

Michael Bettencourt

One-Act Plays: Volume 5

Block & Tackle Productions Press



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**The Patron Saint Of Geeks • The Way
The Real Temple • Macbeth's Children**

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Block & Tackle Productions Press



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To María Beatriz - always in all ways

The Patron Saint of Geeks

DESCRIPTION

Bobby and Chad are close friends in the fifth grade. Harassed as "geeks," they contemplate using a gun to equalize the imbalance in power. The play not only examines the consequences of social stereotyping but also the choices the weak make when continually oppressed by the strong.

CHARACTERS

- BOBBY, in the fifth grade -- plain kind of guy.
- MOM AND DAD, BOBBY's parents: "Mrs. D." and "Mr. D."
- CHAD, BOBBY's close friend, equally plain kind of guy.
- MUSCLE MAN, a spirit -- played by an experienced body builder, reminiscent of Charles Atlas.
- RAD, a bully at school -- in the sixth grade; on the Boys Club football team.
- RAD'S GANG, a group of four who follow RAD around; on the Boys Club football team as well. Though they dress individually, they all wear something that indicates their sports status, e.g., a jacket, sweater, tee-shirt.
- THE PEARLS, four girls in the sixth grade who hang together; while dressed individually, they wear some article that signifies their group: a jacket with the name on it, Che berets, or anything that would be current in their culture.
- DICK POWERS, coach of the Boys Club football team.

SETTING

- Various locations in a small town in western Massachusetts: BOBBY's bedroom; the school; the football field; the Boys Club weight room

TIME

- Presentish

MISCELLANEOUS

- Current music -- director's and actors' choices
- Four chairs, two used as twin beds in BOBBY's bedroom
- Several muscle magazines
- A set of weights and a weight bench
- Football equipment for RAD and BOBBY: helmets, shoulder pads, jerseys, pants, sneakers
- A small wooden box, large enough to hold a .25-caliber gun; also key
- Backpacks

NOTE: Actors are onstage for the entire play and assist with set changes.

NOTE: The characters can be played by any race/ethnicity. But the director should pay close attention to subtle messages in his or her choices. For instance, if DICK POWERS is played by a black man, the role will have a very different feel than if played by a white man. If BOBBY is the son of an "integrated" couple, or if CHAD is a different "race" than BOBBY, it sets up resonances that need to be addressed. Making these choices should add spice to the production, not a distraction.

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Scene 1

Single light, down stage center. Music as if coming from a radio or boombox. BOBBY and CHAD stand in the light, in gym shorts and tee-shirts, barefoot; the feel should be that they're getting ready for bed. They make body poses, as if they were body-builders at a competition, though they are clearly not body-builders.

On the floor near them are several body-builder magazines. The four chairs sit upstage; the two middle chairs have sheets folded on them. At first, BOBBY and CHAD work through their individual routines, with color commentary. Then they will do a synchronized routine together. As they do these initial moves, MUSCLE MAN comes on, upstage of them and slightly in shadow.

BOBBY
(posing)

And, yes, the crowd cheers as he works his way through his routine.

CHAD
He's got 'em on the run now. Especially the women -- he's got 'em going crazy in the aisles!

BOBBY
Look at those lats. Look at 'em! Look at 'em!

CHAD
The biceps are bulgin', buckoos.

BOBBY

I got a twelve-pack of abs.

CHAD

I got a whole case.

They begin a synchronized series of movements, a choreographed routine, that they've obviously worked out together over time. MUSCLE MAN also does it with them. At each move, BOBBY and CHAD make some kind of sound -- an exhalation, a slight grunt, etc. -- which punctuates the move. Even though they're geeks, there should be some grace to the movement.

At one point, BOBBY does one thing and CHAD does another. It breaks the flow. Music out.

BOBBY

No, man, you do this -- this, then over to this.

CHAD

Nope -- this, then this.

BOBBY

No --

CHAD

Yes -- that's how we worked it.

BOBBY

(to MUSCLE MAN)

Which is it?

MUSCLE MAN

Chad's right -- this, then this.

CHAD

Score!

BOBBY

I still like doing this.

CHAD

But that ain't it. This, then this --

Does it more slowly, to mock him -- gently.

CHAD

See, this, then this --

BOBBY

Fine.

BOBBY drops to the floor and tries to do a one-handed push-up.

MUSCLE MAN

The muscle boys had 'em going there, though, for a minute.

BOBBY

Muscle men, if you don't mind.

BOBBY can't do the push-up, so he starts doing sit-ups. CHAD starts doing them, too, and it becomes a race to do them as fast as possible. They collapse after about half a dozen or so. They both get to their knees and do a few more poses from there.

BOBBY

Yeah, once you got it, you got it, and ain't nobody going to take it away.

MOM appears.

MUSCLE MAN flexes his arms in a classic "biceps" pose; BOBBY and CHAD hang from his arms.

MOM

Bobby, are you getting ready for bed?

BOBBY

(shouting back)

I was born ready for bed.

MOM

No smart-mouth. Chad?

CHAD

Ready, Mrs. D.

MUSCLE MAN puts them down. They plant their feet against his and, holding each of their hands, MUSCLE MAN lets them lean out from either side. They sway.

MOM

Teeth?

BOBBY

Whiter than Chad's, Mom.

MOM

Hands?

CHAD

Fine, Mrs. D.

MOM

Then ready for bed.

BOBBY

You just said that.

MOM

We'll be up in a minute to say good night.

BOBBY

Why do grown-ups repeat themselves so much?

MUSCLE MAN pulls BOBBY and CHAD upright. BOBBY stands as if he's in front of a mirror; CHAD sits on the floor and leafs through one of the magazines. BOBBY slaps his guts and sucks it in, pinches the fat on his arms, etc.

BOBBY

What'd'ya think?

MUSCLE MAN

It's a body.

BOBBY

Yeah, but what kind?

CHAD

Geek body.

MUSCLE MAN

The kind that works -- it's healthy --

BOBBY

(distracted)

Stomach seems a little harder --

CHAD

Yeah, right.

MUSCLE MAN

It's well-fed.

BOBBY

(distracted)

Not really harder at all.

MUSCLE MAN

And handsome.

BOBBY

These arms -- pathetic!

CHAD

Quit looking, then.

BOBBY

(to MUSCLE MAN)

Huh?

MUSCLE MAN

Handsome.

BOBBY

Handsome? Man, you gotta get some eyes!

MUSCLE MAN

It gets good grades in school.

BOBBY
(still distracted)

Quadiceps -- lame!

MUSCLE MAN
Parents who love you.

BOBBY takes CHAD's magazine. CHAD picks up another one.

BOBBY
Look at this.

MUSCLE MAN
Don't believe the magazines.

BOBBY
(ignoring him)
Man, these guys are great!

MUSCLE MAN
Don't.

BOBBY
And this! Look at her!

BOBBY hands the magazine to MUSCLE MAN to have him hold it open, then tries to imitate what he sees.

BOBBY
See, if I could just push this a little --

(gives up)
I'll never look like that.

MUSCLE MAN
Why do you want to?

BOBBY stands and looks at MUSCLE MAN as if MUSCLE MAN is the most complete idiot in the world.

BOBBY
Huh? Are you kidding? If I had a body like that, those
-- those --

CHAD

Go ahead, say it.

BOBBY

Assholes at school, Rad and his rat pack, wouldn't bother me.

CHAD

Us --

BOBBY

Us.

CHAD

That's a fact.

MUSCLE MAN

Better watch your language.

BOBBY

That's what they are.

MOM

Bobby, Chad.

BOBBY

(yelling back)

Yeah, Mom. We're jumping under the covers right now.

(to MUSCLE MAN)

You don't know how it is, what Rad is like.

CHAD

Rad and his rat pack.

BOBBY

Sometimes -- sometimes --

MUSCLE MAN

You want to hurt them, right?

BOBBY

Yeah! Oh yeah! Bad!

BOBBY picks up another magazine and moves toward the beds.

CHAD

Me -- I want to stay away.

MUSCLE MAN

Make them feel what you feel.

They get into bed.

CHAD

I like my teeth to stay in my mouth.

BOBBY

Yeah! Exactly! I want a body like this so that Rad pees in his pants when he sees me. I want to do a one-hand dumb-bell press with him and his thugs.

MUSCLE MAN

Thugs --

CHAD

The geek speaks.

MUSCLE MAN

Impressive word.

BOBBY

Slam them on the ground. Soccer kick his head. Drop-knee to his nose.

CHAD

Lips flapping.

BOBBY

I want my foot on his neck, laughing at him, spit coming out of my mouth, and saying, "You're never gonna do that again."

MUSCLE MAN

That would feel good to you?

BOBBY

Oh, yeah -- to me and about fifty million other people at school.

(to CHAD)

Right?

(making fake crowd sounds)

"Rad is dead. Long live Bobby!"

(jumps at MUSCLE MAN, who catches him)

Up on their shoulders; I'd be a hero.

MUSCLE MAN

(hoists BOBBY on his shoulder)

Long live Bobby!

BOBBY

Make him bleed.

MUSCLE MAN

And you'd be happy.

BOBBY

Just once, man. Just once.

MUSCLE MAN

And you'd be happy.

BOBBY

Put me down.

MUSCLE MAN puts him down. BOBBY looks in the mirror one more time.

BOBBY

This body sucks.

MUSCLE MAN

No, it doesn't.

BOBBY

I want to be like you.

MUSCLE MAN

I'm just a dream. I'm just a wish of yours.

CHAD

He's not real.

BOBBY

But you know what I mean when I tell you these things.

MUSCLE MAN

But I can't do anything about them --

CHAD

See?

BOBBY

You can't just, like, abracadabra me into looking like you?

MUSCLE MAN

Longer and more messy than that.

BOBBY

Will you help me?

CHAD

Not-real -- can't help.

MUSCLE MAN

I will try.

MOM enters. MUSCLE MAN retreats into the half-shadows.

MOM

(to BOBBY)

C'mon, young man, into bed.

BOBBY is momentarily confused, having to switch realities. MOM picks up the magazines.

MOM

And let's try to keep the room at least semi-straight for a moment.

BOBBY

I'll take 'em.

DAD appears.

MOM

I don't see what you see in those magazines.

DAD

It's a "guy" thing, mother dearest --

(to the boys)

-- isn't it?

(to MOM)

They have your magazines -- we have ours.

By this time, BOBBY has placed the magazines under the chair, which is his "bed," and is seated, putting the sheet over his legs. MOM sits in the chair next to the "bed."

MOM

Well, I don't think it's beautiful at all.

DAD

(making mock poses)

It's not about beauty, mon cher -- though I would argue with you about the beauty thing.

MOM

Why would they go and -- inflate themselves like that?

DAD

Power. Right, bucko?

BOBBY

The hour of power.

CHAD

The music of muscle.

DAD

Right!

MOM

They get so tight they can hardly walk -- or scratch their armpits.

BOBBY

That's not true, Mom.

(to CHAD)

They're so lame.

MOM

Then explain it to me

BOBBY

They're athletes just like everyone else, Mom. They train, they gotta eat right, they compete. Some of them make a lot of money --

DAD

The babe's got a point.

BOBBY

-- and nobody messes with them. Nobody. That's the coolest thing.

MOM

I could outrun them --

BOBBY

It's how they look. They just have to walk into a room --

DAD

Occupy space.

BOBBY

-- and everyone sees them --

(makes a muscle pose)

-- sees them -- and no one's even going to bother them to begin with because they see how big they are, and I think that's cool because then you don't have to do anything and people leave you alone.

DAD

A Ph.D. in the making.

MOM

It just seems -- weird, that's all.

BOBBY

It's not weird, Mom.

MOM

Chad, doesn't it seem weird to you?

DAD

(to CHAD and MOM)

No weirder, heh, than 25 ways to groovier toenails or "16 ways you can thin your thighs and earn money at the same time."

CHAD

(laughs)

I see those magazines at the store.

MOM

I don't read those --

DAD

They zero in on your weak spots, like Dracula breaking into the blood bank.

CHAD

Ughhhh!

MOM

You're saying Mr. Muscle Magic magazine is about weak spots?

In the shadow, MUSCLE MAN goes through his routine as an underscore to the story of Charles Atlas.

DAD

Always. Remember Charles Atlas? Do you know who Charles Atlas was?

BOBBY

Real name Angelo Siciliano.

CHAD

Born 1894, came to the United States in 1903.

DAD

(to MOM)

See, they learn from those magazines. Then you know about his system, "Dynamic-Tension."

CHAD

Invented while watching lions stretch at the zoo.

BOBBY

Declared the "Most Perfectly Developed Man" in 1922.

DAD

Supposedly the story was real: Some bully kicked sand in his face at the beach, and he vowed to never to let that happen again. So he bulked himself up and promised the same for other men with his patented "Dynamic-Tension" system.

(to MOM)

Let me use your chair.

MOM

What are you doing?

DAD moves the chairs away downstage and prepares to do a "dipping exercise": a push-up done with the hands on the chairs and legs straight back, so that the body is angled; then down and up.

DAD

This was called the "dipping" exercise.

MOM

Where did you learn this?

BOBBY

Dad!

DAD

(ignoring both of them)

You go like this -- and then like this --

DAD tries it twice more, and then collapses.

DAD

To be done faithfully every morning and night.

BOBBY

I got his genes --

DAD

I'll start tomorrow, hey? The Charles Atlas system for men who felt weak and tiny and insignificant. Like most men feel most of the time, I might add.

MOM

Oh, please!

DAD

(sitting down)

It's true.

MOM

Men don't feel weak and tiny and insignificant.

DAD

Wrong.

MOM

(to BOBBY)

Don't believe him.

DAD

(to BOBBY)

For guys like us, Mr. Atlas knew, because he became the patron saint of geeks. What was his motto?

BOBBY

"No one picks on a strong man."

DAD

People would send away for his books, and keep sending away for them. Your grandfather did that, when he was about your age.

BOBBY

Grandpa?

CHAD

Did it work?

DAD

I don't know, to tell you the truth.

DAD walks over to MOM. He starts massaging her shoulders.

DAD

He looked pretty skinny all his life. I only learned that he did it because I found the instruction books in the attic.

MOM

Remember the gangs -- ooh, that feels good --

BOBBY

Grandpa was in a gang?

MOM

No -- bullied by gangs -- a little softer --

DAD

Don't know my own strength.

MOM

They'd steal his money and pull his pants down.

BOBBY

Really?

DAD

When he was about your age. Pretty regular, it was -- kind of a dance. It seemed that no matter which route he took, the bullies would be waiting. Beat him up if he didn't have money --

MOM

Right there -- ah --

DAD

Beat him up if he had money -- they just wanted to beat people up. But there was Charles Atlas in the magazines.

(to MOM)

That okay?

MOM

Thanks.

DAD

Promising salvation.

BOBBY

I can understand that.

DAD

Yeah?

BOBBY

Yeah. I can completely, completely, completely understand that.

CHAD

Yeah.

MOM and DAD look at each other, hearing something in their words.

MOM

Is everything okay?

BOBBY

Yeah.

MOM

Chad?

CHAD

Yes.

DAD

Everything all right at school?

BOBBY

Yeah, no sweat.

DAD

Sure?

BOBBY

Yeah.

DAD

Chad?

CHAD

Everything's fine.

MOM

You know, you can tell us anything --

BOBBY

Everything's fine, Mom.

(shows his teeth)

See, clean.

(shows hands)

See, clean, too.

BOBBY elbows CHAD, who holds out his hands as well.

MOM

You guys got hot dates?

BOBBY

Mom --

MOM

I don't know -- they are getting kind of handsome.

DAD

Kind of handsome?

(to the boys)

Sheesh, it's hard to get a compliment out of her.

MOM

Don't want to spoil the goods.

DAD

Took me years to get one. I think they've got all the right ingredients.

Kisses BOBBY good night. ruffles CHAD's hair.

DAD

I do.

MOM

I do, too.

(kisses BOBBY and CHAD)

Good night.

DAD

Buenas noches, señores. And sweet dreams of Charles Atlas.

As they leave, MOM turns back.

MOM

Are you sure everything's okay?

BOBBY

It's fine, Mom.

MOM

All right -- just checking. You are both handsome, you know.

BOBBY

And Dad is Charles Atlas.

CHAD laughs.

MOM
(laughing)

You wait -- I'll bet you he starts his "dips" tomorrow! Sweet dreams.

MOM leaves. MUSCLE MAN comes and sits down by the bed.

MUSCLE MAN
They mean well. They do pretty well, too.

BOBBY
They're clueless.

CHAD
I like your folks.

MUSCLE MAN
They're not clueless -- they just have different clues.

BOBBY
Yeah? I wish they had a clue for me.

MUSCLE MAN
They can only read the clues you give them.

CHAD
Give 'em a break.

BOBBY
(tightens his bicep)
What'd'ya think?

But BOBBY lets it go and doesn't even wait for an answer.

BOBBY
Monday -- Rad -- My grandfather -- I don't think I want to go to school.

MUSCLE MAN
Unless you have the plague, Mom will call you at 7 AM.

BOBBY
The time of doom.

MUSCLE MAN

I wish I could help you more.

BOBBY and CHAD close their eyes. Lights fade out. MUSCLE MAN exits.
Transition music.

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Scene 2

A dream sequence, with appropriate music and lighting. RAD and his boys stand upstage left. POWERS stands behind CHAD and BOBBY, in dim light. The PEARLS stand downstage center and about two arms lengths apart. During BOBBY's and CHAD's lines, they primp themselves in a choreographed way.

The music is a heavy rhythm, pulsing. As it starts, BOBBY wakes up, a confused look on this face. He stands on his chair. Music goes to underscoring.

BOBBY

Chad, what the -- the -- hell is going on here?

CHAD

(gets on chair)

Don't ask me -- I was in a nice dream, and then I'm dragged over here!

BOBBY

I don't like this.

CHAD

Look, the Pearls!

BOBBY

Them, here? They treat us like toxic waste.

CHAD

And that's when they're treating us nice!

Music comes up to full. The following lines should be choreographed with simple but coördinated movements.

PEARL 1

We are the Pearls.

PEARL 2

The stand-up girls.

PEARL 3

Everyone likes us.

PEARL 4

In the whole wide world.

PEARL 1

We got the grace.

PEARL 2

To make our case.

PEARL 3

And if you don't like us.

PEARL 4

Then we're in your face.

Music stops. The PEARLS gather together downstage center in a posed group. Lights come up on RAD and his boys: cool and cruel but handsome.

The PEARLS slowly turn their heads upstage to look and speak as if tasting a good food.

PEARLS

Um, um, um.

Music begins again, underscoring.

CHAD

Oh, man, you can really ruin a dream! Rad and his apes.

BOBBY

I didn't invite them!

CHAD

But they're here. My butt hurts, and they haven't even kicked it yet!

PEARL 1

Look at Rad.

PEARL 2

He is fine, fine, fine.

PEARL 4

(to PEARL 3)

She needs to get her eyes checked.

PEARL 3

Nothing wrong with her eyes.

A light comes up on POWERS.

POWERS

(heavy voice)

You better respect my players.

CHAD

Oh great -- Coach Powers.

POWERS

Because you two can't cut it.

CHAD

The ex-Marine nut case.

POWERS

(laughing)

Look at those arms!

RAD

(to PEARL 1)

You like what you see?

CHAD

All the mean people together.

POWERS

I wouldn't even use you as waterboys.

CHAD

Shoulda made popcorn.

BOBBY

Will you shut up?

RAD

You got good eyes.

Similar heavy musical beat.

RAD

My name is Rad.

BOYS

We are his gang.

ALL

Wherever we want to.

RAD

We do a hang.

RAD

We don't like goths.

BOY 1

We don't like geeks.

BOY 2

We don't like anyone.

RAD

Who's soft and weak.

Music stops. Both the PEARLS and RAD and the gang point at CHAD and BOBBY.

ALL

Like you!

Then RAD's boys look at the PEARLS.

THE BOYS
(as if tasting a good food)

Um, um, um.

RAD's GANG and the PEARLS join each other downstage, in dim light, pairing up. RAD goes up to CHAD and BOBBY and, pulling them off the chairs, hauls them downstage center. The pairs move so that they circle behind RAD, CHAD, and BOBBY. POWERS stands on the chair that was BOBBY's "bed," arms folded, tough. Throughout the next lines, the PEARLS and RAD's GANG will strike poses that show their cruelty. They strike their first pose.

RAD
Here are the geeks. What do you say?

ALL
Geek salute!

They all give BOBBY and CHAD the geek salute -- director's discretion to create this salute with the actors.

RAD
What should we do with them?

PEARL 1
Hog feed.

RAD 1
Death wedgies.

PEARL 4
Tattoo on the forehead.

RAD 3
Clean the toilet bowl with their tongues.

Second pose.

PEARL 2
Bang their teeth on the water fountains.

RAD 2

Make 'em kiss -- naw, they probably already do that.

PEARL 3

Suck my snots.

RAD 4

Drown 'em.

Third pose.

RAD

What'd'ya got to say for yourselves?

POWERS

Come on!

RAD

Come on -- I don't hear the magic words.

Smacks CHAD on the back of the head. Fourth pose.

CHAD
(to BOBBY)

You have the suckiest dreams.

RAD

Shut up. Answer me. What are the magic words?

POWERS

Come on!

CHAD

I don't know. May the farts be with you?

Smacks CHAD again. Fifth pose.

CHAD

Don't be a smart-ass.

BOBBY

Don't hit him.

Smacks BOBBY.

RAD

I'm equal opportunity. Maybe you know the answer.

BOBBY

Stop it, and I'll say what you want us to say.

RAD

(to everyone)

He knows his lines!

Sixth and last pose.

RAD

Coach?

POWERS

Yeah?

RAD

I wouldn't even let 'em pick up the jock straps.

POWERS

Too low even for that.

RAD

(to BOBBY)

Well?

Music begins, low, percussive, but not as driven as before. BOBBY looks at everyone around him, turning to do so. They can respond to him as they see fit: a smirk, a dismissal, etc. When he returns to his original position, he speaks.

BOBBY

(to CHAD)

Sorry about this --

(to RAD)

I'm sorry --

RAD

Nope, nope, not right.

(points to the ground)

Knees.

BOBBY

Come on.

RAD

Knees.

The PEARLS and RAD's GANG begin chanting "Knees! Knees!", not loud but insistently.

POWERS

(with a shout)

Knees!

BOBBY gets on his knees. CHAD also gets on his knees.

RAD

Better. Now -- begin.

BOBBY

I apologize --

CHAD

I apologize --

BOBBY

For being a geek --

CHAD

For being a geek --

BOBBY

And less than perfect --

CHAD

And less than perfect --

BOBBY

That I'm not cool --

CHAD

That I'm not handsome --

BOBBY

That I'm not like you.

CHAD

That I'm not like you.

Music stops. Beat.

RAD

(to everyone)

I don't know about you, but that made me feel better.

Music begins: good strong dance music. The PEARLS, RAD, and RAD's GANG start dancing while BOBBY and CHAD keep kneeling and POWERS looks over everything with arms folded, as if he were a cruel king. RAD walks up and stands on the chair next to him and folds his arms. Lights fade out while the music continues during the scene transition.

* * * * *

Scene 3

During the scene transition, several things happen. RAD and RAD's GANG get dressed in gym clothes, and a weight set and a weight bench is brought on. There should be two bars, one on the bench and one on the floor, and assorted weights and dumb-bells. These weight don't necessarily need to be real weights -- they could be weights made out of cardboard, for a touch of surreality, or even mimed, with sound effects for the metallic sounds. Music could be playing.

The boys are there, with POWERS, working out. CHAD and BOBBY, also in gym clothes, walk up to what would be the door of the weight room. The GANG can ad lib lines, but they should not interfere with the lines being said between CHAD and BOBBY. As they're talking, MUSCLE MAN enters behind them.

CHAD

Let go of me! You have no brains left. I'm not going in there.

BOBBY

I am.

MUSCLE MAN

Bobby --

CHAD

Membership dues doesn't cover broken bones.

BOBBY

I'm in.

MUSCLE MAN

I understand why you're doing this.

CHAD

Go later. When they're not here. You could do that.

BOBBY

Now.

MUSCLE MAN

But you have to be careful.

CHAD

An hour won't make any diff --

BOBBY

(turning on him)

You pansy!

CHAD

What?

BOBBY

You geek! You wuss!

MUSCLE MAN

Be careful.

BOBBY
You like that?

CHAD
No.

BOBBY
Do you?

CHAD
No.

BOBBY
I'm sick of it. It makes me sick.

(facing the weight room)
I'm Charles Atlas.

CHAD
You're whacked.

BOBBY
I'm Charles Atlas.

CHAD
Bobby --

BOBBY
The patron saint of geeks.

BOBBY takes a step toward the weight room.

CHAD
Don't!

MUSCLE MAN catches BOBBY in mid-stride and escorts him into a separate light. Lights dim on everyone else, and everyone stops what he is doing and pays attention to the conversation between MUSCLE MAN and BOBBY.

MUSCLE MAN
It's one thing for you to do this. It's another thing to shame your best friend.

BOBBY

He's a coward.

MUSCLE MAN

Stop that. Anger makes you stupid.

BOBBY

Always be strong, right?

MUSCLE MAN

Always act strong. It's not just muscles.

BOBBY

Well, I don't feel strong right now. In fact, I'm about to mess my shorts walking into that room.

MUSCLE MAN

If you're scared, tell Chad. Don't pull a "Rad" on him -- don't morph into the thing you hate. Be strong? Be honest.

BOBBY

You won't leave?

MUSCLE MAN

You know I can't do anything -- I'm just a thought of yours, a hope.

BOBBY

But hopes can help?

MUSCLE MAN

Yes.

BOBBY

So don't leave.

MUSCLE MAN

As long as you need me.

They walk back to CHAD. The action resumes.

CHAD

Where'd you go? Just staring off into space.

BOBBY

I told you -- Charles Atlas. Hey, old buddy, old pal --

CHAD
(warily)

What?

BOBBY

Stupid award for sticking you with the names.

CHAD

Good. Now -- home? Home?

BOBBY

I'm scared.

CHAD

Then home.

BOBBY

Don't really want to -- but I have to.

CHAD

Home is this way.

BOBBY

I called you names because I was scared. You don't have to come. Making my own mess.

CHAD

Brown outs in the underwear?

BOBBY

Level 5 brown outs.

CHAD

That bad, huh?

BOBBY

Yeah.

CHAD

And you're gonna?

BOBBY

"Dynamic-Tension."

CHAD claps his hands together once, then gestures with his right hand to go into the weight room. BOBBY enters.

CHAD

Kitty litter for brains.

Everyone in the room turns to them. MUSCLE MAN retreats upstage.

RAD

Sound the geek alert.

BOBBY

(points to the sign)

Weight room's open.

RAD

For them who know what they're doing. Coach --

POWERS

It's reserved, boys.

BOBBY

I'm gonna work out.

CHAD

Me, too.

POWERS

We have the room till five.

BOBBY

It's five-thirty. We're members. An adult's in the room. So, we're gonna start.

RAD

Next thing you know, Coach, he's gonna want to join the team.

POWERS

Let him pay his dues.

RAD makes an extravagant gesture towards the weight bench. BOBBY, knowing exactly what to do from reading all this magazines, goes to it, indicating for CHAD to follow him. Everyone else in the room gathers around to watch, ringing them in.

BOBBY

We're going to do some bench presses.

CHAD

We?

BOBBY

Me.

The bar has more weight on it than BOBBY wants, so BOBBY and CHAD start taking off the weights. They know how to do this from reading, but they've never really handled the weights, so it is a combination of awkward and knowledgeable, compounded by everyone watching. They leave two 25-pound weights on. BOBBY gets on the bench.

BOBBY

Now, spot me.

CHAD

Spot you -- right.

BOBBY lifts the weights off the rack and does one press.

RAD

That's one.

BOBBY does one more.

RAD

That's two.

(to everyone)

Breaking the record, huh?

BOBBY does one more.

RAD

Three!

As BOBBY goes for his fourth, RAD gestures to two of his GANG, and when BOBBY has the bar on his chest, they move in and hold it there, so that he can't push it up. CHAD can't do a thing. They start to press it into this chest, making it difficult for him to breathe.

RAD

You're really stupid.

BOBBY

You're cr[azy] --

RAD

Go buy a weight set and do it in your bedroom -- the way you do a lot of things alone in your bedroom.

BOBBY

I can't br[eathe] --

CHAD
(to POWERS)

Come on!

POWERS

You're spotting him -- you do something.

CHAD actually makes a rush toward one of the GANG holding the bar, but he gets smacked and falls to the ground. He's up almost instantly.

BOBBY

Don't --

POWERS

Hard to get a good spotter.

CHAD grabs a 5- or 10-pound weight and holds it as if to throw it or hit someone with it.

CHAD

Let him go!

Everyone laughs.

POWERS

Rad -- enough.

The boys release their grip. The bar rests on BOBBY's chest -- he does not have the strength to move it. CHAD puts the weight down and goes to help BOBBY raise the bar to the rack. Then he kneels beside BOBBY.

CHAD

You okay?

BOBBY
(sitting up)

I feel great.

CHAD

Yeah?

BOBBY nods yes.

CHAD

Yeah, me too. Great.

BOBBY

Great workout.

CHAD

Sweating like a pig.

BOBBY

Yeah, good start.

BOBBY stands, painfully but also proud.

BOBBY

Same time tomorrow, right, Chad?

CHAD

Yeah. We'll be back.

BOBBY

Curls tomorrow.

CHAD

Dips, too.

BOBBY

Let's go.

The move out of the weight room. The GANG continues to lift weights, and their lines intersperse with BOBBY and CHAD. MUSCLE MAN follows them. BOBBY is in a little bit of pain.

BOBBY

I hate them.

MUSCLE MAN

Be careful.

CHAD

Don't want to go back.

MUSCLE MAN

What do you want to do, Bobby?

BOBBY

I hate them.

CHAD

I don't want to go back.

BOBBY

I hate them.

CHAD

Don't say it again.

MUSCLE MAN

"Don't say it again" is right.

BOBBY rubs his chest.

BOBBY

(to MUSCLE MAN)

What do you know?

(to CHAD)

Nothing to our parents.

CHAD

Right.

MUSCLE MAN

What do you want to do?

Looks back at the weight room, then decides.

BOBBY

I want to go home.

CHAD

I want to go home, too.

CHAD starts to move away. BOBBY winces in pain as takes the classic Charles Atlas stance.

BOBBY

Look at me -- Charles Atlas. Useless.

BOBBY joins CHAD.

BOBBY

Dinner?

CHAD

Deal.

BOBBY

Thanks.

CHAD
(sniffing)

Level 5 brownout, man!

BOBBY walks bow-legged, pulling on his shorts.

BOBBY

Level 6.

They exit. MUSCLE MAN watches them until the lights are out. Transition music.

* * * * *

Scene 4

During the transition, the weight set is moved off and BOBBY's bedroom is set up. BOBBY is in bed; his MOM and DAD sit on either side. Even before the lights comes up, DAD is talking, so that we catch him mid-sentence.

DAD

-- this stupid joke about Gandhi at work today.

(to BOBBY)

Wanna hear it?

BOBBY

Huh?

DAD

Gandhi. This joke.

MOM

You were awful quiet at dinner.

BOBBY

Yeah, Dad. Who is Gandhi?

DAD

(to MOM)

Who is Gandhi?

MOM

Different generation.

DAD

Gandhi. Gandhi lived in India, and he helped his country get independence from England. A long time ago England went to India and stole everything, and Gandhi was the guy that helped people get it back. He was a strange man. He never wore shoes, so he built up these enormous callouses on his feet. He was also skinny because he didn't eat a lot,

which also gave him bad breath. And he liked to pray a lot.
So --

MOM

Sooo -- The joke?

DAD

Sooo -- Gandhi was known as the super-calloused fragile
mystic expelling halitosis. Eh? Eh? Get it?

MOM

Barely registers on the Laughometer.

BOBBY

No.

DAD

Not pretty lame?

BOBBY

No, I don't get it.

DAD

Mary Poppins?

(begins to sing)

"Supercallifragilistic -- "

MOM

Save us all!

BOBBY

Yeah, Dad.

DAD

Well, it's clear that my attempt to raise your spirits has failed
completely. And Chad didn't eat much tonight.

MOM

He just picked.

DAD

In fact, Chatterbox Chad didn't say much, either. You both looked like a funeral. Everything okay?

BOBBY

Great.

MOM

I don't know --

(feeling his forehead)

Honey --

BOBBY

(pulling away)

Mom!

MOM

You don't feel warm.

DAD

Maybe we should let him get to sleep.

(to MOM)

Just a mood.

(to BOBBY)

I'll try to get some better jokes.

They kiss him goodnight and start to leave.

BOBBY

Charles Atlas is a fake, you know.

DAD

What?

BOBBY

Charles Atlas is a fake.

DAD sits back down by the bed.

DAD

A "fake."

BOBBY

A liar. He's weak.

DAD

Well, weak, yeah -- he's been dead for quite a while.

MOM
(sotto voce)

No jokes --

BOBBY

Dead. Yeah.

DAD

Well, okay -- you're right, he's dead.

BOBBY

Since 1972.

MOM

Bobby --

BOBBY

Goodnight, Mom.

DAD kisses BOBBY.

DAD

Definitely better jokes. Sleep tight.

MOM

Don't let the bedbugs bite.

DAD

And if they do --

MOM

Take a shoe --

They wait.

DAD

Hey, pardner, you're supposed to chime in!

BOBBY

(reluctantly)

And whack 'em till they're black and blue.

MOM

Sweet dreams.

They exit.

BOBBY

Till they're black and blue.

BOBBY, as before, pulls the covers up over his head. Lights change, music starts -- new dream sequence. RAD comes out dressed in a football outfit: shoulder pads, jersey, pants, sneakers. He carries his helmet. He is also dragging another set of equipment. The PEARLS comes on as well, dressed as cheerleaders with pom-poms, and are joined by POWERS. When not speaking, The PEARLS will do a simple, silent, choreographed cheerleading routine. POWERS mimes coaching from the sidelines of the action, though he never talks directly to RAD.

RAD

Bobby! The skunk! The jerk! Get your rear-end out here!

BOBBY comes out from under his cover.

PEARLS

2, 4, 6, 8 / Isn't Rad just lookin' great!

RAD

(pointing to the equipment)

Put it on!

BOBBY starts getting dressed.

PEARLS

Rah, rah, la di dah!

RAD

What was that stunt all about? Me looking stupid in front of my friends and the coach? You are going to pay. Pay. Pay.

PEARLS

No pain, no gain / That's our / refrain.

RAD

Come on, hurry up!

PEARLS

Rad'll drive Bobby / So insane.

RAD

You think you can go head to head with me, you think you're better than me. You need a lesson.

BOBBY is dressed in full gear except for helmet.

BOBBY

I don't want to do this.

RAD

No choice. Get down!

They put their helmets on. BOBBY awkwardly gets down in a three-point football stance. RAD breaks down into a linebacker's stance.

PEARLS

(in a loud whisper)

Hit 'em / Hit 'em low.

RAD

Come on.

PEARLS

(in a loud whisper)

Hit 'em where / Their cherries grow.

BOBBY

(stands up, takes off his helmet)

I don't want to --

RAD
(takes off helmet)

Your mother sucks!

BOBBY
Stop it.

RAD
She sucks a big, long --

PEARLS
Suck, sucks!

BOBBY
Stop it --

RAD & PEARLS
Mama sucks! Mama sucks!

BOBBY
Just stop it!

RAD
And your father -- heh. A jerk, just like you.

PEARLS
Bobby's dad / Has got no class.

RAD & PEARLS
He's just a little / Pansy-ass.

BOBBY
Not real, none of this is real --

RAD
This is your life, dog-butt. Get used to it.

RAD puts on his helmet.

PEARLS
Hut, hut, hut / Bobby's just a dog butt.

RAD

Do it!

PEARLS

Look at Bobby dance / He's peeing in his pants.

RAD

Do it, butt-wipe!

PEARLS

Bobby's gonna cry / Bobby's gonna die.

RAD

(screaming)

Do it!

The following needs to be carefully choreographed. The PEARLS continue their choreography. In a fit of rage, BOBBY puts on his helmet and charges RAD, who, with one forearm, deftly throws him to the ground. BOBBY does it again, and so does RAD. On the third charge, RAD hits BOBBY under the chin and knocks him down flat. RAD stands over him. While RAD speaks, BOBBY pulls himself up.

RAD

(grabbing his own crotch)

You don't have it here, man, where it counts. You're nothing, you're less than nothing. Slime.

PEARLS

(in a very low whisper)

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RAD

(slaps BOBBY's helmet)

Crap.

(slaps him again)

Slug.

Goes to slap him a third time, but BOBBY ducks, causing RAD to miss.

RAD

Oh, man, you die now!

PEARLS
(in a very low whisper)

Die, die, die.

RAD

Get down.

When BOBBY doesn't obey, RAD pounds him on the shoulder pads, forcing BOBBY down.

RAD
Assume the position, dead man.

BOBBY gets into a four-point stance, visibly shaken. RAD gets into his linebacker stance. The PEARLS stop and watch the action.

RAD
One more time, meatball.

BOBBY attacks, and instead of hitting him, RAD grabs his face mask and leads him, twisting his neck until RAD throws BOBBY to the ground like a roped cow. BOBBY lay there, unmoving; RAD puts his foot on BOBBY, pounds his chest, and shouts like a gorilla.

RAD
Ahhhhhhh!!!!

PEARLS
Two stars, four stars, six stars, a comet / When I look at
Bobby --

RAD & PEARLS
I just want to vomit!

(a finger or two in their mouths)
Agggghhhh!

If possible, the PEARLS should pick up RAD and carry him off. If not, they surround him, in both situations chanting "Rad, Rad / He's so bad / He's the worst mutha gangsta / We ever had" in a loud stage whisper as he walks off in triumph. As he exits, RAD turns to BOBBY; POWERS stands behind him.

RAD

Worthless. Worm food. You got nothing. Might as well die right now and save us the trouble of putting up with your miserable little life.

PEARLS

(in a loud whisper)

Yeah!

They exit. BOBBY gets up slowly, takes off his helmet.

BOBBY

Where are you? Where are you?!

MUSCLE MAN enters. BOBBY starts getting out of the equipment.

MUSCLE MAN

Right here.

BOBBY

You're worthless.

MUSCLE MAN

I told you that --

BOBBY

Hope is worthless.

MUSCLE MAN

Hope doesn't always work.

BOBBY

You made me a promise.

MUSCLE MAN

Hope doesn't always work when you want it to work.

BOBBY

No more hope.

MUSCLE MAN

Don't say that.

BOBBY

No more hope. No more you. All on my own. I am all alone.

(makes a flicking motion)

You, gone.

MUSCLE MAN

You have Chad.

BOBBY

Worse than nothing. I might as well drop 'em and bend over now.

MUSCLE MAN

You are not alone.

BOBBY

I will be when you leave.

BOBBY moves the equipment toward MUSCLE MAN. He makes the flicking motion again.

BOBBY

Gone.

BOBBY goes back to his "bed."

BOBBY

In here all on my own.

BOBBY pulls the covers up over his head. Lights out. Transition music. MUSCLE MAN takes off the football equipment.

* * * * *

Scene 5

CHAD's house. Music changes into something quietly ominous. In the darkness, a small table is brought on and on it is placed a wooden box about the size of a cigar box. In the box is a .25-caliber pistol: the Raven MP-25; however, the gun is never shown. A single light comes up on the

box. If possible, the lighting here should be spooky without being hokey -- something to establish danger without overdoing it.

BOBBY and CHAD appear in the dimness, now fully dressed and carrying school backpacks, and look at the box. CHAD looks at BOBBY, and BOBBY at CHAD. They then walk to the box but do not touch it. They drop their backpacks. Music out.

BOBBY
Open it.

CHAD
No.

BOBBY
Open it.

CHAD
I don't want to.

BOBBY
Open it.

CHAD
It's my mother's.

BOBBY
I don't care -- you said --

CHAD
It was stupid.

BOBBY
But you said it, and you can't take it back.

CHAD
I can.

BOBBY
You can't. You promised it, and now it's there, and you have to do what you said. What you promised. Or else --

CHAD

Or else what? Or what?

BOBBY

I will hate you. I will hate you forever.

CHAD

Hate me?

BOBBY

Yeah.

CHAD

You wouldn't do that.

BOBBY begins to circle CHAD.

BOBBY

I would.

CHAD

You can't hate me.

BOBBY

Then show me.

CHAD

I'm your best friend.

BOBBY

Best friends help each other out.

CHAD

You can't hate me. I'm your best friend.

BOBBY

Then show me. Do it.

CHAD

I can't.

BOBBY

Then you're not my best friend.

CHAD

I am your best friend! But I can't do this.

BOBBY

Then why did you tell me? Why did you tell me?

CHAD

I don't know!

BOBBY

Because you hate him, too.

CHAD

Don't hate anybody.

BOBBY

Liar.

BOBBY stops circling.

BOBBY

Hate, hate, hate --

CHAD

Stop it!

BOBBY

Don't you? Huh?

CHAD
(hesitating)

Yes.

BOBBY

Him. All of 'em. Right?

CHAD

Yes.

BOBBY

The guys.

CHAD
The guys.

BOBBY
They hate us, too.

CHAD
The guys hate us.

BOBBY
And they will never leave us alone.

CHAD
Because they're guys.

BOBBY
And we aren't. And the girls hate us, too.

CHAD
They hate us, too.

BOBBY
They like guys.

CHAD
And we're not guys.

BOBBY
We're jerks --

CHAD
Wusses --

BOBBY
Morons --

CHAD
Retards --

BOBBY
Geeks --

Losers -- CHAD

Nerds -- BOBBY

Wimps -- CHAD

But not guys. So -- BOBBY

CHAD digs into his pocket and pulls out a key, holds it up in the light.

CHAD
My mother doesn't know. She doesn't know I know where
this is.

So -- BOBBY

CHAD goes to the box and unlocks it, but he doesn't open it. He steps away from it. BOBBY goes up to the box and opens it, stares at the contents, then circles the box.

It's not big. CHAD

Doesn't have to be. BOBBY

She bought it for protection. CHAD

It's beautiful. BOBBY

But she got scared of it. CHAD

It can talk. BOBBY

CHAD

I remember when her and my father brought it home.

BOBBY

It's not big, but it can talk loud. It can talk louder than me, or you.

CHAD

It made me scared.

BOBBY

Did she ever use it?

CHAD

No. She wanted to get rid of it, but my father wouldn't let her. He wanted her to be protected, he said.

BOBBY stops circling.

BOBBY

Where are the bullets?

CHAD

In another box.

BOBBY

Do you have that key? Do you?

CHAD

Yeah.

BOBBY moves away from the box.

BOBBY

You could hide that in your pocket. Right here.

CHAD

Stop it.

BOBBY

Or here. And the next time Rad mouths off --

Don't, okay? CHAD

Why not? BOBBY

CHAD
(goes to close the box)
Let's get it out of here.

Don't! BOBBY

CHAD stops.

BOBBY
Why did you get the keys?

CHAD
What?

BOBBY
Why did you get the keys?

CHAD
I want to get it out of --

BOBBY
Why?

CHAD
Why?

BOBBY
Why don't you tell your mom and dad you know?

During the "interrogation," CHAD gets increasingly irritated as BOBBY gets closer to CHAD's true feelings.

CHAD
About the keys?

BOBBY
Yeah.

CHAD
I don't know.

BOBBY
You could've told them.

CHAD
Yeah.

BOBBY
And they'd hide the keys, and you wouldn't get scared again.

CHAD
Yeah.

BOBBY
Because you're pretty scared right now, right?

CHAD
Yeah.

BOBBY
But you didn't tell them.

CHAD
No.

BOBBY
You're keeping a secret.

CHAD
Yeah.

BOBBY
From them.

CHAD
Yeah.

BOBBY

You know where her gun is.

CHAD

Yeah.

BOBBY

And they don't know you know.

CHAD

No.

BOBBY

It's a big secret. You're keeping a big secret from your parents.

CHAD

Yeah.

BOBBY

Bigger than Charles Atlas.

CHAD

What?

BOBBY

Bigger than hope.

CHAD

I don't understand -- Leave me alone.

BOBBY

Why?

CHAD

Leave me alone.

BOBBY

(imitating the PEARLS, in a heavy whisper)
"Rad, Rad / He's so bad -- "

CHAD

Shut up!

BOBBY

(in the same whisper)

"He's the worst mutha gangsta / We ever had."

CHAD

You're going weird!

BOBBY

Why don't you tell them you where the keys are? Why?

CHAD

(hesitating, indicating the box)

That --

BOBBY

What?

CHAD

That --

BOBBY

Yeah? That --

CHAD

That doesn't make me feel --

BOBBY

Yeah?

CHAD

It doesn't make me feel as scared as some other things
make me feel -- scared.

BOBBY

Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. Exactly.

BOBBY walks to the open box. He indicates for CHAD to come closer. CHAD hesitates; BOBBY encourages him. CHAD comes forward, and BOBBY puts CHAD's hand on the gun inside the box. They stand there with their hands on the gun.

BOBBY

(in a whisper)

"Rad, Rad / He makes you mad -- "

(pause)

"Someone needs / To hurt him bad."

CHAD

Yeah.

BOBBY

All of them.

CHAD

All of them.

BOBBY

The guys.

CHAD

Clean things up.

BOBBY

I hate them.

CHAD

I hate them, too.

They look at each other. They take their hands off the gun.

CHAD

Well?

BOBBY

Yeah?

CHAD

Do you want?

BOBBY

Do you want?

CHAD
Yeah. And no.

BOBBY
We do it together -- or we don't.

CHAD
Right -- together, or not. How?

BOBBY
What?

CHAD
I mean, how? You know -- how?

BOBBY
You mean --

CHAD
Yeah -- you know. Like, who carries it?

BOBBY
Carries it?

CHAD
Yeah.

BOBBY
I don't know.

CHAD
You?

BOBBY
I don't know.

CHAD
Me?

BOBBY
You don't want to.

Right. CHAD

You can't. BOBBY

I don't think I can. So then it'd be you. Right? CHAD

I guess. BOBBY

You'd have to carry it. CHAD

We gotta decide that. BOBBY

Yeah -- CHAD

That's important. BOBBY

Yeah -- especially if it's done together, like we said. CHAD

Yeah. And when. BOBBY

Yeah -- and when, too, right. CHAD

When -- I didn't think of that. BOBBY

So we can be there together. Like we said. CHAD

Like we said. BOBBY

CHAD
This is harder --

BOBBY
Really harder.

CHAD
Are you thinking?

BOBBY
Yeah, I'm thinking.

CHAD
Me, too. That's good, right?

BOBBY
What?

CHAD
That we're thinking. About all this.

BOBBY
My mom and dad always told me to think first.

CHAD
Mine, too. So it's good --

BOBBY
Yeah.

CHAD
Yeah.

CHAD touches the gun, and then takes his hand away.

CHAD
I get pictures --

BOBBY
What kind?

BOBBY does the same.

CHAD

You, too?

BOBBY

What kind?

CHAD

I don't know -- bad. I don't only get 'em in my head.

(hand on his stomach)

Here. All -- jumpy.

BOBBY

Like lifting weights, huh?

CHAD

(laughing softly)

Yeah!

(taking a muscle pose)

Spot Man!

BOBBY

Yeah! And Rad like a ten-pounder dumbbell. Me, too. Bad pictures. All over.

CHAD

That means something, right?

BOBBY

I think so.

CHAD

I think so, too.

BOBBY closes the lid. CHAD locks it.

BOBBY

We know.

CHAD

Yeah.

BOBBY

We know what we coulda done.

CHAD

Yeah.

BOBBY

We coulda done it.

CHAD

It's right there.

BOBBY

And we know what we're not gonna do.

CHAD

We know what we're not gonna do. Yeah. "Rad, Rad, he's so bad -- "

BOBBY

Um, um -- "He don't know / The good luck he's had." Hey, not bad, huh?

CHAD

For off the top of your tongue.

BOBBY

You should put it away.

CHAD

Yeah. Should I tell them about the keys?

BOBBY

That's up to you.

CHAD

It would be good, wouldn't it?

BOBBY

I guess so --

CHAD

I guess so, too. No more secrets, huh?

BOBBY

Yeah -- no more secrets.

CHAD

I don't think my head can take any more secrets.

BOBBY

Or my stomach.

BOBBY and CHAD pick up their backpacks and come downstage, right or left. The lights dim on the box. MUSCLE MAN walks to the box and stands by it, watching the two of them.

BOBBY and CHAD stand for a moment, awkward in each other's presence, not sure what to do next. Slowly, tentatively, CHAD punches BOBBY in the arm, softly, more of a nudge. BOBBY, looking at CHAD, does the same, lightly, playfully.

BOBBY

Jerk --

CHAD

Wuss --

After the first two terms, they start to go through their muscle routine again but without the verve they had before. They say the words as they make the movements.

BOBBY

Moron --

CHAD

Retard --

BOBBY

Geek --

CHAD

Loser --

BOBBY

Nerd --

	CHAD
Wimp --	
They drop the routine.	
	CHAD
Do you hate me?	
	BOBBY
No.	
	CHAD
I don't hate you, either.	
	BOBBY
My mom and dad woulda been real disappointed.	
	CHAD
Mine, too. I like your parents.	
	BOBBY
I like your parents, too.	
	CHAD
What're we gonna do?	
	BOBBY
School tomorrow.	
	CHAD
No different.	
	BOBBY
Rad --	
	CHAD
Bad --	
	BOBBY
Scared --	
	CHAD
Yeah.	

BOBBY

It makes me sick, sometimes.

CHAD

Sometimes I don't know whether to breathe or puke.

BOBBY

Puke or breathe.

CHAD

Well, if we could puke on them, they maybe they'd let us alone.

BOBBY

Yeah! Yeah! A whole "puke brigade," get all the geeks in a line --

CHAD

And when Rad and the rats walk by --

BOBBY

And the Pearls in their big hair --

CHAD

We all just --

BOBBY

On the count of three --

They make exaggerated puke sounds and motions.

BOBBY

Man, top to toe.

CHAD

Get out the hoses!

BOBBY

Dripping off their ears!

CHAD

All up their noses!

A few more puke sounds and motions.

BOBBY
Yeah!

CHAD
Yeah!

Finish laughing.

BOBBY
You know --

CHAD
You think?

BOBBY
My stomach feels a whole lot better thinking about it.

CHAD
Can't wait to see the movie!

BOBBY holds out his fist; CHAD takes his fist and touches the top of BOBBY's with it; they reverse, and BOBBY does the same to CHAD. Then they lightly bang their knuckles together, put their arms around each other and walk off making puke sounds. MUSCLE MAN watches them, then picks up the table and box. Lights out.

* * * * *

Scene 6

BOBBY's bedroom; CHAD is sleeping over. CHAD is on the floor, on his back, while BOBBY stands over him, one foot on CHAD's stomach. CHAD is faking as if he's pinned to the floor by BOBBY's foot.

BOBBY
(in a mock announcer's voice)
And Chick Chimichanga, that bad-ass bandito from Baja, has got Buck Buff pinned to the floor with his patented "foot of death," patent number 56933 --

CHAD

(same announcer's voice, interrupting)

But Buff ain't beaten yet. He executes his patented California Roll

CHAD rolls so that he's between BOBBY's feet.

CHAD

-- and executes his "Elevator Shaft" move.

CHAD moves his body into a triangle so that his butt is against BOBBY's crotch.

BOBBY

(same voice)

And Chick is chucked to the floor, writhing --

CHAD

Writhing --

BOBBY

Writhing in pain!

CHAD

And defeat!

CHAD walks around the room in a victory walk, pumping his arms, etc. BOBBY's DAD walks in with a muscle magazine in his hand.

BOBBY

Dad -- knock, all right?

DAD

A thousand pardons, my thrice potent master.

CHAD

Buck Buff scores! Hi, Mr. D.

DAD

Buck Buff, huh?

CHAD
(pointing to his butt)
Got the tightest glutes this side of Hell and Armageddon.

DAD
You guys make this stuff up?

BOBBY
Dad!

DAD
Sorry -- don't want to interrupt the world cham-peen-ship
here. Got you the newest Pump It Up.

BOBBY and CHAD start circling one another.

BOBBY
Not doing that any more.

DAD
Really? Since when?

CHAD
(to BOBBY)
2, 4, 6, 8

BOBBY
(to CHAD)
It's your bones I'm gonna break, ol' Buck-A-Luck.

CHAD
(to BOBBY)
No, you ain't, you chimichanga chimpanzee.

They grapple in mock battle.

DAD
So you don't want the magazine?

BOBBY
(in a struggle)
No thanks, Dad.

DAD

Chad?

CHAD
(in a struggle)

No thanks, Mr. D.

DAD

Hmmm.

MOM enters.

DAD

He doesn't want the magazine.

MOM

Thank God for small favors. Come on you two steaming hunks of junk, time for bed.

BOBBY

I'm going to take you down.

CHAD

I'm gonna take the whole universe with me.

MOM

Bobby! Chad!

They mock wrestle. MOM slams her hand three times on the floor.

MOM

One -- two -- three! And the winner is -- I can't tell! They both win! Now, into bed, both of you.

MOM hauls up BOBBY, DAD hauls up CHAD.

BOBBY

Cosmic Wrestling Federation rules!

DAD

And the winner is --

(raises CHAD's hand)

Buff Butt.

CHAD

Buck Buff.

DAD

Easy to get the names mixed up.

MOM

Into bed. It's nice to see you two guys smiling again. Settle down!

They pretend to settle down, lying stiff, their eyes closed, snoring, pretending that they're asleep.

DAD

The beasts are asleep. Do you think we can leave them alone?

MOM

I don't know. They're pretty dangerous.

DAD

Naw. I think they're pretty tame on the inside.

MOM

(tickles BOBBY)

But they're oh so ferocious on the outside!

BOBBY

(trying to maintain his posture)

We're sleeping!

CHAD

We're trying to sleep!

DAD

Better let sleeping dogs lie. Good night, sweet princes.

MOM

And may flights of angels sing thee to thy rests.

BOBBY
(eyes still closed)

Sssshh!

MOM and DAD exit. There are several beats.

BOBBY
They gone?

CHAD
Yeah.

BOBBY
Good. Ready?

CHAD
Yeah.

Lights change. BOBBY gets the magazine from DAD's chair and stands up on his bed. He rips the magazine in half. As he does so, MUSCLE MAN comes out.

MUSCLE MAN
You won't need me any more.

BOBBY
Not like you are.

CHAD
But you come in a lot of different flavors --

BOBBY
So we'll see you around.

BOBBY hands MUSCLE MAN the magazine. The rest of the crew come out, in pairs, the GANG with the PEARLS and RAD with COACH POWERS. They form a semi-circle around the beds, each pair in its own light.

BOBBY
(in his announcer's voice)
And now --

Ladies and germs -- CHAD
The final round -- BOBBY
Of the Cosmic Wrestling Federation's -- CHAD
Tag Team Tornado! BOTH
And the winners are -- BOBBY

In the next sequence, BOBBY and CHAD will snap their fingers; at each snap, a light goes out on one of the pairs and on MUSCLE MAN. RAD and COACH POWERS are the last pair.

2 -- CHAD
4 -- BOBBY
6 -- CHAD
8 -- BOBBY
Who do we -- CHAD
Appreciate? BOBBY
Sorry. CHAD
(to MUSCLE MAN)
Me, too. BOBBY

They snap their fingers, and MUSCLE MAN is in darkness.

BOTH

2, 4, 6, 8 / Who do we appreciate?

They both strike the same muscle pose: arms to the side, 90 degrees, tightening their biceps. As they tighten their muscles, they exhale with a big grunt at the same time. All the time, they have big smiles on their faces.

BOTH

Hunh!!

Blackout.

The Way

DESCRIPTION

Aviva Matthews is a very popular girl in school. She has everything going for her and is at the top. But one day she tries to break up a fight at school between a girl and her friend Ruby, and the incident affects her deeply. Studying Lao-Tzu's "The Way" in her World Religions class, she decides to use the power of meditation to end the violence that happens to children and that children do to each other, and she goes to her bedroom for a retreat. This leads to a confrontation with her friend Dink, who believes the whole adult world (which to her is the cause of all the violence) should be wiped clean so that things can be done over, and done right. They realize that both approaches are needed: confronting injustice must be balanced with the search for peace and harmony. Spiritual power comes only when it engages with history, and violence can only be met with love and risk and courage.

CHARACTERS

- AVIVA MATTHEWS, *teenager*
- T.J. BOYLE, teacher
- DINK, the punk anarchist
- RUBY, PEARL, YASMIN, classmates of AVIVA and DINK; they act as a sort of narrator
- THE FIGHTER, a girl
- Various students in a variety of roles, especially as the CROWD (which also functions as a Greek chorus), often referred to as PERSON in the script.

NOTE: When PERSON is used, it does not mean the same person, only that the lines should be parceled out to different individual actors.

The Voices of the Children -- they will appear in AVIVA's "vision" -- except for FATIMA, the other children can be male or female -- just use the appropriate name.

- Ringyat/Jaleel -- child prostitute (female/male)
- Maria/Pedro -- daughter/son of someone "disappeared" (female/male)
- Marta/Jaime -- victim of a bombing (female/male)
- Becka Raven/William Raven -- Native American (female/male)
- Fatima -- young girl to under female genital mutilation
- Alem/Haile -- young soldier (female/male)
- Cassie/Charles -- killed in a school shoot-out (female/male)

SETTING/TIME: The school; Aviva's room -- the present

MISCELLANEOUS: 1) Musical choices are up to the director; 2) parts that require group work should be as choreographed as possible so that the movement looks tight; 3) ethnicities can and should be as mixed as warranted.

* * * * *

PROLOGUE

This is a visual scene, a dumbshow. AVIVA is seated on her meditation cushion. She is strongly backlit, so that the audience can only see her silhouette. Music underscores the scene, building in volume, until it crescendos. There is a bright burst of light to coincide with the crescendo of the music, and the stage goes to darkness.

If there is a way to make AVIVA appear to levitate without revealing any of the machinery to do it, all the better.

Music comes up again, and RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL appear. As RUBY begins to speak, the backlit silhouette of AVIVA comes up slowly.

RUBY

Something strange has happened. / No one knows if it's
bad or good. / Something strange is happening / Right in
this neighborhood.

YASMIN

Aviva Matthews is sitting / Alone in a single room / She
doesn't speak to anyone / Just sits with her pain and gloom

The backlight goes out on the silhouette; AVIVA exits.

PEARL

Every adult has asked her / But no one knows her "why" or
"how" / Aviva is on a journey / How it ends -- how it began
-- starts right now

* * * * *

Scene 1

Lights come up bright, and AVIVA appears, surrounded by RUBY, PEARL, YASMIN and others as they walk through the hall in school, bookbags, etc. Other people on stage for crowd. She waves to people, big smile, etc. as if she were the queen moving through the commoners. DINK is obvious in the crowd, and she always hovers on the edge of AVIVA's light.

RUBY

It begins right here: Aviva is a very popular girl. Everyone loves Aviva.

PERSON 1

Isn't she just da bomb, man?

PERSON 2

Killer.

PERSON 3

Pretty.

PERSON 4

Fly.

RUBY

Teachers love her, too.

A crowd of "teachers" -- that is, actors dressed as teachers -- come out, gradebooks in their hands, and they hand her signs with "A" and "A+" written on them.

PEARL

The A's piled up and up and up --

The teachers leave, replaced by "coaches" -- that is, actors dressed as coaches -- with trophies.

YASMIN

Top-notch in sports.

They give her the trophies, which she hands off to the CROWD. As PEARL speaks, AVIVA mimes what he says.

PEARL

Extra-curricular -- whew! Drama club.

(AVIVA mimes acting)

Chorus.

(AVIVA mimes singing)

Yearbook and newspaper.

(AVIVA mimes phone calls, handing out papers)

Church.

(AVIVA mimes praying)

Yes, the queen.

Again waves like the queen to the multitudes; someone comes up behind her and puts on a tiara.

PEARL

And social conscience.

As PEARL talks, an actor comes out with hands manacled with papier-mache handcuffs; AVIVA touches them with the tiara and the actor breaks them apart, freed. Velcro could also be used.

PEARL

Student president of the regional chapter of Amnesty International. Her parents were very proud.

Two actors comes out holding up photos of two adults over their faces -- the photos should show the adults looking somewhat intimidated under the bright lights. An alternate to the photos would be sock puppets or half-masks for the parents.

YASMIN

All in all, Aviva's life was phat, sweet, and tight.

Everyone gathers into a family tableau, and a light goes off like a family portrait being taken. A momentary shuffle, then a second picture. Then the actors exit, leaving only AVIVA and her "parents" -- the two actors with the photos, sock puppets, or half-masks -- as well as RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL on stage. The "parents" and AVIVA sit on folding chairs.

RUBY

Of course, into every life a little rain must fall.

FATHER

We don't think it's safe.

AVIVA

It's just a trip to New York!

MOTHER

We don't think you're old enough.

AVIVA

I'm fourteen.

FATHER

It's a dangerous place!

AVIVA

Oh, right!

RUBY

The concerned parents.

They stand; RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL move the actors' chairs to a different part of the stage. A little musical bridge.

ALEXA

You can't blame us for being aware!

MOTHER

That was in Colorado!

ALEXA

It can happen anyw --

MOTHER

Those kids were wacko!

FATHER

We want to know who your friends are -- you can't trust anyone these days.

MOTHER

All the guns --

AVIVA

Just nutsos, that what they were -- out in Columbine --

MOTHER

Nutsos with guns --

AVIVA

-- or all those others.

(to ALEXA)

I don't hang around with nutsos.

FATHER

How do you know?

PEARL

As much as she hated it, Aviva had to admit she was stumped.

RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL pick up the actors' chairs and move to another part of the stage. A little musical bridge.

MOTHER

Did you read about --

AVIVA

Yes, I did.

MOTHER

Just awful.

AVIVA

It's not like that would happen around here.

FATHER

Those boys killing their parents -- terrible --

AVIVA

Some parents are.

FATHER

Oh, really?

Beat as AVIVA sees their faces.

AVIVA
Present company excluded, you know.

The "parents" exit, taking the chairs.

AVIVA
Mom!

(no answer)
Dad!

(no answer)
Damn!

YASMIN
And as if it weren't bad enough having interfering parents who really loved her and a very nasty-tasting foot stuck in her mouth, there was Dink -- her oldest and most annoying friend -- who just wouldn't leave Aviva alone.

DINK enters, dressed punk. She hands AVIVA a bookbag, which AVIVA slings over her shoulder. RUBY, PEARL, and YASMIN now become fellow students.

DINK
So what are you wearing today?

AVIVA
Not the floor of my closet.

DINK
Ha, ha, ha. At least I am not the over-dressed bourgeois slave of starved magazine models.

AVIVA
Uh-oh, punk girl's learned a new word.

RUBY
You have an attitude.

YASMIN

An acid attitude.

DINK

All those pictures of dry bones and sick dreams.

PEARL

You're just jealous --

DINK

I don't want to be Barbie-cued --

AVIVA

So sassy a lassy --

DINK

Anorectic zombies with maxed-out credit cards --

AVIVA

I like you, Dink, but sometimes it's really hard to like you.

RUBY, YASMIN, AND PEARL

Agreed.

DINK

Been that way since kindergarten, so let's all deal with it.

PEARL

She loves being the rebel

DINK

(reviews their clothing)

Let's see: cute skirt, got the right bagginess, thirty-dollar sweater, hair just so --

YASMIN

I don't use a blender to cut mine.

DINK

I use an electric carving knife -- another one of my parents' useless capitalist gizmos -- so don't go all high and mighty on me. All this, and there's kids starving right here in our little town. Do you know how many --

AVIVA

Yes, I do know, you wasp!

DINK

I'm wounded!

PEARL

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

DINK

Sting!

PEARL

Get off me!

RUBY

Back off! We do know --

DINK

Yeah?

AVIVA

From doing that community service requirement --

DINK

Big whoop!

AVIVA

-- we all had to do. So we know!

DINK

You know not much worth knowing. Aviva Beeba, and you, the back-up band, you're just so -- locked in, you know. I am your conscience, I am going to unlock your soul --

YASMIN

She's summoning the sermon.

AVIVA

Unlock it from what?

DINK

From this society --

AVIVA

When's the last time you cleaned your ears?

DINK

My ears are fine --

AVIVA

We don't need salvation, thank you.

DINK

You don't need? Hah!

YASMIN

She's warming up!

DINK

This society buys your soul -- yes, even yours! -- and cuts it into bite-sized pieces and sells 'em back to you and you end up eating your own self to death.

RUBY

Gross --

DINK

To death. Like that Faustus guy we read about --

AVIVA

Well, thanks, Dink, now that you've ruined our appetite and our entire day --

DINK

You need it. Not as much as I do, of course. But you need it. All God's chillun need it.

PEARL

Go do your revolution somewhere else.

DINK

I'm going to have it right here with you.

AVIVA

You annoy me.

DINK

I like you, too.

AVIVA

I like you, too. Do we like her?

RUBY, YASMIN, AND PEARL

We like her.

AVIVA

But you annoy me.

RUBY, YASMIN, AND PEARL

You annoy us, too.

DINK

(skipping offstage)

Little girls, sweet and hot / Look at everything you've got --

(DINK turns and faces AVIVA)

What you really do not know / Is just how fast it all can go.

(snaps her fingers)

Ta-ta, luv.

DINK continues skipping offstage but is stopped by the class bell ringing. BOYLE comes on wearing a bookbag and with two folding chairs, which he sets up. The rest of the CROWD enters; each brings in a folding chair and sits as well as three chairs for RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL. Just as the bell stops ringing, AVIVA slips into one as if she's just making to class before the bell rings. Right next to her is DINK. AVIVA takes a notebook out of her bookbag, and gets ready to take notes.

BOYLE

(to AVIVA and DINK)

Glad you could all make it.

DINK

That's what they created the last minute for.

BOYLE

Well, now that we have the yin

(indicating AVIVA)

-- and the yang --

(indicating DINK)

-- with us, let's have the Honors class pick up from yesterday.
Our forward march through the religions of the world. If this
is Tuesday --

DINK

It must be Buddha.

(DINK taps AVIVA)

Buddha's cool.

BOYLE

Nope, today is Lao-Tzu -- man of shadows.

AVIVA begins writing.

BOYLE

No, you don't have to write that down -- "man of shadows" is
not going to be an answer on the test. Just a little dramatic
opening.

AVIVA

I just wanted to --

BOYLE

(to the class)

I say "man of shadows" because no one really knows if he
existed or if he wrote the book everyone says he wrote,
the Tao -- T-A-O -- (that's "dow," not "tay-oh") -- the Tao Te
Ching. Roughly translated, "The Way."

AVIVA surreptitiously picks up her pen and begins to write. BOYLE catches
her.

BOYLE

No pens.

DINK

So he didn't exist?

BOYLE

There's no record.

DINK

So a ghost wrote the book?

BOYLE

Somebody wrote the book, and we've named him Lao-Tzu.
None of that really matters. What matters is the book.

DINK

So, do we get this book?

BOYLE

You already have it.

DINK

No, I don't.

BOYLE

That's the kind of thing Lao-Tzu would say to people.

DINK

Then he was whacked.

BOYLE

See what he was getting at. "The Way," the book, is about how to live your life when you're in the Tao -- which, Lao-Tzu would say, is silly because we know everything we need to know to live a good life -- we're born with it -- but we screw it up with a life full of illusions and betrayals.

DINK
(to AVIVA)

Ha! Told you.

AVIVA

The Tao?

BOYLE

The Tao.

AVIVA

Is what?

Lights change. Flute music comes up. The actors turn their chairs to face the audience full and sit still. The lighting should be such that individual faces are illuminated, so that the audience has the feel of faces floating in a primeval darkness. If possible, they should also be at different levels. BOYLE sits with them.

BOYLE

The Tao. Lao-Tzu. Yin. Yang. What does all this strange language mean? Close your eyes and just breathe. The Tao. The Tao is this energy that is everything -- no beginning or end, just is.

DINK

It creates life as naturally as the ocean creates waves, and if you let the Tao flow through you, your life will follow the way of the Tao --

BOYLE

No illusions, no hungers for power, no exhaustion from always trying to find that thing, that thing --

AVIVA

That CD, that car, that gun, that love, that job, that ego -- that will make all your life have meaning.

RUBY

It is about letting go and going back --

PEARL

To the universe that gave you life in the first place --

YASMIN

It is about peace and an end to suffering.

ALL

An end to suffering.

AVIVA

We can hear our breath like we've never heard it before -- as loud as a train in our ears.

DINK

We can hear our blood pound through our veins.

BOYLE

But most important of all. We don't need to feel afraid.

ALL

We do not need to feel afraid.

BOYLE

For a moment. A half-moment --

ALL

We do not need to feel afraid.

BOYLE

A moment warm, bright -- an atomic click of atoms, then gone.

AVIVA

But we felt it. And it felt good.

ALL

It felt very, very good.

AVIVA

Not to be afraid.

DINK

Not to be afraid.

Lights bump to bright white, school bell rings, and the world is suddenly choreographed chaos as the crowd surges to the next class, the next entertainment, and so on. This is also how the chairs get moved off. Music, laughter, etc. Ad lib lines in the crowd; BOYLE shouts, "Read the first ten sections!"

All of a sudden the chaos stops, and everyone faces the audience directly, picking out an audience member to look at. Flute music up.

BOYLE

A moment warm --

Warm. PERSON

Bright -- BOYLE

Warm -- PERSON

Bright -- PERSON

An atomic click of atoms. BOYLE

Then gone. PERSON

But they felt it -- AVIVA

They felt it -- DINK

And it felt -- RUBY

Very -- YASMIN

Very -- PEARL

Very -- HALF OF CROWD

Good. ALL

* * * * *

Scene 2

A recreation of the opening tableau of Scene 1: AVIVA, the popular girl, surrounded by the hordes. BOYLE exits.

RUBY

But these things don't last for long.

PEARL

And the life of the teenager comes roaring back.

YASMIN

With a vengeance.

From offstage the audience hears a voice in a rage. Everyone on stage tries to hold their bright smiles, but it's clear that it's a strain for them -- suddenly, everything is not all sweetness and light. The FIGHTER enters.

FIGHTER

(from offstage)

I am not going to take this! Kicking me out of school -- nah-uh!

(comes on stage)

Where is she?

(sees RUBY)

You!

RUBY

Out of my face, loser.

FIGHTER

You got me kicked out.

RUBY

You got yourself kicked out.

FIGHTER

You ratted me out.

RUBY

Look, you got yourself bounced --

FIGHTER
(to everyone)

She flipped on me --

RUBY
-- waving that thing around --

FIGHTER
A comb --

RUBY
I wasn't gonna lie!

YASMIN
Take a walk, will you?

FIGHTER
(to YASMIN)
You, cheesehead, shut up! Ain't your business.

RUBY
(to YASMIN)
Watch it -- you might get spit on with rabies.

FIGHTER
It was a comb -- You know what they did to me for a comb?

FIGHTER walks up and down the ranks of the people in the tableau, berating them. They don't move, but they are clearly scared a bit.

FIGHTER
Do you know what those fatheads in the office did to me?
They threw me out -- for what? For Zero Tolerance!

RUBY
Fool gets what a fool deserves.

AVIVA
What happened?

FIGHTER
And who are you?

YASMIN

(to AVIVA)

Watch it -- you might get spit on with rabies.

FIGHTER

I know you -- you're that Wendy who does the prisoner thing

--

PEARL

Uh-oh -- in her sights --

FIGHTER

(Dragging out the phrase)

Amnesty International. Well, I just got shagged with injustice!

RUBY

Man, you are so full of gas --

AVIVA

I don't know --

FIGHTER

They kicked me out.

AVIVA

Good reason, maybe --

RUBY

You had a comb --

(to everyone)

-- she had a comb that looked like a switchblade knife!
What were you thinking, girl? They asked me if you did. I
wasn't gonna lie for you!

AVIVA

You're the one --

FIGHTER

Hey, white bread, not talking to you anymore!

DINK
(to FIGHTER)

You might just want to shut up.

FIGHTER

Shut up, punk star.

RUBY
What are you doing here? You're supposed to be off school grounds --

FIGHTER
What do you think I'm here for? What - do - you - think?

AVIVA
Look, we can work this out --

DINK
(to AVIVA)
Don't play the United Nations here --

FIGHTER
You're just a poser --

AVIVA
We can talk --

FIGHTER
A fake --

RUBY
You're wigged -- out of my face.

FIGHTER
Like all of 'em.

AVIVA
Ruby, let's talk --

FIGHTER
In your face full-time --

RUBY

Move!

FIGHTER

Naw, naw, naw -- right here, right now.

AVIVA

C'mon!

YASMIN

Clear the stage, freak, -- you ain't touching --

AVIVA

Yasmin, stop it!

FIGHTER

Right now --

PEARL

Ruby, let's go --

FIGHTER

You can't do this to me!

RUBY

I'm not going there --

FIGHTER

You skanked six months of my life --

PEARL

Bad dice, honey.

AVIVA

Pearl --

FIGHTER

A bogus call -- zee-ro tolerance for me! Me! If any one of her friends --

(indicating AVIVA)

-- got nailed, you think the principal'd toss them? Think he'd chuck Little Miss I-Hate-Injustice. Nooo! Payment is due --

RUBY

You did it to yourself! Fly away, witch!

The next sequence must be well-choreographed: it is a series of 10 "slides." Each "slide" shows a snapshot of the fight. The first is the opening position of RUBY and FIGHTER; the last shows AVIVA on the ground. In between, the director can arrange the remaining 8 slides to tell the story that AVIVA tried to intervene and was knocked to the ground; the director is also free to use DINK and any other character in the sequences. Each "slide" is a tableau, a statue of sorts. The CROWD will clap for each slide, as if it were the flash of a strobe -- using a strobe would be nice, too, if possible. The whole sequence should be seen as a dance. Final tableau: AVIVA is on the ground; FIGHTER has exited. BOYLE comes on.

BOYLE

What's going on here?

CROWD pulls back. BOYLE comes over, and with the help of DINK and RUBY, lifts AVIVA up.

BOYLE

What happened?

But AVIVA is too frightened to speak.

BOYLE

(to CROWD)

What happened here?

In three groups: Group 1 puts its hands over its eyes.

CROWD

We saw nothing.

(Group 2 puts its hands over its ears)

We heard nothing.

Group 3 simply puts its hands over its mouth.

BOYLE

You're Aviva's friends, right?

Everybody puts a hand over the mouth of a neighbor.

BOYLE
(to AVIVA)

Let's go. Let's go to the principal's office.

BOYLE leads AVIVA offstage. Everyone in the CROWD except DINK, RUBY, PEARL, and YASMIN does a half-turn to face upstage in four beats, clapping out this rhythm four times: clap, clap, slap the thighs, similar to the opening of the percussive section of Queen's "We Will Rock You." On the last beat, CROWD will be facing upstage with its back to the audience and the lights will bump down. CROWD exits.

* * * * *

Scene 3

Music -- director's choice. Lights on RUBY, YASMIN, PEARL, and DINK.

PEARL
Never saw anything like it.

RUBY
She shouldn't have stuck her face in.

DINK
She was doing it for you.

RUBY
I can take care of myself!

DINK
Isn't it nice to know that somebody else wanted to do it for you?

YASMIN
I hope she's all right.

DINK
Isn't it nice to know that somebody would take pain for you?

RUBY
She wasn't taking any pain for me. She was just doing that
-- Amnesty International thing.

PEARL
(to RUBY)

Why is it so hard for you to say thanks? The girl is --

RUBY
I can fight my own battles!

PEARL
(to YASMIN)

The amazon warrior.

RUBY
Shut that mouth of yours!

DINK
Oh, so now you are gonna do the fighter thing, is that it?

(to the others)
She's going to turn out no better.

RUBY
Your mouth is bigger than your brain.

DINK
I think you don't like to say "thank you" -- that's cool, just don't make Aviva pay for it. She saved your behind -- the least you can do if you can't say thanks is say nothing, and don't go doing all these tough-chick poses -- they're ugly on you.

YASMIN
I think, Ruby darlin', that she has your number on this.

RUBY
I was scared, all right!

YASMIN
Who wasn't?

RUBY
I didn't know what she was packing.

PEARL

An evil heart.

DINK

Naw -- she was as scared as us.

PEARL

Still evil.

DINK

That's what fear does to a body -- makes it mean.

PEARL

Meanness is evil.

YASMIN

Agreed.

RUBY

When I saw her there, I knew why -- my price for telling the truth!

DINK

Always a price for the truth.

RUBY

And I wanted to walk away, you know -- just flip my behind around, give her the hand, and sail on out of there. Not worth my time.

YASMIN

So why didn't you?

DINK

It kicked in, didn't it?

PEARL

What?

DINK

The volcano.

RUBY

Her face in my face -- like a switch. I wasn't going to take the disrespect, I was going to rearrange her life.

DINK

Explode.

RUBY

I felt the fire right here --

(indicates her heart)

-- and it was like I lost my brain. The thinking part -- walk away. The volcano part -- slam!

PEARL

Meanness is evil.

YASMIN

And so how's it gonna stop? Aviva got decked for trying. She couldn't stop it. So who? So how?

DINK

I don't know.

RUBY

Me neither.

YASMIN

Count us in on that.

PEARL

It's gonna take a long time for peace to come around.

DINK

If ever. Volcanoes can last a long, long time.

RUBY

And they burn really, really hot.

Musical bridge -- director's choice. Lights fade down slowly to black.

* * * * *

Scene 4

Lights up on AVIVA, seated center stage. Her eyes are closed, as if she is asleep. Music changes to something more meditative, but there is also an edge underneath it. Behind AVIVA enter the VOICES OF THE CHILDREN. The director is free to arrange and light them as needed, but the effect should be as otherworldly as possible: these are visions within AVIVA's dream. NOTE: See the note for the Voices under "Characters" and substitute accordingly.

The VOICES begin to whisper AVIVA's name softly.

VOICES

Aviva, Aviva, Aviva --

AVIVA stirs but does not open her eyes.

RINGYAT

We are the world.

MARIA

We are the children.

AVIVA

No --

MARTA

My name is Marta.

AVIVA

Marta.

MARTA

You cannot see it, but I have lost an arm. An eye. Victim of a bomb planted in the ground like a poisoned fruit. I was gathering wood -- I lost my soul.

BECKA RAVEN

I am Becka Raven.

AVIVA

Becka.

BECKA RAVEN

On the reservation I watch the young men burn with alcohol,
and at night I hear the sad stories of how my ancestors
have been slaughtered.

FATIMA

My parents named me Fatima --

AVIVA

Fatima.

FATIMA

-- because I was such a miracle in their lives. But now
they want to cut me, mutilate me, take my private parts and
throw them away.

KIDYANE

Yo! I am Kidyane!

AVIVA

Kidyane.

KIDYANE

In the wars between the clans they gave me, Kidyane, a
gun bigger than I was tall. I remember the first man I killed.
I cried. I remember my second. I did not cry.

CASSIE

Cassie, for Cassandra.

AVIVA

Cassie.

CASSIE

I crouched behind the library table, but I knew he was going
to kill me. And when he did, I felt the peace of God enter
my soul. But I still do not understand why.

RINGYAT

Ringyat -- my name has the voice of bells.

AVIVA

Ringyat.

RINGYAT

Where I live, the men come in buses to my neighborhood.
Money changes hands, and I go with one of them, two of
them -- it doesn't matter. I earn money for my family, that is
all. I think of the sea when I feel their weight.

MARIA (PEDRO)

Maria, namesake of the Virgin Mary. (Pedro, namesake of
the apostle)

AVIVA

Maria/Pedro.

MARIA

For more hours a day than I sleep I sew labels onto
clothes I will never wear, tie laces on sneakers my feet will
never know. Somewhere the owner lives in a big house;
somewhere, someone dies for the sneakers I make.

At this point, the director can have the VOICES move around AVIVA, if
appropriate.

RINGYAT

So much violence, Aviva.

MARTA

Done to us --

CASSIE

Done against us --

MARIA

We are burned like wood in a stove --

BECKA RAVEN

Our hearts are stolen --

FATIMA

Our minds drowned in pain --

KIDYANE

Our bodies turned into weapons --

MARIA

Our blood is put into a bank account --

BECKA RAVEN

Adults violate us.

CASSIE

Our own friends violate us.

MARTA

We do it to each other.

RINGYAT

And the world makes a killing from our sadness every day.

The VOICES repeat the following phrase, one after the other, overlapping:
"And what will Aviva do?" The order of the VOICES is not important.

AVIVA

Help me.

The VOICES begin to move upstage, out of the light.

AVIVA

Help me! Give me an answer!

They are now upstage.

AVIVA

What am I supposed to do?

In one coordinated movement, the VOICES clap, and AVIVA pops her eyes open. As the lights fade to black, the audience sees AVIVA anguished and uncertain.

* * * * *

Scene 5

The sound of a gong. Lights change into BOYLE's class, a duplicate of the action in Scene 1 except that there are no chairs this time -- people are sitting, sprawled out, etc. on the ground. BOYLE enters. Everyone

now knows what happened to AVIVA. The lines said by PERSON can be assigned to different people in the CROWD.

BOYLE

All right, just because it's springtime and we have a class outside doesn't mean the minds of the honors class have to turn to mush.

PERSON 1

C'mon, Mr. B. -- I have a song in my heart!

BOYLE

And what song would that be, Mr. Young?

PERSON 1

Answer can be any song the audience would know -- try for a funny or ironic answer.

BOYLE

I'll put it on my list.

PERSON 2

You have a long list.

BOYLE

I'm going to have a long life, so, no problem.

PERSON 2

How do you know that?

BOYLE

I don't "know" it -- I guess it's just about attitude.

Underneath, sotto voce, as BOYLE speaks.

PERSON 1

'Tude

PERSON 2

Dude

PERSON 3

You're so rude

PERSON 2

Get me a lawyer

PERSON 3

So you be sued.

BOYLE

Mind can shape --

AVIVA

Is that true?

BOYLE

What, Aviva? People, keep it down!

PERSONS stop.

BOYLE

I didn't hear you, Aviva.

AVIVA is suddenly aware of how quiet it is and how people are watching her.

AVIVA

Is that true?

BOYLE

About attitude?

AVIVA

Yes.

BOYLE

I just know it works.

AVIVA

Works.

BOYLE

The Taoists --

(to the rest)

-- listen up, this'll be part of your final portfolio -- all the Taoists and Buddhists and Zen-ists and whatnot have one common, enduring belief. Anyone remember it?

PERSON 4

To end suffering in life, end desire.

BOYLE

Very good.

PERSON 4

Yeah, I memorized it -- but I have no idea what it means.

BOYLE

And why should you?

PERSON 3

You mean it's okay he's a stump?

Laughter.

BOYLE

Hold it in for a minute. No, it's understandable. You all live in a culture that depends upon you -- you and you and you and me, too -- having endless desires: for sneakers, for fast food --

PERSON 4

For sex --

BOYLE

Goes without saying. Even though you just said it.

PERSON 4

Sex, sex, sex --

BOYLE

Enough. But is everyone really happier? Eh? Would you say that the people around you are happy in that deep-down way Lao-Tzu was getting at in his book? Yes? No?

PERSON 1

I'm happy.

BOYLE

Oh, I know you are -- But do any of you ever feel something isn't complete, something that can't be fed by credit cards?

PERSON 2
(suddenly shy)

I don't know --

BOYLE

Anyone?

Silence.

BOYLE
Well, tough question to answer. See, Lao-Tzu was asking
the same question --

PERSON 3
You mean they had credit cards then?

Everyone laughs.

BOYLE
Only he came up with a completely different answer from
what we have come up with, with our credit cards, which is
what makes it hard to grab. But Lao-Tzu saw the price. The
price. And the price is?

AVIVA
Suffering.

BOYLE
Yes. Suffering.
(points to PERSON 4)
From --

PERSON 4
Desire?

BOYLE
Get it? From desires with an endless appetite that get
violent when they can't get enough. Now, some people stop
right there with that thought -- life is stupid, ain't anything to
do about it, blah blah blah. Lao-Tzu would have slapped
them, because there is something you can do.

Points to PERSON 4 again.

PERSON 4

To end suffering, end desire.

BOYLE

And how do you do that? C'mon, I know you all know this.

PERSON 1

Meditation.

BOYLE

Clearing the mind --

PERSON 2

Them that has a mind.

BOYLE

And some think that clearing the mind can change the world, the way if a butterfly moves its wing in Asia -- remember we talked about that? -- it can change everything.

PERSON 1

Yeah, but --

BOYLE

But what?

PERSON 1

Can it?

BOYLE

I don't know. Some people say, that's all I know. Testing it is up to you. It can't hurt.

PERSON 3

(trying to sit in a lotus position)

Look at me, I'm the Buddha.

PERSON 4

You just a rude Buddha.

PERSON 2

Dude.

BOYLE

Okay, folks, we got a few minutes left and the sun is shining and we're sitting under an oak tree older than all of us, in the shade of the Tao, so to speak, so let's try a little Lao-Tzu again.

BOYLE, CROWD, and AVIVA sit in a meditation position, and it should be staged so that AVIVA is seated in the same place the audience sees her in the Prologue. Music begins as lights come down. BOYLE looks over at AVIVA with concern as the lights go to black.

* * * * *

Scene 6

CROWD exits; AVIVA remains, and she is backlit as seen in the Prologue.

RUBY

Aviva Matthews is sitting / Alone in a single room

YASMIN

Aviva?

PEARL

She doesn't speak to anyone / Just sits in her silent gloom

RUBY

Aviva?

YASMIN

She is trying to end the suffering / To heal what has been burned

PEARL

Aviva?

DINK

She will not talk to anyone / Until all the evil has been turned

Backlighting out. PEARL, YASMIN, RUBY, and DINK stand outside what would be AVIVA's bedroom door.

PEARL

Her parents said they can't get her to answer.

RUBY

Yeah?

PEARL

She's been up here three days now.

RUBY

No food --

PEARL

Yeah.

YASMIN

No water --

RUBY

Yeah.

PEARL

She disconnected her phone --

RUBY

I'm scared.

YASMIN

We could break the door down.

PEARL

I don't think that's a good idea.

YASMIN

Well, do you have any better ideas?

PEARL

No.

YASMIN
(to DINK)

Do you?

DINK

If we don't do something, they're going to come and take her away.

PEARL

I know.

DINK

The school will file a petition -- her parents are going to be in some deep sheep dip when that happens -- and some shrink somewhere is going to get the nanoprobe in and delete her brain.

RUBY

A little strong, don't you think?

DINK

We're under the legal limit of eighteen -- they can do anything they want to us.

YASMIN

So what are we going to do, hey?

DINK

It's up to me.

RUBY

Yeah? Why not me?

DINK

I've been busting her chops longer than any of you.

RUBY

But she went down for me.

DINK

I know that -- so consider me your ambassador. Trust?

RUBY

Trust. Besides, to be honest -- I have a hard time talking myself out of bed in the morning. You got the quicker lip -- you know that.

DINK
(to the others)

Fine with you?

They agree with a handshake they make up.

DINK
All right -- so let me work some magic.

PEARL, YASMIN, and RUBY exit, with some humorous gestures of encouragement. DINK hesitates.

DINK
(to herself)

Yeah, right.

(gets herself ready to speak)

Aviva?

No response.

DINK
Aviva -- it's me. Me, Dink.

No response.

DINK
Can I come in?

No response, but as DINK talks, AVIVA will stand and walk slowly to where the door of her room would be.

DINK
All right, I'll stand here. I like it out here in the hallway, talking to a door. I just want to know if you need some help. If I can help. At all. I think I know what you're doing. Tell me if I get warm, okay? You want to end suffering -- right? Is that warm? You're kind of, like, in mourning, right? Right?

No response.

DINK
To be honest, Aviva, it's the only thing I can think of. Am I warm?

AVIVA nods her head yes but makes no response.

DINK

You did a good thing -- stupid, but good stupid, you know. Ruby knows that -- she's a little tight, you know, about admitting it because -- well, you know how she is, about giving anything away. But she knows you wanted to do the right thing by her. No regrets there.

Beat.

DINK

You got scared because of what could have happened to Ruby. Who knew what the girl was carrying -- not just in her heart, but in her pocket. Warmer? Man, I wish you'd say something. It's cold out here. I get scared, too -- every day. This world is not built to love us. Am I hot?

AVIVA

I had --

DINK

Bingo!

AVIVA

-- a dream.

DINK

Yeah! Talk to me. Talk to me.

AVIVA

I had a dream.

DINK

Dreams are good. Very saint-like -- cool.

AVIVA

I want you to do something for me.

DINK

Anything.

AVIVA

Before I say anything to you.

DINK

Give it to me.

AVIVA

Drop the sarcasm and smart-mouth. No more. It makes everything stink.

DINK

It does, does it?

AVIVA

It's part of the problem.

DINK

I'm part of the problem?

Beat.

DINK

So, don't stop. What kind of dream?

AVIVA

Yes or no.

DINK

Yes. Consider it dropped. Go on.

AVIVA

Voices -- all around me.

DINK

Whose voices?

Beat.

DINK

Aviva?

AVIVA

Our brothers and sisters.

DINK

Yeah? Do I know them?

(realizes her saracastic tone)

Sorry.

AVIVA

I am in here for them. For all of them.

DINK

Who are they?

AVIVA

Ringyat, Kidyane --

DINK

You don't know anybody --

AVIVA

Maria, Marta, Cassie --

DINK

-- with that name. Cassie?

AVIVA

Becka, Fatima -- they spoke.

DINK

To you?

AVIVA

They asked me to help!

DINK

These voices.

AVIVA

These brothers and sisters!

DINK

Aviva, man, you have to come out. You have everyone weirded out and wired. Me, included. I know what you're doing in there, but it's not going to work. You're sitting in meditation, right?

AVIVA

I am going to make it end.

DINK

Exactly -- sitting down on your behind -- I'm sorry, I just can't keep that smart-mouth shut, it's all I got -- sitting there on your pretty little butt starving to death to put end to death. And just how is that supposed to work?

AVIVA

I am finding a way to make it stop.

DINK

Look, I admire all of this. It's cool, it really is -- even if some of us are freaking out because you're starving yourself down to zero! -- but, hey, free choice, rah rah and all that, Aviva's so smart, don't let anyone tell her different.

AVIVA suddenly steps through the "door," as if coming out of her room, and startles DINK.

AVIVA

Shut up!

DINK

Hey!

AVIVA

You don't know one-half of one percent of most of nothing -

DINK

Smart mouth got you out!

AVIVA

-- so shut your gob.

DINK

Gonna hit me?

AVIVA

And what are you doing --

DINK
(Pointing to her chin)

C'mon --

Starts mock-boxing around AVIVA.

AVIVA
-- you, the rebel, so puffed up about yourself being so radical? My butt, radical! Just one big smart-mouth.

DINK
Leave my mouth out --

AVIVA
You so radical? You should be in here with me, so where's your heart, because you ain't anywhere near here.

DINK
Why? So we can go all mystical and think we're better than everyone else because we have dreams?
(mockingly, in rhythm)
"We're so pure, and you are not."

AVIVA
What's wrong with a little purity?

DINK
It stinks.

AVIVA
Meanness was going to blow Ruby away.

DINK
I know that!

AVIVA
It's meanness that makes your smart motor-mouth jump. And you don't think we should do something to get rid of that?

DINK
Rid of it? I'll tell you what's mean. I think we should blow away the whole mean mess and start all over again!

AVIVA

Just rock and roll!

DINK

You know what I'd like to do? You want to know mean?
Listen to me! I'd like to cram every adult into our skin and
march them through all the stupidity, all the blood sacrifice,
of being a child in this world, in their world, all of it --

(notices something about AVIVA)

What?

AVIVA

The voices --

DINK

The voices --

AVIVA

That's what they were saying --

DINK

Then add mine in. Blow it all open.

AVIVA

No, no --

DINK

Listen to me! How the adults just move us around and
use us and lie to us and hurt us and then dump a world
on us full of poison and explosion and then tell us it's our
responsibility to be leaders, our responsibility to clean it up
and make it better so they can go off and steal and lie some
more.

AVIVA

That's what they were saying --

DINK

Beeba, Beeba, all kids are victims 24-7-365, no matter
what. And you sitting in there full of pity, trying to get pure,
ain't going to stop anything. You have to act, man, we have
to act, because they are acting every day.

AVIVA

No, no, no --

DINK

Why not?

AVIVA

Don't you hear it, Dink?

DINK

What?

AVIVA

Don't you hear it in your own heart?

DINK

What?!

AVIVA

Meanness, hatred, get even, get revenge, make them pay -- keep that in there, and then things will never change. No more! No more, Dink! I don't want it in here anymore.

(pointing to DINK's heart)

Or in there. Not in the heart of my best friend. I'll start with my own, but I'm going to start with yours, too, even if it kills me --

DINK

You don't need to go that far.

AVIVA staggers a little. DINK helps her sit on the floor.

DINK

But you do need to go this far, or else you're going to go timber. C'mon, sit down.

They sit on the floor.

AVIVA

Thanks. I am very tired.

DINK

You're not the only one.

And hungry. AVIVA

Food's that-a-way. DINK

Then I think it's time to go that-a-way. AVIVA

This mean you're coming out? DINK

Yes. AVIVA

For good? DINK

For good and for friends. You can go, now, if you want. AVIVA

DINK does not move.

Really. You've done your duty. AVIVA

DINK does not move.

You're still here. AVIVA

Yep. DINK

So, okay -- does this mean you're going to come in? AVIVA

Beat.

Me to your world -- come out. AVIVA

DINK

Yeah.

AVIVA

You to mine -- come in.

DINK

In, then. For friends.

AVIVA

Only real reason to do anything.

DINK

Yeah.

AVIVA

Stop meanness.

DINK

Yeah.

AVIVA

Then, rink-o-Dink, I think we have us a chance. And all of them, too.

DINK

The voices?

AVIVA

I will tell you everything about the voices

Beat.

DINK

(hesitating)

What did you do about -- you know -- personal hygiene in there?

AVIVA

Nothing in -- nothing out.

DINK

Simple.

AVIVA

Hard.

DINK

Just thought I'd ask. You had us so scared.

AVIVA

I had me scared.

DINK

Glad you're back.

AVIVA

Still scared.

DINK

Honest? Me, too.

AVIVA

Then I will tell you about the voices.

The VOICES come out on stage, followed by the rest of the CROWD and RUBY, PEARL, and YASMIN.

AVIVA

To end suffering -- the butterfly's wing.

DINK

That's you and me, huh?

AVIVA

And everyone.

DINK gets up and makes a funny gesture of flying by tucking her thumbs into her armpits and flapping her arms.

DINK

I'm a butterfly. Is this how it works?

AVIVA

(gets up as well)

You look like a chicken.

DINK continues to flap her arms like a chicken, and AVIVA joins her, the two of them moving around like spastic chickens until they break up laughing and embrace. Everyone brings their hands together, palm to palm, and holds them heart-high. Then, in one motion, they bow to the audience. Lights go quickly to black.

The Real Temple

DESCRIPTION

All of life is a journey, and Lorenzo finds this out literally when, in a waking dream, he falls through his mirror into a slightly wacky King Arthur-world that takes him on a search for beauty, strength, and wisdom.

CHARACTERS

- Lorenzo, very, very ordinary teenager; he becomes KING D'ARTHUR
- Maria, Mother of LORENZIO -- feisty; good-humored
- Three Knights In A Daze, LORENZIO's helpers -- they should be dressed as outlandishly as possible; everything they do should be reminiscent of the Three Stooges
- The Voice of Density, a narrator and commentator; is not seen
- Lady Gretchen Grapunzel-Dunzel de Blanche du Bois avec C'est Moi, an imprisoned beauty -- speaks in a "Blanche DuBois" accent from A Streetcar Named Desire
- The Saggin' Dragon, a rich old dragon who wishes for better days
- King Sale-O-Man!, an entrepreneur from ancient times who is selling wisdom
- Other characters for various scenes

SETTING

- A nice place somewhere in America
- A vaguely medieval land

MISCELLANEOUS

- Choice of music is open
- A microphone for DENSITY
- A microphone for SALE-O-MAN!

Note 1: This play is meant to be done broadly, going for all the laughs and jokes and mugging and funny business that one could go for. Do not be shy.

Note 2: Equally so, sound/music and lighting effects should be big and broad.

Note 3: If there is no fly space, stagehands will need to move the scenery off. This should be done with choreography, so that it blends with the action on the stage.

Note 4: Casting: All parts, except for LORENZIO and MARIA can be cast from either gender.

* * * * *

Scene 1

Pre-show music out. The bedroom of LORENZIO. LORENZIO is standing in front of a full-length mirror doing "muscle poses." He is a very ordinary-looking eighth-grader. There are muscle magazines around. The "mirror" is actually an empty frame so that the audience can see him clearly. There is a window frame with curtains, a picture, perhaps an overhead light: all of these are flown in and will fly out at the end of the scene; they will return at the end of the play. There is also a dresser. Music is playing in the background; LORENZIO may be singing along, perhaps even dancing a little.

As LORENZIO looks at himself in the mirror, he can do various funny things: slap his gut, suck in his gut, pick at his hair and nose, etc. MARIA enters with a basketful of clothes, which she puts down and begins to fold and put away in the dresser.

LORENZIO

Mom!

MARIA

Sorry. Didn't knock, spit, say "right on!" three times, and do the secret touchdown dance.

MARIA proceeds to do all of it.

LORENZIO

Mom!

MARIA

Now am I allowed?

LORENZIO

You get weirder by the yard every day.

MARIA

But I'm not boring.

LORENZIO

No, just weird.

MARIA

You prefer boring?

LORENZIO

I am boring.

MARIA

You're not boring.

LORENZIO

Mom, you're bugging me! A little privacy, please?

LORENZIO slumps to the floor and begins riffling through one of the magazines.

MARIA

You like how they look?

LORENZIO

Yeah.

MARIA

Really?

LORENZIO

You don't?

MARIA

I don't know. Kinda lumpy. Tell me what you like.

LORENZIO

Are you done?

MARIA

Almost.

She leaves the basket and goes to sit down by him.

MARIA

I'm sorry. I just saw your door open, had to bring the clothes in. I know you need your privacy. Forgive me?

LORENZIO shrugs his shoulders.

MARIA

I'll take that as a yes. Okay, I'm done. You can go back. In privacy.

MARIA gets up, gets the basket, and starts to leave.

LORENZIO

Mom?

MARIA

Yeah?

LORENZIO

Think I can ever look like this?

MARIA

Like that?

LORENZIO

Yeah?

MARIA

I suppose anyone could.

LORENZIO

But me?

MARIA

Why not?

LORENZIO

(brings the magazine down)

But me?

MARIA

Honey, what's the matter?

LORENZIO

Nuthin'.

MARIA

(gentle mocking)

Somethin'.

LORENZIO

Nuthin'!

MARIA

Somethin'!

LORENZIO

I'm boring.

MARIA joins him at the "mirror."

MARIA

And just what do you think that means?

LORENZIO

Mom, I don't want adult-speak, okay? Am I boring?

MARIA

Not to me. I think you're really funny.

LORENZIO

(indicating the magazines)

But, you know, I got none of this --

MARIA

They can't scratch their butts.

LORENZIO

Mom!

MARIA

They have to hire butt-scratchers they're so tight. Now how do you think that would look?

LORENZIO

That's what I'd be -- a butt-scratcher.

MARIA

Not any son of mine! You are destined to have your butt scratched, young man!

LORENZIO

I got Dad's genes.

MARIA

Biology isn't everything. I know this will sound stupid, but you can be anything you want.

LORENZIO

Next NBA slum-dunk champ?

MARIA

Oop, well, that's a stretch!

(punches his arm to accent the pun)

Stretch, get it -- ha, ha, ha? 'Fraid that's where your Dad's genes and mine work against you.

LORENZIO

So I can't be anything I want.

MARIA

Toughest thing in life -- knowing how to know what you want. Once you know that, you can get going on your journey.

LORENZIO

What's my journey?

MARIA

That, love of my life, is the hardest thing to know. But, I can tell you this -- it won't be boring. Those kinds of journeys never are.

LORENZIO

(dejected)

Yeah.

MARIA gets up and starts doing muscle poses in the "mirror."

MARIA

You know, some of those babes in there --

(indicates the magazines)

-- I know you look at the babes! -- make me feel boring. How cut they are. Bodies -- such strange things, huh? How am I doing?

LORENZIO gets up and poses with her.

LORENZIO

Like this.

For a few moments they pose together until they break up laughing.

MARIA

You, boring? Hah! Give me your shirt -- I've got another load going in.

LORENZIO takes off his shirt -- he's wearing a white tee-shirt. He hook-shots it to MARIA, who grabs it and slam-dunks it in the basket.

MARIA

Score!

Dances around, high-fives LORENZIO, etc.

MARIA

Hey, if they lowered the basket, we'd all be champs! Catch the later wave, dude!

MARIA dances out of the room. LORENZIO goes back to doing poses in the "mirror." Underscoring music begins.

* * * * *

Scene 2: The Coronation

LORENZIO peers more deeply into the "mirror," posing this way and that. As he does so, the music strengthens and the lights begin to signal that something is going to happen. LORENZIO peers so deeply into the "mirror" that he "falls" through it. When he does, all the scenery flies away, and LORENZIO finds himself suddenly in a very strange place. Music and lights become really strange, then everything goes dark except a single spotlight on LORENZIO.

LORENZIO

What? What? Hey, wait a minute. Where am I? Where am I? Where the h --

But before he can get the curse word out, a trio of voices tells him to "Ssshh!"

KNIGHTS

Ssshh!

Three separate lights come up on the three KNIGHTS IN A DAZE.

KNIGHT 1 (MOE)

Be careful!

KNIGHT 2 (LARRY)

Can't use that word!

KNIGHT 3 (SHERRY)

Don't go there!

LORENZIO

All right -- then where the heck am I?

MOE

You're in a very strange place.

LARRY

You are having magical things happen to you.

SHERRY

Pay attention.

LORENZIO

Who are you?

KNIGHTS

We are Three Knights In A Daze.

LORENZIO

What?

MOE

Three Knights --

LARRY

In --

SHERRY

A Daze.

LORENZIO

Sounds a bad punk band.

Suddenly, with volume and force, comes the VOICE OF DENSITY. During the next lines the lights come up completely to reveal the KNIGHTS and LORENZIO.

VOICE

So --

LORENZIO

Who are you? What are you?

VOICE

I am the Voice of Density.

LORENZIO

Density? Don't you mean "destiny"?

VOICE

Density!

LORENZIO

All right! Density!

VOICE

Because I am one heavy dude!

LORENZIO

Gotcha, dude. Now cut down on the decibels, Density.

VOICE

So --

LORENZIO

So --

VOICE

So -- aren't you the least bit interested in what's happening here?

LORENZIO

Where is "here"?

VOICE

This is your life.

LORENZIO

I was just looking in the mirror --

VOICE

And you fell into your life.

LORENZIO

I fell through the mirror?

VOICE

Dawn comes late to Marblehead.

LORENZIO

And what, exactly, is my life at the moment?

MOE

You have a second chance.

LORENZIO

A second chance.

LARRY

To get your wishes.

SHERRY

So don't blow it.

Enter onto the stage a crowd of people. Pennants and flags, if possible. Cheerleaders could be doing cheers. Music changes into something heraldic, stirring. In short, the director is free to make as massive and gaudy a spectacle as possible. As the VOICE speaks, the audience sees LORENZIO, who begins to swell with pride and purpose.

VOICE

Think big, man, think massive and cosmic! Think Density!
Think All-You-Can-Eat! Think 4th of July on caffeine! Think
like a king!

LORENZIO

A king! A king!

At his voice, the crowd kneels and becomes silent.

VOICE

How about that?

LORENZIO

I like it!

(looking at himself)

But I think I need some kingly clothes.

KNIGHTS

The Emperor should never be naked!

VOICE

It's coronation time.

Part of the crowd parades past LORENZIO with costumes and weapons of many kinds. He pulls clothes, hats, shoes, a weapon, etc. from the passing throng, dressing himself in a regally outlandish costume. Others can go through the audience passing out small crowns, like Burger King, or small flags. LORENZIO ad libs as he sees the clothes: "Oooh, I like that," "Nope," etc.

VOICE

Now, everyone -- attention!

Everyone takes a knee. The KNIGHTS exchange places to get close to LORENZIO but crash into each other as they do so.

LORENZIO

These are my knights?

VOICE

Knights chivalric, true and blue.

LORENZIO

I'm stuck with them?

VOICE

They're stuck to you.

LORENZIO

What are your names again?

KNIGHTS

Three Knights In A Daze.

The VOICE takes up a rap beat with "record scratch"; the KNIGHTS move to it. The crowd can participate in it as well, pounding onstage to keep a rhythm.

KNIGHTS

We're the guys who watch your back / We keep your back
from a sneak attack

MOE

My name is Moe.

LARRY

My name is Larry.

SHERRY

You think it might be Curley / But I'm known as Sherry.

KNIGHTS

We're stuck to you / True through and through / Protect you
and connect you / Let's "Boo-ga-loo" / Boo-ga-loo / Boo-
ga-loo / Boo-ga-loo / Yeah!

All three draw their swords ineptly and try to cross them in the air, making a mess of the heroic gesture. They look at themselves, then at LORENZIO, look abashed, and fumble into a kneeling posture before LORENZIO, stepping on each other's lines of praise.

MOE

Oh great dread sovereign --

LARRY

Oh thrice potent master --

SHERRY

Oh sovereign grand commander --

LORENZIO

Enough! I get the point. All right. Get up.

They rise.

LORENZIO

Now, slowly and with great reverence, walk backward and stand over there.

They start to move, bowing and scraping, knocking into each other, etc.

LORENZIO

Go on, go on.

When they reach the point, LORENZIO commands them.

LORENZIO

Stop and do not move!

They are frozen in some ridiculous postures, and the crowd laughs uproariously.

VOICE
(booming)

Silence!

(everyone falls silent)

That's better. Now, would everyone please take up their places for the Coronation Oration, otherwise known as "When The Crown Comes Down." Ready? Hit it.

Everyone immediately forms into ranks and patterns -- these are up to the director, but they should have several levels, with people in figures on the floor, standing, and elevated: symmetrical but goofy. As they chant the following words, a crown and a Prince Valiant wig are flown in, which LORENZIO will unhook and put on. If they cannot be flown in, then someone comes onstage with them hanging from a long pole. The VOICE should be in on the chant. This could be done en masse or in choral parts, and there should be stylized movements to reinforce the words -- again, these should be funny and silly.

ALL

Oh dread and potent lord / Please don't sit down on your sword

LORENZIO looks at them questioningly. They all shrug their shoulders and smile.

ALL

That's right -- that's what we said. Do you get the point?

Massive groan at the pun.

LORENZIO

(to the VOICE)

These are the sacred words?

VOICE

When in Rome --

ALL

Oh dread and potent lord / Please don't sit down on your sword / If you should hurt your bum / We'd all feel sad and glum / Instead, stand strong and tall / And be a king for all / And if you do your work / Then we won't call you a jerk.

LORENZIO

(loud whisper)

I thought I was supposed to get a little respect.

VOICE

This is respect -- you should hear them when they don't like someone.

ALL

If we don't like what you do / Then we'll chop off your head, too / Ain't it fun to rule a mob? / Hope you like your job.

By this time LORENZIO has his wig and crown on.

ALL

Hail, King D'Arthur! May your rama-lama-ding-dong always last real long! May your doo-wacka-doo be always kind to you!

LORENZIO

(addressing the crowd)

Thank you for this honor --

VOICE

That's enough.

LORENZIO

Wait a second. I want to speak to my people.

VOICE

Can't. You have work to do.

Lights change.

LORENZIO

What's going on?

VOICE

Being king is not all beer and skittles.

ALL

Nuh-uh!

VOICE

You have to earn your keep!

ALL

Sis-boom-bah!

VOICE

If you want to keep your crown, you have to go on a quest.

ALL

(like the commercial)

Be all that you can be!

VOICE

You have three tasks to perform.

ALL

Three -- count 'em, three!

LORENZIO

A quest?

VOICE

You have to find true beauty, strength, and wisdom.

LORENZIO

That doesn't sound so hard.

VOICE

You will begin immediately on your quest for true beauty.

The KNIGHTS clank forward.

MOE

It's our duty --

LARRY

To follow you --

SHERRY

So Rooty-toot-tooty!

KNIGHTS

(inept dance moves)

Let's "Boo-ga-loo."

LORENZIO

Let's go.

The crowd exits as LORENZIO waves at them. The KNIGHTS jockey to get close to him, try to lift him on their shoulders, knock each other about, etc. Lights change.

* * * * *

Scene 3: The Quest for Beauty

In the scene change, a ladder is brought out; this is GRAPUNZEL-DUNZEL's "tower." GRAPUNZEL-DUNZEL stands on it; she carries a coil of braided rope that will become her "hair." It should be about 20' in length and braided from a rough, heavy rope. It should also be attached to a cap of sorts that can be taken off. She also wears a white half-mask that has on it an exaggerated cosmetic face: big eye-lashes, red cheeks, etc. -- an exaggeratedly feminine face, like a doll. If it can be dared, balloons for bosoms.

LORENZIO and the KNIGHTS enter from the back of the house to music, and as they do, the VOICE narrates their journey. They are riding hobby horses.

VOICE

And, lo, they traveled through many a strange country in search of true beauty -- but it seemed in really short supply.

LORENZIO

Let's stop here -- I'm bushed.

MOE

(pulling on his hobby horse)

Hi-ho, Silver --

LARRY

Whoa, Paint.

SHERRY

Easy, Trigger.

Of course, they bump into each other and into LORENZIO.

LORENZIO

I told you guys, at least a ten-foot buffer zone! That last pig pile we had about snapped my back.

MOE

Sorry about that, boss. My fault -- I "gee'd" when I should have "haw'd."

LARRY

Gee, what a shame!

SHERRY

Haw did you do that?

They laugh.

LORENZIO

Stop it! No more stupid puns! No more "Knock, knock" jokes. No more "a priest, a rabbi, and an iguana" jokes. No more --

(in a pouty, whiny voice)

"I should be first this time! No, it's my turn! No, Larry always gets to ride point and say, 'Watch out for the dead griffin on the right.' " No more "He's touching me! He's touching me! Oooh, cooties!" You guys are the most ridiculous knights a king could ever have!

They look crestfallen.

VOICE

Don't you think you're a little hard on them? Isn't he, folks?

KNIGHTS should encourage the audience to go "Awww" in sympathy. LORENZIO cuts it short.

LORENZIO

(to VOICE)

Butt out, oh ponderous poo-bah.

(to the audience)

Don't encourage them.

(to KNIGHTS)

If we weren't in the middle of some god-forsaken disenchanted forest, I'd go right over to Knights-For-A-Day and trade you in.

VOICE

Awww.

More encouragement of the audience by KNIGHTS.

LORENZIO

I'm warning you!

KNIGHTS continue to look crestfallen and woe-begone.

VOICE

Give 'em a break. What'd'ya say, good people? Thumbs up if you agree.

LORENZIO

All right -- all right!

(to audience)

You can put your thumbs away. Just be careful where you put them.

(to KNIGHTS)

You're not that bad. You're all smarter than, than -- a fire hydrant, and that counts for something in this world, right?

(to the audience)

Satisfied?

KNIGHTS signal the audience that it is not enough, but LORENZIO catches them. They retreat back to their "crestfallen" look.

LORENZIO

We'll camp here. Now, where are we going to find true beauty?

GRAPUNZEL

(she waves)

Yoo-hoo!

LORENZIO

Great -- now we have a screech owl! Bring it on, bring it on -- make it worse!

GRAPUNZEL

(even stronger)

Yoo-hoo!

LORENZIO

(muttering)

Having the saddle rash wasn't enough --

KNIGHTS catch sight of GRAPUNZEL and are enraptured, signaled by a musical trill of some sort.

MOE

Boss, I don't think it's a screech owl.

LARRY

Not at all.

SHERRY

Not by a mile. Not by a mile and three-quarters.

GRAPUNZEL

Hello, there.

LORENZIO

Don't interrupt me -- can't you see I'm whining?

KNIGHTS drop their horses and move in a rapture toward GRAPUNZEL.

LORENZIO

Where are you going?

LORENZIO sees where they are headed, and he, too, is enraptured: musical trill.

MOE

Oh, lady sweeter than Nutrasweet.

LARRY

Oh, breeze softer than Downy.

SHERRY

Oh, beauty hotter than jalapeños.

GRAPUNZEL

I do declare, you boys are going to spoil me.

(spying LORENZIO)

But who are you, mon chevalier?

LORENZIO

Ding K'Arthur -- I mean King D'Arthur. Ring of the Tound
Kable -- uh, Ting of the Kound Rable --

LARRY

Good goin', boss.

LORENZIO

(spitting it out)

King of the Round Table.

GRAPUNZEL

And may I sit at your table?

ALL

Yes, please do.

They all sit, staring up at her.

VOICE

And thus she began her tale.

GRAPUNZEL

I am just a poor young thing from the South who has had to depend upon the kindnesses of strong, handsome, virile, turbo-charged men like yourselves.

They all bay at the moon like dogs.

ALL

Yowwww!

MOE

What is your name, oh felicitous filly?

GRAPUNZEL

My name -- It is does not rank high among the stars -- My poor humble name is Lady Gretchen Grapunzel-Dunzel.

SHERRY

And how did you get trapped in this nasty, nasty tower?!

GRAPUNZEL

Therein lies a tale of woe.

ALL

Oh, no!

GRAPUNZEL

The nasty Baron de Blanche du Bois avec C'est Moi stole me from my father and locked me in this tower to protect my ravishing and unparalleled beauty from ever being enjoyed by any other man or beast.

ALL

(a lá Stanley Kowalski)

Grapunzel!!!!!!

GRAPUNZEL

Music to my ears.

LORENZIO

How may we help you, dangling damsel?

GRAPUNZEL

Well, this wicked old curse the Baron put on me could be broken if one of you can scale this tower and rescue me.

Beat as they survey the task.

MOE

Uh, how can we do that? It's as smooth as glass.

LARRY

I'm sort of afraid of heights.

SHERRY

And I'm afraid of people who are afraid of heights.

LORENZIO

Is there any way you can help us?

GRAPUNZEL throws down the coil of rope, her "hair" -- it should make a big thud when it falls. They look at it, pick it up, examine it.

GRAPUNZEL

Just climb up my hair -- and you will have pleasure unlike anything you have ever, ever known.

MOE

Wow -- look at how beautiful this -- this -- hair is!

LARRY

(feeling it, unwilling to admit what it is)

It's so, so, so -- I can't think of a word for it.

They start fighting over the "hair"; GRAPUNZEL's head bobs as if it is being pulled by their tussle.

GRAPUNZEL

Señor Knights -- please!

MOE

Me first.

LARRY

Nah-uh, knucklehead -- me first.

SHERRY

That's where you're both wrong -- move over.

GRAPUNZEL

Boys!

LORENZIO

Hey! Who's the king here?

They desist but continue to jab and poke each other.

LORENZIO

This king job has to have some perks other than the three of you. I will rescue the fair Lady Gretchen Grapunzel-Dunzel de Blanche du Bois avec C'est Moi.

LORENZIO does a series of ten funny stretches, etc. to get ready to go up the rope. KNIGHTS counts out one to ten.

VOICE

She'll pass her expiration date before you get up there!

LORENZIO

Here we go!

The KNIGHTS pick him up slowly so it looks like he is actually ascending.

GRAPUNZEL

Oh, yes, I know you can do it. I know that "you the man"!

But when LORENZIO gets to a certain height, the cap slips off and the "hair" tumbles down. They all fall down.

GRAPUNZEL

Oh -- oh -- oh -- damn!

LARRY

What happened?

MOE

She lost her head --

LARRY

Well, some of it.

SHERRY

You mean none of it was real?

LORENZIO

Explain this, dear Gretchen Grapunzel-Dunzel de Blanche du --

Now using some outrageous foreign accent -- French or German would be good.

GRAPUNZEL

I know my name!

LORENZIO

Well?

GRAPUNZEL

All right, so it isn't real!

MOE

I'm -- I'm -- shocked.

SHERRY

I feel violated.

LARRY

You mean all that glitters is not gold?

Triumphal music.

LORENZIO

Then, who are you?

GRAPUNZEL takes off the mask. Her hair is slicked back, and she pulls out of a pocket a handlebar moustache, which she puts on: she now becomes the classic villain in a melodrama, a lá Snidely Whiplash.

GRAPUNZEL

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

MOE

It's the evil Baron!

If GRAPUNZEL has a balloon bosom, she should also take out a pin and pop the balloons through the cloth of the dress.

GRAPUNZEL

Ah, music to my ears!

LORENZIO

I demand --

GRAPUNZEL

You demand nothing!

MOE

Why, oh why, oh why, oh why --

GRAPUNZEL

Because I am tired of all you so-called knights --

(pronounces it as "kah-nites")

-- cruising --

(pronounced "cah-roosing")

-- around my cah -- -- cah -- castle grounds, crushing the carrots, casting caca everywhere, all mystical visions and bad body odor!

LORENZIO

So you get us to climb up there --

GRAPUNZEL

And then I simply cut the rope!

LARRY

You're not beautiful at all!

GRAPUNZEL

And I suppose you're MCAS material. Now get out of here and go home where you belong! And leave the hair there -- do you have any idea how much that stuff costs today?

They retreat.

GRAPUNZEL

(maniacally)

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

They retreat to their horses and exit while GRAPUNZEL laughs and sad music plays.

GRAPUNZEL

Nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah.

GRAPUNZEL's maniacal laughs follows them out. Lights out, stage cleared.

* * * * *

Scene 4: The Quest for Strength

The lair of the SAGGIN' DRAGON set. The lair consists of a large table covered with piles of papers, books, etc. DRAGON sits at the desk with a calculator and a ledger book, totaling up his investments. Many people will bustle in with messages, charts, etc. to show DRAGON, and he will respond appropriately. Anything else to indicate a very busy office, and don't be shy with sound effects, if possible. Also, there should be stacks of money around -- bundles, buckets, etc. It would be wonderful to get something like a Dow Jones running ticker going across the back of the stage. If not, a wheel of fortune or large dartboard. The lighting should be reminiscent of flame -- after all, we are in a dragon's lair.

DRAGON should resemble a dragon but should also wear spectacles and look tired. As the stage is being set, VOICE speaks in the darkness.

VOICE

Humiliated, defeated, tired, in need of a Power Bar and a fruit smoothie, they stumbled on.

MOE
(whiny)

Where are we?

LARRY
(whiny)

We're nowhere!

SHERRY
(whiny)

We're nowhere fast!

LORENZIO

I wanted to stop and ask directions -- but nooooo!

DRAGON
(loudly)

Will you all shut up?!

They face DRAGON.

DRAGON

Can't you see we're busy here?

LORENZIO

Where's "here"?

DRAGON

You are in a very sacred place: the Stock Derange, located on Gall Street.

LORENZIO

And what do you do in this "sacred" place?

DRAGON

(as if it were perfectly obvious)

What do we do here?

LORENZIO

Yes.

DRAGON

What do we do here?

LORENZIO

Yes!

DRAGON

Wait!

The CROWD comes to a screeching halt. DRAGON gestures for them to move forward, which they do, with trepidation.

DRAGON

(to everyone)

We have some -- what are they? -- pee-ple here who do not seem to understand what we do. Can you imagine that?

CROWD

We can't imagine that at all!

DRAGON

What we do here is only the most important activity in the world --

CROWD

Definitely the most important.

DRAGON

For all we know, the most important in the universe.

CROWD

In the universe.

MOE

(timidly)

And that would be, your flameship?

DRAGON indicates LARRY.

LARRY

Yes, your scaliness?

DRAGON indicates SHERRY.

SHERRY

Count me in, your lizard lord.

DRAGON

(to LORENZIO)

And you?

LORENZIO

Oh, all right --

DRAGON turns to WORKERS and conducts them, as if they were a chorus.

CROWD

Every person eventually asks / What does life really mean
/ We have found the answer to that / And it makes us feel
serene

In this place called the Stock Derange / What we do is
sweet as honey / All day long we come and go --

DRAGON turns to LORENZIO and KNIGHTS, in a loud stage whisper.

DRAGON

And make oodles and boodles and bundles and buckets
and carloads and truckloads of money.

CROWD

And make oodles and boodles and bundles and
buckets and carloads and truckloads of money.

(whispering echo in the background)

Money, money, money, money, money --

LORENZIO

That's the secret to life?

CROWD

Yes it is.

DRAGON

Without money, you have no strength --

CROWD

(whispering echo in the background)

Oodles of money --

DRAGON

And without the strength of money, you have nothing. You are nothing.

CROWD

Nothing.

DRAGON

No one.

CROWD

No one.

DRAGON

That is all there is to know, and all ye need to know.

(to CROWD)

All right, back to work!

Looking back to LORENZIO and KNIGHTS, expecting them to be impressed.

DRAGON

Well?

MOE

This is what you do all day?

LARRY

Sit there?

SHERRY

Compute?

LARRY

Buy?

SHERRY
Sell?

MOE
In hot pursuit --

ALL
Of money?

DRAGON
Of oodles of money --

SHERRY
Seems kind of boring -- kind of.

MOE
I'd have to agree with Sherry on that one, yes.

LARRY
It ain't got no zip.

DRAGON
But money, dear children, is what drives the world and makes us strong.

LARRY
(to LORENZIO)
Is this the strength you want to find?

LORENZIO
I don't know.

MOE
This is what we walked through muck and mire --

SHERRY
Brambles and briars --

LARRY
Ice storms and fires --

MOE
To find?

LARRY

Well, I don't think it's worth it.

CROWD have been overhearing this and gradually they have edged in closer to listen.

DRAGON

(dangerously sweet)

Really?

MOE

What's the most important thing in the world? These guys.
Ready?

MOE and LARRY flip SHERRY. As they do, they say the following.

MOE & LARRY

Heads we win -- tails we win.

CROWD break out into applause but are quickly silenced by a baleful look from DRAGON.

DRAGON

So you don't need any money?

LARRY

We don't need to spend our lives on getting it -- to us, that ain't strength.

DRAGON

How dare you tell me that what I have done all my life is worthless!

SHERRY

Well, you look like just a big ol' Saggin' Dragon.

DRAGON

(to CROWD)

Get over here!

CROWD gets on their hands and knees in front of his desk. Lights on now definitely on fire, and sound is bass-laden. DRAGON gets off the desk and literally stands on the CROWD's backs.

DRAGON

All my life I earned my cash / Invested, digested, built up my stash / Got a portfolio I'd rate top-flight / I wouldn't waste my time being a knight.

When I was young, my Dad said, "Son, / "You ain't any good if you ain't number one. / "It doesn't matter who you fry on the way / "As long as your rating is Triple-A."

Gets off the backs of CROWD.

DRAGON

I worked hard, I never had any fun! / But I went straight to number one! / Sure, I'm lonely -- but that's no big deal / So no one loves me -- but who needs to feel?

DRAGON stops; lights and sound out. DRAGON looks around him, suddenly aware of his own emptiness.

DRAGON

(half whisper)

So no one loves me -- but who needs to feel? I feel very tired all of a sudden. Saggin' Dragon. Come here.

(to CROWD but without any fire)

Look into that buying that silver, selling that gold --

(makes a weary gesture and sits down)

Whatever.

LORENZIO

Are you all right?

DRAGON

Suddenly very tired. I never believed any of it, you know. When I was a young dragon, I just wanted to belch out my flame, be free to pursue who I really was. I was an artist! Woodburning! That was my thing. I was really hot! And now, look at me -- all this wealth, but you have people who care about you --

(to KNIGHTS)

Could you --

LARRY

What?

DRAGON

Could you do that -- flip thing again?

MOE and LARRY flip SHERRY.

MOE & LARRY

Heads I win -- tails I win.

DRAGON

Ah, yes. Heads I win -- yes, yes. Oh, when I was young
-- I think you should go now.

As DRAGON speaks in self-pity, the CROWD, as a group, rub their index fingers against their thumbs, silently weep, exaggerated pain, etc. and otherwise make fun of DRAGON. KNIGHTS and LORENZIO can barely keep from laughing.

DRAGON

My father never liked me -- he always gave me a hot foot and sent me away to play in the fireplace. I never had any friends -- they called me "chunky butt" or jalapeño breath, but I showed them, I showed them!

LORENZIO

Perhaps we should be going. We came here to find strength and, well, I think we have to say it didn't quite turn out that way.

(to KNIGHTS)

Shall we?

MOE

All --

LARRY

For one and --

SHERRY

One for all.

DRAGON

Yes, yes, I quite understand. I'm sorry it didn't work out.

LORENZIO

Oh, it worked out for us all right. I hope you earn many, many merry deutsche marks.

MOE

Delightful dollars.

SHERRY

Fabulous franks.

LARRY

Stellar pound sterling.

LORENZIO

Goodbye.

LORENZIO and KNIGHTS exit offstage. DRAGON watches them leaves, then speaks belatedly.

DRAGON

You wouldn't, by any chance, have room for one more -- No, no, I suppose you wouldn't. I don't blame you -- I can't quite control the flame like I used to. And I have gas. Ah, the price of getting older. A little acid reflux and we could all be barbecued.

(DRAGON looks at the CROWD)

Well, what to do with you? Just -- do -- something.

DRAGON exits. CROWD laughs silently as the lights come down. They clear the stage.

VOICE

And so the quest continued. They had learned a valuable lesson -- money is nice, but it don't suffice. But so virtuous were they that they forgot to snag a few loose bills --

From the back of the house comes LORENZIO and KNIGHTS. They go down the aisle toward the stage.

VOICE

And folks, these guys are so poor that they can't even afford the sound of hoof beats. And they're off, on the third leg of this interminable quest, this time for wisdom, and we ain't talking about teeth.

Suddenly, from the stage barks out a loud, obnoxious, carney-barker voice on a hand-held microphone.

SALE-O-MAN

Yowser, yowser, yowser, ladies and germs, brothers and cisterns, may-dahms and mon-sewers, señores y señoritas. Lend me your ears because I have the offer of a lifetime that will last a lifetime. Folks, have I got a deal for you!

* * * * *

Scene 5: The Quest for Wisdom

It is KING SALE-O-MAN and his world-famous infomercial, "How To Be A Wise Guy In Seven Easy Steps." There should be some kind of up-tempo music.

LORENZIO

What now?

SALE-O-MAN

I am King Sale-O-Man, Sale-O-Man the Great, the wise guy of wisdom, and welcome to my world-famous infomercial, "How To Be A Wise Guy In Seven Easy Steps," the show that's been going and going for, oh, a couple of millennia now.

Greets people in the audience, asks a few how they are doing today, asks a few "Are you feeling wise today?" and so on.

LORENZIO

Wait a second. Who is this joker? I'm not going to --

SALE-O-MAN

And I am going to let you all in on a little secret today about how to make the grey matter up there spit fire like an old Zippo lighter --

LORENZIO

Stop this!

SALE-O-MAN

All you have to do is buy my book, The Seven Successful Habits of Really, Really, Really Wise Guys, and the accompanying video tapes for the mere sum of --

LORENZIO

Stop this! You can't do this!

SALE-O-MAN

Ah, a disbeliever --

LORENZIO

You can't sell wisdom!

SALE-O-MAN

You can sell anybody anything! Beanie Babies, eh? Toilet seats with red and green lights to tell you if it's up or down? The Princess Di funeral Barbie? Pet Rocks -- I rest my case.

LORENZIO

Wisdom is something you acquire over time -- it's a vintage wine, it's not grape juice.

SALE-O-MAN

You are so old-fashioned, so retro. Nobody wants to acquire wisdom these days -- who's got the time?

(turns to the audience)

Life today is about speed -- you gotta be somewhere before you leave, you have to be a million different people from sun-up to sun-down -- All I'm doing is offering a service that makes the rat race a little easier to take.

(all innocence)

That's all.

LORENZIO walks right up to SALE-O-MAN and takes the microphone.

LORENZIO

(to the audience)

You're being cheated here! Don't listen --

SALE-O-MAN

Hey, this is my gig --

LORENZIO

You can't get wise this way -- you have to work for it --

SALE-O-MAN

No one wants to work, King Ding-A-Ling -- it's all gotta be on-time delivery, 24-7-365. Go back to your smelly old life -- I've got to earn a living.

LORENZIO

Nooo!

At LORENZIO's yell, all the lights go crazy and blackout. Sound effects as well. LORENZIO exits. KNIGHTS move to the edge of the stage.

VOICE

Uh-oh -- the whole quest thing seems to be going to hell in a handbasket. What is to be done? Oh, what can be done?

Three individual lights will come up on KNIGHTS, one after the other. They are sitting on the edge of the stage. In the darkness, the set for the opening scene in the bedroom is set and LORENZIO takes his place in front of the mirror.

MOE

You there?

Light up on LARRY.

LARRY

Yeah. How about you?

Light up on SHERRY.

SHERRY

I'm here -- wherever "here" is.

LARRY

What happened?

MOE

It all went to hell in a handbasket -- whatever that means.

LARRY

I never knew what that phrase meant. I mean, it would have to be a pretty big handbasket --

SHERRY

True.

LARRY

-- to fit "all" into it -- I mean, "all" means all, doesn't it, which means every Ding Dong --

SHERRY

Cubic Zirconium --

MOE

Those little stickers on fruit at the supermarket that you always end up eating by mistake --

LARRY & SHERRY

What?

MOE

You know -- those little stickies that say this apple is from New Zealand and after you take a bite you realize that only half the sticky is there and there can only be one place where it went --

LARRY

All right! We get the picture! Anyway, it'd have to be a big basket was my point if it was carrying "all" to hell.

SHERRY

And who would carry it?

LARRY

Who, indeed? Who would be big enough? Strong enough? Dumb enough?

MOE

And why a handbasket?

LARRY

Right!

SHERRY

Why not a cigar box?

LARRY
(exasperated)

It has to have the alliterative "h" sound, you klotzkopf!

SHERRY

Oh.

MOE

Helicopter.

LARRY

A helicopter could do it.

SHERRY

HUM-VEE.

LARRY

Hackney. Uh, Honda.

MOE

Hindenburg.

They both look at him.

MOE

"Everything's going to hell in a Hindenburg." I kinda like that.

SHERRY

He's got a point.

LARRY

On the top of his head. All right, all right! But the point is, nothing would be big enough to hold "everything" -- so what does it mean?

MOE

Maybe it doesn't mean anything.

LARRY

What?

SHERRY

Then why would people say it?

MOE

Because people are always thinking that things are worse than they are.

LARRY

That's true -- you change the color or shape of some little thing and someone starts yelling, "It was better in the old days -- the good old days, mind you, when men were men -- "

SHERRY

And 50-year old women could be called girls --

MOE

And children knew how to wear a baseball cap properly, dag-nab-it!

SHERRY

Things may be bad --

LARRY

But they're never as bad as you think they are.

MOE

It's the thinking that gums up the works --

LARRY

And thinking's the only thing that can un-gum it, too.

SHERRY

By gum!

Lights come up on the bedroom. They see the scene.

LARRY

And I wonder what he is going to think.

Lights out on KNIGHTS. They get up on the stage and stand off to the side. LORENZIO is looking in the mirror, just as he was in the first scene.

MARIA

Almost time for dinner. Lorenzo -- are you all right?

LORENZIO

I don't know.

MARIA

You look -- you look like you're a thousand miles away.

LORENZIO

A million.

(turning to MARIA)

When did you leave?

MARIA

I don't know -- a few minutes ago. What is it, honey?

LORENZIO

I think something kinda weird and, I don't know, kinda -- well, cool -- but I can't tell. A few minutes, you said?

MARIA

Not even.

KNIGHTS creep up to the mirror and look at LORENZIO. He can sense they are there, but he cannot see them.

MARIA

What are you looking at?

LORENZIO

The truth.

MARIA

Lorenzo, you're beginning to scare me.

LORENZIO

Sit down. Mom, you say you were gone for just a few minutes -- but did you ever have one of those awake dreams where you were staring at something, and all of a sudden you're not there. You're there, but you're not because something's, like, gone away from you.

MARIA

You were out of body?

LORENZIO

Like you went to Neptune and back without a sweat.

MARIA

You went somewhere.

LORENZIO

I feel like I did.

MARIA

It's not that little gas thing you get, is it?

(a look from LORENZIO)

All right -- Just covering all the bases.

LORENZIO

What was I talking to you about before you left?

MARIA

About how boring you were -- which I don't agree with --

LORENZIO

And I was looking in here, and I kinda -- fell through.

MARIA

So you went -- through there?

LORENZIO

I think so --

MARIA

And what did you find?

LORENZIO stares at the mirror sees MOE and LARRY flip SHERRY.

KNIGHTS

Heads I win, tails I win.

LARRY

Ta-ta.

MOE

Toodle-loo.

SHERRY

Good night, sweet prince.

They exit.

LORENZIO

Heads I win, tails I win.

MARIA

What?

LORENZIO

(turns to her)

Heads I win, tails I win. Mom, real strength -- not out there.

Or --

(making muscle poses)

-- like this. The real stuff is right here --

MARIA

Must have been quite a trip. It's good to have you back.

LORENZIO

Yeah.

MARIA

Hungry?

LORENZIO

As a dragon.

MARIA

Dinner, then, your flameship, in the shake of a lamb's tail.

MARIA exits. LORENZIO comes downstage. The CROWD and KNIGHTS come out. The KNIGHTS have a crown and hand it to LORENZIO.

LORENZIO

You can travel to Neptune in a heartbeat.

HALF THE CROWD

You can have adventures and quests --

HALF THE CROWD

-- that seem wonderful and precious.

LORENZIO

But in the end --

MOE

In the end --

LORENZIO

The strangest journey of all --

LARRY

The journey that means the most because it is the hardest
--

LORENZIO

Is to remain strong in yourself.

CROWD pulls out kazoos and blows a fanfare for the king.

KNIGHTS

Hail King Lorenzo.

LORENZIO

(to the audience)

And may all your own journeys, no matter your age, bank
balance, or pizza preference, lead you along the highest
roads and toward the brightest suns.

KNIGHTS rush up to LORENZIO and jostle him jokingly.

MOE

And don't forget --

MOE and LARRY flip SHERRY, and as they do, everyone in the CROWD does the same.

LARRY

With a hey nonny -- nonny --

EVERYBODY

(a lá Groucho Marx)

And a ha -- cha -- cha!

Lights bump out. Music. Curtain call.

Macbeth's Children

A Confrontation with William Shakespeare's Macbeth

Co-Written with Dev Luthra

NOTE: This script was originated with the help of thirteen young actors in the Cambridge Performance Project during the spring of 2001.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- DUNCAN, King of Scotland
- MALCOLM, Son of Duncan
- DONALBAIN, Son of Duncan
- BANQUO, Thane of Scotland
- FLEANCE, Banquo's son
- MACBETH, Thane of Glamis, later of Cawdor, later King of Scotland
- LADY MACBETH, his wife
- MACDUFF, Thane of Fife
- LADY MACDUFF, his wife
- ATHOLL, his son
- FIRST WITCH
- SECOND WITCH
- THIRD WITCH

A NOTE ON CASTING:

Many of the actors will double (this is indicated in the text), and casting need not follow gender: female actors have played Duncan, Donalbain, Macduff, and Atholl.

WORKSHOP NOTES:

- Weapons: Weapons were 1½" painted dowels about 5' long, which served as spears and swords. There were four daggers made out of thin dowels and a simple cross-piece as a handguard.
- Witches: The witches had simple painted dowels for their wands. Whenever possible, have the witches onstage.
- Crowns: Gold crowns were used for Duncan and Lady Macbeth. (Duncan's crown was later passed on to Macbeth.) There were also eight gold crowns that Banquo's lays down in the apparition scene.
- Costumes: We wanted to have the actors, except for Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff, dress in some kind of military garb. The witches can

- dress in as wild an attire as they prefer.
- Music: We used a live drummer, but recorded music and sound could be used as well.
- Choreography: Movements should be simple and clean, with an emphasis on both adjectives.
- Epilogues: This script uses Epilogue #1; choose the one you like.

* * * * *

PROLOGUE

Lights out -- drumming begins, military style. THE WEIRD SISTERS appear and take up their places on the stage as if they were orchestrating the ensuing action.

The company, dressed as soldiers, enters the theatre in rhythm to the call of DRILL INSTRUCTOR.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Left -- left -- left right left -- left -- left-- left right left --

DRILL INSTRUCTOR continues he hands off their weapons: a 5' length of 1½" dowel. To bring the company to a halt, DRILL INSTRUCTOR chants.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Left right left right left right left --

On the last syllable, they all slam their weapons against the floor. They then begin THE FIELD OF BATTLE, a choreographed scene of warfare and devastation. The WITCHES wander through the warfare, occasionally "correcting" or re-directing but basically watchers.

COMPANY

The children have seen so much death

"Be all that you can be."

that death means nothing to them now.

"The few, the proud -- hoo-wah!"

They wait in line for bread.

"War is peace."

They wait in line for water.

"If you're not with us, you're against us."

Their eyes are black moons reflecting emptiness.

"Ignorance is truth."

We've seen them a thousand times.

"The damage is collateral."

[From Sam Hamill, "State of the Union 2003," *Almost Paradise: New & Selected Poems & Translations* (Shambhala Publications, 2005). Used by permission of the author.]

At the end of FIELD OF BATTLE, FLEANCE steps forward.

FLEANCE

Who would have thought the old man -- and the old woman,
and the father and mother aching to shield their children, and
the children themselves, both ripe and unripe, all reaped by
the harvest of swords -- who would have thought they had
so much blood in them. I never would have thought it.

(to the WITCHES)

Let's begin.

The company assembles under the chant of DRILL INSTRUCTOR, who
does a "Sound off" routine.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

The children have seen so much death --

COMPANY

Be all that you can be.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

-- that death means nothing to them now.

COMPANY

The few, the proud -- hoo-wa!

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Sound off --

COMPANY

One, two --

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Sound off --

COMPANY

Three, four --

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

One, two, three, four, one, two, hup --

ALL

Three, four!

Transition lights and music.

FIRST WITCH

So here we are, we three again / In thunder, lightning, and
in rain.

SECOND WITCH

Listen, sisters, to the drums -- / Something wicked this way
comes.

THIRD WITCH

These dogs of war, cold and ironical, / Are the players in our
piercing chronicle.

ALL

Fair turns foul, foul never turns fair: / Madness hovers in this
choking air.

The company, as one, bangs down their weapons, then takes up a posture
of attack/defense, as if in battle.

FIRST WITCH

Our story begins in a world rich in death.

SECOND WITCH

Caused by one man --

THIRD WITCH

Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH

Macbeth.

ALL (INCLUDING COMPANY)

Macbeth.

Company bangs their weapons again, then changes to a new posture. MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, and DUNCAN step forward out of the company.

FIRST WITCH

The play starts in Scotland --

SECOND WITCH

It's a time of civil war --

DUNCAN

Macbeth kills the traitors for King Duncan --

THIRD WITCH

But he wants just a little bit more --

FIRST WITCH

Greedy for the crown --

SECOND WITCH

Pricked on by his wife --

DUNCAN

They kicked King Duncan up to the afterlife.

Company bangs their weapons again, then new posture. LADY MACBETH, BANQUO, and FLEANCE step forward.

FIRST WITCH

But to keep the crown firmly nailed to his head --

LADY MACBETH

Macbeth piled more dead ones on the dead --

Company bangs their weapons, then simply stands at attention.

FLEANCE

Banquo, his best friend, was the first defiled --

MALCOLM and DONALBAIN step forward.

BANQUO

Leaving his son Fleance a fatherless child.

SECOND WITCH

Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan's heirs to the crown --

MALCOLM

Run away to England --

DONALBAIN

And Ireland --

MALCOLM
(thumb up)

Son up --

DONALBAIN
(thumb down)

Son down.

MACDUFF, LADY MACDUFF, and ATHOLL step forward.

FIRST WITCH

Macduff who knew the sins of Macbeth --

MACDUFF

Paid for his knowing with his own family's death.

THIRD WITCH

Lady Macbeth, her heart stuffed with remorse --

LADY MACDUFF

Killed herself -- she'd backed the wrong horse.

SECOND WITCH

Here's how it ends so you won't have to wait.

ATHOLL

Macduff kills Macbeth and --

Everyone makes a slicing motion across their necks with their hands.

ALL

Decapitate. End of story.

WITCHES

(indicating the audience)

But not for you --

(indicating the COMPANY)

-- or them.

FLEANCE

What about Fleance, Banquo's left-behind boy?

SECOND WITCH

Murderous dreams have murdered his joy.

MALCOLM

Or Malcolm --

DONALBAIN

Or Donalbain --

THIRD WITCH

Burning with hate --

MALCOLM AND DONALBAIN

When do we get to retaliate?

ALL WITCHES

None of these questions Mr. Shakespeare consults.

ALL CHILDREN

He's more interested in presenting his anguished adults.

FLEANCE

These adults said they'd protect us from pain --

ATHOLL

"We know what's best" was their constant refrain --

The drumming begins again, low, and the company, except for the WITCHES, marches in place but slowly moves upstage as well. The WITCHES step forward.

DUNCAN

This world of Macbeth --

BANQUO

-- is like our world today --

LADY MACBETH

Where children are beaten --

LADY MACDUFF

-- used up --

ATHOLL

-- thrown away --

MALCOLM

No power or money --

DONALBAIN

Means they have no defense --

MACBETH

And so the world murders --

MACDUFF

-- their innocence --

Drumming stops.

FIRST WITCH

What does it cost to be young in this world?

FLEANCE steps forward and takes a moment to look at the audience directly.

FLEANCE

What does it cost to be young in this world?

SECOND WITCH

Calculate the price --

THIRD WITCH

As our story's unfurled.

The drumming begins again, and there is now a much more choreographed piece of warfare as the WITCHES unfurl a banner which reads "Macbeth's

Children." When it's unfurled, the WITCHES call a halt to the "war," and the play begins.

NOTE: The banner can stretch across the stage horizontally or run vertically on both sides of the stage, "Macbeth's" on one side and "Children" on the other.

Strong transition.

* * * * *

Scene 1: England

The WITCHES announce the scene. This works best if FIRST WITCH says the words while the other two do some sort of funny mime to underscore the words.

FIRST WITCH

The exiles from Scotland at the Palace of Edward the Confessor, England. Facts in evidence -- please keep score -- it gets pretty tricky: Macbeth has killed Duncan, Banquo, and Macduff's wife and son. We now begin the play proper; you may sit back and watch.

This scene takes place just after Macbeth: 4.3, where MACDUFF has learned about the death of his family. MACDUFF is sitting alone.

FLEANCE enters running, wiping his hands vigorously on a handkerchief, as if trying to clean off something dirty. There is also a streak of red on his face or cheek. When he shows the handkerchief, it is daubed with red, as if with blood. MALCOLM and DONALBAIN enter.

MALCOLM

Macduff?

MACDUFF

Yes.

MALCOLM

How goes your grief today?

MACDUFF

I am the cat's mouse: I am played with and still living.

MALCOLM

Our hearts go to you -- yes, Fleance?

FLEANCE

(trying to clean his hands)

Yes, yes -- honored Macduff.

DONALBAIN

What is the matter?

FLEANCE

I have cut my hand.

DONALBAIN

How?

FLEANCE

(embarrassed)

On my knife.

DONALBAIN

(mocking)

Practicing "gladiator," hey?

MACDUFF

(to MALCOLM and DONALBAIN)

Our warrior.

MALCOLM goes to FLEANCE and gently wraps his hand in the handkerchief.

MALCOLM

At least he was doing something. What is it that we will do?

DONALBAIN

We each have hard cause against Macbeth.

MACDUFF

And that means only one thing, agreed upon, I hope: his swift and surgical and painful death. Edward will supply the men -- all we need to do is supply the will. And so, the question: when do we return to take back what was taken from us?

FLEANCE

I have had enough blood.

MACDUFF

What are you saying?

DONALBAIN

What is the "warrior" saying?

FLEANCE

Just that -- blood enough. He always treated me well.

MACDUFF

(to FLEANCE)

He unjointed your father for his table -- and your every breath does not breathe "revenge"? What kind of son are you?

FLEANCE

My heart needs patience.

MACDUFF

(dismissive)

Patience.

MALCOLM

Macduff --

MACDUFF

What?!

MALCOLM

Be patient --

MACDUFF

(to FLEANCE)

You crave patience even though a towering falcon -- your father! their father! -- was by that mousing owl Macbeth hawk'd at and kill'd? The world cracks, and you say "Patience"?

MALCOLM

We are doing the best our best can do with what we do not have. A little more talk will not mar the time.

DONALBAIN

Always were one for talk.

MALCOLM

You forget, brother, that I go back not only as avenger but also as king --

DONALBAIN

(to MACDUFF, mockingly)

And ain't I the good king's servant --

MALCOLM

-- and I do not want to be a traitor-hearted king like the king we now have. A better understanding of "why," otherwise we lose sight of "when" and "how." Tell them about the encounter with the witches -- you were there. You have heard this?

MACDUFF

No.

MALCOLM

(to DONALBAIN)

You?

DONALBAIN

No.

FLEANCE

I do not want to remember this!

MALCOLM

You should -- to better understand your understanding.

(to MACDUFF)

This is supposedly where began Macbeth's fall from grace.

(to FLEANCE)

We have both lost fathers -- speak this for yours.

FLEANCE

I wish my father could hold me now in his arms and with his voice.

MALCOLM

I have that same ache.

MACDUFF
(in disgust)

My God!

MALCOLM

Pour his voice from the chalice of your throat. I will be here.

FLEANCE

We were coming from the battle -- I was attending my father, as I always do.

MACDUFF

A young boy's place in battle.

FLEANCE

And then we saw them.

* * * * *

Scene 2: The Witches' Brew

Lights and setting change: the heath. Thunder. Enter the WITCHES. BANQUO and MACBETH prepare to enter; FLEANCE prepares to join them.

FIRST WITCH

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

SECOND WITCH

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

THIRD WITCH

Harpier cries 'Tis time, 'tis time.

ALL

'Tis time, 'tis time.

The drumming begins.

THIRD WITCH

A drum, a drum!
Macbeth doth come.

ALL

The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about:
Thrice to thine and thrice to mine
And thrice again, to make up nine.
Peace! the charm's wound up.

Enter MACBETH and BANQUO, with FLEANCE.

MACBETH

So foul and fair a day I have not seen. Young Fleance, keep
up with us! I would not want you lost.

BANQUO

He held himself well today.

MACBETH

He did, he did -- I wish I had a son of my own to follow my
feet.

BANQUO

There is always time and hope --

FLEANCE

Father --

BANQUO

What are these
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't?

MACBETH

Speak, if you can: what are you?

FIRST WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH

All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH

All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!

FLEANCE

(pointing to MACBETH)

Father, look!

BANQUO

Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair?

MACBETH

Like the day itself, fair good news fouled with exhaustion.

MALCOLM

(interrupting, to FLEANCE)

What did you think then?

FLEANCE

Think? I could barely breathe! These witches -- ugly, loud
--

MALCOLM

Think, Fleance --

MACDUFF

This is a waste of time.

DONALBAIN

I agree.

MALCOLM

Did Macbeth seem just surprised or was he brimmed with
fear?

FLEANCE

He looked -- guilty, as if someone had guessed a secret.

BANQUO
(to the WITCHES)

My noble partner --

MALCOLM

A secret --

BANQUO
-- you greet with present grace and great prediction --

to me you speak not.

MALCOLM
(to MACDUFF)
Planted early well before these witches. What happened
next?

FLEANCE
My father wanted something from them.

BANQUO
If you can look into the seeds of time --

FIRST WITCH
Hail!

SECOND WITCH
Hail!

THIRD WITCH
Hail!

FIRST WITCH
Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

SECOND WITCH
Not so happy, yet much happier.

THIRD WITCH
Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:
So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

FIRST WITCH

Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

The WITCHES vanish. MACBETH and BANQUO pursue, then freeze.

FLEANCE

It was all very confusing.

MALCOLM

I can imagine. My father, Duncan, king -- Macbeth, king --

BANQUO

(to MACBETH)

You shall be king.

MALCOLM

(to FLEANCE)

And you, Fleance, king.

MACBETH

(to BANQUO)

Your children shall be kings.

MACDUFF

(to MALCOLM)

And you, at that point -- king-in-waiting.

(pointing to FLEANCE)

And him -- king?

MALCOLM

Yes.

MACDUFF

Four kings.

DONALBAIN

And a leftover.

MACDUFF

One throne.

MALCOLM
(to FLEANCE)

It is very confusing.

FLEANCE

I do not want to be king. I cannot bear its edge against my heart.

MACDUFF

You are a coward, Fleance -- shut up. So, Macbeth had it early in his heart to kill your father. The baby verifies that. And only one course to the throne -- Macbeth through a sea of blood, smile on his lips, his heart a crunch of coal without a seam of grace in it. What else is there to understand?

MACBETH breaks into the action.

MACBETH

There is more to me than that.

MACDUFF

The hollow man rings!

MACBETH

True, I had lusted to set Duncan's sun on my head --
But what the witches told me
Frightened me to the hollow of my bones....
Murder -- to hear my thought, yet but fantastical,
Echoed back by the clappers of their tongues
Shook so my single state of man
And made my seated heart knock at my ribs...

MACDUFF

So, a touch of conscience --
(referring to FLEANCE)
-- even this suckling --

MALCOLM
(referring to FLEANCE)

You need not insult him --

MACDUFF

-- would feel as much. Much older, you should have felt it more. More responsible, you should have cut your own throat then and there.

MACBETH

I hoped if chance would have me king, why, chance might crown me,
Without my stir.

MACDUFF

Add laziness!

BANQUO

(interrupting)

I tried to tell him
To be more careful of his soul,
That...the instruments of darkness tell us truths...
To betray us in deepest consequence.
But he did not hear me -- stood wrapped in his own come-bloody thoughts.

MALCOLM

Fleance, you can let the memory go. Enough.

FLEANCE walks to his father. MACBETH and BANQUO turn back.

FLEANCE

Look, how rapt he is, Father.

BANQUO

Yes, look, how our partner's rapt. Macbeth!

MACBETH

(whispering to himself)

Come what come may --

BANQUO

Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

MACBETH

Let us toward the king.
Think upon what hath chanced, and...

Having weigh'd it, let us speak
Our free hearts each to other.

BANQUO

Very gladly.

MACBETH

Till then, enough. Come, Fleance, come be my traveling
boy for the tumbled trip to home.

FLEANCE

(asking permission)

Father?

BANQUO

Be to both of us our homeward son and bring us three good
luck!

BANQUO and MACBETH exit.

FLEANCE

He joked with me all the way. Gave me coins. Praised my
arm's strength. Said he wished he had a son like me.

MACDUFF

A counterfeit heart.

FLEANCE

I liked him.

* * * * *

Scene 3

DONALBAIN

You liked him! He liked him! You are an idiot! We are
wasting time!

MALCOLM

If I am -- if he and I are -- to measure out our lives against
his, then I need to know his measure within an inch of my
life.

DONALBAIN

Your life isn't worth an inch at the moment. Nor yours.

MALCOLM

(to FLEANCE and DONALBAIN)

He treated our father well, too. He saved my father's kingdom -- before corruption tasted anything of him.

Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding SERGEANT, played by ATHOLL.

DUNCAN

What bloody man is that?

MALCOLM

This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!
Say to king Duncan the knowledge of the broil --

SERGEANT

Doubtful it stood...

A stab of pain -- then the SERGEANT continues.

SERGEANT

Fortune, on [the traitor] smiling,
Show'd like a rebel's whore: but...brave Macbeth--well he
deserves that name--
Disdaining fortune...carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave
And with his brandish'd steel
Unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN

O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

MALCOLM comments to MACDUFF, DONALBAIN, and FLEANCE.

MALCOLM

See his manly, savage, graceful bravery. My father's love made him gifts for that.

Enter DUNCAN, MACBETH and BANQUO.

DUNCAN

O worthiest cousin!
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me: ...only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay....
My worthy Cawdor!

FLEANCE

Then why did he do it? I do not want to be a king! He had
grace, courage -- why, why, why?! If he can have that grace
and then lose all grace, what hope for grace is there for any
of us? What hope is there for me?

MACDUFF

(to DONALBAIN)

Oh, this is rare!

DONALBAIN

Rare? Uncooked!

MACDUFF

Your joint and several purposes are blunted by "why"! You
have enough cause to choke you, and yet you will not clear
your throats!

(to FLEANCE)

Boy, what must I do to bake you hard?

(to MALCOLM)

And you should know better.

MALCOLM

I know better than you think I know.

DONALBAIN

You think better than you act, which is not hard since your
act is nothing to think about.

MACDUFF summons the WITCHES and MACBETH and speaks to them.

FLEANCE

(fearful)

What are you doing?

MACDUFF

(directed at MACBETH)

Our devalued Scottish spawn is not the only one powered
to call our worst forward. Show them the real truth of this
wicked world. Begin with me.

In this scene, FIRST WITCH and SECOND WITCH will double as murderers
of LADY MACDUFF and ATHOLL, MACDUFF's son. MACBETH will speak
the lines of the MESSENGER, then join the murderers. As the scene is set,
MACDUFF speaks.

MACDUFF

(to FLEANCE and MALCOLM)

Let these coming wounds wound you back to your purpose.

(to the WITCHES)

You may begin.

The WITCHES circle MACDUFF.

FIRST WITCH

Macduff of Fife had a wife.

SECOND WITCH

Macduff of Fife had a son.

THIRD WITCH

Macduff of Fife left no message.

In the scene, it is clear that FLEANCE allies himself with ATHOLL.

* * * * *

Scene 4: Macduff's Castle

LADY MACDUFF

What had he done, to make him fly the land?

ATHOLL

You must have patience, madam.

DONALBAIN

There's patience again!

LADY MACDUFF

He had none:
His flight was madness...to leave his wife, to leave his
babes,
His mansion and his titles in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not...
(referring to ATHOLL)
Father'd he is, and yet he's fatherless.

FLEANCE

How "fatherless" rings in my ears!

MACBETH joins the murderers. FLEANCE stays near ATHOLL.

LADY MACDUFF

Sirrah, your father's dead...How will you live?

ATHOLL

As birds do, mother.

LADY MACDUFF

What, with worms and flies?

ATHOLL

With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

LADY MACDUFF

Poor bird! thou'ldst never fear the net nor lime,
The pitfall nor the gin.

ATHOLL

Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set [traps]
for.

FLEANCE

Oh, yes they are.

ATHOLL

My father is not dead, for all your saying.

LADY MACDUFF

Yes, he is dead --

FLEANCE

If he is wanted dead, then he will be found dead.

LADY MACDUFF

How wilt thou do for a father?

ATHOLL

Nay, how will you do for a husband?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

ATHOLL

Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

FLEANCE

Fathers are cheap and used so cheaply.

ATHOLL

Was my father a traitor, mother?

LADY MACDUFF

Ay, that he was...one that swears and lies.

ATHOLL

And be all traitors that do so?

LADY MACDUFF

Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged.

ATHOLL

And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

LADY MACDUFF

Every one.

FLEANCE

Then the world would be empty.

ATHOLL

Who must hang them?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, the honest men.

DONALBAIN

Young suckling Fleance --

ATHOLL

Then the liars and swearers are fools,
for there are liars and swearers enow to beat
the honest men and hang up them.

DONALBAIN

-- you look green!

LADY MACDUFF

God help thee, poor monkey, poor prattler --

Enter a MESSENGER, who is actually MACBETH disguised. LADY
MACDUFF's responses set him off balance.

LADY MACDUFF

Who are you?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Bless you, fair dame!

LADY MACDUFF

Why are you blessing me?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

I am not to you known --

LADY MACDUFF

No, you are not!

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Though in your state of honour I am perfect.

LADY MACDUFF

How did you get in?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

I doubt some danger --

LADY MACDUFF

How did you get in?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

I doubt some danger does approach you nearly --

LADY MACDUFF

Do you know or do you not?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

If you will take a homely man's advice,
Be not found here --

LADY MACDUFF

Why?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Hence, with your little ones.

LADY MACDUFF

Why?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Cruelty...is too nigh your person.

LADY MACDUFF

Why?

MESSENGER [MACBETH]

Heaven preserve you!
I dare abide no longer.

LADY MACDUFF

I abide you no longer!

The MESSENGER exits. FLEANCE and ATHOLL act almost as one. MACBETH tries to leave, but LADY MACBETH appears to force him to join the murderers.

LADY MACDUFF

I have done no harm.

FLEANCE

It doesn't matter.

LADY MACDUFF

But I remember now
I am in this earthly world --

FLEANCE

Ashes to ashes --

LADY MACDUFF

-- where to do harm --

ATHOLL

Dust to dust --

LADY MACDUFF

Is often laudable, to do good sometime
Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas,
Do I put up that womanly defence,
To say I have done no harm?

ATHOLL

We have done no harm.

Enter MURDERERS.

LADY MACDUFF

What are these faces?

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Where is your husband?

LADY MACDUFF

I hope, in no place...
Where such as thou mayst find him.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

He's a traitor.

ATHOLL

Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain! Mother, I protect thee!

ATHOLL attacks the MURDERER.

NOTE: The death of ATHOLL and LADY MACDUFF should be done as stylized as possible.

FLEANCE

Don't!

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

What, you egg!

The MURDERER stabs ATHOLL. He falls into FLEANCE's arms.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

Young fry of treachery!

ATHOLL

He has kill'd me, mother:

Run away, I pray you!

ATHOLL dies in FLEANCE's arms. LADY MACDUFF backs away from the MURDERERS, and as she does so, she backs into LADY MACBETH, who holds her. One of the murderers ties a red ribbon around her throat, and LADY MACDUFF collapses to the floor. A beat after LADY MACDUFF's murder, then both ATHOLL and LADY MACDUFF rise and exit, as if they are leaving the stage after completing their scene. ATHOLL and FLEANCE take a beat to acknowledge each other before ATHOLL leaves.

MACDUFF

(to FLEANCE)

That would have been you. Young Atholl's body, my son's body, answers to the salutation of worms because you got away.

MALCOLM

That is enough.

MACDUFF

We have barely set sail. Come on, weanling -- do you see me crying any more over the death of my loves? I cried as was needed, then left off crying as was needed. You know what needs next happen. Listen to this man whom you "liked" so much.

DONALBAIN

Such great and scurvy fun!

The killing of BANQUO: this is an edited combination of 3.1 and 3.3. The FIRST WITCH and SECOND WITCH will again play the murderers. BANQUO now plays himself, as does FLEANCE. The THIRD WITCH will play the THIRD MURDERER. MACBETH comes over and leads FLEANCE into the scene by the hand, then stands by the MURDERERS.

MACBETH

Well then, now, my catalogue of dogs,
Have you gnawed on the scraps of my speeches?...
Both of you
Know Banquo was your enemy.

BOTH MURDERERS

True, my lord.

MACBETH

So is he mine...I could
With barefaced power sweep him from my sight...
yet I must not....
[So] I to your assistance do make love,
Masking the business from the common eye
For sundry weighty reasons.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

I am one, my liege,
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
Have so incensed that I am reckless what
I do to spite the world.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

And I another
So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,
That I would set my lie on any chance,
To mend it, or be rid on't.

MACBETH

Your spirits shine through you. Within this hour at most
I will advise you where to plant yourselves...
it must be done to-night,
And something from the palace...

Leave no rubs nor botches in the work--
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,
Whose absence is no less material to me
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:
I'll come to you anon.

BOTH MURDERERS

We are resolved, my lord.

Exit MURDERERS. MACBETH alone -- these words come just before his meeting with the MURDERERS. As he speaks, he stands next to or close to FLEANCE. The WITCHES surround him.

MACBETH

He...bade [the sister] speak to him --

FIRST WITCH

Then prophet-like
They hail'd him father to a line of kings --

SECOND WITCH

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe --

THIRD WITCH

Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding.

MACBETH

If 't be so,
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd...
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
It is concluded.

FIRST WITCH

Banquo, thy soul's flight --

SECOND WITCH

If it find heaven --

THIRD WITCH

Must find it out to-night.

FLEANCE shows some hesitation. The MURDERERS position themselves.

BANQUO

Come, son, this is the part we must play.

FLEANCE

I cannot --

MACDUFF

Think of Atholl -- you owe it to him to know what he knew.

FLEANCE

I already know this.

MACDUFF

Not deeply enough.

BANQUO

Come, son -- it is what all men must bear to make their lives well-borne.

This scene comes from 3.3. Enter three MURDERERS -- MACBETH actually pushes the THIRD WITCH, who does not want to do the deed. When she refuses, MACBETH joins the MURDERERS, in a quick disguise.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

But who did bid thee join with us?

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

Macbeth.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

He needs not our mistrust...

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Then stand with us....near approaches
The subject of our watch.

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

Hark! I hear horses.

BANQUO

Give us a light there, ho!

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

Then 'tis he --

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

A light, a light!

Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch.

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

'Tis he.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Stand to't.

BANQUO

It will be rain to-night.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Let it come down.

They set upon BANQUO.

BANQUO

O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!
Thou mayst revenge. O slave!

BANQUO dies in a stylized manner. FLEANCE escapes, then stands by MACBETH, watching the scene.

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

Who did strike out the light?

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Wast not the way?

THIRD MURDERER [MACBETH]

There's but one down; the son is fled.

SECOND MURDERER [SECOND WITCH]

We have lost

Best half of our affair.

FIRST MURDERER [FIRST WITCH]

Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

FIRST WITCH and SECOND WITCH exit. MACBETH puts a hand on FLEANCE while he speaks.

MACBETH

No son of mine succeeding --
To make...the seed of Banquo kings!

MACBETH shoves FLEANCE away.

MALCOLM

Enough.

MACDUFF

And you think you escape the visions?

FLEANCE

Enough!

(to DUNCAN)

There is no need!

MACDUFF

(to MALCOLM)

You wanted to know better the "why."

(to ALL)

If we unite to fight against Macbeth, we cross ourselves on the crucifix that blood nails us to -- no other "why" will do.

FLEANCE

It is just blood now, isn't it? Not principle, not justice, not "greater good" -- but whose thirst is the first to be gorged!

(to MALCOLM)

Stop them!

DONALBAIN

(mocking)

"Stop them!" You have no choice -- see what your manhood makes it clear you cannot escape, ever.

MACDUFF signals DUNCAN to take his place his place in his "bed," a chair set stage center. MACBETH and LADY MACBETH enter, as does BANQUO, who signals FLEANCE, who reluctantly joins him again. MACDUFF signals to begin.

Enter BANQUO and FLEANCE.

BANQUO

How goes the night, boy?

FLEANCE

The moon is down...

BANQUO

...A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep: merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose!

Enter MACBETH.

BANQUO

Who's there?

MACBETH

A friend.

BANQUO

What, sir, not yet at rest? The king's a-bed....
I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:
To you they have show'd some truth.

MACBETH

...When we can entreat an hour...
We would spend it in some words upon that business...

BANQUO

At your kind'st leisure.

MACBETH

If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,
It shall make honour for you.

BANQUO

So I lose none
In seeking to augment it...

MACBETH

Good repose the while!

BANQUO

Thanks, sir: the like to you!

Exeunt BANQUO and FLEANCE, but then FLEANCE turns away from his father and sneaks back to the scene as LADY MACBETH enters the scene. She has a knife in her hand. They will play a game of "hide-and-seek" all the way into DUNCAN's bedroom.

MACBETH

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?

MALCOLM

Wait! You watched? Wait! Why?

MACBETH and LADY MACBETH wait.

FLEANCE

Curiosity. To learn something good for my father, since Macbeth had won gifts for doing only what my father had done.

MALCOLM

And then did nothing? Said nothing?

FLEANCE

Look at me -- a child, not a man, but --

(indicating MACDUFF and DONALBAIN)

-- according to them, a man nonetheless -- then a weak man --

DONALBAIN

Weakly squeaky --

FLEANCE

-- with no power to prevent, only buckle and bleach my eyes
with knowledge too soon seen, too little soothed.

(to MALCOLM)

And whom to trust?

MALCOLM

Your father?

FLEANCE

And put him in danger? If chance could find the murderers,
then that same chance might save my father.

MACDUFF

(to MALCOLM)

Satisfied?

MACDUFF signals to MACBETH.

MACBETH

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

LADY MACBETH pulls just out of his reach, plays hide-and-seek with it
behind her back.

LADY MACBETH

[Oh, but I] do fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness --

MACBETH

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

LADY MACBETH

[Let me] chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round.

MACBETH

Art thou...fatal vision...but

A dagger of the mind...?

LADY MACBETH

Look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't.

LADY MACBETH laughs quietly, and leads him into DUNCAN's bedroom.
She places the knife in DUNCAN's hand.

MACBETH

I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.

MACBETH takes out his own knife. As he does, DUNCAN takes the knife
in his hand and smears it with red coloring, to resemble blood. MACBETH
is now in DUNCAN's bedroom.

MACBETH

And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before.

DUNCAN exchanges knives with MACBETH; MACBETH now holds the
bloody one. DUNCAN bloodies the second knife.

MACBETH

There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes.

LADY MACBETH

Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire?

MACBETH

It is the bloody business!

LADY MACBETH

What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man...

MACBETH

I am still manned!

LADY MACBETH

But now too full o' the milk of human kindness!
I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.

MACBETH

Bring forth men-children only
[As you have brought me forth];
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males.

LADY MACBETH takes the second knife out of DUNCAN's hand and puts it in MACBETH's hand. He now holds two bloody knives. He stands behind DUNCAN.

MACBETH

I am settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
Away, and mock the time with fairest show:
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

LADY MACBETH leaves the room. FLEANCE half-looks at MACBETH. MACBETH raises the daggers over his head and slowly brings them down until the tips touch DUNCAN's chest as the WITCHES speak.

FIRST WITCH

Now o'er the one halfworld
Nature seems dead --

SECOND WITCH

-- and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep --

THIRD WITCH

Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings --

FIRST WITCH

-- and wither'd murder --

SECOND WITCH

-- alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf...

THIRD WITCH

-- towards his design
Moves like a ghost....

The knives are against DUNCAN's chest. A bell rings.

MACBETH

....Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

MACBETH lays the daggers in an "X" on DUNCAN's chest. DUNCAN takes some of the red coloring he used on the knives and smears MACBETH's hands with it. MACBETH pulls the knives away. DUNCAN falls and dies.

FLEANCE

Murder!

MACBETH spins around but FLEANCE flies, and MACBETH does not see him. He immediately joins LADY MACBETH.

MALCOLM

God bless us!

DONALBAIN

Amen!

MACBETH

(looking on his hands)

This is a sorry sight.

LADY MACBETH

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH

There's one...cried 'Murder!'
One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' another...
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'

When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH

Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH

But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen"?
I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"
Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH

These deeds...thought...these ways...will make us mad.

MACBETH

Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep" --

MALCOLM

Macbeth murders all our sleep.

MACDUFF

-- the innocent sleep --

FLEANCE

Enough pity!

MACBETH

-- "Macbeth shall sleep no more."

LADY MACBETH

....Get some water,
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go carry them; and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH

I'll go no more:
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH

Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil --

MACDUFF
(to FLEANCE)

Do you fear him?

LADY MACBETH
If he do bleed --

MACDUFF
(to FLEANCE)
Do you fear this painted devil?

LADY MACBETH takes some of the blood from the knives and smears his cheek with it.

LADY MACBETH
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;
For it must seem their guilt.

LADY MACBETH exits, taking the daggers. She places one in FLEANCE's hand, the other in MALCOLM's. She returns to DUNCAN and smears her own hands. Meanwhile, MACBETH looks at his hands.

MACBETH
....What hands are here?...
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No.

Re-enter LADY MACBETH.

LADY MACBETH
My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white....
A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy is it, then!....
Be not lost
So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH
To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

MACDUFF motions to the WITCHES, and they gather the actors together. FLEANCE and MALCOLM (holding the daggers), DONALBAIN, MACDUFF, and MACBETH remain.

MACDUFF

'Twere best to know ourselves in order to know our deeds.
Now, knowing, what will we do? We have seen all we need
to know.

No one moves.

DONALBAIN

Silence! We are no further along than when we started all
this "remembering." They stand there like blunted sheep.
They will not move in revolt against the revolt done to us,
and we cannot move without them moving.

(to MACDUFF)

As a good lord you will not move without --

(indicating MALCOLM)

-- his consent, and this one --

(indicating FLEANCE)

-- is the wild card that makes jokers of us all: not yet king
but king to be. And I? I've nothing to give but spleen and
malice, and they are rated common stuff -- like me.

MACBETH

(to MACDUFF)

Look at them -- upon them you rest your rebellious anger?
Upon them you plant your siege? You have already lost,
for I have powers and truths beyond any measures you can
measure out against me. Come, witches, once again.

MACBETH motions for the WITCHES to enter. DUNCAN, LADY MACDUFF, and BANQUO will play the apparitions. From 4.1.

FIRST WITCH

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

SECOND WITCH

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

THIRD WITCH

Harpier cries 'Tis time, 'tis time.

FIRST WITCH

Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw....

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

SECOND WITCH

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.

MACBETH

How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!...
I conjure you, by that which you profess,
Howe'er you come to know [my future], answer me:

FIRST WITCH

Speak.

SECOND WITCH

Demand.

THIRD WITCH

We'll answer.

Thunder. First Apparition: a bloody Child.

FIRST APPARITION

Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.

MACBETH

Then I will live...

MACBETH points at MALCOLM, MACDUFF, DONALBAIN, and FLEANCE.

MACBETH

-- what need I fear of thee, all woman-born and women-fed?

Thunder. Second Apparition: a Child crowned, with a tree in his hand.

SECOND APPARITION

Be lion-mettled, proud...
For Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until

Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him.

MACBETH

That will never be -- Sweet bodements! good!...
Yet my heart
Throbs to know one thing more: tell me, if your art
Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever
Reign in this kingdom?....

FIRST WITCH

Show!

SECOND WITCH

Show!

THIRD WITCH

Show!...

Third Apparition: a show of Eight Kings. BANQUO lays down eight crowns as MACBETH speaks.

MACBETH

Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: down!
And thy hair...is like the first.
A third! A fourth! Start, eyes!
What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?
Another yet! A seventh!...
Yet the eighth appears....
Horrible sight!...

BANQUO moves away from MACBETH.

MACBETH

What, is this so?

ALL WITCHES AND APPARITIONS

Ay, sir, all this is so....

The WITCHES and APPARITIONS vanish, taking the crowns.

MACBETH

(to MACDUFF)

So, you see -- I am fortified, bolstered in blood against all coming blood. Every man is of woman born, every tree must stay within its roots. Fleance, you are the one mystery I cannot crack -- but crack it I will to keep the golden round from squaring itself on you. Save yourselves your selves; Scotland is mine.

MACBETH exits. There is a long pause.

MACDUFF

(to MALCOLM)

Face it, my lord -- for you are my lord, though not yet crowned at Scone -- it is upon him --

(indicating FLEANCE)

-- that Scotland's fairness hangs.

DONALBAIN

But the apparitions?

MACDUFF

I will be the one to set the conditions of Macbeth's death.

DONALBAIN

Your mother was not of this world?

MACDUFF

Try not to exercise thy charm...

Macduff was from his mother's womb

Untimely ripp'd.

MALCOLM

Thou opposed, being of no woman born?

DONALBAIN

And I suppose you can coax trees to engage in close formation?

MALCOLM

(understanding what MACDUFF is thinking)

Yes, he can.

DONALBAIN

Oh?

MALCOLM

Let every soldier hew him down a bough
And bear't before him: thereby shall we shadow
The numbers of our host and make discovery
Err in report of us.

DONALBAIN

If two can be fulfilled --

(looks at FLEANCE)

Then surely three will be our lucky number.

MALCOLM

Lucky for some.

MACDUFF

(to MALCOLM)

Your luck will be to king our kingdom for the term of your heart's length -- but the health of our body politic rests on this young prate's friable bones.

(to FLEANCE)

Well? The decision is yours -- rebellion or exile.

MALCOLM

(looking at FLEANCE)

You are my rival, now, you know.

DONALBAIN

And you are both now mine.

FLEANCE

I don't want to be anything to anyone but son to my father.

DONALBAIN

Too late for that.

MALCOLM

And I must add my weight on your friable bones.

MACDUFF

As I said, Edward has pledged 10,000 men, Fleance. Plus what we raise in arms at home. But we need your word. We need the man's word, the word of the man today and the man to come.

FLEANCE

(to MALCOLM)

What should I do?

MALCOLM

There is no real choice here. What is soft must be baked hard; what is already hardened must shatter in service. That is your path. From now on political bread feeds your daily plate.

FLEANCE looks at them all, looking very much like a frightened child. He indicates for MALCOLM to give him his dagger, which he does. Then, putting one blade against another, he scrapes them together, as if he were sharpening one blade against the other.

FLEANCE

This is how my soul feels.

The rest of the actors, except MACBETH, take up their weapons. They circle FLEANCE and say the following as they slowly crowd in on him.

DUNCAN

Fight.

ALL

Fight.

MACDUFF

Kill.

ALL
Kill.

BANQUO
Prove it.

ALL
Prove it.

FIRST WITCH
Rebellion or exile.

ALL
Rebellion.

LADY MACDUFF
Revenge is sweet.

ALL
Revenge.

LADY MACBETH
When you durst do it, then you were a man.

ALL
Be a man.

ATHOLL
Avenge your father.

ALL
Avenge.

SECOND WITCH
Be a warrior.

ALL
Warrior.

THIRD WITCH
What kind of son are you?

ALL

Son.

DONALBAIN

Be a faithful son.

ALL

Faithful.

ALL WITCHES

To be a hero -- or not to be.

FLEANCE crosses the daggers on his chest, then raises them over his head and yells as loudly as he can.

FLEANCE

YES!!!

Everyone stops, faces the audience, as the lights come to ghost light. Everyone exits except the WITCHES and FLEANCE.

* * * * *

Scene 5

THIRD WITCH

Foul whisperings are abroad -

FIRST WITCH

Unnatural deeds --

SECOND WITCH

Do breed unnatural troubles --

FIRST WITCH

Infected minds --

THIRD WITCH

-- to their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets --

SECOND WITCH

(indicating FLEANCE)

More needs he the divine than the physician.

THIRD WITCH

Malcolm and Donalbain and Macduff came back.

SECOND WITCH

They brought 10,000 men to spring the attack.

FIRST WITCH holds her paper in front of her face.

FIRST WITCH

They cut branches down for camouflage.

SECOND WITCH and THIRD WITCH do the same, peeking out from behind.

FIRST WITCH

This faked out Macbeth when they launched their barrage.

SECOND WITCH

And Lady Macbeth used a hundred brands --

THIRD WITCH

-- of soap to scrape the blood off her hands.

The WITCHES mock-wash their hands while mock-saying the phrase.

SECOND WITCH

And when she couldn't wash them clean --

THIRD WITCH

She killed herself --

FIRST WITCH

End of that scene.

They grab their backpacks and move to FLEANCE. From their backpacks they pull a variety of articles that they use to dress FLEANCE as a "warrior" -- but because of what they pull out of their bags, he looks more like a clown warrior than a "real" warrior. [NOTE: It is director's choice about what to pull out and put on FLEANCE.]

FIRST WITCH

And now it's time for Fleance to be strong --

THIRD WITCH

Not show any fears --

FIRST WITCH

Make hard his heart, deafen his ears --

SECOND WITCH

Show the adults he can be killingly wild --

THIRD WITCH

And never think twice that he was once a child.

The WITCHES step back to admire their work. FLEANCE looks the fool, but he doesn't protest. The other actors enter, "dressed" for war.

SECOND WITCH

Macbeth waits for you.

FLEANCE

The mind I sway by and the heart I bear
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

Without hesitation, FLEANCE rips off his "armor" until he holds nothing but his "sword." The WITCHES back off but keep smiling.

FLEANCE

To-morrow -- and to-morrow -- and to-morrow --

MALCOLM

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day --

MACDUFF

To the last syllable of recorded time --

DUNCAN

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools --

DONALBAIN

The way to dusty death.

LADY MACDUFF

Out, out, brief candle!

BANQUO

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player --

LADY MACBETH

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage --

ATHOLL

And then is heard no more --

MACBETH

It is a tale told by an idiot --

FLEANCE

Full of sound and fury --

MACBETH AND FLEANCE

Signifying nothing.

A SERVANT (ATHOLL) steps forward.

MACBETH

Thy story quickly.

SERVANT [ATHOLL]

As I did stand my watch upon the hill,
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,
The wood began to move.

MALCOLM AND WITCHES

"Fear not, till Birnam wood
Do come to Dunsinane."

MACBETH

And now a wood
Comes toward Dunsinane.

MACDUFF

Arm, arm, and out!

MACBETH

I gin to be aweary of the sun,
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.

SOLDIER [DUNCAN]

Ring the alarum-bell!

SOLDIER [BANQUO]

Blow, wind! come, wrack!

ALL (EXCEPT FOR FLEANCE AND MACBETH)

At least they will die with harness on their back!

* * * * *

Scene 6: Dunsinane.

Drumming begins. The COMPANY performs THE FIELD OF BATTLE, and FLEANCE fights. From the pack come MACBETH, MACDUFF, and FLEANCE. The company continues the choreography, but now in slow motion and in silence.

MACBETH

They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,
But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's he
That was not born of woman? Such a one
Am I to fear, or none.

MACDUFF comes up behind MACBETH. FLEANCE stands to the side.

MACDUFF

Turn, hell-hound, turn!

MACBETH

Get thee back; my soul is too much charged
With blood of thine already --
(seeing FLEANCE)
-- and thine in addition.

MACDUFF

My voice is in my sword.

MACBETH

Thou lovest labour --
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield,
To one of woman born.

FLEANCE

Despair thy charm --
Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd.

MACBETH

Accursed be that tongue that tells me so --

MACDUFF

Then yield thee, coward,

MACBETH

I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
Nor honor [indicating FLEANCE] his eight-fold continuous
crown --
I will try to the last. Lay on, Macduff,
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

A short, choreographed fight between MACDUFF and MACBETH, but MACBETH is defeated, thrown down. The COMPANY forms a half-circle around MACDUFF, MACBETH, and FLEANCE. MACBETH waits to be killed by MACDUFF. He is on his knees with MACDUFF's his sword across his throat.

MACDUFF
(to FLEANCE)

Come here. Come here.

ALL

Come here.

FLEANCE walks slowly to MACDUFF.

MACDUFF

This is what you must do.

ALL

Must do.

FLEANCE

I cannot.

ALL

Cannot.

MACDUFF

The death for traitors is beheading. Macbeth is a traitor
nonpareil. Therefore --

MALCOLM

Fleance, you have no choice.

ALL

No choice.

(beat of the weapons)

No choice.

(beat of the weapons)

No choice --

The beat of the weapons continues throughout until the decapitation.

MACDUFF

This is what you must do to complete yourself.

ALL

Complete yourself.

MACDUFF

This must happen if your spirit stays strong enough for eight
generations.

MACDUFF urges FLEANCE to grab the other end of the sword and pull up
on it, thus completing the beheading.

FLEANCE reaches, then walks away to talk himself into doing the deed.

FLEANCE

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts...
Fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose --

The company recites the same lines in a hoarse whisper echoing him.

COMPANY

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts...
Fill him from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick his blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake his fell purpose --

FLEANCE finally grabs the other end of the sword. Just as they are about to complete the act, the company bangs their weapons on the floor. With a slight jerk upwards, MACDUFF and FLEANCE complete the act. To indicate the beheading, MACBETH simply drops his head over the sword: the movement should be clean and simple, with no melodrama.

* * * * *

Epilogue #1

There is a very slight pause, and then all the actors, one by one, act as if they have just awakened from a dream: they are making a transition from the world of the stage back into their own world. MACBETH remains with his head bowed. The WITCHES remain the WITCHES in their behavior, though: slightly sarcastic, always curious.

FLEANCE

Our revels now are ended.

WITCHES

Yes.

BANQUO

(pointing to MACBETH)

Look what we have done.

MACBETH raises his head.

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes.

LADY MACDUFF

We have destroyed the life of someone --

ATHOLL

But he destroyed the lives of others --

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes.

DUNCAN

So we had reasons to make it right --

LADY MACBETH

More than reasons enough.

MALCOLM

More than "more than enough" -- remember, all those
"reasons" he killed had names --

BANQUO

Faces --

ATHOLL

Family --

DONALBAIN

Friends --

MACDUFF

And all who kill others should die themselves --

DONALBAIN

Eye for an eye --

LADY MACDUFF

Heart for a heart --

DUNCAN

Vengeance and revenge.

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes. Yes.

FIRST WITCH

And does this execution bring you peace?

SECOND WITCH

And is this world better off?

THIRD WITCH

(indicating MACBETH)

And what does doing that make all of you?

FIRST WITCH

We thought --

SECOND WITCH

We'd just ask you --

THIRD WITCH

These questions.

FLEANCE

I have a feeling --

Everyone looks at FLEANCE.

FLEANCE

I have a feeling that this is not where we should end.

MACBETH

So what would you suggest?

FLEANCE

(indicating the audience)

I think we need to talk with them.

MACBETH

Them?

FLEANCE

Yes.

MACBETH

All right.

The COMPANY faces the audience, perhaps even comes downstage to be as close as possible. FLEANCE gestures to LADY MACDUFF to begin. The ACTORS read their brief letters to one of the characters in the play, a character to whom they want to say something or make an observation. The letters can be memorized or read from sheets of paper the actors carry on them. When they are finished, the company, as one, speaks to the audience.

ALL

"What does it cost to be young in this world?"

FLEANCE

Being young in this world should never have a cost.

All at the same, the COMPANY clap their hands and do a vaudeville-type button, with the arms outspread and on an angle, with a step forward, using "Hah!" to punctuate the movement. Then they all bow simply and exit as music comes up.

* * * * *

Epilogue #2

FLEANCE

Our revels now are ended.

WITCHES

Yes.

BANQUO

(pointing to MACBETH)

Look what we have done.

MACBETH raises his head.

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes.

LADY MACDUFF

We have destroyed the life of someone --

ATHOLL

But he destroyed the lives of others --

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes.

DUNCAN

So we had reasons to make it right --

LADY MACBETH

More than enough reasons.

MALCOLM

More than "more than enough" -- remember, all those
"reasons" he killed had names --

BANQUO

Faces --

ATHOLL

Family --

DONALBAIN

Friends --

MACDUFF

And those who kill others should die themselves --

DONALBAIN

Eye for an eye --

LADY MACDUFF

Heart for a heart --

DUNCAN

Vengeance and revenge.

ALL (EXCEPT THE WITCHES)

Yes. Yes.

FIRST WITCH

And does this execution bring you peace?

SECOND WITCH

And is this world better off?

THIRD WITCH

(indicating MACBETH)

And what does that make all of you?

FIRST WITCH

We thought --

SECOND WITCH

We'd just ask you --

THIRD WITCH

These questions.

FLEANCE

I have a feeling -- I have a feeling that this is not where we should end.

MACBETH

So what would you suggest?

FLEANCE

(indicating the audience)

I think we need to talk with them.

MACBETH

Them?

FLEANCE

Yes.

MACBETH

All right.

The COMPANY faces the audience. FLEANCE gestures to LADY MACDUFF.

LADY MACDUFF

We get confused.

ALL

Yes. We get confused.

DUNCAN

We get confused by the world --

MACDUFF

Adults have created --

LACY MACBETH

We get confused when so many really good things --

BANQUO

Get abbreviated.

ATHOLL

We get confused when we're told --

MALCOLM

To be kind and considerate --

FIRST WITCH

And then look at the world --

FLEANCE

And see almost everything opposite.

DUNCAN

We get confused why adults have children --

MALCOLM

And why they make such a fuss --

DONALBAIN

And then raise a world that --

ALL

Efficiently --

DONALBAIN

Gets rid of us.

MACDUFF

Makes children soldiers --

LADY MACDUFF

Makes children slaves --

LADY MACBETH

Turns them into prostitutes --

SECOND WITCH

Then dumps them into graves.

THIRD WITCH

Fills us with junk --

ATHOLL

Gives us falling-down schools --

FIRST WITCH

Sells off our innocence --

SECOND WITCH

Standard-tests us till we're fools --

LADY MACDUFF

Medicates our behaviors --

MACDUFF

Then sets the speed to overload --

LADY MACBETH

Acts surprised when we're depressed --

MACBETH

Acts surprised when we --

ALL

Explode!

The COMPANY strikes the same melodramatic poses that they struck earlier in the play as the "adults" -- make it broad, for comic effect.

BANQUO

(to the audience)

We do have an answer.

ATHOLL

An antidote.

LADY MACDUFF

A way forward.

MACDUFF

A way out.

DUNCAN

(indicating the audience)

You were all once children --

FIRST WITCH

Don't forget that.

ATHOLL

Re-connect.

ALL

Connect with that.

MACBETH

Against the odds set against us --

FLEANCE

We are still full of life --

DONALBAIN

And love --

LADY MACDUFF

And laughter --

SECOND WITCH

And hope --

BANQUO

We are not yet ground down.

MALCOLM

We are the best -- the only -- second chance this world has.

THIRD WITCH

Our bright-edged souls are what should carve the future.

LADY MACBETH

Take our measure for your measure.

MACBETH

We wait for you.

MALCOLM

Our lives -- and yours -- depend upon your coming to meet us.

FLEANCE

Our love for life calls out to you endlessly.

ALL

Re-connect.

The stagelights cut out and the houselights come up immediately. The cast looks deliberately at the audience.

FIRST WITCH

What does it cost --

SECOND WITCH

To be young --

THIRD WITCH

In this world?

FLEANCE

Being young in this world should never have a cost.

All at the same, they clap their hands and do a vaudeville-type button, with the arms outspread and on an angle, with a step forward, using "Hah!" to punctuate the movement. Then they all bow simply and exit.

* * * * *

Epilogue #3

Created by The Junior Youth Repertory Company of New Hampshire Theatre Project, which performed Macbeth's Children April 13-15, 2007.

FLEANCE

It is done.

BANQUO

Look what we have done.

MACDUFF

We did what we had to do. There is no shame in that.

LADY MACDUFF

We have destroyed the life of someone --

ATHOLL

But he destroyed the lives of others --

DUNCAN

We had reasons to make it right --

LADY MACBETH

More than enough reasons.

MALCOLM

More than "more than enough" -- remember, all those "reasons" he killed had names --

BANQUO

Faces --

ATHOLL

Family --

DONALBAIN

Friends --

MACDUFF

You avenged your father, their father , my family. Those who kill others deserve to die.

DONALBAIN

Eye for an eye --

FIRST WITCH

Makes the whole world blind.

SECOND WITCH

Does this execution bring you peace?

THIRD WITCH

And is this world better off?

FIRST WITCH

Ask yourself that question.

FLEANCE

He killed them, yes, but if --

MACDUFF

Fleance!

MALCOLM

Fleance, it's over. He's dead.

FLEANCE

He killed Duncan in his bed. Your family, attacked your home. My father -- ambushed. He came to me broken. If he is evil, what does that make me?

MACDDUFF

Still more waffling? You have done the deed. Let it be, child.

FLEANCE

You don't understand.

FIRST WITCH

Is he a child still?

SECOND WITCH

His mind become stretched and twisted?

THIRD WITCH

Torn between his duty to the world and himself?

ALL WITCHES

Hail to thee, destroyer of Cawdor! No longer a child. Soon to be king.

FLEANCE takes the scepter handed to him by the WITCHES. Everyone waits. As the company speaks, they hand their weapons to the WITCHES.

ATHOLL

It's a wild world out there.

LADY MACDUFF

No place for innocence.

MACDUFF

Childhood cut short.

BANQUO

Youth ripped from us so quickly.

DONALBAIN

Forced into slavery.

MALCOLM

Forced into war.

DUNCAN

Do we have a choice?

MACBETH

We're just children, and sometime we all forget --

LADY MACBETH

Just how vulnerable children are.

FLEANCE

Not always protected, though some try so hard.

MACBETH

Also not respected.

BANQUO

Some say their way is right way -- some say they understand.

ATHOLL

They want us to succeed.

LADY MACDUFF

But their examples aren't so clear.

MACDUFF

We don't want to grow cynical.

DONALBAIN

But we feel overlooked.

MALCOLM

Rejected.

MACBETH

We want you to see us.

MACDUFF

We want a way forward.

LADY MACBETH

A way out.

ALL

You were all children once.

FLEANCE

Don't forget that.

BANQUO

Reconnect.

ATHOLL

Connect with us.

FLEANCE

We are not yet ground down.

MACBETH

And neither are you.

MACDUFF

Despite the odds set against us --

LADY MACDUFF

We're still full of life --

LADY MACBETH

And love --

MALCOLM

And laughter --

DONALBAIN

And hope --

DUNCAN

We are the best --

MACBETH

The only chance this world has.

MACDUFF

Our bright-edged souls can carve the future.

DUNCAN

Our love for life calls out to you.

BANQUO

What does it cost to be young in this world?

FLEANCE

Being young in this world should never have a cost.

End of play.

About Block & Tackle Productions

After more than a decade of projects together, Michael Bettencourt and Elfin Frederick Vogel joined forces to form Block & Tackle Productions. In addition to producing Michael's plays with Elfin directing, B&T Productions also looks to collaborate with other playwrights and directors and explore different media for dramatic narrative, such as live-streaming theatrical productions, recording radio-play podcasts, and creating short films.

Whichever project B&T Productions pursues, it will create theatre narratives focused on our present times and where every part of the production - design (set, lighting, sound, media), performance, script, the brand of beer sold in the lobby, and the pre-show music - relates to and nourishes every other part. As often as possible, B&T Productions will do this in collaboration or conjunction with like-minded theatre-makers.

Elfin Frederick Vogel (Producer/Director) -- Elfin has directed over thirty productions in New York City and regional theatres, from classical plays (among others, *Othello*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*) to 20th-century plays (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *The Real Thing*, *Exit the King*) and new plays, among them *Only the Dead Know Brooklyn*, *Excerpts from the Lost Letters of Hester Prynne*, *No Great Loss*, *Four Plays*, *The Sin Eater* (all by Michael Bettencourt), and *Moral and Political Lessons on "Wyoming"* and *Reckless Abandon* (by Vincent Sessa).

Michael Bettencourt (Producer/Writer) -- Michael is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter. As always, special thanks to María Beatriz. All his work can be seen at www.m-bettencourt.com

**Block
&Tackle**
PRODUCTIONS

www.blockandtackleproductions.com

