Bill.

ENTER BILL, Sergeant at Arms of the Fraternal Order of the Mongoose. He is wearing a Hawaiian shirt and a fez and carrying a glass of gin.

BILL:

Brother Bill is here, no need to fear! Who's the youngster?

MAYOR:

William, this is Donald Appleblossom.

BILL:

Darn fine to meet you! Brother Bill, Sergeant at Arms, Fraternal Order of the Mongoose. Sorry it took me so long, annual convention and all that. Splash a little gin in this glass would you Bax?

BAXTER EXITS with glass

BILL:

So, who you with Donny? Masons? Vatican? Time Lords?

DONALD:

Fantastic True Stories. Are you REALLY part of the Fraternal Order of the Mongoose?

BILL:

Did I say Mongoose? Slip of the tongue, I meant... Jesus. Fraternal Order of the Jesus. Yup. Everything seems good and... religious here. Spiritus Sancti. Enamini Partri. Vini Vidi Vicci. Auf Weidersehn.

MAYOR:

He already knows everything Bill.

DONALD:

Oh? Ohhhhh! Well why didn't you say so? I really am a Mongoose kid.

MAYOR:

Yes, I'm sure he was baffled by your clever ruse.

BILL:

Popped through the looking glass, eh Alice? Darn near mind blowing isn't it? How you holding up?

DONALD:

Okay I guess.

BILL:

How about this secret council business?

DONALD:

It's a lot to take in. I mean, you hear rumors of this sort of thing, but you never consider that-

BILL:

Tell me about it. And how about these mole men? Scary little trolls aren't they?

ENTER BAXTER with filled glass

BAXTER:

They're more imps than trolls.

BILL:

(taking glass) And I'm more sober than I am drunk, but I'm still drunk.

EXIT BAXTER

DONALD:

They certainly sound like a lot of trouble.

BILL:

You'll see scarier things than them, you stick around long enough. Say, what's your opinion on the robot uprising?

DONALD:

Robot uprising?

BILL:

Whu-oh. He already Knows everything?

MAYOR:

Everything pertaining to the mole men William.

ENTER BAXTER

BILL:

Whoops-a-daisy. Looks like it's ritual suicide for me.

BAXTER:

I'll just go get the tarp.

EXIT BAXTER

DONALD:

What?

MAYOR:

He's just pulling your leg Donald, aren't you William?

BILL:

Sure I am. Sure I am, kid.

MAYOR:

Now then, it's just you and William, but we'll have to do. Do the Mongoose have any ideas regarding-

BILL:

Nuke 'em.

MAYOR:

William, please, we've been over this before. Despite what the Mongoose may believe, every problem we come up against cannot simply be solved by-

BILL:

Blasting your enemy to bits? Sure it can. Worked in Atlantis. Worked in Japan. Worked on the moon. Your enemy can't do you any harm when he's in the grave. Well, there's exceptions to that, but that's why we keep a shaman on the payroll.

DONALD:

I'm sorry, are you talking about using atomic weapons on the Mole Men? Isn't that a bit... over the top?

BILL:

Not at all. Remember what they did to your poor opponent.

DONALD:

What did they do?

MAYOR:

Nothing Donald, William just likes to spec-

BILL:

They kidnapped him and Ate Him.

DONALD:

They ate him??

MAYOR:

Allegedly ate him. It has never been proven that the Mole Men posses any canabalistic tendencies.

BILL:

It's never proven the other way either. And pardon me, Lynn, if I'm a little extra cautious when it comes to gettin' eaten.

MAYOR:

Have you stopped to consider the repercussions of this action? A blast powerful enough to destroy the Mole Men would undoubtably and invariably affect this town as well. The radiation poisoning suffered by my citizens for starters, to say nothing of the contamination of our water and-

BILL:

Well one problem you won't have here anymore will be Mole Men.

MAYOR:

I am not of the mindset to currently discuss nuclear options. Are we clear William?

BILL:

Three seconds. One flash of light. A SMALL mushroom cloud.

MAYOR:

Are we clear?

BILL:

(resigned) You're the boss.

ENTER BAXTER

MAYOR:

Baxter! Do we have communication with the The Flying Dragons yet or not?

BAXTER:

Almost Miss Mayor. We should have Mr. Yomoto on the phone shortly.

MAYOR:

Good, we'll see if he has any better ideas about how to go about handling this situation.

CLOCK chimes 3 times. PHONE rings

MAYOR:

Hello?

MOLE MAN:
Is this the mayor?

MAYOR:
It is. Hello Gole-o.

ROLL-O:
I am Roll-o, brother of Gole-o, son of Mole-o! I am the messenger of the Mole Men.

MOLE MEN:
THE MOLE MEN!

ROLL-O:
The time is now at hand Mayor. Will you grant my leader's demands and leave our land, taking your people with you?

MAYOR:
That is not an option for us Roll-o. If I could just speak to your brother I believe we could work out a solution that would be beneficial for both our people.

ROLL-O:
The time for talk is past. Now is the time to feel the fury of the Mole Men.

MOLE MEN:
THE MOLE MEN!

Phone hangs up. Earthquake.

LOUDSPEAKER:
Alert! Alert! Code 12! Code 12! Initiating Lock Down!

MAYOR:
Is everyone all right?

BILL:
I had a bunch to drink at the conference, but old Bill isn't the only one who felt that, right?

MAYOR:
It would appear that the Mole Men have figured out some way to generate and localize earthquakes. I had no idea they possessed this sort of technology.

BAXTER:

Whoops.

MAYOR:

What do you mean, Whoops?

BAXTER:

Well, it IS possible that- do you remember the budget shortage last year?

MAYOR:

Yes.

BAXTER:

Well, you didn't want to raise taxes, so we may have sold Coletrain Industries' earthquake stimulation prototype ray to the Mole Men.

MAYOR:

We May Have?

BAXTER:

It was either them or the Russians. Someone Communist, I'm sure of that.

DONALD:

Why would you sell something like that to either of them? Why didn't you sell it to somewhere safe like... Idaho!

BAXTER:

What does Idaho need with an earthquake stimulation prototype ray?

DONALD:

What do WE need with an earthquake stimulation prototype ray?

BAXTER:

It's for stimulating earthquakes.

DONALD:

But why?

BAXTER:

Because... well, sometimes you need an earthquake stimulated and.... Miss Mayor?

MAYOR:

Because we could Donald. It's as simple as that. Why does any one of us do anything?

Because we were curious to see if we could. It's the same desire to learn about our world and what makes it operate the way it does, that lead us to sail the oceans, to take flight, to crack the atom.

DONALD:

Well what's next, a weather controlling machine? (realization) You HAVE a weather controlling machine!

BAXTER:

Only in development.

DONALD:

Don't any of you ever worry about the consequences?

MAYOR:

Every day. But if we were to allow fear to cripple our inventive spirit we would all still be huddled in a cave somewhere in Europe shivering against the dark.

BILL:

And ruled by those damn Atlantians.

PHONE RINGS. BAXTER answers.

BAXTER:

Miss Mayor, we've finally been able to get a line through to the head of the Flying Dragon Clan. It's fuzzy, but it's the best we can do.

MAYOR:

It will have to do then. I just hope the translator holds up.

Image of Mr. YOMOTO appears on Universal Translator phone

YOMOTO:

Hello Miss Mayor.

MAYOR:

Konichiwa Yomoto-san. It is always a great honor to speak with you.

YOMOTO:

I'm sorry, I have no idea what you're saying.

MAYOR:

It is always a great honor to speak with you Yomoto-san. What seems to be the problem here Baxter?

YOMOTO:

That was just a long stream of gibberish on my end.

BAXTER:

I'm sorry Miss Mayor, the universal translator is still down.

MAYOR:

Well then have it fixed, Quickly. Honestly, who runs our building maintenance? Trained chimps?

EXIT BAXTER

YOMOTO:

Is there anyone there that speaks Japanese?

MAYOR looks around, everyone shrugs

MAYOR:

We're having some minor technical difficulties on this end Yomoto-san. If you could just be patient.

YOMOTO:

Even Spanish? I speak Spanish fairly well.

MAYOR looks again, again everyone shrugs

MAYOR:

And yet the city board refuses to fund my language initiatives.

DONALD:

Maybe he speaks English?

MAYOR:

That's not a half bad idea you have there Donald. Yomoto-san, we seem to be having a problem with our translator. Do you, perhaps, speak English?

YOMOTO:

Okay, I caught English, but that's it.

MAYOR:

Do you... have anyone... who speaks... Ennnnnn-gllllll-iiiiiiiish.

YOMOTO:

Slower isn't going to help.

MAYOR:

DO YOU SPEAK ENGLISH!

YOMOTO:

Neither is louder. Look, I'm sorry I've got to go. We've got a Mole Man problem here in Tokyo like you wouldn't believe.

MAYOR:

Yes! Mole Men!

YOMOTO:

Yes, Mole Men?

MAYOR:

We need... your help... with the...

YOMOTO:

And we're back to where we started.

YOMOTO hangs up.

MAYOR:

... mole men.

BILL:

Where was that phone made, Romania?

MAYOR:

Cleveland, Ohio.

BILL:

Cleveland. So much for buying American.

Another Earthquake

MAYOR:

I will hand Gole-o this, he is persistant.

DONALD:

Miss Mayor. I think I'm in over my head. May I leave now?

MAYOR:

I'm afraid that's impossible Donald. After that first earthquake the entire building went to Code 12. We are on complete lockdown until this situation resolves itself.

ENTER BAXTER

BAXTER:

Miss Mayor! Miss Mayor!

DONALD:

How did you do that?

BAXTER:

Do what?

DONALD:

Come in the room?

BAXTER:

I used the door.

DONALD:

But we're on lock down.

BAXTER:

Yes.

DONALD:

So how did you...

BAXTER:

Miss Mayor! Miss Mayor! The city is starting to fall apart! Reports have come in that the clock tower is starting to tilt dangerously and that the zoo is in ruins.

MAYOR:

Begin sending out the emergency relief crews. We'll do the best we can to contain the damage as it occurs.

EXIT BAXTER

DONALD again tries the door but he can not open it.

DONALD:

What if we moved?

MAYOR:

Come again, Mr. Appleblossom?

DONALD:

Just hear me out Miss Mayor. What if we packed up the town and did move away like Gole-O wants?

MAYOR:

Then we would be giving in to his demands.

DONALD:

It's better than being destroyed by earthquakes, isn't it?

MAYOR:

And suppose we did move, Mr. Appleblossom? Where would we go? Other towns? Other states? What about those unable to leave? The sick, the elderly, the poor? Do we just leave them here to face the Mole Men alone?

BILL:

It'd be like an all you can eat buffet.

DONALD:

You're part of a secret society that spans half the globe, we could get everyone out if we tried.

MAYOR:

This time Mr. Appleblossom, this time. But what about the next time the Mole Men rear their heads looking for more land? Or when the Magma Creatures return and demand we pay them tribute? If the Moon Raiders turn their attention our way again?

BILL:

If the damn Atlantians rise back out of the sea.

MAYOR:

We are where we are in this world because we have been willing to stand our ground in the face of opposition. It is not often easy, but I suppose survival never is.

DONALD:

But if we won't give in and they won't give in, it seems like we're racing towards our own destruction.

MAYOR:

I know it may seem that way at the moment Donald, but hopefully-

Another Earthquake

BILL:

Lynn, I know you don't want to do this, but I don't see any other way. It's time to rain some nuclear fire on the Mole Men's parade.

DONALD:

No!

BILL:

Well that's one opinion, but-

MAYOR:

No.

BILL:

All right, two opinions. But two opinions hardly make-

MAYOR:

Baxter!

ENTER BAXTER

BAXTER:

No!

EXIT BAXTER

BILL:

Well fine. I guess we'll all just stay here and get scrambled to death until that machine runs out of juice.

DONALD:

Wait a minute... scrambled?

BILL:

You know, like an egg?

DONALD:

That's it!

BILL:

I know! (pause) What are we talking about?

DONALD:

Miss Mayor, what if we didn't have to bomb the Mole Men and we didn't have to leave town? What if there were some way to stop the earthquake machine?

MAYOR:

If we were able to stop the earthquake machine, the Mole Men would lose their advantage. They would immediately withdraw.

BILL:

Well that's all well and good, but how are we going to stop that thing, short of the 5 megaton solution that keeps getting shot down by the rest of this room.

DONALD:

We'll scramble the signal. The machine just stimulates earthquakes. If the signal is stopped, the machine is useless.

BILL:

Ohhhh, we'll scramble the signal. (pause) Well I have no idea how to do that. Do you Lynn?

MAYOR:

I'm afraid I'm as in the dark as poor William. So unless you have an idea Mr. Appleblossom.

BILL:

He's from Fantastic True Stories, what possible real world solution could he have?

DONALD:

I was a physics major in college. I wrote my senior paper on wave theory. It won the Promising Scientist of 1952 award.

BILL:

Hold up a minute. What's an award winning physicist doing writing for Fantastic True Stories?

DONALD:

I thought it was a science magazine.

BILL:

Science fiction maybe.

MAYOR:

What will we need to do Mr. Appleblossom?

DONALD:

Well, these earthquakes are being caused by the sonic vibrations produced by the Mole Man's earthquake stimulation ray, right?

MAYOR:

Correct.

DONALD:

Then all we need to do is negate the earthquakes is to send another sonic wave at an inverted frequency. The two waves should overlap and cancel each other out.

BILL:

Should?

DONALD:

95 out of 100 times.

MAYOR:

And the other five times?

DONALD:

The two waves would actually multiply each other tearing the earth to pieces.

BILL:

Well, will you look at the time? Gotta go. Lynn, as always a pleasure. Donny, best of luck. And may the Great Mongoose smile on you all until we meet again.

BILL attempts to leave, but the door is locked.

MAYOR:

Lockdown. William.

BILL continues to try the door, growing more panicked with each line.

BILL:

Lockdown Schmockdown, Lynn. I'll see you all- see you all- Hey! Open Up! I'm a Sergeant at Arms for a Fraternal Order!

MAYOR:
William.

BILL:
I'm third in line for Head Mongoose!

MAYOR:
William.

BILL:
Third In Line!

MAYOR:
William! You need to calm down.

BILL:
Calm down? Calm Down?!

MAYOR:
Yes.

BILL:
No! Either we're about to be shaken to pieces or we're going to be over run and eaten!
And look at me! I'm dinner for a whole family of Mole Men and sandwiches the next day!

MAYOR:
You're not leaving William. None of us are. Please, try to mature about it.

BILL falls to the ground in a tantrum.

BILL:
I don't want to die! I don't want to get eaten!

DONALD moves to help BILL up

MAYOR:
He'll be fine Donald. This is nothing. You should have seen him during the Moon War.

DONALD:
I didn't mean to scare everyone, was just offering it as a possibility. It's impossible

anyway.

MAYOR:
Why is that Donald?

DONALD:
Well, for starters, we'd need another earthquake stimulation ray, or else some sort of great big, I don't know, high frequency sonic beam generator.

MAYOR:
Baxter?

ENTER BAXTER

BAXTER:
Yes, Miss Mayor?

MAYOR:
Where's the high frequency sonic beam generator we're using to communicate with Venus?

BAXTER:
Probably pointed towards Venus.

EXIT BAXTER
MAYOR begins dialing the phone

MAYOR:
William, I need you to quickly get a party of your Mongoose brethren out to the old church where we're storing the generator, and I need them to turn it around.

BILL:
(rising) Towards Mars?

MAYOR:
No, towards the Earth.

BILL:
(on phone) Lenny? This is Bill. I need you and three other guys to do something for me. Lenny, I don't have time for the pledge. ... Because there are civilians around. I need you to go out to the old church, find the high frequency sonic generator and turn it around.... no, towards the Earth.

ENTER BAXTER

BAXTER:

Miss Mayor! Miss Mayor! The Mole Men are here! The Mole Men are here!

MAYOR:

I hope your plan works Mr. Appleblossom.

DONALD:

So do I.

ENTER WOLE-O, a Mole Man

WOLE-O:

Salutations Miss Mayor.

MAYOR:

Hello... Gole-o?

WOLE-O:

I am Wole-o, emissary of the Mole Men.

MOLE MEN:

(vo) THE MOLE MEN!

WOLE-O:

I have been sent by Gole-o, son of Mole-o, to accept your unconditional surrender as well as oversee the immediate evacuation of this township.

MAYOR:

Well then I am afraid you've come here for nothing Wole-o, as I do not plan on surrendering to you and your people today, tomorrow, or any day forward.

WOLE-O:

Then you shall be destroyed.

MAYOR:

We will see. Now William.

BILL/WOLE-O:

(into phone/walkie-talkie)Fire the ray!

Earthquake begins, higher pitch hum starts up and the earthquake slowly ends

DONALD:
It's stopped!

MAYOR:
Halt the ray William.

BILL:
Cease fire.

WOLE-O:
By the Great Tunnel, how is this possible?

MAYOR:
Human imagination and ingenuity Wole-o. Your advantage is gone. I suggest you leave now and convince your ruler to order a speedy withdrawl.

BILL:
Before I brain you with this phone.

WOLE-O hisses and backs away

WOLE-O:
You have won the day Miss Mayor, but nothing more. We will never be stopped for this land is our destiny. So swear the Mole Men.

MOLE MEN:
(vo) THE MOLE MEN!

WOLE-O tries to leave but the door won't open. BAXTER opens it for him.
EXIT WOLE-O

LOUDSPEAKER:
Alert! Alert! Code One! Code One! Lockdown Deactivated!

BILL:
Wole-o's right you know. They're never gonna stop till they take over this whole area. They don't care how long it takes, cause they're never going to stop trying.

DONALD:
What if we built a wall? Wouldn't that stop them?

MAYOR:

With the Mole Men on one side and Middleville on the other? No Donald, that would never work. Walls do not end conflict, they merely delay them.

BILL:

It's true Donny, Atlantis was nothing but walls by the end, and look what happened. Pray for peace and prepare for war Donny, that's how we live.

DONALD:

Seems like a crummy way to live.

BILL:

Then maybe someday people like you will change how this all works Donny. Lynn, I'm going to take a group of Mongoose out to the ravine, make sure the Mole Men are all back under.

MAYOR:

Thank you William.

BILL:

My pleasure. Donny? Good luck and don't take any nickels.

DONALD:

You mean wooden nickels?

BILL:

None of 'em. Trust me, six months from now-

MAYOR:

(ahem)

BILL:

Nevermind. Just good luck. May the Great Mongoose shine on you all until we meet again.

EXIT BILL

MAYOR:

Well Mr. Appleblossom I must say it appears as though you've gotten your story after all. I must, however, ask that my name be left out of it entirely. I know what you're thinking, why would I not want the publicity? If the general population knew what happened today I would likely be crowned a hero as well as mayor for life. But I tell you I have done

nothing more today than is expected of me as leader of this city. I would expect no less of anyone who has sat where I have sat and seen what I have seen. I am no hero Donald, simply a woman doing her best to help others survive and I will not use fear to keep myself in power. There are terrible forces in this world Donald, both from beyond and beneath. There are terrible forces both in our foes and our friends. We walk a fine line between destruction and salvation, we have since the dawn of our species. Perhaps some day the balance will shift forever towards the side of righteousness, but until that day whenever oppression, cruelty and injustice rear their heads to threaten the people of Middleville I will stand along side those who would oppose them. I hope you will stand beside me. I hope you all will stand beside me.

LIGHTS DOWN