

Death & Taxes

The Musical

-by-

David Jacklin

“In this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”

Benjamin Franklin, 1789

“And the fact that somebody, sometime, will make a musical out of it.”

David Jacklin, 2016

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THE CHARACTERS

KEITH HARRIS, editor and publisher of the Pompeii Periculator, 40-50-ish

WINSTON COOPER, Keith's assistant and conscience, 18

MILES BRIDGER, a young man in a hurry, mid- to late-20's

CHRISTINE MAXFIELD, his associate/friend, 25ish, who isn't in quite such a rush

LAURA PHILLIPS, school-teacher and divorcee, 25, who is still recovering

BONNIE SHAW, Laura's friend, 30, who has never stopped long enough to rush

CHARLIE PHILLIPS, mayor and barber, 60-ish, who has never rushed anything

AGNES NESBITT, a widow in her 40's, with a quick tongue and tough hide

STAN THROOP, 35, plumber, alderman and long time rival of...

TED MORTON, 40-ish, grocer and alderman

CYNTHIA ASHBURY, regional news celeb and commentator

CHELSEA HARTLEY, 18, Keith's new assistant and conscience

TOWNSPEOPLE in various guises, disguises and appearances

THE PLACE AND TIME

The town of Pompeii, Ontario (pronounced POMP-ee), about umpteen miles from anyplace and just too far to get back to.

The time: does it really matter?

Death & Taxes, *The Musical* was given its first public performance June 23, 1989 at St. James Parish Hall, Perth, Ontario, by the Perth Summer Theatre, with the following credits:

Direction & Design. . .David Jacklin

Musical Director/Arranger. . .Catherine Villar

*Costume Design...*Mary Allen/Kay Andrews

Cast In Order Of Appearance

KEITH HARRIS.....David Jacklin

WINSTON COOPER.....Scott McKutcheon

MILES BRIDGER.....David Semple

CHRISTINE.....Heather Majaury

LAURA PHILLIPS.....Deborah Wadsworth

BONNIE SHAW.....Francine Dunn

CHARLIE PHILLIPS....Stephen Flett

AGNES NESBITT.....Lin Carnrite

STAN THROOP.....Rob Firlotte

ED MORTON.....Rob Umpherson

CYNTHIA ASHBURY.....Janice Jacklin

Pianist

Catherine Jacklin

Musical Numbers

#	Title	Performers
1.	Overture	<i>Instrumental</i>
2.	My Heart Belongs	<i>Keith/Company</i>
3.	I Ain't Going Back Home	<i>Miles</i>
3a.	I Ain't Going Back Home, transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
4.	Sunny Day	<i>Laura</i>
4a.	Sunny Day, transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
5.	The Council Rag	<i>Keith/Charlie/Stan/Ted/Agnes</i>
5a.	The Council Rag, transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
6.	Whilin' Away The Time	<i>Charlie/Keith/Miles</i>
6a.	Whilin' Away The Time, 1 st transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
6b.	Politics, 1 st transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
7.	Politics	<i>Miles/Laura/Company</i>
7a.	Politics, 2 nd transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
7b.	Not A Lot To Do, transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
8.	Not A Lot To Do	<i>Teens</i>
9.	That Tax	<i>Charlie/Miles/Company</i>

Intermission

10.	The Hometown March	<i>Company (quasi-instrumental)</i>
11.	The Day The Bloom Fell Off The Rose	<i>Keith/Charlie/Miles/Company</i>
11a.	The Hometown March, 1 st transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
12.	I Wanna Go Walkin' With You	<i>Miles</i>
12a.	I Wanna Go Walkin' With You, 1 st transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
12b.	Whilin' Away The Time, 2 nd transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
13.	Whilin' Away The Time (reprise)	<i>Charlie</i>
13a.	Ain't That Just Like A Man, transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
14.	Ain't That Just Like A Man	<i>Laura/Bonnie/Christine</i>
15.	Culture Night	<i>Company</i>
16.	Cranes In Their Nest	<i>Instrumental</i>
17.	Oh, Danny Boy	<i>Winston</i>
17a.	Oh, Danny Boy, transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
18.	Love Only Rhymes (With Five Other Words)	<i>Miles/Christine</i>
18a.	Love Only Rhymes, transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
18b.	The Hometown March, 2 nd transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
18c.	Business Never Looked So Good, underscore	<i>Instrumental</i>
19.	Business Never Looked So Good	<i>Company</i>
19a.	Whilin' Away The Time, 3 rd transition	<i>Instrumental</i>
20.	My Heart Belongs, reprise	<i>Keith/Company</i>
21.	Bows, Finale Ultimo and Exit	<i>Instrumental/Company</i>

Death & Taxes, The Musical

Act One

(Setting: wings & ground-row depicting the main street of a small town, dominated by the clock tower of the Town Hall, a couple of church spires, several store fronts.)

(MUSIC: No. 1 OVERTURE)

(lights up on a scroll-top desk; KEITH HARRIS sits at it)

KEITH: Now, I see in the papers that the county taxes are going up 11 percent, school taxes 13 percent, provincial taxes 7 percent (least, the liquor tax is, and that's all I care about). Federal taxes are going up. . . I don't know, it changes daily. I say, I SEE it in the papers. What I mean is: I PUT it in the papers, 'cause this is my paper, you see. The Pompeii Periculator. Periculator . . . that's somebody who keeps an eye on things. Comes from our town's motto: PERICULO PERICULOSUM. Look before you leap. Well, it's not bad advice, really.

You've probably never been to Pompeii. Why should you be any different? Best way to get here is to start from Highway . . . no, that'll take you through the construction. Come up Road . . . no, the bridge washed out. Well, if you start . . . see, that's the problem with Pompeii. It's real easy to leave here, but real hard to get back. I swear our main industry is selling gas to our own kids so they can head to Toronto.

Don't get me wrong. Pompeii is a beautiful place. So green in the summer; so crystal white in the winter. In the spring, there's a smell in the air your lungs want to grab at and hold in and come fall, the mornings crackle with a crispness that seems like it's been that way, unchanged for a thousand years. And, it has. That's what wrong with Pompeii: Pompeii never changes . . . but everything else has.

(MUSIC: No. 2 MY HEART BELONGS)

MY HEART BELONGS RIGHT HERE, IN
GOOD OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO!
IT'S NOT A MODERN PLACE AT A
FAST-TRACK PACE, BUT IT'S HOME. (OH, YEAH)
MY HEART BELONGS, RIGHT HERE, AND NO
MATTER HOW FAST OR HOW FAR I GO
I'LL END UP RIGHT BACK HERE
FOR YET ANOTHER YEAR, 'CAUSE IT'S HOME. (UH-HUH)

THE COURSE OF CIVILIZATION LEFT US
HERE IN HIBERNATION AND OUR
CONSTANT OCCUPATION IS A
TOTAL DEDICATION TO THE STATUS QUO! (DON'T CHA KNOW?)

AND ONCE A YEAR WE WAKE UP FOR THE

SPRING AND SUMMER BREAKUP, BUT THEN
WHEN WE'VE HAD A SHAKEUP OF OUR
FUNDAMENTAL MAKEUP, BACK TO SLEEP WE GO!
(WHOA-OA-OA! *(yawns)*)

MY HEART BELONGS, RIGHT HERE, I'LL
NEVER GO FAR, NOT VERY. OH! I GOT NO
URGE TO ROAM, I'LL JUST STAY AT HOME WHERE IT'S SAFE
(AND WARM).

MY HEART BELONGS, RIGHT HERE, IN
GOOD, OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO!
IT'S THE ONLY PLACE MY HEART CAN CALL MY HOME!

The Citizens of Pompeii!

(the COMPANY enter as a chorus)

COMPANY: OUR HEARTS BELONG, RIGHT HERE, IN
GOOD, OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO!
THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE TO RUN THE
OLD RAT RACE THAN HERE! (RIGHT HERE!)

SO RAISE A SONG AND CHEER FOR
GOOD, OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO!
AND MAY THE QUIET LIFE HOLD OFF THE
MODERN STRIFE THIS YEAR!

OF COURSE, IT ISN'T PERFECT;
THERE ARE PROBLEMS TO BE FOUND.
NO ONE KNOWS IT BETTER THAN WE!
BUT, IF WE CLOSE OUR EYES
AND KEEP OUR NOSES TO THE GROUND,
THERE WON'T BE ANY PROBLEMS WE CAN SEE!

BUT DON'T THINK FOR A MINUTE WE DON'T
KNOW THAT THEY ARE THERE;
WE'RE SIMPLY HAPPY JUST THE WAY WE ARE.
BUT IF YOU'VE GOT A BETTER WAY MANAGE OUR AFFAIRS...
BUDDY, THERE'S THE HIGHWAY! BETTER HOP IN YOUR CAR!

(KEITH joins the chorus)

ALL: PEOPLE GET THE NOTION THERE'S A
MIGHTY MAGIC POTION THAT WILL
KEEP THIS TOWN IN MOTION BUT EVERY

BALM AND LOTION LEAVES OUR WALLETS SORE! (MORE AND MORE)

IT'S NOT THAT WE'RE ADVERSE, IT'S JUST THAT
THINGS COULD BE MUCH WORSE AND IT COULD
QUICKLY BE A CURSE AND TO BE
VERY BRIEF AND TERSE, WE'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE!
(IT'S JUST A BORE)

WE'RE STAYING HERE, RIGHT HERE, AND
LIVE AND LOVE AND GET BURIED, OH!
ALTHOUGH OUR CHILDREN MIGHT HEAD FOR THE
CITY LIGHT, WE'RE HOME. (WON'T ROAM)

SO, RAISE A CHEER (YAY!), RIGHT HERE (YAY!), FOR
GOOD, OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO!
IT'S THE ONLY PLACE WE WANT TO CALL . . .
THE ONLY PLACE WE WANT TO CALL . . .
THE ONLY PLACE WE WANT TO CALL OUR HOME!

(music ends; all exit except KEITH and WINSTON)

WINSTON: Mr. Harris! Here are the sales numbers from last week.

KEITH: Put them with the others.

WINSTON: *(Putting the paper into the waste basket.)* You'll have to look at them sometime.

KEITH: PERICULO PERICULOSUM, Winston.

WINSTON: Are you planning on leaping?

KEITH: Not just yet. *(he indicates his old, black manual typewriter)* As long as I've got that, I can put out a paper . . .

WINSTON: Yeah, but who's buying newspapers, these days?

KEITH: Who's buying newspapers? A very good question.

WINSTON: Maybe this isn't a good time to tell you I've been accepted at U of T.

KEITH: Good a time as any.

WINSTON: You should go digital, Mr. Harris. Every paper in the world is digital, now.

KEITH: You think so?

WINSTON: I know so!

(he exits; a phone rings; lights down, up on an office opposite; phone rings and rings; a woman, CHRISTINE, enters and answers it)

CHRISTINE: Little Haven Development Group. Who may I say is calling? Will you hold, please? I'll see if he's in. *(she silently counts ten, then:)* I'm sorry, he doesn't seem to be in his office. Is there any message I can give him? I see. Fine. Thankyou. Goodbye.

(she writes down the message and adds it to a pile; MILES enters)

MILES: Sorry. Who was it?

CHRISTINE: Mrs. Johnson.

MILES: Mrs. Johnson?

BOTH: It's the lady from the credit card company!

CHRISTINE: You're going to have to pay it this time.

MILES: With what?

CHRISTINE: American Express. If anyone calls for me, I'll be in court.

MILES: You got a case?

CHRISTINE: Guy owes thirty-seven hundred dollars in parking tickets. Oh, well, it's a living.

MILES: Barely. Three deals down this week. Boom, boom, boom! Cost me twenty thousand.

CHRISTINE: Oh, Miles. What am I going to do with you?

MILES: Marry me.

CHRISTINE: *(Ironically.)* Sure.

MILES: I've still got one prospect. Fronting a mall development deal.

CHRISTINE: Fronting it? Who's backing it?

MILES: The guy in every small town who wants to put his money where his mouth is but no one lets him. It's going to be a big surprise for the town of Pom-pay, Ontario.

CHRISTINE: Where's that?

MILES: Six and a half miles from Nowhere. Just this side of Oblivion.

CHRISTINE: Ah, you've been there!

MILES: I was born there.

CHRISTINE: Born there?

MILES: Same place, different name on the "Welcome" sign.

(MUSIC: No. 3 I AIN'T GOING BACK HOME)

CHRISTINE: And, now you're going back.

MILES: No, thank you. I left there once. I'm not going back.

IN A SMALL TOWN, YOU'VE GOT GOOD FRIENDS AROUND YOU,
IN FACT, THEY SURROUND YOU ALL DAY.
IN A SMALL TOWN, YOU MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS,
AND THEY MIND YOUR BUSINESS —
THEY ALL MIND YOUR BUSINESS.
THEY'VE ALL GOT THEIR TWO CENTS TO SAY.

WELL, I MADE UP MY MIND, ON THE DAY THAT I TURNED TWENTY,
THAT LITTLE TOWN JUST HAD NO FUTURE FOR ME.
SITTING AROUND ON A PARK BENCH IN THE SUMMER,
WATCHING ALL MY FRIENDS GETTING
OLDER AND GREYER AND FADING A LITTLE EACH DAY.

I LEFT IT ALL BEHIND ME!
NEVER SAID GOODBYE!
SHOOK IT OFF ME FINALLY,
NEVER AGAIN TO RETURN;
I AIN'T GOING BACK HOME!

CHRISTINE: It can't be as bad as all that.

MILES: Are you kidding? They'll small town you to death.

IN A SMALL TOWN, LIFE'S QUIET AND IT'S SIMPLE.
IT SIMPLY FADES QUIETLY AWAY.
IN A SMALL TOWN, YOU MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS
WHAT'S LEFT OF YOUR BUSINESS.
IF YOU CALL THAT A BUSINESS.
YOU SHOULD HAVE CLOSED DOWN YESTERDAY.

WELL THEN, I LEFT THE DUST OF THE VILLAGE LIFE BEHIND ME.
I MADE SOME TRACKS FOR THE HIGH ROAD UPTOWN.
GOT IN TOP GEAR AND I'M SHIFTING DOWN FOR NO MAN.
TRADED IN THE TRACTOR FOR A
CHANCE AT THE RING ON THE VERY NEXT GO-ROUND!

WELL, I LEFT IT ALL BEHIND ME!
NEVER SAID GOODBYE!
SHOOK IT OFF ME FINALLY,
NEVER AGAIN TO RETURN;
I AIN'T GOING BACK HOME!
NEVER AGAIN TO RETURN;
I AIN'T GOING BACK HOME!

(music ends; the phone rings; CHRISTINE answers it)

CHRISTINE: Little Haven Development Group. *(Beat.)* One moment, please. I'll put you through.

(She silently counts to five, then hands the phone to MILES.)

MILES: Miles Bridger speaks. Yes, sir. No, sir. Yes, sir. *(He hangs up.)* I'm going back.

(MUSIC: No. 3a, I AIN'T GOIN' BACK HOME, transition)

(lights down on them and up on LAURA and BONNIE; LAURA runs about doing household chores while BONNIE talks at her)

BONNIE: A shopping mall! They're going to put a shopping mall in the Market.

LAURA: I don't see what we can do about it. They already give us a grant.

BONNIE: A grant? Look at the figures – 'way down at the bottom of the page. You see? "Miscellaneous: \$3,400 dollars." That's us, along with paper clips and staples.

LAURA: Just a minute. *(Calling off.)* Craig! Craig! Get down! Now! I don't care who else is doing it! Well, life's not fair, sometimes.

BONNIE: You're right, it's not fair. The almighty dollar calls the tune, but who pays the piper?

LAURA: Craig! Craig! Get down! Now! I don't care if he likes it. Dogs are not for riding!

BONNIE: So, we need a united front – pack the meeting! Everybody's got to be there.

LAURA: I'll be there. I was planning on it. *(Off, again.)* Craig! Craig! Take that cat out of the drainpipe! Because I'm funny that way! And do up your jacket! You'll catch cold.

BONNIE: So, would you be a real dear and call these names? Just to remind them. And, I'll see you about 7:30. I gotta run. I've got two meetings this afternoon and a hair appointment. Bye! *(she exits, still talking)* Hey, there's money in that meter!

LAURA: See you.

(she dials the phone and waits)

(MUSIC: No. 4 SUNNY DAY)

Hi, Nancy. It's Laura Phillips. I'm calling about the meeting tonight. Yes, tonight. Well, the Cultural Committee's making the proposal to the Town Council. You can't. Okay. Well, see you, then. Bye! Craig! *(She looks out.)* Oh! Never mind.

SUNNY DAY. THERE ISN'T A CLOUD UP IN THE SKY.
SO WHY IS IT RAINING?
AND WHY DO I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD CRY?
I'D BETTER BE CAREFUL.

IF ONE MORE SUNNY DAY
TRIES POKING ITS FACE OUT FROM THE CLOUD,
I'M GOING TO GET ANGRY.
THE WEATHER MAN PROMISED ME IT WOULD RAIN.
I'D BETTER BE CAREFUL.

IF I DON'T WATCH OUT, I MIGHT END UP SINGING THE BLUES.

(she makes another call)

LAURA: Hi! It's Laura Phillips. I was just calling about the Town Council Meeting tonight. Oh, that's too bad. His mother? That's awful. Alright, then. Bye.

(she scratches several names off the list)

ANOTHER SUNNY DAY, AND EVERY ONE'S LIKE ALL THE REST.
IT OUGHT TO BE RAINING.
IT SEEMS THAT I LIKE THE RAINY DAYS BEST.
I BETTER BE CAREFUL.

IF I DON'T WATCH OUT, I MIGHT END UP SINGING THE BLUES.

(she makes another call)

Hi, it's Laura Phillips. Yes, the meeting. I see. Have a good time. Bye.

GUESS I'LL HAVE TO TAKE THE SUNNY DAYS THEY GIVE ME.

MAKE THE BEST OF WHAT A SUNNY DAY MIGHT BRING ME.
IF YOU FIND ME LAUGHING, WOULD YOU PLEASE FORGIVE ME?
BLAME IT ON ANOTHER SUNNY, SUNNY DAY!

(the phone rings; she answers)

Hello? Oh, Bonnie, I'm glad you called. Everybody on the list has backed out. When? Is it serious? I can't do it by myself! Bonnie, please! Alright, I'll try. Bye.

SUNNY DAY! THE BIRDS AND THE KIDS ARE ALL AT PLAY.
IT'S KIND OF DEPRESSING.
ANOTHER SHORT DAY HAS SLIPPED AWAY.
I'D BETTER BE CAREFUL.

IF I DON'T WATCH OUT, I MIGHT END UP SINGING THE BLUES.
IF I DON'T WATCH OUT, I MIGHT END UP SINGING THE BLUES.

(music ends; she calls outside)

Craig! Craig! You're coughing! You've got a cold! You'd better come in. Now!

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

(MUSIC: No. 4a SUNNY DAY, transition)

(lights fade and come up on KEITH; he addresses the audience)

(MUSIC: No. 5 THE COUNCIL RAG)

KEITH:

We have to hurry. Mayor Phillips takes Council meetings very seriously. It's no fun being on the Town Council in Pompeii. It's not easy. It also tends to stimulate a high rate of inflation – blowhard-wise. I call it the "Huff and Puff Factor". Some councillors run around like so many over-inflated balloons, ready to blo-o-o-w somebody's house down. Well, it's their job. My job is to provide people with pins. I like my job.

WE'RE GOING DOWNTOWN TO THE COUNCIL MEETING,
WE'RE GOING TO BE THERE 'TIL HALF-PAST ONE.
THEY'RE TALKING 'ROUND, 'ROUND AT THE COUNCIL MEETING.
BUT WHAT'S THE HOUR MATTER IF YOU'RE HAVING FUN?

THEY WERE ALL ACCLAIMED IN THE LAST ELECTION.
YOU'D THINK THAT FOLKS WOULD BE SATISFIED.
BUT EVERYBODY'S GOT TO PULL IN THEIR OWN DIRECTION,
EVERYBODY'S MAD AT THEM, FIT TO BE TIED.

THEY'RE DANGED IF THEY DO,
AND THEY'RE DANGED IF THEY DON'T,

AND, THEY'RE DANGED IF THEY JUST SIT STILL.
AND WE ALL KNOW IT'S SO MUCH FUN
TO BE A SMALL TOWN ALDER-"MUN"!

Take it!

COUNCILLORS: WE ARE THE COUNCILLORS, SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!
SEE ALL THE COUNCILLORS, SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!

MY EYES ARE DIM, I CANNOT SEE!
I DO NOT HEAR WHAT'S SAID TO ME,
'CAUSE I AM AN COUNCILLOR, SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!

AGNES: YOU'VE GOT TO WEIGH THE CONS OF EACH DECISION;
YOU KNOW THE PROS ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE.
AND EVERY TIME YOU MAKE SOME DEEP INCISION,
YOU'RE CUTTING DEEPER INTO SOMEONE'S HIDE.

TED: EVERY SCHEME THAT SOMEONE HATCHES LATELY
NEVER SPECIFIES JUST WHO'S TO PAY.
BUT THAT LEGALESE, SO FINE AND STATELY,
CAN SLIP A "GOTCHA" IN ANYWAY.

STAN: BUT, WE'RE DANGED IF WE DO,
AND WE'RE DANGED IF WE DON'T,
AND, WE'RE DANGED IF WE JUST SIT STILL.
I BET YOU THINK THAT IT'S ALL FUN

ALL THREE: WHEN YOU'RE A SMALL TOWN ALDER-"MUN"!

WE ARE THE COUNCILLORS, SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!
SEE ALL THE COUNCILLORS, SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!

CHARLIE: I'LL BE RAISING ALL THE TAXES AS I GO! (*Whip crack noise*)
I'LL BE RAISING ALL THE TAXES AS I GO! (*Whip crack noise*)

ALL FOUR: 'CAUSE I AM AN COUNCILLOR, SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!

KEITH: You ever see a vaudeville show? I mean, look at 'em! Now, Stan Throop hates Ted Morton, for reasons we'll go into later. Both of them hate Agnes Nesbitt, for no

particular reason. And, our mayor, Charlie Phillips, gavels them through each meeting like a music hall chairman. Yeah, it's a vaudeville show, alright.

(music vamps under)

STAN: Mr. Mayor! Mr. Mayor!

CHARLIE: Yes, Councillor Throop?

STAN: How many aldermen does it take to screw in a light bulb?

CHARLIE: I don't know. How many aldermen does it take to screw in a light bulb?

STAN: Six. One to screw in the light bulb and five to commission studies!

AGNES: Mr. Mayor! Mr. Mayor!

CHARLIE: Yes, Councillor Nesbitt?

AGNES: I have a report on the new fire-truck the town bought from my brother-in-law.

CHARLIE: Yes?

AGNES: It caught fire!

TED: Mr. Mayor! Mr. Mayor!

CHARLIE: Yes, Councillor Morton?

TED: How many taxpayers does it take to screw in a light bulb?

CHARLIE: I don't know. How many taxpayers does it take to screw in a light bulb?

TED: Thirty-eight hundred.

CHARLIE: Thirty-eight hundred!

TED: One to screw in the light bulb and thirty-seven hundred and ninety-nine to break up into fifty-four interest groups and protest!

CHARLIE: Ba-dump-bump!

KEITH: Mr. Mayor! Mr. Mayor!

CHARLIE: Yes, Mr. Harris? What can we do for a member of the Press?

KEITH: This council has been accused of being ill-informed and lack-a-daisical!

COUNCILLORS: Have we?

KEITH: Yes! Now, what are you going to do about it?

COUNCILLORS: We don't know and we don't care! Yuk! Yuk! Yuk! Yuk!

CHARLIE: Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Stop the music! Stop the music!

(music stops; they play musical chairs in the next section.)

We seem to have wandered off topic.

SEVERALLY: SIX LITTLE COUNCILLORS, SITTING ON THE COUNCIL,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG.
TWO ARE AWAY AND SO THERE'S REALLY FOUR, ALL
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG.
FOUR LITTLE COUNCILLORS, SITTING ON THE COUNCIL,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG.
TWO ONLY ARGUE, SO THERE'S REALLY TWO, BOTH
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG.

(STAN and TED exit)

TWO LITTLE COUNCILLORS, SITTING ON THE COUNCIL,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG.
"CONFLICT OF INTEREST", LEAVES US ONLY ONE, HE'S
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG.

(AGNES exits)

CHARLIE: EVERYBODY THINKS THAT THEY COULD
DO THE JOB SO WELL.
NOTHING TO IT, WHAT'S THE HAIRY DEAL?
PASS AROUND SOME FAVOURS;
COVER UP IF THERE'S A SMELL.
EVERYBODY KNOWS IT'S NOT FOR REAL.

BUT, COME ELECTION TIME, NO ONE
SEEMS TO HAVE THE TIME TO RUN.
LATER, THOUGH, THEY'VE ALL GOT TIME TO YELL!
Still . . . *(The council re-enter.)*

COUNCILLORS: WE ARE THE COUNCILLORS, SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!

SEE ALL THE COUNCILLORS, SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!

THE MAYOR, HE MET WITH THE COUNCIL.
THE MAYOR, HE MET WITH THE COUNCIL.
THE MAYOR, HE MET WITH THE COUNCIL . . .

CHARLIE: AND, NOBODY COULD AGREE!

ALL: STILL, WE ARE THE COUNCILLORS,
SITTING IN THE COUNCIL ROOM,
DOING . . . DOING . . . DOING . . . DOING THE COUNCIL RAG!

(music ends; CHARLIE gavels)

CHARLIE: Now, hold on! Hold on! Shutup! *(he bangs again)* Ted! You're out of order! Just because Stan Throop's a lying, cheating skunk is no reason for you to call him one. Now let's get back to the matter at hand. The way I see it, we've really got nothing to lose here. Yeah, Ted, I know. A mall'd take business away from downtown – but, there hasn't been any business downtown in twenty years. Now, I need a motion.

STAN: I think we should adjourn to Kelly's and talk this over.

CHARLIE: You just want a few drinks and still tell your wife you were at Council Meeting.

AGNES: I think that Cec Wilcox has got his finger in this. It smells.

TED: He still hasn't forgotten about the race-track we stopped him building.

CHARLIE: We didn't stop him building it. We just didn't okay the zoning.

TED: I don't even think we should listen to them.

STAN: Can't hurt to listen.

TED: Can, too!

STAN: Cannot!

TED: Can, too!

STAN: Cannot!

CHARLIE: QUIET! *(he gavels)*

AGNES: I so move.

CHARLIE: You so move what? Agnes, you gotta be specific. We're still digging our way out from under the last time you "so moved" something. If we voted on that motion, we'd all be down at Kelly's. Now, I need a motion on . . . what was it again?

TED: Shopping mall . . .

CHARLIE: Right. Should we or shouldn't we talk to this . . . Little Haven Development Group? Agnes?

AGNES: I move that the Little Haven Development Group be invited to present their presentation to the Council.

CHARLIE: A little redundant, but okay. Second?

STAN: Second . . .

CHARLIE: *(he gavels)* Moved and seconded. Discussion. *(there is none; he gavels)* Call the vote. All those in favour? *(no one moves)* Opposed? *(no one moves)*

(LAURA enters, breathlessly, with arms full of papers and files)

LAURA: Mr. Mayor!

CHARLIE: Just a minute. Mayor will break the tie. Motion carries. *(he gavels)* That's it for new business arising from old business of the old business period. Any new business arising from old business that was new business during the old business period?

LAURA: Mr. Mayor?

CHARLIE: Just a minute, Laura. No new business arising from old business that was new business during the old business period. *(he gavels)* Okay. New business arising from old business in the new business period. Laura. That's you.

LAURA: Oh! Right . . . *(papers drop; she recovers them)* Mr. Mayor, Members of the Council . . . *(more papers; she picks them up)*. Uh . . . Mr. Mayor, Members . . .

CHARLIE: We've already done that part, Laura.

LAURA: I'm sorry. My son, Craig, has pneumonia and . . . ah! Here it is. Mr. Mayor, Members – and so on. Our beloved town is facing a crisis which may determine our very existence as a town, or whether, like our ancient counterpart, the town of Pompeii is to be buried in the dust of modern civilization. We have seen the onset of decay, the ever-spreading sapping of the energies and vitality of our community. The youth of our town are leaving; business is drying up; our identity is being drowned in a sea of outside influences –

AGNES: Drying up while drowning?

CHARLIE: Agnes . . .

AGNES: It is imperative that we, as a community, find a way to combat this decay. But how can we find new energies, new vitality? How can we renew belief and trust in our future that will point us toward new growth and new heights?

TED: Good questions. Got any answers?

LAURA: Yes! As representative of the Pompeii Cultural Committee, I have been asked to bring to this Council our proposal for the revitalization of our community.

AGNES: Bravo . . .

CHARLIE: Agnes . . .

LAURA: . . . a proposal to bring new life, new prosperity and new hope to our town. Ladies and Gentlemen . . . I present the Pompeii Universal Cultural and Community Centre!

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(she uncovers a drawing of an impressive looking building; it is round and black-ish)

CHARLIE: *(savouring it)* The P-U-C-C-C, huh?

AGNES: Or Puck, for short.

CHARLIE: Agnes . . .

LAURA: A cultural centre in the Town could make us the centre of national attention, creating a whole new and exciting industry in Pompeii – the tourist trade!

AGNES: Tourists! Who wants 'em? Loud, offensive, whining . . .

LAURA: Yes! But bringing millions of dollars with them.

AGNES: To make up for the millions we have to pay out to build The Puck.

STAN: Who's gonna pay for it?

TED: Can't hurt to listen!

STAN: Can, too!

CHARLIE: Agnes . . . *(He looks confused as to who actually spoke.)*

LAURA: The costs must, initially, be born, in part, by the town . . .

STAN: Pie in the sky!

TED: I like it.

LAURA: One day . . .

AGNES: One day!

CHARLIE: Agnes . . ! I think we have a consensus here. Pie in the sky doesn't put food in the fridge, Laura. We need concrete, not concepts. Now, the way I see it, what you're asking us to do is put our money into a bunch of "maybe"s that could amount to a "might-have-been". *(he gavels)* Any other business?

LAURA: That's it?

CHARLIE: Yup.

LAURA: Without even a vote?

CHARLIE: Oh. Motion?

STAN: Move to entertain the concept of building a big puck.

CHARLIE: Second?

AGNES: Second.

CHARLIE: Discussion? *(none)* Call the vote. Those in favour? *(silence)* Opposed? *(silence)* Mayor will break the tie. Motion defeated. *(he gavels)*

LAURA: Stan Throop made the motion and he didn't even vote!

CHARLIE: Stan?

STAN: Had to change my position in light of further consideration.

LAURA: Close-minded, narrow thinking . . . You're a skunk, Dad. A skunk!

CHARLIE: Laura, as your dad, I can be just about anything you want to call me. As mayor . . . *(he gavels)* . . . watch it. Any other new business arising from old business in the new business period? *(none)* Chair will now entertain a motion to adjourn. Stan?

STAN: Are you kidding? This is getting to be fun!

CHARLIE: Agnes? Help me out here.

AGNES: I so move

CHARLIE: You so move what?

AGNES: I so move we so adjourn . . . *(under her breath)* . . . you so-and-so.

CHARLIE: Motion to adjourn has been made. Call the vote. All in favour. *(nothing)* Opposed. *(nothing)* Mayor will break the tie. Motion carries. Next scheduled meeting is the 26th. Meeting adjourned. *(he gavels)*

LAURA: I don't believe this. All of our work! Just ignored!

CHARLIE: Stan, let's head to Kelly's. I need to talk to you about this Market thing. Besides, *(looking at Laura)* I don't want to go home, just yet.

(MUSIC: No. 5a THE COUNCIL RAG, transition)

(lights down and up on KEITH HARRIS walking along the street)

KEITH: I don't know if it's because we are who we are that we stay here or it's because we stay here that we are who we are. We like to think that being from here makes us different. I suppose people are people, no matter where they're from. I suppose women everywhere still meet over to the church Tuesdays, to wrap bandages for Belize or whatever. The United Church is over there, by the school; the Presbyterians are up there, by the grave-yard; and the Anglicans are over there, by the tavern.

There's still one place left where a man can count on things being as they always were. There's one place where a man can enter and sit and know that everything that happens while he is there has to do with nothing except being a man. Charlie wouldn't have it any other way.

(lights up on CHARLIE's barbershop; he clips a customer, MILES, while KEITH enters and picks up a newspaper)

CHARLIE: How you doing today, Keith?

KEITH: Not too bad . . . not too bad . . .

(he sits and reads; CHARLIE clips)

CHARLIE: Quite a day . . .

KEITH: Yep. *(pause)* Colder'n usual, though.

CHARLIE: Yep, yep . . . but, it's been warm . . .

KEITH: Oh, yeah, yeah. It's been warm.

CHARLIE: Yep . . . but, it's kinda cool today.

KEITH: Yep. *(a pause as he reads)* Walt Dufton's dead.

CHARLIE: Yep. Now, which one was he?

KEITH: You know, had the marina. Married the Tilford girl.

CHARLIE: Oh, yep, yep. Now, he wasn't very old.

KEITH: Oh, no, no. Sixty or so . . . *(he reads)* "62nd year." Aneurism.

CHARLIE: Jeez, eh? Yep, yep. Haven't seen them around for a while.

KEITH: Well, they've been living in Florida . . . in the winter, anyway.

CHARLIE: Yep. My brother says he's gonna retire down to Florida. Yep, yep. Don't think I could stand the heat.

KEITH: Yeah, it gets warm. *(pause)* Can get cold, though.

CHARLIE: Yep, yep. The nights can be cold.

KEITH: Oh, yeah, nights can be cold. Same as here, I guess. The nights can be cold. Mind you, it's been warm around here, lately.

CHARLIE: Oh, yep, it has been that. *(Pause.)* Kinda cool today, though.

KEITH: Yep.

(ritual finished, KEITH reads while CHARLIE turn to MILES)

CHARLIE: So, are you visiting or on business . . . ?

MILES: Oh, just a bit of nosing around.

CHARLIE: Yep, yep.

MILES: I like to find out about people. It's a pretty nice place, Pom-PAY.

CHARLIE: Yep, yep. We like it here . . . in POMP-ee.

MILES: What do you do, here?

CHARLIE: I'm the barber and . . .

MILES: No, no. I mean, for entertainment.

CHARLIE: Oh. There used to be a movie theatre in Stephens' Springs, but . . .

KEITH: . . . it's a parking lot, now. Makes more money than it ever did as a movie theatre.

CHARLIE: Yep. Baseball; hockey; TV, I guess.

MILES: Not a lot to do in town, huh?

CHARLIE & KEITH: We keep busy.

CHARLIE: Keith here runs the paper and I'm the mayor.

MILES: Is that right? Well, well, well.

KEITH: Charlie's been mayor since 1984. Longer than John Drappow was.

MILES: Jean Drapeau?

CHARLIE: No, John Drappow. He was mayor here from '32 to '57.

(LAURA moves toward the barbershop, with determination)

KEITH: What's your line of work?

MILES: Oh, I'm in the sales line.

CHARLIE: Travelling salesman? Say! Stan Throop told me a good one last night. There was this travelling salesman and his car breaks down and he goes to this nunnery for the night, and the Mother Superior has this huge . . .

(LAURA bursts into the middle of this; she is very angry)

LAURA: Stan Throop is, at this moment, bulldozing the Market!

CHARLIE: Laura, I am flabbergasted.

LAURA: Well, so am I!

CHARLIE: You send 'em away to college . . . Look around. What do you see?

LAURA: Hair.

CHARLIE: Who do you see?

LAURA: You. Keith Harris. Him.

MILES: *(mumbling)* Thank you very much.

CHARLIE: And, what do we all have in common?

LAURA: Is this a trick question?

CHARLIE: We are all men, Laura. There's gotta be some place a man can call his own.

(CHARLIE starts to put lather on MILES)

LAURA: Stan Throop is bulldozing the Market!

CHARLIE: You said that.

LAURA: Aren't you going to stop him?

CHARLIE: N-n-n-no . . .

LAURA: Why not?

CHARLIE: I told him to.

LAURA: I'm flabbergasted.

(she spins the chair & MILES gets lathered)

MILES: I'm lather-plastered!

CHARLIE: You stay out of this.

MILES: Well, do you mind?

(CHARLIE cleans him off and begins to shave MILES.)

LAURA: How could you just go ahead and do that?

CHARLIE: How could you barge into a barbershop? How would you like it if we came barging into the beauty parlour?

LAURA: The place I go is unisex.

CHARLIE: My God.

LAURA: Mr. Harris, do you agree with him?

KEITH: Me? I'm not even here.

LAURA: *(to MILES)* What about you? Think a woman's place is in the beauty parlour?

MILES: *(CHARLIE's razor is at his throat)* Are you kidding?

LAURA: Coward.

MILES: Given a choice, yes.

LAURA: You know that Market was integral to the Cultural Committee's development.

MILES: Which development is that?

KEITH: Big puck . . .

CHARLIE: A pie-in-the-sky piece of silliness. Bunch of airy-fairy fairies jumping around in tu-tu's. *(he pauses with the razor at MILES's throat)* Right?

MILES: Whatever you say.

LAURA: Art is important.

CHARLIE: Art is expensive and if you want it, you pay for it.

LAURA: You pay for the hockey arena!

CHARLIE: Keith, how many people were at the last hockey game?

KEITH: Say, four hundred.

CHARLIE: Laura, how many people were at your last culture night?

LAURA: *(mumbles something)*

CHARLIE: Didn't quite catch that.

LAURA: I said . . . thirty-five.

CHARLIE: Counting Keith, who got in free.

LAURA: That's not the point! What about art?

CHARLIE: Art? Listening to Bonnie Shaw forget her lines and fumble around and the audience trying harder to laugh at it than the actors are to make it funny? At least, at a hockey game, there's always a chance for a good fight.

LAURA: You want a fight? You're going to get one! You think you can just tread all over people. Well, don't tread on me! We have not yet begun to fight! We will fight you in the Council rooms; we will fight you in the streets! We will never . . . *(she stops and realizes that she is speaking in cliches)* Philistines! The lot of you!

(she storms out; a beat)

KEITH: Well, I hope it wasn't something I said.

(CHARLIE finishes shaving MILES and puts away his gear.)

CHARLIE: Lame-brained kind of ideas. Arts and culture. Oh, it's fun to go see a musical, once in a while *(all three look at the audience)*, but all this culture tommy-rot. Operas and symphonies and fat people running around, sweating and yelling at each other in Italian. Why in the name of humanity should we pay for that?

MILES: Precisely.

KEITH: Good for tourism, you know.

CHARLIE: So many tourists around now, you can't find a decent place to fish. All rushing around, trying to manufacture a good time.

KEITH: Yep, yep.

CHARLIE: Everybody so busy trying to get themselves a slice of the good life, they don't have time to enjoy it.

KEITH: Yep, yep.

CHARLIE: I don't understand things anymore, Keith. I sometimes think it's time I stepped down.

KEITH: *(KEITH's head comes up.)* Oh, yeah?

CHARLIE: But, there isn't anybody as mean or as ornery as I am to take over.

KEITH: *(Back to the newspaper.)* Yep, yep.

CHARLIE: Just a fishing rod and me and a couple of trout'd do me.

KEITH: Yep, yep.

MILES: Don't forget the four Fisheries Officers, who'd come along for the ride.

CHARLIE: Yep. It's all changing, Keith. It ain't the same no more.

(MUSIC: No. 6 WHILIN' AWAY THE TIME)

(music chord)

KEITH: Yep.

(music chord)

CHARLIE: Yep.

(music chord; KEITH & CHARLIE look at MILES)

MILES: Yeah.

(CHARLIE drops his razor into the mug:)

CHARLIE: WHILIN' AWAY THE TIME
WHILE THE WORLD GOES CRAZY; IT'S A DIRTY CRIME.
THERE'S NOT A MOMENT I RECALL THAT I REGRET.
NOT A MOMENT OF IT ALL I'LL SOON FORGET.

JUST WHILIN' AWAY THE TIME
BUT IT PASSES FASTER EVERY SINGLE DAY.
THEN ONE DAY WE FIND WE'RE NOT THE MEN WE WERE.
AND WHAT WAS CERTAIN THEN IS NOT SO VERY SURE.

BUT, STILL, I THINK IT'S FINE
TO HAVE THE TIME TO WHILE AWAY THE TIME.
AND WHILE I GOT THE TIME FOR YET AWHILE
I THINK I'LL GO AND FIND A PLACE WHERE I'LL

HAVE THE TIME TO WHILE THE TIME.
LET THE WORLD GO RUSHIN' ON ITS MERRY WAY.
JUST PUT MY FEET UP; CLOSE MY EYES;
HAVE A SNORE; FORGET IT FOR
ANOTHER HUNDRED YEARS OR MAYBE MORE.

*(song is repeated with variations a la "barbershoppers"; music ends;
MILES pays CHARLIE and starts to leave)*

CHARLIE: I don't get a lot of fellows coming in for a shave, these days.

MILES: Well, I like to drop into the barbershop, my first day someplace.

KEITH: Why's that?

MILES: No place like a barbershop to find out what's happening, is there?

CHARLIE: I don't think I caught your name.

MILES: I don't think I threw it. *(He exits.)* Hey, there's money in that meter!

(MUSIC: No. 6a WHILIN' AWAY THE TIME, transition)

(lights down; up on WINSTON, at a computer in KEITH's office)

WINSTON: All right. Ready to do this. Here we go. *(he touches a key)* Yes! Uploading! Come on. Keep going. Go, daddy! *(He reacts to his wording.)* Just a few more megs. Yes! Thank you! Done!

(he touches something and the computer reacts; the screen lights up)

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The Pompeii Periculator is on line!

KEITH: *(OFF.)* Winston!

WINSTON: Back here!

KEITH: Back where?

WINSTON: In your office, Mr. Harris.

KEITH: *(Entering.)* What are you doing . . . you went ahead and did it.

WINSTON: You're going to love it. Online users can search back issues . . .

KEITH: So can I.

WINSTON: Keep track of stats and queries . . .

KEITH: So can I.

WINSTON: We can even set up an online store. We don't have to deal with customers at all.

KEITH: And this is a good thing?

WINSTON: Oh, sure. Nobody actually talks to each other any more.

KEITH: I kinda miss that.

WINSTON: Speaking of actually talking to people, Aggra-media Conglomerate called again.

KEITH: Really?

WINSTON: They want an answer.

KEITH: Not ready to give them one. I'm off now to take a picture of the Horticultural Society, then I'm covering the Women's Institute Annual Meeting.

WINSTON: I never get the hard news assignments.

KEITH: Stick with it. You'll soon be covering the Kiwanis Bazaar.

WINSTON: You think so?

KEITH: *(holds up an unconnected cord)* Keep plugging. See ya.

(MUSIC: No. 6b POLITICS, 1st transition)

(lights down and up on a library; LAURA moves along the rows, looking for books; MILES comes from the opposite direction, also intent; at the last second, each changes direction and moves behind the stack; a crash from behind and MILES comes out, holding his nose and in obvious pain; LAURA follows, anxiously)

LAURA: I'm terribly sorry!

MILES: Yeah.

LAURA: Really, I am. Is it bleeding?

MILES: I think so. *(he checks)* Yeah, it is.

LAURA: Put your head back. Here sit here.

MILES: I'm fine. Just leave me be.

LAURA: No, no. Sit down. Here! Sit!

(she pulls out a chair and forces him into it; he falls on the floor)

Oh, dear.

MILES: You're dangerous!

LAURA: Here, let me . . .

MILES: Get your hands off!

(someone puts their head around a corner and shushes them)

Sorry . . .

LAURA: Here, let me . . .

MILES: SSSH!

(he gets up and sits, holding his head back)

Just sit. *(Points to a chair across the room.)* There. Sit. Sit!

(she sits)

LAURA: I'm sor . . .

MILES: Sssh! *(a pause)* I think it's stopped.

LAURA: Oh, good. *(a pause)* You were the fellow in Dad's shop.

MILES: Mm-hm.

LAURA: You must think I'm pretty awful.

MILES: Mm-hm.

LAURA: Really?

MILES: *(he looks at her thoughtfully)* Mm-hm.

LAURA: This has been a bad couple of days. My son, Craig, has whooping cough . . . and Stan Throop's tearing down the Market . . .

MILES: Yeah, I heard that part.

LAURA: . . . I was humiliated in front of the Town Council, last night . . .

MILES: I thought your father was the mayor?

LAURA: He is.

MILES: Oooo . . .

LAURA: They're going to build a shopping mall . . . in a market!

MILES: You don't like to shop?

LAURA: You can shop anywhere. There's only one Market. So, a group of us, the Pompeii Cultural Committee, we put together a proposal. See? *(she hauls out her material)* The Pompeii Universal Cultural and Community Centre . . .

MILES: The Puck, huh?

LAURA: I could do a real job on your nose . . .

MILES: Sorry. Nice plan. How much?

LAURA: Just four-and-a-half million. But, they want to build a mall instead!

MILES: A central location is helpful to the businessmen.

LAURA: Businessmen? Ted Morton? He's had the same display in his store window since 1984 – same year my father first got elected mayor. People around here latch onto something and hold on like a . . . like a . . .

MILES: It's exactly the same where I come from.

LAURA: Where's that?

MILES: Six and a half miles from Nowhere.

LAURA: Oh. Welcome home.

MILES: This isn't home. This is business.

LAURA: Home is where the heart is.

MILES: Home is a condo, fifteen floors up with a view of the business district. Why stay?

LAURA: Because we aren't all Rip Van Winkles. We've got ideas. Like the Puck . . . uh . . . the Pompeii Universal Cultural And Community Centre.

MILES: People don't vote for high ideals.

LAURA: What about the merits of the project? Isn't that what people are supposed to vote on?

MILES: Never has been so far. Politics! That's what it's all about. Whenever you get two people together, what have you got?

LAURA: What?

MILES: Politics!

(OTHERS stick their heads out of the study carrels at his exclamation. He drops his voice again.)

Whenever one person wants to do something that somebody else can see or hear or touch, what have you got?

LAURA: Politics?

MILES: Politics!

(OTHERS stick their heads out of the carrels. He whispers.)

It's the sexiest game of all.

(MUSIC: No. 7, POLITICS)

IT HAPPENS EV'RY SINGLE NIGHT, THAT AGE OLD MYSTERY,
BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IN DARKENED ROOMS
WHERE PRYING EYES CAN'T SEE.
THEY PULL THE BLINDS, SO NO ONE PEEKS;
SO NO ONE ELSE CAN KNOW.
AND, THERE THEY DO THE DIRTY DEEDS,
THE ONES THEY DARE NOT SHOW.
BUT YOU KNOW IT'S JUST A GAME.

(OTHERS stick their heads out of the study carrels.)

A GUILTY SECRET HIDDEN DEEP WHERE QUESTIONS NEVER GO.
A SECRET SHAME OF DARKEST FAME,
WHERE SECRET LUSTS CAN GROW.
FROM SHUTTERED ROOMS NO SOUND ESCAPES
UNTIL THE CAM'RAS GLOW,
AND, THEN THEY LOOSE THE SHOCKING NEWS,
THE DEALS THAT BACKROOMS GROW.
BUT YOU KNOW IT'S JUST A GAME.

(OTHERS stick their heads out of the study carrels.)

MILES & OTHERS: A GAME CALLED POLITICS.

(The OTHERS come out of the carrels and join in.)

THEY DO THE DEEDS AND MAKE THE DEALS THAT

MAKE THE WORLD GO 'ROUND.
THEY WHISPER ALL THE HIDDEN THINGS THAT
DARE NOT MAKE A SOUND.
THEY SMILE A SMILE THAT'S SO SINCERE,
BUT THEY ALL LOVE TO PLAY
THE GAME CALLED POLITICS.

THE OTHERS: WHEN MORNING COMES, THEY LIFT THE SHADES
AND SMILE UPON THE DAY.
THEY OPEN LOCKS, UNBOLT THE DOORS
AND END THEIR NIGHT-TIME'S PLAY,
BUT COME THE MORNING NEWS, WE HEAR
THE BITES OF WHAT THEY SAY,
THE GOLDEN NUGGETS OF THE TWISTS
THAT THEY'LL SOON SEND OUR WAY
BUT YOU KNOW IT'S ALL A GAME.
A GAME CALLED POLITICS.
A GAME THEY CALL POLITICS.

MILES/LAURA
& THE OTHERS:

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THEY DO THE DEEDS AND MAKE THE DEALS THAT
MAKE THE WORLD GO 'ROUND.
THEY WHISPER ALL THE HIDDEN THINGS THAT
DARE NOT MAKE A SOUND.
THEY SMILE A SMILE THAT'S SO SINCERE,
BUT THEY ALL LOVE TO PLAY
THE GAME CALLED POLITICS.

LET'S ALL PLAY POLITICS.
THE GAME THEY CALL POLITICS.

THEY DO THE DEEDS AND MAKE THE DEALS THAT
MAKE THE WORLD GO 'ROUND.
THEY WHISPER ALL THE HIDDEN THINGS THAT
DARE NOT MAKE A SOUND.
THEY SMILE A SMILE THAT'S SO SINCERE,
BUT THEY ALL LOVE TO PLAY
THE GAME CALLED POLITICS.

POLITICS! POLITICS!
LET'S ALL PLAY POLITICS!

(By the end, the OTHERS have all returned to their carrels.)

MILES: So, now. What do the people get out of your project?

LAURA: Culture! Heritage! Art!

MILES: They prefer bread and circuses. Bread . . . in the stores, and circuses in the parking lot, a Kiddie's World with rides and . . .

LAURA: How do you know that?

MILES: I heard it somewhere . . .

LAURA: The Town Council haven't even heard the proposal, yet.

(she sees the books he has chosen)

Survey of Land Grants, Deeds and Titles for the Town of Pompeii, Ontario?

MILES: Mm-hm.

LAURA: Oh, my god! Why didn't you tell me?

MILES: Why didn't you ask me?

LAURA: I don't just drop books on people and then ask about their private lives.

MILES: You just drop books on people and tell them all about *your* private life.

LAURA: Not all.

MILES: Oh? There's more?

LAURA: YOU'LL never know!

(she grabs the big book)

Mine!

MILES: Fine, I was putting it back.

LAURA: I hope your nose swells permanently.

MILES: Oh, be reasonable!

LAURA: Reasonable? You want reasonable?

MILES: Have a good day, now.

LAURA: Thank you very much. I have other plans!

(she starts to leave; MILES reaches for the document she was looking at; she grabs it from him and bangs it over his head)

Mine!

(she exits)

MILES: God, she's cute.

(MUSIC: No. 7a, POLITICS, 2nd TRANSITION)

(lights down on library, up on KEITH's office as he works at the computer, with pauses to glance at manuals)

KEITH: Lots of rumblings over the Market Square development. Laura Phillips has made a proposition . . . *(he corrects on the word-processor)* . . . proposal for a good-looking new cultural centre. The Little Haven Development Group wants something practical – a shopping mall. I mean grocery stores make money, right? And, theatres lose money. Right. Problem is, the money a grocery store makes is money that's already here, that's already going to businesses already here. What we need is money from outside and nobody's gonna come to Pompeii to buy groceries.

That's telling 'em. Now, send it to the Cloud.

(he clicks the mouse; the computer dies; he hits it)

Winston!

(MUSIC: No. 7b, NOT A LOT TO DO, transition)

(lights down & up; CHARLIE cuts TED's hair; LAURA approaches)

CHARLIE: So, there's this travelling salesman and his car breaks down and he goes to this nunnery for the night, and the Mother Superior has this huge . . . !

(LAURA bursts in and stands panting)

I'll finish it later.

LAURA: You're GIVING it to them!

CHARLIE: Not giving . . .

LAURA: The taxpayers paid a million bucks for all that and you're GIVING it away!

CHARLIE: Not true. Wouldn't be legal. The asking price is a dollar . . . but it's negotiable.

LAURA: It's incredible. What do you think will happen when this is made public?

CHARLIE: It's already public.

LAURA: *(Holding up the document.)* A half-sentence in a foot-note on the bottom of page four hundred and thirty-four of a six hundred page document – in fine print!

CHARLIE: Yeah, but it's in there.

LAURA: I am . . . flabbergasted. I am . . . astounded. I am . . .

TED: We get the drift.

LAURA: I can't believe what I am hearing.

CHARLIE: Any decisions made by the Council have been for the public's own good, and if the public don't like it, too bad. If they knew what we knew . . .

LAURA: *(holding up the 600 page document)* You make it so easy.

CHARLIE: Next meeting's on the 26th. If you have any comments, you can make them then.

LAURA: Oh, I'll have comments. You bet I will. I have not yet begun . . . !

(she exits abruptly)

CHARLIE: Laura's coming out of her shell, don't you think?

TED: I didn't know about that one dollar part, Charlie.

CHARLIE: You voted for it, Ted.

TED: I did?

CHARLIE: Yep.

TED: I just built a new meat freezer out back and this new mall is going to have a supermarket. Where's that leave me? I might have to think about this, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Laura's not the only one coming out of her shell. So, anyway, this Mother Superior has got this huge . . .

(lights down and up on MILES, at a phone booth; a phone rings; CHRISTINE enters and answers the phone)

CHRISTINE: Little Haven Development Group.

MILES: You're there! I was afraid you'd be in court or something.

CHRISTINE: No, I entered a plea of *NOLO CONTENDERE*, bargained a reduced charge based on *DE GUSTIBUS NON EST DISPUTANDUM* and got a suspended sentence *IPSO JURE HODIE MIHI*.

MILES: I thought it was parking tickets?

CHRISTINE: Justice is justice.

(LAURA enters with a clip-board; she accosts passers-by)

LAURA: Excuse me. I'm raising funds to support the Pompeii Universal Cultural and Community Centre? Would you care to make a donation?

(failure)

CHRISTINE: Messages. Six asking what you think you're doing; six asking what the hell you think you're doing; and two saying he'll be damned if he'll pay for it. In that order.

MILES: Hmm. I need a favour.

CHRISTINE: Anything.

LAURA: Excuse me. I'm raising funds for the Pompeii Universal Cultural and Community Centre? Would you care to make a donation?

(failure)

MILES: I need a title search on the Market Square in Pompeii. Who owns it, for how long and how much did they pay for it?

CHRISTINE: Are you into something sneaky?

LAURA: Excuse me. I'm raising funds

MILES: Me? Christine . . .

CHRISTINE: What am I going to do with you?

MILES: Marry me.

CHRISTINE: *(Ironically.)* Sure.

LAURA: Excuse me. Would you care to . . . ?

MILES: You're a pal, Chris.

CHRISTINE: Gee, thanks.

MILES: I'll check back. Bye.

CHRISTINE: Bye . . . *(they hang up)* Oh, boy. I'm a pal. *(She exits.)*

MILES: Hey, there's money . . . ! Sheesh!

LAURA: *(crossing to MILES)* Excuse me, I'm raising funds for the . . . oh, it's you.

(they separate and she tries another passer-by; through this TOWNSPEOPLE pass by on their business, including teenagers - girls in a group; boys on skateboards.)

Excuse me, I'm . . . uhm . . . I'm . . .

MILES: . . . raising funds . . .

LAURA: raising funds for the . . . uhm . . .

MILES: . . . Pompeii Universal . . .

LAURA: Go away! *(To passer-by.)* Not you! *(too late)* Will you leave me alone?

MILES: Just trying to help.

LAURA: I don't need help.

MILES: How much have you raised, so far?

LAURA: I'm not telling you!

MILES: A hundred thousand?

LAURA: No!

MILES: A thousand?

LAURA: . . . no . . .

MILES: A hundred?

LAURA: Yes!

MILES: Your donation?

LAURA: . . . yes . . .

MILES: What's your pitch?

LAURA: Pitch?

MILES: Angle. Hook. Gimmick.

LAURA: I am funding culture, not selling beer.

MILES: Same thing. Watch . . .

(he takes her clipboard and goes into the audience; CHELSEA comes onstage and sits disconsolately, plainly bored.)

Excuse me. Did you know your children are destined for a life in prison? That's right. The Pompeii Universal Cultural and Community Centre is a project that has the sole purpose of providing the mental challenge needed to turn your children into useful and productive members of society. Can you face them, tonight, knowing you have not contributed to this cause? *(pause)* Think of their open, trusting faces. *(pause)* It's tax deductible. Thank you! And, your receipt.

(he returns to LAURA)

Apparently, keeping his *(her)* children out of prison was only worth ten dollars.

LAURA: Well, it's a start.

MILES: If you get ten dollars from every adult in town, which you won't, you'll raise a grand total of about . . . fifteen thousand dollars.

LAURA: Do you have a better plan?

MILES: Sure. We can scratch each other where it itches.

LAURA: You arrogant . . . !

MILES: Figuratively speaking. Compromise!

LAURA: Art does not come from compromise.

MILES: Okay, but buildings can. Think! A commercial development with a cultural centre as the focal point. The one keeps the other going. Everybody's itch gets scratched.

LAURA: It'll be a cold day in a hot place before I'll scratch Cec Wilcox's itch.

MILES: You'd cut off your nose to spite Cec Wilcox? You don't know if he's involved!

LAURA: Isn't he?

MILES: Can't say.

LAURA: When your "unnamed backers" are ready to compromise, then we are. Not before!

MILES: You people are about the most stubborn, narrow-minded . . .

LAURA: Oh, yeah?

MILES: Yeah!

(MUSIC: No. 8: NOT A LOT TO DO)

LAURA: You want to get a coffee?

MILES: Fine.

LAURA: Over there?

MILES: Fine.

LAURA: I'm paying.

MILES: Fine.

(LAURA and MILES exit; a couple of boys skateboard through)

CHELSEA: NOT A LOT TO DO IN POMPEII. EVERY DAY IS JUST THE SAME:
ONCE YOU'VE HAD A LOOK AT POMPEII,
MAKES YOU WONDER WHAT BECAME OF
ALL THE KIDS WHO LIVED IN POMPEII,
BORN AND GREW UP WITH THAT SHAME.
EVERY KID WHO LIVED IN POMPEII WAS
BORED, BORED, BORED! WITH THIS WAITING GAME!

I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN, RIGHT NOW!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THE BORING TOWN.
I WANNA SEE ALL THAT THERE IS TODAY!
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT MY PARENTS SAY!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN! I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN!
I WANNA! I THINK . . . I THINK I WANNA . . .

(OTHER GIRLS enter and join CHELSEA. BOYS skateboard through.)

OTHER GIRLS: Hey.

CHELSEA: Hey.

THE GIRLS: NOT A LOT TO DO IN POMPEII. STARE AT WALLS AND WATCH IT RAIN.
ALL THE THINGS TO DO IN POMPEII
ONLY MAKE ME MORE INSANE!
WE'VE TALKED ABOUT IT ALL IN POMPEII;
THEN WE TALKED IT ALL AGAIN.
EV'RY DAY I STAY IN POMPEII IS
LIKE A WORM BORING IN MY BRAIN!

I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN, RIGHT NOW!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS BORING TOWN.
I WANNA GET OUT AND GET ON MY OWN;
I'M NOT GONNA WAIT 'TIL THEY THINK I'VE GROWN!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN! I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN!
I WANNA! I THINK, I REALLY WANNA!

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(BOYS skateboard through)

SITTIN' BY THE SUBWAY^(TM), DREAMIN' OF A SOMEDAY,
TALKIN' TO THE SAME OLD BOYS.
STANDIN' AT THE REC-CEN, WAITIN' FOR THE TIME WHEN
IT'S MY TURN TO MAKE SOME NOISE!
WHEN'S MY TURN TO MAKE SOME NOISE?

(The BOYS stop skateboarding and join in)

ALL: I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN, RIGHT NOW!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS BORING TOWN.
I WANNA SEE ALL THAT THERE IS TODAY.
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT MY PARENTS SAY!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN!
I WANNA! I THINK . . . I THINK, I THINK I WANNA!

'CAUSE THERE'S NOT A LOT TO DO IN POMPEII. *(NOT A LOT TO DO)*
GROW UP FAST AND LIVE TOO LONG. *(BORING, BORING JUST THE SAME.)*
NEED A LIFE, BUT NOT IN POMPEII. *(POMPEII)*
NEED A LIFE! IS THAT SO WRONG?
WHEN I KISSED A BOY IN POMPEII, *(USED TO HAVE SOME FRIENDS)*
WE'D BEEN PLAYMATES ALL ALONG. *(BORING, BORING JUST THE SAME.)*
EV'RY KID WHO LIVES IN POMPEII HAS A

BELLY FULL OF THIS SMALL TOWN SONG!

I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN, RIGHT NOW!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS BORING TOWN.
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS ANCIENT RUIN.
I WANNA GO SOMEWHERE WHERE SOMETHING'S DOIN'!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN!
I WANNA GET OUT OF THIS TOWN!
I WANNA! I DO! I REALLY REALLY WANNA!
'CAUSE THERE'S NOT A LOT TO DO IN POMPEII.

(The BOYS skateboard off.)

THE GIRLS: NOT A LOT TO DO IN POMPEII.

ANOTHER GIRL: See ya.

CHELSEA: See ya.

(The rest of the GIRLS leave. CHELSEA remains)

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NOT A LOT TO DO IN POMPEII . . .

(CHARLIE and the council enter as MUSIC ends; CHELSEA exits.)

CHARLIE: So, we keep arguing and Cec Wilcox gets his way.

STAN: I'm not arguing.

TED: You are, too.

STAN: Am not!

TED: Are, too!

AGNES: How can we build the Puck if we don't have the money?

STAN: We'd have the money, if we had a mall. Cars'd be rolling through here.

AGNES: We don't want them rolling; we want them stopped.

STAN: They'll stop and spend.

TED: Pie-in-the-sky.

STAN: It's a hole, now. We've got to put something there.

TED: Why? It's a nice hole.

STAN: It's a dust-bowl.

AGNES: It's a nice dust-bowl.

CHARLIE: Agnes . . .

STAN: We can't just leave it!

TED: I agree with Stan.

STAN: You what?

TED: Well . . . yeah.

CHARLIE: My god . . . Agnes?

AGNES: I agree with Stan, uh, Ted, uh, Stan and Ted.

CHARLIE: I don't believe it. All right, meeting, 6:30 tomorrow?

STAN TED AGNES: Right, Charlie.

(they exit, leaving CHARLIE)

CHARLIE: Something is putrid in Pompeii.

(LAURA and MILES enter)

Uh-huh.

(LAURA exits, after a brief moment with MILES)

Hold up, there, son! *(He joins MILES.)* You've been talking to my councillors.

MILES: Yep.

CHARLIE: Taking them aside, one at a time?

MILES: Yep.

CHARLIE: Divide and conquer?

MILES: Yep.

CHARLIE: Good for you. That's the way I'd do it.

MILES: I'm glad you approve.

CHARLIE: Don't say I approve. I just say that's the way I'd do it.

MILES: Okay.

CHARLIE: Now, here's the bottom line. The rumour flying around is that these "un-named" backers of yours are local. Any truth in that?

MILES: Can't say.

CHARLIE: Listen, for myself, I don't care. I just care what's in it for the town. But, I can quote you chapter and verse what everybody else said. Agnes Nesbitt said . . .

AGNES: *(lights up on AGNES)* Sounds good to me. . . BUT . . . if Cecil Wilcox has got one penny in this, I wouldn't vote for it if you promised me a yacht and two gold toilets. *(Lights down on her)*

CHARLIE: Stan Throop said . . .

STAN: *(lights up on STAN)* If Cec Wilcox doesn't have his finger in this and Ted Morton's voting the other way, you got me on side. *(Lights down on him.)*

CHARLIE: . . . and Ted Morton said . . .

TED: *(lights up on TED)* If Stan Throop's against it and Cec Wilcox is out of it, then I'm in it. *(lights down on him)*

CHARLIE: So, you are, in my view, sitting mighty pretty on the horns of a very fine dilemma. 'Cause, I know, sure as spit, that Cec Wilcox is leveraging this deal.

MILES: Can't say.

CHARLIE: Now, on the other hand, there's my daughter sitting there with a half decent proposal. But, Agnes's has got no use for it and Stan and Ted will vote against each other no matter what. But, I'm seeing my daughter getting motivated for the first time since that damn-fool husband of hers dumped her. Makes me kind of wonder.

MILES: What about the merits of the project?

CHARLIE: What's that got to do with it? Now, you string along with me, my boy, and I'll get you in and me out. Piece of cake.

MILES: Why?

CHARLIE: Because I like you, Miles. More to the point, so does my daughter.

MILES: Now, wait a minute!

CHARLIE: . . . and, she's a good judge of character, 'cept for that weasel she married. It's the initial costs that are going to be the problem.

MILES: Right. Who pays?

CHARLIE: What do you mean, who pays? You know who pays.

(Both do a take to the audience; CHARLIE snaps his fingers; THE COMPANY appear in a rush; MILES reacts)

MILES: How did . . . ?

CHARLIE: Hey, I'm the Mayor.

KEITH: Town Council Announces Development Plans!

AGNES: What?

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KEITH: Mayor Charlie Phillips, in a surprise statement, today announced the Town's backing for a commercial development on the downtown Market Square property.

TED: He what?

KEITH: The Little Haven Development Group says that "this is the only viable proposal put forward for the development of the property."

LAURA: It what?

KEITH: Mayor Phillips added, "The Council is very pleased with the way this proposal has progressed. We are unanimous in our opinion."

STAN: We what?

KEITH: The Mayor concluded with a statement that a special tax will be required to cover the initial development costs, saying that the temporary surtax of 38% on all goods and services in town, will have no impact on the economy.

ALL: What!

BONNIE: You can't do that!

CHARLIE: It's done.

AGNES: I never voted on it!

CHARLIE: I was at the meeting. Where were you?

AGNES: I was . . . oops!

CHARLIE: Thought so.

BONNIE: We won't pay!

CHARLIE: You always pay.

WINSTON: Why should we?

CHARLIE: It's your destiny, son! Your birthright! It's your heritage!

(MUSIC: No. 9 THAT TAX)

ONCE THERE WAS AN OLD PHAROAH
(ALL: HMMM! WAY DOWN IN EGYPT LAND!)
WOULD NOT LET THOSE CHILDREN GO!
(ALL: HMMM! WAY DOWN IN EGYPT LAND!)
BUILD A SPHINX FOR WHEN I'M GONE.
(ALL: HMMM! WAY DOWN IN EGYPT LAND!)
KEEPING UP WITH BABYLON!
(ALL: HMMM! WAY DOWN IN EGYPT LAND!)
AND THE PEOPLE SAID . . .

ALL: OH, PHAROAH, DON'T YOU SEE?
YOUR PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN MISERY.
RAISE OUR BURDEN THAT'S ALL WE "AXE".
AND, OLD PHAROAH SAID

CHARLIE: "FINE! I'M GONNA RAISE THAT TAX!"

ALL: THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT'S THE WAY THE BUDGET GROWS.

SALES TAX CONNECTED TO THE INCOME TAX;
INCOME TAX CONNECTED TO THE VALUE TAX;
VALUE TAX CONNECTED TO THE SIN TAX —
THERE'S ONLY ONE SIN THEY HAVEN'T TAXED!

DEAR MISTER TAXMAN, GIVE US A BREAK!

YOU WANT THE FACTS, MAN? THAT'S ALL I MAKE!
I KNOW YOUR CHILDREN NEED NEW BRACES AND YOUR
PORSCHÉ NEEDS NEW TIRES.
AND YOUR IVORY TOWER NEEDS MORE
GOLD ON THE SPIRES.
I KNOW YOU'RE HONEST AND DESERVING AND I WANT TO HELP YOU,
BUT SOMETHING INSIDE MAKES ME WANNA EAT, TOO!

MILES: NERO FIDDLER WHILE ROME BURNED DOWN!
(ALL: HMMM! BY THE PONTE VECCHIO)
CLEARED THOSE SLUMS RIGHT TO THE GROUND.
(ALL: HMMM! BY THE PONTE VECCHIO)
COLISEUMS COST MORE EACH DAY.
(ALL: HMMM! BY THE PONTE VECCHIO)
AND HAVE YOU PRICED AN APPIAN WAY?
(ALL: HMMM! BY THE PONTE VECCHIO)
AND THE PEOPLE SAID . . .

ALL: OH, NERO, HEAR OUR CRY!
A SESTERCE WON'T BUY WHAT IT USED TO BUY.
RAISE OUR SPIRITS AND GRANT US "PAX"
AND, OLD NERO SAID

CHARLIE: "ATSA FINE! I'M-A GONNA RAISE-A THAT-A TAX!"

ALL: THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT'S THE WAY THE BUDGET GROWS.

CHARLIE: AND SILVER BELLS IN DEAR OLD ROMA
CAN STILL RECALL THOSE GOLDEN DAYS.
AND ECHOING (ALL: ECHOING, ECHOING, ECHOING)
ACROSS THE PIAZZA, (ALL: PIAZZA, PIAZZA, PIAZZA)
THOSE ANCIENT LATIN VOICES SEEM TO SAY:

ALL: OO-WE ACK-LAY ONEY-MAY!
THAT'S THE WAY WE SOUND FOR
EVERY TIME WE NEED SOME CASH IT'S
NEVER TO BE FOUND, AND
OO-WE ACK-LAY ONEY-MAY!
SEEMS TO SAY IT BEST.
TAXES, RENT AND BABY GETS THE REST!

CHARLIE: EN-WHAY EE-THAY ONEY-MAY-GAY
ON'T-WAY O-GAY 'ROUND,

EN-THAY EE-WAY OT-GAY OVE-LAY
ILL-TAY ONEY-MAY'S FOUND.

IF-GAY EE-WAY IKE-LAY OVE-LAY
EN-THAY AT'S-THAY GRAND!
AS WE ARVE-STAY
I CAN HOLD YOUR HAND!

ALL: DEAR MISTER TAXMAN, LET'S NOT FORGET
THE BASIC FACTS, MAN; EASE UP A BIT.
'CAUSE FROM YOUR IVORY TOWER, THINGS LOOK PRETTY GOOD,
IT'S ALL TICKETY-BOOMING, THE WAY THAT IT SHOULD,
BUT THE GUY IN THE TRENCHES IS STARTING TO SEETHE,
WE'RE WONDERING WHEN YOU'RE GONNA TAX WHAT WE BREATHE!

PHAROAHS ALL HAVE LONG BEEN HID
(HMMM! BUT STILL THE TAXES GROW)
DOWN BENEATH THEIR PYRAMID.
(HMMM! BUT STILL THE TAXES GROW)
NERO'S PART OF WHAT HAS BEEN.
(HMMM! BUT STILL THE TAXES GROW)
WHAT WE'VE GOT WE VOTED IN.
(HMMM! BUT STILL THE TAXES GROW)

CHARLIE: AND THE PEOPLE SAY . . .

ALL: OH, DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING
WHEN ANYTHING'S BETTER THAN TAXPAYING?
RAISE OUR STANDARDS, THAT'S ALL WE ASKED.
WHAT THEY DID INSTEAD
WAS GO AND RAISE THAT TAX!

THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT TAX, THAT TAX, GONNA RAISE THAT TAX.
THAT'S THE WAY THE BUDGET GROWS!

CHARLIE: *(to MILES)* You see? I told, piece of cake!

*(all the OTHERS do a take to CHARLIE; lights to black with button
of music)*

END OF ACT ONE

Death & Taxes, The Musical

Act Two

(at top of act — setting as before)

(MUSIC: No. 10 THE HOMETOWN MARCH)

(the cast march on, playing kazoos and doing drill like a marching band, with CHARLIE as band-master; music ends)

CHARLIE: Left and right wheel! Quick march!

(the cast exit; lights up on CYNTHIA ASHBURY, with microphone)

CYNTHIA: Main Street, Ontario. A small town, sleepy, quiet; conservative; not given to over-reaction or emotional display. Yet, here, in *this* town, all is not what it seems.

(some TOWNSPEOPLE go past with signs reading "Puck-er Up!")

TOWNSPEOPLE: Pucker up! Pucker up! Pucker up!

CYNTHIA: Here, in *this* town, the tensions lie not far beneath the surface.

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(TOWNSPEOPLE go past with signs reading "Mart — not Art!")

TOWNSPEOPLE: Mart — not Art! Mart — not Art! Mart — not Art!

CYNTHIA: At the centre of the contr-AW-versy is this man –

(lights on CHARLIE, sitting in his barber chair, with a fishing-rod)

Mayor Charles "Charlie" Phillips, a man whom, some say, is a brilliant visionary; a man whom, others say, has gone off his nut. Mayor Phillips, which is it?

CHARLIE: *(practising his casts)* I'd give worlds to know.

CYNTHIA: How do you justify your action to those who elected you?

CHARLIE: Actually, I haven't been elected since 1990. Nobody's run against me since then.

CYNTHIA: Your own daughter is leading the fight to stop the commercial development.

CHARLIE: Ain't that a kicker?

CYNTHIA: So, you have no intention of relenting on this 38% surtax?

CHARLIE: Why? Things look pretty good from here.

CYNTHIA: The words of a man, who for the moment, anyway, seems to have the situation well in hand. This is Cynthia Ashbury, Zee-Dee-Vee News, Pompeii

(lights down; traffic sounds; lights up on KEITH, on a bench; CHRISTINE is at a cross-walk, trying to cross; she points, waits, steps back to avoid being run over, steps out, steps back, etc.)

KEITH: You're not from around here, are you?

CHRISTINE: Is it that obvious?

KEITH: Everybody knows you can't cross at a Courtesy cross-walk. We put them in to keep the tourists in town. Fellow who owns that hardware store came on the bus in '78. He got out to stretch his legs. Waited so long at that cross-walk, he finally bought the store, got married and raised three kids. Never has been to this side of the street.

CHRISTINE: You're joking.

KEITH: *(shakes his head)* Yep.

CHRISTINE: I'm looking for Charlie Phillips' barber shop.

KEITH: Over there beside the hardware store.

CHRISTINE: Would you know if Miles Bridger is there?

KEITH: Think I saw him go in. Winston!

(WINSTON sticks his head around a corner)

WINSTON: Yeah?

KEITH: Miles over to Charlie's?

WINSTON: No, it's about fifty metres.

KEITH: *Is Miles over at Charlie's?*

WINSTON: Was five minutes ago, but he's meeting with Agnes Nesbitt at ten.

CHRISTINE: How do you know that?

WINSTON: Doesn't everybody? *(he exits. CHRISTINE looks at KEITH in puzzlement.)*

KEITH: Saves a lot of trouble if everybody knows everybody else's business.

CHRISTINE: Well, he's meeting with me first.

KEITH: I'll make a note of that.

(she starts to cross the street, jumps back)

Never, ever step out into that street unless you know the person driving the first car in line. You know anybody in town?

CHRISTINE: No.

KEITH: Oh, they'll kill you.

CHRISTINE: How do I get over there?

KEITH: Drive back to Stephens' Springs and come into town from the other side.

CHRISTINE: You're joking.

KEITH: *(nods)* Nope. There's Miles.

CHRISTINE: Miles! Miles!

(she waves and signals; honking and traffic sounds; KEITH and CHRISTINE wince)

KEITH: Boy, I thought he knew more people than that.

(MILES and LAURA enter at a run and cross to them)

MILES: What are you doing here?

CHRISTINE: Came to see you.

MILES: Oh. Laura — Chris. I was telling you . . . Chris — Laura. She's . . . uh . . .

LAURA: Uh . . .

CHRISTINE: Uh . . .

BOTH: Hi!

(they shake hands)

LAURA: Hi . . .

CHRISTINE: Hi . . .

MILES: Chris's . . .

LAURA: Your receptionist.

CHRISTINE: I'm a lawyer.

LAURA: Sorry.

CHRISTINE: Here's that title search. It was a real mess.

MILES: *(he addresses LAURA)* Sorry. Business.

LAURA: Development business?

MILES: Keeps me here.

CHRISTINE: Keeps us both here.

LAURA: How so?

CHRISTINE: Registry Office is closed. Have to wait for Monday to check this end of it.

MILES: Great! Where're you staying?

CHRISTINE: Well, I thought a motel . . .

MILES: Not in Pompeii. You'd better stay with me.

LAURA: What?

CHRISTINE: Miles.

MILES: Oh, come on. Laura, you have a problem with that?

LAURA: Uhm . . . uh . . . no.

CHRISTINE: Miles. People . . .

LAURA: . . . talk. People . . .

CHRISTINE: . . . wouldn't . . .

LAURA: . . . understand.

CHRISTINE: Right.

MILES: Fine. Don't stay with me. Stay with Laura.

LAURA & CHRISTINE: Miles!

MILES: Fine. Sleep in a gutter.

LAURA: Christine, I *could* | make up a couch or something . . .

CHRISTINE: | There has to be someplace . . .

MILES: I still don't see . . .

LAURA: No, you don't, do you?

CHRISTINE: There's a lot you miss, Miles.

LAURA: There's a motel about halfway to Stephens' Springs.

CHRISTINE: I think that's what I need.
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LAURA: Or something . . .

CHRISTINE: Something.

MILES: When did I leave this conversation?

LAURA: Pretty well right off the top. I will see you at the meeting.

MILES: That's bound to be fun.

LAURA: It's not supposed to be fun. It's serious – to us – but you just keep pushing.

MILES: I'm not pushing anything.

CHRISTINE: No.

MILES: What?

CHRISTINE: Just . . . no. I'm . . . going to go find that motel.

(CHRISTINE exits)

MILES: Chris!

LAURA: I think I'll go help her find it.

(LAURA exits)

MILES: Laura!

(he gives up and sits beside KEITH)

People, huh?

KEITH: Well, they're only human.

MILES: All I want is reasonable behaviour. Reason! Is that too much to ask?

KEITH: This town was founded by people too stubborn – or too unreasonable – to give up.

MILES: I'm not asking for miracles . . .

KEITH: Don't! You might get them.

MILES: This mall could be a miracle. You want to be rich?

KEITH: Too much work. So, you've got Charlie on your side, but, for once, Charlie's got the Council united . . . against him. And, the people ready to lynch him.

MILES: Well, I'm going to start by getting the councillors aside and talking to them. In small groups, you can talk reason.

KEITH: Don't count on it. Where're you starting?

MILES: Lunch with Stan Throop and Ted Morton.

KEITH: *(bursts into hysterical laughter; at length)* Oh, dear, oh, dear . . .

MILES: Now, what?

KEITH: The only reason Stan and Ted are on the Council is to cancel each other's vote. There hasn't been a single issue that a Morton and a Throop have agreed on in over a century. It'd be funny, if weren't so tragic.

MILES: What's tragic about it?

KEITH: What's this town's one claim to fame?

MILES: Are you kidding? First Traffic Accident Park. First Traffic Accident Souvenirs.

(MUSIC: No. 11 THE DAY THE BLOOM FELL OFF THE ROSE)

KEITH: First traffic accident in the country . . . and guess who was involved?

MILES: Stan and Ted?

KEITH: Close. Their great-grandfathers and they've been feuding ever since.

MILES: Stupid people.

KEITH: Stupid? Son, this is history!

WELL, HISTORY DOESN'T RECORD WHAT BROUGHT
THE MORTONS OUT THAT DAY.
WAS IT EGGS OR WAS IT FLOUR
THEY PICKED UP ALONG THE WAY?
THE ONLY THING WE KNOW FOR CERTAIN
IS THEY SET OUT UP THE STRIP
IN THEIR BRAND-NEW, GREEN McLAUGHLIN
ON A TWO-HOUR SHOPPING TRIP.

PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS
(up the right-hand aisle come the MORTONS, with a cutout flivver)

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN WAS HEARD
A RUMBLE AND A ROAR
AS ED THROOP'S NEW STANLEY STEAMER
HEADED OUT THE DRIVE SHED DOOR.
THAT MIGHTY SIX-HORSE ENGINE
SHOOK THE TOWN RIGHT TO ITS CORE.
BY THE TIME THAT HE HIT PINE STREET,
HE WAS DOING TWELVE OR MORE.

(up the left-hand aisle comes ED THROOP, with goggles and scarf
billowing; CHARLIE enters & crosses to KEITH)

THE DAY THE BLOOM FELL OFF THE ROSE;
THE DAY THE LIGHT BEGAN TO FADE.

KEITH CHARLIE: OLD TIMERS STILL REMEMBER
WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE BEFORE
THAT FATEFUL MORNING IN SEPTEMBER
IN THE YEAR NINETEEN-OH-FOUR.
IN A TANGLE OF NEW FENDERS
AND A MIGHTY CRASH OF DOORS,
THERE BEGAN THE MODERN AGE.

(KEITH exits)

CHARLIE: NOW, GOING TO THE MARKET
WAS A CERTAIN FARMER BROWN,
AND HE HAD WITH HIM A MILK COW
WHOM HE COULD NOT MAKE GIVE DOWN.
DETERMINED, THEN, TO SELL HER
FOR A GOOD PRICE IN THE TOWN,
HE WAS WALKING THROUGH THE MORNING
WITH NO WORRY AND NO FROWN.

(KEITH, with straw hat, enters, pulling BOSSY, a pantomime cow)

AT THE TIME, THE MAIN STREET CROSSROAD
WAS A 3-WAY INTERSECT.

MILES: THE APPROACH OF DISTANT TRAFFIC WAS NOT EASY TO DETECT.

CHARLIE: WITH A COW THAT HAD GROWN MULE-ISH,

MILES: FARMER BROWN DID NOT SUSPECT

CHARLIE MILES: THAT, OF ALL THE FOLKS IN TOWN,
HE WAS THE ONE FATE WOULD SELECT.

KEITH, MILES
& CHARLIE: THE DAY THE BLOOM FELL OFF THE ROSE;
THE DAY THE LIGHT BEGAN TO FADE.
OLD TIMERS STILL REMEMBER
WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE BEFORE
THAT FATEFUL MORNING IN SEPTEMBER
IN THE YEAR NINETEEN-OH-FOUR.
IN A TANGLE OF NEW FENDERS
AND A MIGHTY CRASH OF DOORS,
THERE BEGAN THE MODERN AGE.

(music vamps under dialogue)

KEITH: Now, I want to be sure we all understand the situation. Approaching from due north is Farmer Brown. With him, a recalcitrant Bossy — nine hundred pounds of balky bovine. Coming from the south-south east, the Morton family, happy day-trippers, in a lime-green McLaughlin, Canada's Edsel. And, finally, just now cresting Pine Street Hill, is Ed Throop, coming from the south-west, in his Stanley Steamer roadster. Ahead of him, nearly a half-mile of smooth down-grade, with no intersection until the bottom. Here – at Market Square. Ed runs his Steamer on a special fuel: distilled water. With a down-grade like that, Ed could be doing, oh, 15

by the time he hits the flat. That's 23 to anybody who's still in school.

(the COMPANY enter as CHORUS)

CHORUS: AS FARMER BROWN DREW NEAR THE INTERSECTION
THAT COW BEGAN TO RUN.
SHE DRAGGED THAT POOR MAN WITH HER
LIKE THEY WERE SHOT OUT OF A GUN
CURSING, SWEATING, STUMBLING,
HE FINALLY PULLED HER TO A HALT,
AND, THEN THAT BIG McLAUGHLIN SHOWED
ITS ONE AND ONLY FAULT.

(music vamps)

KEITH: See, the 1904 McLaughlin was a beautiful car. Comfortable, spacious. It could carry the whole family all day on a tank of gas. In fact, there was really only one major design flaw . . . *(music stops)* The brakes didn't work.

(music picks up "melodrama chase" theme)

CHORUS: SEEING WHAT WAS HAPPENING MR. MORTON HIT THE BRAKES!
BUT THAT BIG McLAUGHLIN SIMPLY GOT A CASE OF SHAKES.
PUSHING HARDER, BANG!, THE PEDAL SLAMMED DOWN TO THE FLOOR.
LOOKING UP, HE SAW THAT FARMER CLOSER THAN BEFORE!

(music vamps on nice arpeggios)

KEITH: When Farmer Brown saw that McLaughlin coming, he had no sense of history in the making. He simply bethought himself of his loved ones, and his family, and of the fact that now, he would never have to pay back that \$8.50 he had borrowed the week before. *(music stops)* What the cow thought at that moment has not been recorded.

(music picks up "melodrama chase" theme)

CHORUS: HURTLING DOWN THE PINE STREET HILL AT FIFTEEN MILES PER HOUR,
ED THROOP HAD HIS THOUGHTS UPON THE STANLEY STEAMER'S POWER.
WHEN, AT LAST, HE LOOKED BACK TO THE ROAD, IT WAS TOO LATE.
JUST BEYOND THAT GUERNSEY, HE COULD SEE THE PEARLY GATE!

(music vamps on nice arpeggios)

KEITH: Now, what Ed Throop said and thought in that moment HAS been recorded, in detail, in the Throop family history. His words, his thoughts and his emotions. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions of Bill C-105 . . . *(music stops)* . . . it is not permitted for us to repeat them here.

(music picks up original theme in new key)

ALL: WITH FARMER BROWN OUT IN THE STREET
AND BOSSY STANDING NEAR,
MR. MORTON HAD NO TIME TO REGISTER HIS FEAR.
WITH BOSSY RUNNING TO HIS RIGHT,
THE SIZE OF TWO BIG DEER,
NINE HUNDRED POUNDS OF BURGER
MADE HIM CHOOSE WHICH WAY TO STEER.

(MORTON turns LEFT, directly toward THROOP)

IN THE SPEEDING STANLEY STEAMER,
ED THROOP GASPED THROUGH HIS SURPRISE
WHEN THE FARMER AND THE MILK COW
SEEMED TO JUMP BEFORE HIS EYES.
AND, DOING WITHOUT THINKING,
AS ANY DRIVER MIGHT,
ED NEVER SAW THE MORTONS
AS HE TURNED TO HIS RIGHT.

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(the drivers register shock as they see each other)

THE DAY THE BLOOM FELL OFF THE ROSE;
THE DAY THE LIGHT BEGAN TO FADE.
OLD TIMERS STILL REMEMBER
WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE BEFORE
THAT FATEFUL MORNING IN SEPTEMBER
IN THE YEAR NINETEEN-OH-FOUR.
IN A TANGLE OF NEW FENDERS
AND A MIGHTY CRASH OF DOORS,
THERE BEGAN THE MODERN AGE.

(Key change)

THERE WERE MORTONS FLYING THROUGH THE AIR
WITH SWAN-LIKE, GRACEFUL EASE.
THERE WERE MORTONS IN THE GUTTERS;
THERE WERE MORTONS IN THE TREES.
AND THEN BEGAN THEIR FEUDING
FROM THAT DAY TO THIS NIGHT,
WHETHER MORTON OR ED THROOP HAD BEEN
THE ONE WHO SHOULD TURN RIGHT.

THE DAY THE BLOOM FELL OFF THE ROSE;
THE DAY THE LIGHT BEGAN TO FADE.

OLD TIMERS STILL REMEMBER
WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE BEFORE
THAT FATEFUL MORNING IN SEPTEMBER
IN THE YEAR NINETEEN-OH-FOUR.
IN A TANGLE OF NEW FENDERS
AND A MIGHTY CRASH OF DOORS,
THERE BEGAN THE MODERN AGE.
SO BEGAN THE MODERN AGE.
IT BEGAN THE MODERN AGE.

THE COW: MOO!

(spot on KEITH and MILES, as the rest exit)

MILES: So, the Mortons were pretty well wiped out, huh?

KEITH: Oh, no, they all landed quite safely.

MILES: So, it was Ed Throop who was killed?

KEITH: Nope. He drove into a haystack.

MILES: Farmer Brown?

KEITH: Jumped into a horse-trough.

MILES: The cow?

KEITH: Funny thing about that cow. With all that running and all that scaring, that cow was so shook up, from that day forward, she gave nothing but homogenized milk.

(MUSIC: No. 11a. THE HOMETOWN MARCH, transition)

(KEITH leaves abruptly; lights down and up on a meeting in progress; AGNES is speaking and has been for some time)

AGNES: . . . by this, we see that economic growth is a factorial exponential. In reaching these decisions, we must take into account the fact that linear development is not feasible in light of the geometric nature of unvalued economic growth potential . . .

LAURA: What's that mean?

CHARLIE: Inflation's running wild.

LAURA: Look, what does all this have to do with the fact that you have ignored every study you commissioned when they didn't say what you wanted them to say?

AGNES: To put it in a nutshell: we are here to do what is in the interest of the public, not necessarily what interests the public.

LAURA: Was wasting all that money in the public interest? Especially, now that public's picking up the tab to the tune of 38%!

AGNES: Businesses in town will gain.

LAURA: Oh, yeah? Ted! Tell them.

TED: Well, I don't want to cause trouble.

LAURA: You'll have trouble with me if you don't.

CHARLIE: What is it, Ted?

TED: Got a letter today from Blue And Green Grocers. They're cancelling my franchise in order to back the Little Haven Development Group.

LAURA: How long has your family been in business here, Ted?

TED: *(sobbing)* A hundred and thirty-eight years!

AGNES: That's just one case. Look at the possibilities! Miles, what were those figures?

MILES: Nine million in development costs; one hundred jobs; twenty million a year in sales.

LAURA: Half of the first comes out of taxpayer's pockets; most of the second are already here and all of the third comes at the expense of people like Ted.

CHARLIE: Look, it's getting toward midnight. Can we adjourn this and . . .

LAURA: Mr. Mayor, I will not leave until I have had a chance to make my presentation.

AGNES: She's your daughter, Charlie. Do something about her.

CHARLIE: Laura . . . ! *(he looks at her for a long moment)* You have the floor.

(everyone settles in)

LAURA: Ladies and gentlemen: In the course of the proceedings tonight, we have heard tales of outrageous abuses of the trust that has been placed upon this Council. In particular, I point to the startling behaviour of our Mayor in pushing through a project in spite of vehement opposition and all sound advice to the contrary.

(MUSIC: No. 12 WANNA TO WALKING WITH YOU)

All recommendations have been *against* this development, but our Mayor forges blithely ahead, convinced that he and he alone, has the divine grace and guidance –

MILES: I GOT THE FEELING THAT IT'S GONNA BE A LONG, LONG NIGHT.
A FUNNY FEELING WE'LL BE TALKING 'TIL THE MORNING LIGHT.
WHAT I'D RATHER BE DOING IS JUST BILLING AND COOING,
WITH A HANDFUL OF YOU IN MY ARMS.
WHAT I MOST WANT TO HEAR IS YOUR VOICE IN MY EAR SAYING
"DEAR, I BELIEVE IN THOSE ENDEARING CHARMS."

THE CLOCK IS TICKING, COMING UP TOWARD THE MIDNIGHT HOUR.
THEY'RE NIT-PICK-PICKING. I THINK THEY'RE RUNNING ON ATOMIC
POWER.

WHAT I'D RATHER BE DOING IS JUST "ME-ING AND YOU-ING"
WITH THE OLD HARVEST MOON UP ABOVE.
AND WHAT I MOST WANT TO FEEL IS THE FEELING I FEEL
WHEN YOU SAY TO ME, "COME ON, LET'S TALK ABOUT LOVE."

BUT, WE'RE GONNA STAY HERE 'TIL THE COWS COME ON HOME,
AND THE BIRDIES ARE A-TWITTERING IN THE TREES.
AND THE TICK-TICK-TICKING OF THE CLOCK,
AND THE TALK-TALK-TALKING IN THE DOCK
MAKES ME WANNA GO WALKING . . .
WANNA GO WALKING . . .
WANNA GO WALKING WITH YOU.

CHARLIE: Oh, come on, Laura! What kind of nonsense is that?

LAURA: Look it up! You turned it down the offer once and bought it a year later at 150% inflation! Is that in the public interest?

MILES: THEY'RE STILL DEBATING. THEY'LL BE SHOOTING AT EACH OTHER
SOON.

I'M STILL HERE WAITING FOR YOU TO LOOK OUT AT THE MOON,
'CAUSE HE'S UP IN THE SKY, WAITING FOR YOU AND I TO
WALK OUT OF HERE, HAND IN HAND.
BUT THAT OLD MISTER MOON'S GONNA DISAPPEAR SOON,
IF YOU KEEP UP THIS TALKING, THE WAY THAT YOU PLANNED.

YEAH, WE'RE GONNA STAY HERE 'TIL THE COWS COME ON HOME,
AND THE BIRDIES ARE A-TWITTERING IN THE TREES.
AND THE TICK-TICK-TICKING OF THE CLOCK,
AND THE TALK-TALK-TALKING IN THE DOCK
MAKES ME WANNA GO WALKING . . .
WANNA GO WALKING . . .

WANNA GO WALKING WITH YOU.

SOME DAY, IF WE EVER LEAVE THIS ROOM,
WE'LL WALK TOGETHER UNDERNEATH THAT MOON AND
HE'LL SMILE DOWN ON ME WHEN HE SEES WITH WHOM I'M STROLLING
BUT I DOUBT THAT HE'LL BE SMILING ON US ANYTIME SOON,

(dance break; he dances around people who don't see him, but continue with the meeting; he mimics people, pulls the Mayor's tie out, places a paper airplane in Agnes's hand and so on)

BUT I DOUBT THAT HE'LL BE SMILING ON US ANYTIME SOON,
'CAUSE WE'RE GONNA STAY HERE 'TIL THE COWS COME ON HOME,
AND THE BIRDIES ARE A-TWITTERING IN THE TREES.

(He mimes firing a shotgun at the birdies; they fall.)

AND THE TICK-TICK-TICKING OF THE CLOCK,
AND THE TALK-TALK-TALKING IN THE DOCK
AND THE NON-NON-NONSENSE THAT I'M HEARING AT THIS HEARING,
AND THE MIDNIGHT HOUR THAT IS MIGHTY NEAR TO NEARING,
AND THE TICK-TICK-TICKING AND THE TALK-TALK-TALKING
MAKES ME WANNA GO WALKING . . .
WANNA GO WALKING . . .
WANNA GO WALKING WITH YOU.

(as the music ends, he is in some ridiculous position)

CHARLIE: Well, Mr. Bridger? What's your . . . story?

MILES: *(getting up)* Sorry. I was just . . . my leg . . . fell asleep.

AGNES: It's not my leg that's asleep.

CHARLIE: Agnes . . . Miles? Speak up.

MILES: Well, there are some very good points on both sides. Nothing's black and white, but . . . I've been instructed to forward the following statement from my backers.

"The Little Haven Development Group regrets any inconvenience to individuals but Ted can go open a car wash. An agreement was made and the Town of Pompeii will be held to that agreement. If it is cancelled, this corporation will have no option but to sue your . . ." tails from here to Matawa. I paraphrase.

CHARLIE: So, there it is, folks. We're in it, now. Might as well hang on and enjoy the ride.

(MUSIC: No. 12a I WANNA GO WALKIN' WITH YOU, transition)

(he gavels; lights fade; up on KEITH, looking at his website.)

KEITH: All right, what has he put up here? *(reading headings.)* Minutes of Town Meeting . . . Tourist Boom in Town . . . Women's Institute Elects Executive . . . Twenty-five shocking photos of the Women's Institute Executive . . .

(he clicks on that section and stares for a moment, then continues.)

. . . Lob Ball League To Buy New Lights For Field . . . Winston!

WINSTON: *(entering)* You bellowed?

KEITH: It's not there.

WINSTON: What's not where?

KEITH: My story on the TV news crews in town this week. It's not there.

WINSTON: It's on the Cloud.

KEITH: It's where?

WINSTON: On the Cloud. *(he clicks the mouse a few times)* See? It's right . . . where is it?

KEITH: I don't know.

WINSTON: Me, neither. Is this a good time to tell you that I'm leaving at the end of the month?

KEITH: You'd leave me for the big city?

WINSTON: Well . . . in a minute.

KEITH: Good for you. Get back on that layout. *(WINSTON exits.)* Winston!

WINSTON: *(Coming back.)* I'm only in the next room.

KEITH: The deal with Aggra-Media Conglomerate closes at the end of the month.

WINSTON: Wow. No more Pompeii Periculator.

KEITH: Not the way we know it. Back to work.

WINSTON: Okay. You should make multiple copies of your files.

KEITH: Where?

WINSTON: On the Cloud. The Cloud is the future.

KEITH: Yeah, our future is up in the sky and full of hot air.

(WINSTON exits; KEITH works for a moment, then:)

Twenty-one pictures of families more dysfunctional than yours.

(MUSIC: No. 12b WHILIN' AWAY THE TIME, 2nd transition)

(He clicks on the link and is shocked at what he sees; lights fade and come up on CHARLIE, relaxing in his barber chair, with his practice rod; he hums and seems very happy; after a moment, MILES enters)

MILES: We've got trouble.

CHARLIE: What else is new?

MILES: A title search shows that the Town never actually had clear title to the Market.

CHARLIE: What!

MILES: There has been an outstanding payment on it due since, uh . . . *(he checks)* 1876.

CHARLIE: Really

MILES: The principle is \$348.53.

CHARLIE: Well, heck . . .

MILES: The interest is \$2,632,721 . . . and change.

CHARLIE: That's twice what the property's worth.

MILES: Now, this is where it gets complicated.

CHARLIE: I'll sit down.

MILES: It was willed it to the town on condition that it be used for community purposes. The contractor who built the Market building had a lien against the property until all payments had been made. He went bankrupt in the recession of 1908 and his assets were sold off before being liquidated at the end of the war, piecemeal.

CHARLIE: Is this the complicated part?

MILES: SO!, the bottom line . . .

CHARLIE: Knew we'd get there, sooner or later.

MILES: . . . is that the Market Square property, all buildings and attachments, are in fact, under lien to . . . Wilcox Investments And Holdings.

CHARLIE: Cec Wilcox! And, it's past due.

MILES: A hundred and forty years past due.

CHARLIE: So, Cec Wilcox has a lien against the Market, and he's backing Little Haven . . .

MILES & CHARLIE: Can't say.

CHARLIE: . . . then the only thing stopping him from putting up his mall is the zoning . . .

MILES: . . . which the Council can't change without violating the original bequest . . .

CHARLIE: . . . which would revert the property to the original deed holder's estate . . .

MILES & CHARLIE: . . . rendering the re-zoning null and void.

CHARLIE: Ain't that a kicker? All right, we've got to feel around this, carefully.

MILES: What do we do?

CHARLIE: I'll talk to a few people. Most people are thoroughly reasonable, if you broach the subject the right way. It's all a question of approach. How's my daughter, by the by?

MILES: Thoroughly reasonable.

(he starts to exit)

(MUSIC: No. 13 WHILIN' AWAY THE TIME, reprise)

Hey, there's money in that meter!

CHARLIE: Yep. It's all a question of approach . . .

STILL, I THINK IT'S FINE
TO HAVE THE TIME TO WHILE AWAY THE TIME.
AND, WHILE I GOT THE TIME YET AWHILE
I THINK I'LL GO AND FIND A PLACE WHERE I'LL

HAVE THE TIME TO WHILE THE TIME.

LET THE WORLD GO RUSHING ON ITS MERRY WAY.
JUST PUT MY FEET UP; CLOSE MY EYES;
HAVE A SNORE; FORGET IT FOR
ANOTHER HUNDRED YEARS OR MAYBE MORE.

(music draws to a close as CHARLIE settles back, then:)

Hey! There's money in that meter!

(he looks to the audience)

She'll have to go.

(MUSIC: No. 13a. AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN, transition)

(lights down and up on LAURA and BONNIE in LAURA's kitchen)

LAURA: *(Calling.)* Craig! That's better. Where were we? Ticket sales!

BONNIE: So, tell me, tell me, tell me!

LAURA: There's nothing to tell. Ticket sales . . .

BONNIE: What do you mean . . . nothing? Every night for three weeks and NOTHING?

LAURA: Ticket sales.

BONNIE: There's nothing to tell . . . about ticket sales. They're all sold.

LAURA: What?

BONNIE: Your father's got everybody so mad, all we had to do was announce a fund-raiser for the Puck and we sold every ticket in one day.

LAURA: Don't call it the Puck.

BONNIE: Touchy. Agnes Nesbitt and Stan Throop are leading the Mart Not Art people up and down the street, tearing down our posters. I could scratch her eyes out.

LAURA: But, if all the tickets are already sold . . .

BONNIE: Oh, that's right!

LAURA: Thirty-six acts signed up, including Ethel Seeman's dance class doing an interpretive dance on "Japanese cranes" . . .

BONNIE: Oh, dear . . .

LAURA: . . . and Ms. Bonnie Shaw reciting *The Highwayman*, with gestures. (*BONNIE looks sheepish*) Bonnie, you know what happens, every time.

BONNIE: I can do it, this time, I can. Really! Pleeeease!

LAURA: Oh, stop it. Go ahead, do it, but have a light supper. Craig!

BONNIE: And you'll be with Miles?

LAURA: Look, it is complicated and difficult and . . . he's in love.

BONNIE: Oh, ho!

LAURA: With someone else.

BONNIE: Oh, oh. How do you figure that?

LAURA: We were talking . . .

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(*MILES enters opposite; they talk across the stage*)

BONNIE: Uh-huh. You were talking . . . about?

MILES: . . . about three months, until construction gets started, then back to Toronto.

LAURA: Oh.

MILES: I'd be back every couple of weeks during the construction.

BONNIE: Not exactly a whirlwind romance.

LAURA: Miles is not a whirlwind kind of guy.

BONNIE: More of a faint breeze.

MILES: Or . . . you could move down there.

BONNIE: He said that?

LAURA: Mm-hm. And, give up my career, here?

MILES: Teach there.

BONNIE: Nice guy! Why doesn't he move here?

MILES: I make deals. I have to be where there are deals to be made. Sorry.

LAURA: Look, I'm not leaving here; you're not moving here. Neither of us is willing to quit being alone to be with the other.

BONNIE: He's not the settling down type.

LAURA: And, I am?

BONNIE: Emphatically.

LAURA: She is.

BONNIE: She?

LAURA: His pal. Chris.

BONNIE: Christine's a bi . . .

MILES: . . . buddy, a pal, always has been, since school.

BONNIE: Is he that dumb?

LAURA: Sometimes.

(CHRISTINE enters)

CHRISTINE: Chris check this and Chris get that!

MILES: You can just say "No."

CHRISTINE: That's not what I mean.

MILES: What do you mean?

BONNIE: What does she mean?

LAURA: She means . . . Miles, it's like I said, who makes you want to stop being alone?

BONNIE & MILES: Who?

CHRISTINE: Go think about it, Miles.

LAURA: Go think.

(MILES exits; CHRISTINE sits by piano)

BONNIE: And that's where you left it?

LAURA: He said he'd meet me at the Culture Night, tonight. Probably.

BONNIE: Probably?

LAURA: Probably.

(MUSIC: No. 14 AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?)

BONNIE: Ain't that just like a man?

LAURA: Ain't it just?

(CHRISTINE stands across from them, alone)

CHRISTINE: Ain't it just?

ALL THREE: AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?

AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?

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BONNIE: RUSH TO GET TO WORK BY NINE EACH MORNING,
RUSH AGAIN AT NIGHT TO BEAT HIM HOME.
SPECIAL DINNER ON THE TABLE, CANDLELIGHT AND WINE,
AND THEN HE PHONES AND SAYS HE'S BRINGING
STEVE AND MIKE AND JIM.
YOU SAY, WHATEVER'S GOOD FOR HIM.

ALL THREE: AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?
AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?

LAURA: SPEND TWO HOURS AT THE BEAUTY PARLOUR,
EIGHTY BUCKS TO CUT AND PERM AND CURL.
WHEN YOU DO GET HOME, HE'S BUSY, PLAYING WITH HIS TOYS.
AND IF HE NOTICES, HE SAYS HE LIKED IT
LIKE IT WAS BEFORE.
AS IF THAT'S WHAT YOU DID IT FOR.

ALL THREE: AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?
AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?
HE'LL WAIT UNTIL YOUR HEART IS LAYING
IN YOUR OPEN HAND AND THEN HE'LL
CUT YOU TO THE CORE BY SAYING
SOMETHING LIKED HE'D PLANNED TO DO IT,
BUT YOU KNOW HE DOESN'T MEAN IT,

SHRUG IT OFF, HE'S ONLY BEING
JUST LIKE A MAN . . . JUST LIKE A MAN.

AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?
AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?

TWICE A YEAR, HE THINKS TO SAY HE LOVES YOU
IF HE THINKS TO THINK OF IT AT ALL.
YOU DECIDE THAT JUST HIS NATURE, LIVING IN A BLUR.
OPEN UP YOUR EYES ONE MORNING, THERE'S A FLOWER THERE.
AND IT MIGHT BE THAT HE STILL CARES.

AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?
AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE A MAN?
HE'LL WAIT UNTIL YOUR HEART IS LAYING
IN YOUR OPEN HAND AND THEN HE'LL
CUT YOU TO THE CORE BY SAYING
SOMETHING LIKE HE'D PLANNED TO DO IT,
BUT YOU KNOW HE DOESN'T MEAN IT,
SHRUG IT OFF, HE'S CAN'T HELP BEING
JUST LIKE A . . . JUST LIKE A . . .
JUST LIKE A . . . JUST LIKE A MAN.

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BONNIE: So, you wait for "probably."

LAURA: Probably.

(music ends and lights fade)

(MUSIC: No. 15 CULTURE NIGHT)

(A GROUP enter and set up chairs in front of the audience; they sing with great precision and articulation)

THE GROUP: IT'S HERE, AT LAST, OUR CU-HUH-HULTURE NIGHT.
AN EVENING BRIM WITH ALL THAT'S PRIM.
A GALA BRIGHT WITH SPAR-HAR-HARKLING LIGHT AND
WE'LL NOT MESS WITH VULGARNESS.

FOR YOU MUST REMEMBER, AS YOU SIT BEGUILLED,
THAT THE ANCIENTS NEVER, HARDLY EVER SMILED,
AND, IF YOU COME TO CU-HUH-HULTURE NIGHT, THEN
NEITHER WILL YOU.

LET'S SING A SONG OF CULTURE. IT'S AWFULLY SERIOUS.
THE SONG OF ART AND CULTURE CAN GET MONOTONOUS.

NOW CULTURE'S MADE OF WO-HUH-HUN-D'ROUS THINGS,
OF GLITT'RING STARS IN CHAUFFEURED CARS,
BRIGHT LIGHTS, CHAMPAGNE AND DI-HI-HI-'MOND RINGS
AND WE WILL BET THEY NEVER SWEAT.

TO BE GOOD, AN ARTIST MUST, OF COURSE, BE DEAD.
IF YOU'RE NOT, IT'S BEST YOU GO SELL SHOES INSTEAD.
NO ARTIST HERE HAS EVER MADE A BUCK AND
NEITHER WILL YOU!

LET'S SING A SONG OF CULTURE. IT'S AWFULLY SERIOUS.
THE SONG OF ART AND CULTURE IS SO MONOTONOUS.

(MUSIC: No. 16 CRANES IN THEIR NEST)

(The music is vaguely Oriental; we see a shadow-dance, behind a screen — very strange; at the end:)

CYNTHIA: That was Ethel Seeman with her marvellously creative depiction of Japanese cranes. I must say that, in all the years I've been asked to host events like this, I've never seen a representation of cranes quite like that. It was . . . art.

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The next number is a treat for me, because I once . . . Sorry? It's not? Oh, well . . . we'll leap ahead then and I guess I can save that story for another time! Heh, heh.

(the "MART NOT ART"ers shuffle in and take seats, noisily)

AGNES: Sorry . . . sorry . . . sorry . . .

VOICE: *(from back)* Down in front!

STAN: Sorry!

LAURA: Ssh!

AGNES: Sorry!

CYNTHIA: It's nice, by the way, to see so many people involved in a fund-raiser like this. The arts are so important in our lives . . .

AGNES: They might be in yours.

CYNTHIA: . . . that's it's wonderful to see so many people come out and "Pucker Up!"

TED/LAURA: Pucker Up! Pucker Up! Pucker Up!

STAN: Yeah, pucker up, Cynthia!

AGNES/STAN: Mart Not Art! Mart Not Art! Mart Not Art!

LAURA: Ssh!

STAN: Sorry!

CYNTHIA: I think our next performer is ready now. Ms. Bonnie Shaw . . .

AGNES: See, I told you we wouldn't miss it!

CYNTHIA: Ms. Bonnie Shaw to recite "The Highwayman."

AGNES: With gestures!

CYNTHIA: With gestures . . .

(BONNIE comes centre, rather shakily)

STAN: Five bucks says she doesn't finish the second verse.

LAURA: Stop it! Pig-headed, stubborn . . .

CHARLIE: Laura . . .

(BONNIE clears her throat; AGNES and STAN cough loudly)

LAURA: Ssh!

AGNES: Ssh!

(they trade "Sssh"s, getting louder and louder)

CHARLIE: Agnes . . . ssh!

BONNIE: "The wind was a torrent of darkness, amongst the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon, tossed upon cloudy seas."

(AGNES and STAN add wind and ghost sounds)

BONNIE: "The road was a ribbon . . ."

CHARLIE: Could you speak up a bit, Bonnie?

BONNIE: ". . . a ribbon of moonlight, over the purple moor!"

And the highwayman came riding — "

(AGNES and STAN add hoof-beats between words)

"Riding — riding — the highwayman came riding
Up to the old inn door."

STAN: Neiigh-gh-gh-gh!

AGNES: Whoa, Dobbin!

BONNIE: "He'd a French cocked hat on his forehead . . . "

CHARLIE: A French what?

TED: *(jumping up)* Cocked hat!

(he realizes he is in the spotlight & sits quickly)

BONNIE: ". . . on his forehead . . . "

CHARLIE: Thanks, Ted.

BONNIE: "And a bunch of lace at his chin.
A coat of claret velvet . . . "

(BONNIE continues to recite under the following)

AGNES: What kind of crap is that?

LAURA: It's not crap; it's art!

AGNES: Listen, I'm a farmer and I know crap when I see it. That's about the stupidest . . .

LAURA: Stupid! What about you people disrupting everything? You're too stubborn to admit that there's value in this!

AGNES: There's value in crap, too, but I don't pay to look at it!

LAURA: Narrow-minded, pig-headed . . . !

AGNES: Stubborn, stupid . . . !

CHARLIE: Ladies! Ladies!

LAURA: Who's a lady?

AGNES: I am!

CYNTHIA: Shut – up!

(silence, except BONNIE who blithely continues)

BONNIE: " . . . Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark-red love knot in her long black hair.
One kiss, my bonnie darling . . . "

(she punctuates it with a noisy pucker)

AGNES: This is stupid!

LAURA: It's art!

AGNES: Same thing! I've read better poetry on the outhouse walls!

(she marches onto the stage and pushes BONNIE aside)

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"There was a young girl from Aberystwith . . . "

BONNIE: *(shoving AGNES)* "Yet, if they press me sharply and harry me through the night . . . "

AGNES: *(shoving BONNIE)* "Who took grain to a mill you grind grist with . . . "

BONNIE: *(shoving AGNES)* " . . . then look for me by moonlight, watch for me by moon . . . "

AGNES: *(shoving BONNIE)* "The miller's son, Jack, laid her flat on her back . . . "

BONNIE: You want to get laid flat, lady?

(BONNIE throws a wild roundhouse that misses; TED and STAN separate them)

|You stupid, stubborn, mean, narrow, little . . .

AGNES: |You stubborn, silly, blind . . .

(TED and STAN collide)

TED: Would you get out of the way?

STAN: You get out of the way!

TED: I'm not budging an inch!

STAN: Yeah, well, I'm staying put!

CHARLIE: Boys! Boys!

(TED and STAN try to stare each other down)

AGNES: You're just too stubborn to admit that all this culture stuff is crap! It's useless!

BONNIE: And, if you opened up your squeaky, narrow little mind, you'd see that man does not live by lob-ball alone.

CYNTHIA: If you all weren't so stubborn, you'd see that you need each other!

AGNES: Like a hole in the head!

BONNIE: I feel woozy.

(TED and STAN are head to head in a stare-down)

AGNES: I haven't seen anything here that anybody couldn't have done and done better, too!

LAURA: Oh . . . hold your breath 'til you turn blue!

AGNES: I can do that better than you, too!

LAURA: Yeah?

AGNES: Yeah!

(they hold their breath)

CHARLIE: Agnes! Laura! Ted! Stan! Bonnie?

BONNIE: *(looking woozy)* Oh!

CYNTHIA: Why don't you all just hold your breath 'til you drop dead? The people in this town are the stupidest, stubbornest, most exasperating people on the face of the earth!

(LAURA has to breathe)

AGNES: I won!

TED: You blinked!

LAURA: So, what?

STAN: Did not!

CYNTHIA: Mr. Winston Cooper to sing "Oh, Danny Boy!"

(MUSIC: No. 17 OH, DANNY BOY)

(WINSTON prepares to sing)

WINSTON: OH, DANNY BOY, THE PIPES, THE PIPES ARE CALLING
FROM GLEN TO GLEN AND DOWN THE MOUNTAIN SIDE.

AGNES: It's still stupid . . .

STAN: Mart Not Art!

AGNES: Yeah, Mart Not Art!

WINSTON: BUT SUMMER'S GONE AND ALL THE LEAVES ARE DYING.
'TIS YOU, 'TIS YOU, MUST GO AND I MUST BIDE . . .

LAURA/TED: Pucker Up! Pucker Up!

AGNES/STAN: Mart Not Art! Mart Not Art!

CHARLIE: Agnes! Laura! Agnes! Oh, God!

WINSTON: BUT COME YE BACK
WHEN SPRING IS IN THE MEADOW,
OR WHEN THE VALLEY'S HUSHED AND WHITE WITH SNOW.
'TIS HERE I'LL BE . . . *(his voice cracks spectacularly)*

(the groups exit through the house, still chanting; WINSTON clutches his throat; CYNTHIA is left supporting BONNIE, who leans over and is sick; lights fade and come up on CHARLIE, on the phone)

CHARLIE: What do you mean, you can't? That's a riot out there! Listen! *(he thrusts the phone out)* Hear that? That's culture run amok. Now, I want the lights out! Of course, I can do that! I'm the Mayor. Shut it down. Shut it all down!

(lights out; we see things in silhouette with backlighting)

That wasn't so hard, was it?

(he hangs up and sits in his chair)

If there's one thing you can count on, it's the power of human stupidity.

(he dials another number; waits while it rings)

Hello, there, Cec! I caught you to home. Charlie Phillips. Say, we need to talk.

(MUSIC: No. 17a OH, DANNY BOY, transition)

(lights down and up; CHRISTINE enters with a candle; a knock)

MILES: Chris? Let me in?

CHRISTINE: Sure. *(she does so; a pause)* Power's out.

MILES: All over town. Nothing but stars.

(they look out at the stars)

There's a story about a letter that nobody can find and they search high and low and never do find it, because it's been sitting right in front of their noses all along.

CHRISTINE: Oh?

MILES: Yeah. Right in front of my nose.

CHRISTINE: Oh. Took you long enough.

MILES: I'm dense.

CHRISTINE: Mm-hm.

MILES: Dim.

CHRISTINE: Mm-hm.

MILES: Dumb.

CHRISTINE: Mm-hm.

MILES: Stop me when we get to one you don't agree with.

CHRISTINE: I will.

(they smile and look out again)

What am I going to do with you?

MILES: Marry me.

CHRISTINE: (a beat) Sure.

(they look out again)

(MUSIC: No. 18 LOVE ONLY RHYMES WITH FIVE OTHER WORDS)

CHRISTINE: IF THIS WERE A MUSICAL, THIS IS WHERE THEY'D SING
OF THE ROSE-COLOURED FUTURE A NEW LOVE COULD BRING,

MILES: AND, THE LOVERS WOULD PET

BOTH: AND THEY'D SING A DUET

BUT LOVE SONGS ARE HARDER TO WRITE NOWADAYS.
FOR LOVERS ARE CHANGING IN SO MANY WAYS.
AND FITTING THE USUAL RHYMES TO A WORD
IS NO LONGER EASY — IN FACT, IT'S ABSURD.

"LOVE" ONLY RHYMES WITH FIVE OTHER WORDS.
THEY'VE BEEN USED AND ABUSED AND I'M CERTAIN I'VE HEARD EACH
ONE RHYMED A THOUSAND TIMES.
THEY'VE ENDED A THOUSAND LINES.
SO, WHY SHOULD WE DO WHAT THEY'RE GUILTY OF
AND END THIS REFRAIN WITH LOVE?

"LOVE" ONLY RHYMES WITH FIVE OTHER WORDS.
NO MATTER HOW SLYLY OR OBLIQUELY REFERRED TO
NO ONE'S FOUND ANYTHING NEW ON THE SUBJECT OF "ME AND YOU".
WE WON'T PRETEND WE'RE TOO FAR ABOVE.
LET'S END THIS REFRAIN WITH LOVE.

CHRISTINE: ON THE SILVER SCREEN, JEANETTE WOULD SING OF
LONELY MOON AND HEARTS IN JUNE.

MILES: ON OLD BROADWAY, THE VIOLINS WOULD SWELL
AND THEN A CHORUS WOULD BEGIN . . .

CHORUS: (OFF) AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH!

BOTH: AND THE STARS WOULD SHINE AND THE RIVERS RUN
PAST THE HAPPY END WHEN THE SONG IS SUNG.
AND THE FINAL FADE: THE RISING OF A DOVE —

CHORUS: (OFF) FOR THEY'RE IN LOVE!

BOTH: "LOVE" ONLY RHYMES WITH FIVE OTHER WORDS.

EVERY LOVE SONG AND BALLAD IN WHICH THEY'VE OCCURRED
HAS A SIMILAR STORY TO TELL. IT'S A STORY WE ALL KNOW SO WELL.
SO, WHY SHOULD WE DIFFER? IT FITS LIKE A GLOVE.
WE'LL END THIS SONG WITH LOVE.

(music ends (false ending))

MILES: Wait a minute. Of, dove, above, glove? *(He points to the orchestra)* Three, four!

(MUSIC: fifth verse)

BOTH: "LOVE" ONLY RHYMES WITH FIVE OTHER WORDS.
NOT ALL APROPOS AND NOT ALL PREFERRED FOR
LYRICAL USE AS SUCH. SOMETIMES, IT CAN BE TOO MUCH,
AND, SINCE THERE'S NO POLITE WAY TO RHYME IT WITH "SHOVE",
LET'S END THIS SONG WITH LOVE.

(music ends; lights down on them)

(MUSIC: No. 18a LOVE ONLY RHYMES, transition)

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*(Lights up dimly on WINSTON, rushing into KEITH's office,
stumbling; KEITH sits in the dark)*

WINSTON: Mr. Harris! Mr. Harris! Riots! Mayhem! Power's out, all over town!

KEITH: Exciting, isn't it?

WINSTON: It's the biggest story in Pompeii, ever! Please, let me have it, Mr. Harris. Please!

KEITH: Give you the biggest story ever to happen in this town? After years of covering
Women's Institute meetings?

WINSTON: Please.

KEITH: Okay.

WINSTON: Thank you, thank you, thank you!

(he starts to organize himself)

All right. Calm down. Now, what do I need? My notes. Got 'em. My laptop. Right.
Charge up the batter . . . I could just cry. What are we going to do? Biggest story
ever! How do we write it up?

(from the darkness, we hear the tap-tap of KEITH's typewriter.)

(MUSIC: No. 18b THE HOMETOWN MARCH, 2nd transition)

(Lights up as KEITH crosses the stage)

KEITH: Today's the sod-turning at the Market. Speechifying and thanking all round and then somebody'll lift an eensy little shovelful of dirt out of a hole that somebody else already dug. And, then, I'll take a picture – the lead photo for the last issue of the Periculator. Should be quite the event.

(Lights on the COMPANY; shouts of "MART NOT ART!" and "PUCKER UP!"; CHARLIE bangs a ceremonial shovel.)

CHARLIE: | Quiet! Quiet!

AGNES: | What'd you call me!

TED: | You're a liar!

LAURA: | You heard me!

STAN: | Am not!

AGNES: | Say it again! I dare you!

TED: | Am, too!

LAURA: | You heard me.

STAN: | Bounce off me and back to you!

CHARLIE: | Quiet down! Quiet! Quiet!

(he continues to bang and shout, even though they've all stopped)

Oh. All this childishness isn't going to solve anything. Laura! Quit saving up spit. Stan and Ted! Back to your corners. Agnes . . . ! Whatever. Ladies and Gentle–! (KEITH pops a flash in his face.) Thank you . . . uhm . . . for your patience. You have all come along here today for the sod-turning for the new Market Square Mall.

VARIOUS: Boo!

CHARLIE: Now, I'm sure that there are some people who feel some opposition to this.

LAURA: You bet there are!

CHARLIE: Who are wondering what they get out of it.

STAN: Yeah!

CHARLIE: Who are asking how they got into this.

AGNES: Damn right!

CHARLIE: But it's too late for all that now. It is now my pleasure to call upon Mr. Miles Bridger to provide us with some words.

MILES: *(At podium)* I have a letter. "Mr. Mayor, Members of the Council, Citizens of Pompeii: For a hundred years, my family have watched the people of this town quarrel and bicker over silliness and stupidity. Well, now the whole world knows what we have known all along: the citizens of this town are so blind mean they'd cut their arm off sooner than lift it to give someone the time of day."

CROWD: What!

MILES: "This mall is your last chance. If you go ahead with it, it'll cost you plenty, because you'll have to be in business here. But, if you don't, it'll cost you everything, because this town will dry up and blow away. Either way, I win. Sincerely, Cecil Wilcox."

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(there is a stunned silence)

I didn't know that's what it said.

AGNES: Cec Wilcox owns the Market? The Town owns it!

STAN: I'm not moving my shop to the Mall!

AGNES: If Cec Wilcox's got his finger in it . . . I'm confused

TED: This is Bridger's fault!

CROWD: *(Variously. Maybe a few pitchforks.)* Yeah! Where is he? Get him! Get him!

CHARLIE: What're you going to do? Shoot the messenger? Folks, Cec Wilcox has got us where it's tender . . . so . . . *(He starts to push the shovel into the ground, then stops.)* BUT!

CROWD: What?

CHARLIE: Not "what", "BUT!" This whole Market Square property. The Town doesn't own it.

AGNES: Yeah, Cec Wilcox . . .

CHARLIE: . . . has a lien against it . . . but it's actually controlled by a footnote to a codicil to the last will and testament of one . . . *(he pulls out an old document.)* . . . George Ezekiel

Thom. And, his descendants are insisting on no commercial development. Ever.

AGNES: Well, old George Thom only had one descendant . . .

TED: . . . who only had one descendant . . .

STAN: . . . who only had one descendant . . .

CHARLIE: . . . who was . . .

LAURA: . . . Grandma Phillips?

CHARLIE: My mom.

TED: Then, YOU set it all up!

CHARLIE: Seemed like a good idea at the time.

MILES: And, the Little Haven Development Group?

CHARLIE: Just Cec and me and some letterhead.

TED: You led us on this merry chase and what do we have? Nothing! Everybody loses!

CHARLIE: Really? When was the last time you saw this many people giving a damn about this town? Look at all the people crowding in to find out what the fuss is all about. We've finally got something here – something to sell!

LAURA: Oh, yeah? What?

ACHARLIE: Us! The foolishness that brought our founders to this spot. The stubbornness that kept them here. The meanness that has kept the Throops and the Mortons feuding for over a century. That's The Spirit Of Pompeii! Our birthright! Our heritage! Now, get out there and do something about it! Meeting adjourned!

(MUSIC: No. 18c BUSINESS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD, underscore)

(CYNTHIA ASHBURY enters, with a mic)

CYNTHIA: This is Cynthia Ashbury in Pompeii, Ontario and behind me, is a town that has been fading away; losing its momentum and its vitality. But, ever since the Culture Night riots, all that has changed. New energy and vigour are reviving this sleepy piece of rural Ontario.

(the TOWNSPEOPLE enter, looking prosperous and talking.)

AGNES: We have to do something about these roads.

TED: Well, it's all the extra traffic.

AGNES: Ever since the Culture Night riots, I've sold more peaches than ever.

STAN: Ted! The stupid bobble heads should arrive Tuesday.

TED: Terrific! I've got a new stupid logo for the stupid T-shirts.

(he shows STAN a T-shirt but we don't see the logo on it.)

STAN: I like it, Ted.

WINSTON: Mr. Morton! Mr. Harris says he needs another dozen stupid T-shirts right away.

TED: Maybe Tuesday, Winston. The stupid T-shirts are back-ordered.

STAN: Say, can you and the wife come over for dinner tomorrow?

TED: We'd love to, Stan.

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(they cross; AGNES watches)

AGNES: Ain't that a kicker?

CYNTHIA: Yes, Pompeii, Ontario has a new claim to fame. People see it now as the stubbornest, stupidest, most downright ornery place in the whole province! Tourists are flocking here . . . and business never looked so good!

(MUSIC: No. 19 BUSINESS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD)

GROUP: WE'RE HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE
THAT EVERY SINGLE LITTLE OUNCE OF MEANNESS
BRED INTO A POMPEII VEIN
HAS PASSED ITSELF ON TO US!

WE'RE VERY PLEASED INDEED
TO FIND THAT PETTINESS AND GREED CAN BRING
A TINY TOWN TO LIFE.
THERE'S MONEY TO BE MADE FROM A LITTLE FUSS.

WE GOT A NEW, THOROUGHLY MODERN WAY
OF LOOKING AT OUR POMPEII WAY.
IT TAKES THE THINGS WE'RE BEST AT AND IT
TURNS THEM TO A VIRTUE FROM A VICE.

AND BEST OF ALL, ALONG THE WAY,
IT'S NICE TO KNOW THE POMPEII WAY
CAN STILL COMMAND ATTENTION FROM THE WORLD AT LARGE;
IT BRINGS A HEALTHY PRICE.

BUSINESS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD IN OLD POMPEII!
THE CASH IS RINGING UP A MERRY TUNE!
THE WORLD TAKES NOTICE OF YOU WHEN YOU'RE REALLY GOOD,
AND, NO DOUBT, HERE IN POMPEII, WE'RE THE BEST! AT:

PLAIN, BLIND, PIG-HEADED, THICK-SKINNED, NARROW-MINDED,
DOWNRIGHT ORNERY, MULE-HEADED CUSSEDNESS!

KEITH: It's something to be *proud* of! Well, it's *something* to be proud of. Well, it's *something* . . .

SEVERALLY: YES, THERE'S MONEY TO BE MADE IN EVERY THING YOU SEE.
DEPENDS UPON YOUR MARKET STRATEGY.
SO, FIND YOURSELF AN ANGLE, GRAB A SLICE OF MARKET SHARE
START TO COUNT THOSE CASTLES IN THE AIR!

ALL: WE GOT A NEW, THOROUGHLY MODERN WAY
OF LOOKING AT OUR POMPEII WAY.
WE FOUND THERE'S LOTS OF PROFIT
IN A STUBBORN STREAK A QUARTER MILE SQUARE.

AND IF YOU JOURNEY POMPEII WAY,
WE'LL TREAT YOU TO A FINE DISPLAY
OF OUR MYOPIC VISION.
IT'S A SHOW THAT'S GUARANTEED TO TURN YOUR HAIR.

BUSINESS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD IN OLD POMPEII.
THE CASH IS RINGING UP A MERRY TUNE
FOR WE WORK HARD TO PROVE TO YOU
WE'RE REALLY, REALLY GOOD,
AND, NO DOUBT HERE IN POMPEII, WE'RE THE BEST! AT:

PLAIN, BLIND, PIG-HEADED, THICK-SKINNED, NARROW-MINDED,
DOWNRIGHT ORNERY, MULE-HEADED CUSSEDNESS!

(TED MORTON is hawking the Stupid T-shirts)

TED: Get your Stupid T-shirts! Can't go back to the city without a Stupid T-shirt!

CYNTHIA: Around me, you see the rebirth of a town, based upon the notoriety of their petty squabbles and fights. A Renaissance of sorts, for those who are out of sorts.

ALL: BUSINESS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD IN OLD POMPEII.
THE CASH IS RINGING UP A MERRY TUNE.
THE BEST KIND OF STUBBORN STREAK
GOES DEEP, DOWN TO THE BONE,
AND, NO DOUBT HERE IN POMPEII, WE'RE THE BEST! AT:

PLAIN, BLIND, PIG-HEADED, THICK-SKINNED, NARROW-MINDED,
DOWNRIGHT ORNER, MULE-HEADED CUSSEDNESS!
(WE CAN'T GET MEANER)
MULE-HEADED CUSSEDNESS! (YOU ALL COME BACK, NOW!)
MULE-HEADED CUSSEDNESS!

(Music ends. The crowd disperses.)

(MUSIC: No. 19a WHILIN' AWAY THE TIME, 3rd transition)

(CHARLIE exits; lights change to KEITH at his desk)

KEITH: Well, things have moved on. Cec Wilcox bought Agnes Nesbitt's farm and built on his mall on it. Then he married her. When Agnes starts changing her mind, she doesn't know when to quit. The Puck is on hold until better economic times. Say, 2091. Laura announced she was going to run against Charlie come the fall election, so Charlie conceded immediately. And now he's fishing. Never catches anything, but he says he's got plenty of time. Laura would have been mayor, but Craig burned down the school, so she decided she'd better spend more time with him. Miles and Christine, we haven't heard from since he built Cec's mall, but I expect we'll see his name in the Wall Street Journal sometime soon . . . or on TMZ.

As for me, well, the more things change . . . Winston!

(A teenaged girl enters.)

CHELSEA: Winston's off to Toronto, Mr. Harris. I'm Chelsea, remember?

KEITH: . . . the more they stay the same. Thanks, Chelsea. *(CHELSEA exits.)* What, you thought I'd sell? Aggra-media got one look at last year's sales figures and ran – but their deposit was non-refundable! You know, they tell me there's only two things in life that are certain. Well, I've been fending off the one and ducking the other for some time, now.

(MUSIC: No. 20 MY HEART BELONGS, reprise)

Maybe, though, there's one more constant – Pompeii. It's always been here and it's always going to be here. And, that's what's good about it. So, remember to phone, once in a while, huh? And come on home, when you've got the chance.

MY HEART BELONGS, RIGHT HERE, IN
GOOD OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO.
IT'S NOT A MODERN PLACE AT A
FAST-TRACK PACE, BUT IT'S HOME (OH, YEAH).

MY HEART BELONGS, RIGHT HERE, AND
NO MATTER HOW FAST OR HOW FAR I GO
I'LL END UP RIGHT BACK HERE
FOR YET ANOTHER YEAR, 'CAUSE IT'S HOME. (UH-HUH)

(the rest of the COMPANY enter and join in)

ALL: AND IF YOU GOT THE TIME TO COME ON OUT AND PASS THE TIME,
YOU'RE WELCOME HERE MOST ANY TIME.
ALTHOUGH WE'RE KINDA HARD TO FIND;
WE'RE WAITING ANYWAY. (SO HEAD THIS WAY, SOMETIME)

OUR HEARTS BELONG, RIGHT HERE,
IN GOOD, OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO.
AND IF YOU'RE OUT THIS WAY,
YOU'VE GOT A PLACE TO STAY, RIGHT HERE, WITH FRIENDS.

SO COME ON HOME, COME HOME,
TO GOOD, OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO.
IT'S THE ONLY PLACE OUR HEARTS CAN CALL . . .
THE ONLY PLACE WE WANT TO CALL . . .
THE ONLY PLACE OUR HEARTS CAN CALL OUR . . .
. . . home!

(music ends; lights to black)

(MUSIC: No. 21 THE HOMETOWN MARCH, REPRISE)

*(lights up for curtain call, this time played by the full orchestra; after
the first round of bows, the COMPANY sing:)*

ALL: WE'RE STAYING HERE, RIGHT HERE, IN GOOD OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO!
AND IF YOU'RE OUT THIS WAY YOU'VE GOT A PLACE TO STAY,
RIGHT HERE, WITH FRIENDS.
SO COME ON HOME. COME HOME! TO GOOD OLD POMPEII, ONTARIO.
IT'S THE ONLY PLACE MY HEART CAN CALL MY HOME!

*(The COMPANY bow one last time and exit; the orchestra
continues to play the Exit Music.)*

END OF MUSICAL