

**Uncle Corbett
Lives In
The Attic**
A comedy
-by-
David Jacklin

Uncle Corbett Lives In The Attic is the recipient of
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David Jacklin
394 Keays Road, RR. 1,
Balderson, Ontario
K0G 1A0

(613) 267-1884
barndoorproductionstheatre@gmail.com
www.barndoorproductions.ca

THE CHARACTERS

BERT	Or Colbert Keilly; late fifties; farmer, dungarees kind of fellow
CAREY	Keilly; Bert's youngest daughter; only child still living on the farm; where she does most everything; 22
CAL	Cameron; police officer and sometime boyfriend of Carey; not bright, but then doesn't have to be.
JEAN	Keilly; Bert's wife of thirty-some years, who manages the home, the finances, the family and her husband with quiet efficiency.
CORBETT	Keilly; Bert's older brother; a shy, quiet genius who looks a lot like a panda.
MRS. PRESTON . .	or Helen, as we discover; a career civil servant who has gotten ahead without affirmative action, thank you very much; late 40's perhaps.
FRANKLIN	Findlay; same age as Cal; Deputy Minister and all-around fair-haired boy within his department; something of a jack-ass, too.
ORVILLE . . .	Who doesn't say much, but has a good head on his shoulders, even if that's all he has.
THE STRANGER . .	there's one in everyone's life.

NOTE: CAL and FRANKLIN are doubled by the same actor; THE STRANGER could also be played by that actor, although it is possible to have another person do it.

THE PLACE AND TIME

The Keilly Farm, in a mythical province of a mythical country, near a mythical capital city. You can't myth it. Act One: one evening in July and the following morning. Act Two: afternoon, thirty days later.

EFFECTS NEEDED

Several flashpots; pulsing "Spielberg" lights; a fridge that pops open upon thumping and delivers beer; a deer head that falls off the wall; a tractor!

UNCLE CORBETT LIVES IN THE ATTIC

A Comedy

ACT ONE

(SR is a farm kitchen, with table, stove, chairs, sink and so on, a deer-head on the wall; at the other side is a barn interior, with an old tractor, some hay-bales and beams, rafters, etc.; between them, and connecting them is the yard, with a gate and an outhouse to one side; the top of the driveway)

(lights up on the barn; a pair of feet sticking out from under the tractor; the sound of hammering)

BERT Get in there, you son of a . . . !

(a final whallop; something breaks)

. . . seacock.

(he stands and examines the pieces)

Now, that was new in '56. They just don't build things to last anymore. Shoddy workmanship, no pride . . . Carey!

CAREY *(OFF)* Yeah, hang on a minute! I'm almost done!

BERT Have we got a spare one of these?

CAREY A spare one of what?

BERT A spare one of these . . . whatchamadoodles!

(CAREY enters, wearing welding gear)

CAREY What did you break, now?

BERT This here . . . doohickey. We've got a spare, haven't we?

CAREY That there doohickey is a universal pinion gear and that WAS the spare.

BERT Ah-ha. Can you fix it?

CAREY All I've got out back is pig-steel. If I had some alum-alloy, or chrome-moly, but . . . cheaper to get another tractor.

BERT If I could afford another tractor, I'd be in the field, right now. Well, maybe I can find parts, somewhere.

CAREY Dad, not even the junk-yards have parts for that tractor, anymore. You'd have to find an antique dealer.

BERT This tractor has given long and faithful service since before you

were born. It worked the fields all through the war. It helped defeat Hitler.

CAREY It was his, was it?

BERT Why, I proposed to your mother while we were haying with this tractor.

CAREY And, she was so surprised, she turned sharp left, took out two sections of fence and dumped two-hundred bales of hay onto Highway 5. Well, I suppose we better fix it, then.

(she kicks it and a piece falls off)

Oh, lord.

(they both slide under; a moment)

Well, look! The load-bearing's not seated!

BERT It's what? Where?

CAREY On the PTO shaft. Give me a hammer!

(a flurry of pounding, then a crunch as something breaks; a part falls off; CAREY gets up)

Well, I guess I'll see if I can weld up that gear. What time is it, anyway?

BERT Getting on to six-thirty. Cal ought to be here soon.

CAREY I know. He can wait.

BERT *(MUMBLING)* When I was his age, I wouldn't have waited a second.

CAREY What'd you say?

BERT Said, "Maybe we can use her anyway, if we just keep her in second!"

CAREY Don't you dare start her up! Not 'till I've finished with the transmission.

BERT Yes, boss. You know, it still irks me.

CAREY What does?

BERT Cal's face.

CAREY It's me that has to look at it.

BERT But, I keep seeing it on someone else.

CAREY You better see an optometrist.

BERT Cal's face . . . He's been in town two years, and I still can't place it. You two thinking about marriage yet?

CAREY Do you know, Dad, I'm twenty-two, already?

BERT Oh, yeah? When'd that happen? Did I get you a present?

CAREY Yes, you did . . . or Mom did, anyway. But, I didn't mean that. I'm twenty-two.

BERT You said that.

CAREY I know, but . . . twenty-two!

BERT You said that.

CAREY I know.

BERT You know, your great-grandfather used to say, "There's more blades of grass in one field than a cow can see on four legs."

CAREY Meaning what?

BERT I don't know, but he used to say it all the time. And, he lived to be a hundred and four, so he must have known what he was talking about.

CAREY Well, a steady diet of grass can be a little too much.

BERT He used to say something about that, too. "Dining on hay ain't much fun, but sorry the day when you ain't got none." Comical old gentleman, he was.

CAREY You know, I found a wrinkle, this morning.

BERT You're young, you'll grow out of it.

CAREY I'm not as young as I used to be.

BERT Or as old as you're going to be. You gotta take life as it comes to you. Just don't let it give you any grey hairs. The trouble with life is it takes you forty years to get used to being alive and another forty to learn how – but there's plenty of people who quit learning when they're 20, quit thinking when they're 30 and quit living when they're 40. Hell, just when the fun's beginning, too! Live and learn, kid! Live and learn!

CAREY Or, you won't live long.

BERT Right.

CAL (OFF) Carey!

CAREY My Romeo approaches.

CAL Yo, Carey!

CAREY But, soft! What light from yonder doorway breaks? In the barn!

BERT Between the two of you, you've got the romance of a mudpie.

CAREY You just fix the tractor. And, don't break anything else, will you? I've got a week's welding, already.

(**BERT** begins to tap on the chassis)

BERT Hen-pecked by my own daughter.

CAREY What?

BERT Said, "I'd better check if she's low on water!"

(**CAL** enters, a big, bluff fellow in a softball uniform)

CAL Hey, Carey, let's go; we're going to be late.

CAREY Good evening, Carey. How are you, this evening? I'm fine, thank you. Here, I brought you some flowers. For me? Oh, you shouldn't have . . .

CAL Good evening, Carey. How are you, this evening? Here, I brought you a flower.

CAREY You did?

CAL Your mother was working in the garden. It's the thought that counts, right?

CAREY Not necessarily.

BERT (UNDER TRACTOR) I still say that's a heck of a face.

CAL What was that, Bert?

BERT Said, "This shaft's made a wreck of the race."

CAL Do you need a hand? Carey, give him a hand.

CAREY He can break it all by himself.

(**BERT** comes out from under the tractor)

BERT I'll tell you what I do need. I need you to take my daughter away from here, where she has spent the day breaking irreplaceable parts on this valuable

antique –

CAREY

Lies!

BERT

– see what you can do about removing, at least some of the grease, dress her up enough so we needn't be ashamed of her in public, take her out and don't let her come back until I'm fast asleep.

CAL

I'll see what I can do.

CAREY

Anything else, while you're getting my life in order?

BERT

Well, your mother was mentioning something about grandchildren.

CAL

I'll see what I can do.

CAREY

Dad! Don't encourage him. He doesn't need it.

BERT

Me? I'm just sitting here, minding my own business.

CAREY

That'll be the day. Alright, we're off. Don't wait up.

BERT

Didn't intend to. Cal, are you sure you've never been to Come-By-Chance?

CAL

Not even by design. You'll never place the face, Bert.

BERT

It's not the face; it's the body I keep seeing under it that's bugging me. You know, my grandfather used to say . . .

CAREY

Alright, slugger, let's go steal some bases and knock out some flies and see what other mischief we can do.

BERT

The tanks are full of milk in the dairy.

CAREY

What was that?

BERT

Said, "Thanks for all the help today, Carey."

CAREY

Oh. Anytime, Dad.

BERT

And, remember – live and learn.

CAREY

Got it.

(CAREY exits; BERT climbs back up onto the tractor)

BERT

Yep, we must all live and learn. Although, I don't suppose it's what we learn that matters, but the process of learning, and how many ever learn that? I sometimes think that we are a race of two-legged lemmings – lining up for this, queueing up for that, standing patiently where we're told to stand by someone who, when you stop to think about it – if you stop to think about it

– has no right to tell us to stand anywhere. Yet, stand we do. Two-legged lemmings, waving our various brightly-coloured pieces of paper, while we line up for the privilege of leaping off into oblivion. Of course, I could be wrong.

(JEAN enters; she is an efficient and busy woman)

JEAN Bert, there's a woman . . .

BERT It's purely physical, my love. She means nothing to me.

JEAN There's a woman at the house. From some government department or other.

BERT Name?

JEAN Preston.

BERT Of the Mounted Police?

JEAN *(LOOKING AT A CARD)* Uhm, Department of Land and Resource Management. What do they do?

BERT Well, they, uhm, manage land and, uhm, resources.

JEAN She wants to talk to you and Corbett.

BERT Does she? Me AND Corbett?

JEAN As title vests in the two of you jointly.

BERT You know, it's my experience, Jean, when someone from the Department of Land And Resource Management wants to talk to the owner of a place, it's unlikely to be to the benefit of the owner.

JEAN You've dealt with them before, have you?

BERT Never heard of them. Where's Corbett?

JEAN I haven't seen him all day. Up in the attic, I guess.

BERT Well, it wouldn't do her much good to talk to Corbett, anyway. Let's go see what she's come all this way to tell us, shall we?

JEAN Do you think it's important?

BERT She's from the government, isn't she?

JEAN So she said.

BERT Then how could it possibly be important?

(BERT and JEAN exit; after a moment, CORBETT enters, searches a bit, finds the broken tractor parts and holds them up)

CORBETT Ah-ha! Yes! It'll work!

(CORBETT exits as the lights go down on the barn and come up on the house; MRS. PRESTON is alone; she sits patiently for a while, then begins to look around; the deer-head on the wall attracts her attention; it is wearing a hat and sunglasses and is smoking a pipe; a sign indicates that its name is "Orville"; she touches it; it falls off the wall into her arms)

MRS. PRESTON Oh, no! Lord!

(it is too heavy for her to put back up; noises off; BERT and JEAN enter)

BERT Are you an animal lover, Mrs. Preston?

MRS. PRESTON No, but they seem to like me.

BERT Well, Orville likes just about everybody. That's likely how he got in the state he's in.

(BERT puts the head back up)

MRS. PRESTON I'm terribly sorry. I just touched it and . . .

JEAN Yes, it does that sometimes.

(BERT pats the head, quite hard; it stays put)

Sometimes. Could I get you anything? Coffee? Tea? Tea. You look like you could use some.

(MRS. PRESTON has been staring warily at the deer-head)

MRS. PRESTON I'm sorry? Yes! Tea! Thankyou. It's quite a trip back into here. You're the only farm on this road, aren't you?

BERT Wait till you make the trip in February, sometime. Snow to your armpits.

MRS. PRESTON Well, I doubt that I'll be coming back.

BERT Now, don't say that. We're always happy to have people out here. Aren't we, Jean?

JEAN Certainly are. You get so tired of seeing the same faces every day that a new face is a treat, no matter whose it is. Oh, I didn't mean it that way.

MRS. PRESTON I'm sure. I simply meant that our business is sure to be concluded long before snow flies.

BERT Business, huh? Now, what business could the Department of Land And Resource Management have with us?

MRS. PRESTON You are . . . Corbett Keilly?

BERT Nope, nope, that's my brother. I'm Colbert, the handsome one. But, everybody calls me Bert.

MRS. PRESTON I see. Is your brother available?

BERT I don't think you'd get much out of talking to Corbett, Mrs. Preston.

JEAN Corbett's not exactly on the same wavelength as the rest of us.

MRS. PRESTON Oh, I see. I'm terribly sorry, I didn't realize.

JEAN Didn't realize what?

MRS. PRESTON Well, he's handicapped, is he?

BERT Not so's you'd notice.

MRS. PRESTON But, he's NON COMPOS MENTIS, at any rate?

JEAN Oh, he's plenty COMPOS MENTIS.

BERT He's so COMPOS MENTIS the rest of us can't keep up with him, that's the problem.

JEAN My mother-in-law used to say that Corbett was meant to be twins – brain-wise.

BERT You see, my brother is so smart that most people make the mistake of thinking he's dumb.

MRS. PRESTON I see.

BERT Now, don't look at us in that tone of voice and think what you're thinking. When Corbett went to join the Army, they gave him an IQ test.

MRS. PRESTON And, he scored a genius level?

BERT Hell, no! He scored a zero!

(she stares at him)

Mrs. Preston, any moron could score a hundred or better on one of those tests – hell, I bet you could do it! But, did you ever hear of ANYBODY

scoring a zero?

MRS. PRESTON No, I don't believe I ever have.

BERT I rest my case.

MRS. PRESTON Yes, well, it is important that I talk with both of you.

BERT You see, Corbett's ideas of what's important, and our ideas of what's important are, let's say, slightly divergent. Is divergent a good way to put it, Jean?

JEAN Divergent is a very good way to put it. I doubt if you'd even get his attention.

MRS. PRESTON Then how do you conduct business around here?

JEAN Oh, Bert and I take care of whatever needs taking care of.

MRS. PRESTON You can't do business like that! Not in this day and age. It can't be done.

JEAN We've been doing fine up to now.

BERT Why don't you tell us what it is you need, then we can see whether Corbett ought to know?

MRS. PRESTON Well, I'm sure you must be aware of why I'm here.

(BERT and JEAN look at each other and shake their heads)

MRS. PRESTON I'm from the Department of Land And Resource Management.

BERT Yeah, saw that on the car, coming in. Nice car. Government car?

MRS. PRESTON Yes, it is. Surely, you know why I'm here? I've tried telephoning you, but you don't have a phone.

BERT Yeah, knew that, too.

JEAN The phone company says, because we're the only ones on the road, we'd have to pay for the poles and the line all the way in from the highway. Well, we're not going to do THAT.

MRS. PRESTON My Department has sent you several letters.

JEAN We never open letters.

BERT We figure, if it's all that important to whoever sent it, they'll come talk to us, eventually.

MRS. PRESTON That's hardly a productive attitude.

JEAN You're here, aren't you?

MRS. PRESTON I personally marked the last three of those letters, "Urgent, requires immediate reply."

BERT Seems to me, letters marked "URGENT" are always more urgent to the sender than the receiver.

MRS. PRESTON Mr. Keilly, do you think I have time to visit every person I deal with?

BERT Mrs. Preston, if I had your job, I'd have time for nothing else.

MRS. PRESTON Well, you do not have my job, Mr. Keilly.

BERT No, ma'am, I don't.

MRS. PRESTON And, I don't think you'd want it.

BERT In more ways than you can imagine. Now, what's this matter that's so all-important that you took the time to drive all the way out here, which we do appreciate, by the way?

MRS. PRESTON It concerns the expropriation of your farm. Thirty days from the delivery of this . . .

(she hands him a legal document)

. . . into your hands.

(BERT reads, while JEAN looks over his shoulder)

BERT Seems they want to take the farm, Jean.

JEAN So, I see. In order to establish a toxic waste site? Suppose we say "No"?

MRS. PRESTON The time to say "No" is long past. A hearing was held, three months ago, which you chose to ignore. In the absence of any case to the contrary, the decision was made in favour of expropriation. You will, of course, be compensated at a fair market value, as set by an independant arbitration board.

BERT Well, that seems fair enough. How's your tea?

MRS. PRESTON I'm fine, thankyou. I'm sorry, but I don't understand your reaction, here.

BERT What's to understand?

MRS. PRESTON Well, you don't seem to be angry or upset over this.

BERT Would anger do us any good?

MRS. PRESTON Probably not.

JEAN Assuredly not. So, why waste time on it?

MRS. PRESTON But, neither of you seem to be the sort of person to simply accept this. I mean, I see a fight coming, here.

BERT No, not a fight. I wouldn't say a fight, exactly.

JEAN Do you like Kipling, Mr. Preston?

BERT She's probably never Kiplied.

(they both stare at him)

Well, somebody had to say it.

MRS. PRESTON I can't say that I ever have "Kiplied."

JEAN Well, read the story of King Log and King Stork. We've found that it never fails.

MRS. PRESTON I'm sure that with court cases and appeals, you can hold things up for a couple of years, but, in the end, we'll get the land.

BERT So, I guess we have to convince you that you don't want the land. Do you really want to see this farm used to dump PCB's?

MRS. PRESTON What I want is immaterial, Mr Keilly. I'm a public servant. I have no opinions. I simply carry out the approved policies of my department.

BERT And, whether it's right or wrong . . .

MRS. PRESTON . . . has nothing to do with me. That's the responsibility of the Minister.

BERT "The buck stops over there."

MRS. PRESTON This decision is not an arbitrary one. A dozen prospective sites were screened on the basis of both environmental and economic impact.

JEAN Did anyone do a study on the impact it will have on the people who are turned out of their home?

MRS. PRESTON Mrs. Keilly, the federal government, or at least, the department I work for, is not an unfeeling monster. Of course, consideration was given to the owners of the properties in question.

BERT And, it was determined that this family contributed the least, economically and environmentally?

MRS. PRESTON I am not prepared to sit here and argue with you.

BERT And, I was just warming up, too.

MRS. PRESTON I'm afraid you've brought this on yourself. If you had any regard for the proper procedures, you might have avoided this. But, you can't expect any help from us, if you do not co-operate in the first place.

BERT Hear that, Jean? We don't co-operate.

MRS. PRESTON I think I'll leave, before this gets out of hand. As one human being to another, you have my sympathy, I wish you luck and suggest you get a lawyer. As a public servant, I know you've already lost, through your blatant disregard for proper procedure. Good evening.

BERT Mrs. Preston, this family has been defending this piece of land against all kinds of things, including the federal government, since before there was a federal government. We're still here.

MRS. PRESTON And so, Mr. Keilly, is the federal government.

(MRS. PRESTON exits; silence)

BERT I think they're playing for keeps, this time, Jean.

JEAN Well, you know what your grandfather would have said.

BERT Yep. "There's more ways to gather honey than chasing a bear up a tree."

JEAN Exactly. I wonder what he meant by it?

BERT I have no idea.

(they sit for a moment, staring at the document; CORBETT enters, laden with assorted junk and string)

CORBETT Oh, there you are. Good evening – is it? Yes, I'm sure it is. Well, perhaps it is.

JEAN Where've you been, Corbett? We were looking for you.

CORBETT Oh, were you? I'm sorry I wasn't here. I would have enjoyed that.

BERT There was a woman here. A civil servant.

CORBETT Really? See what I've found.

(he proudly displays his junk)

JEAN Corbett, is that my colander?

CORBETT Colander? Yes, it could be. Come to think of it, I'm sure it is. Are you finished with it?

JEAN For a while, at least.

CORBETT Fine. Not to worry; I won't harm it. Why was the civil servant woman here?

JEAN They want to expropriate the farm.

CORBETT Oh, good. Is that good?

BERT They want to take away our home, Corbett.

CORBETT Yours and mine?

BERT And Jean's and Carey's.

CORBETT I see. So, it's not good?

JEAN Not from our point of view.

CORBETT And, that's the trick, isn't it? To be able to see the world from the other fellow's point of view. To understand all – to forgive all. The encompassing of the world in that universal brotherhood . . . siblinghood? . . . called for by all great leaders. I have to go upstairs and tape all this together, now.

*(he starts out, comes back and points to **BERT**'s teacup)*

Are you finished with that?

(he takes the teacup and fits it experimentally into the colander)

Yes, that will do nicely.

JEAN Corbett, you haven't had any supper.

CORBETT I'll do without tonight, thankyou, Jean. I'm going to talk to Saturn.

JEAN Oh. Well, I'll leave some soup on the stove, in case you're hungry afterward.

CORBETT Yes, thankyou. Do we have a copy of "The Gravitic Constant as a Sub-set of the Proto-Atomic Equation" around here?

BERT If we do, you've got it in the attic.

JEAN I think I saw it in the bathroom, Corbett.

CORBETT That's where I left it!

(he continues out)

JEAN So, what do we do?

BERT Oh, I'm sure he'll find it.

JEAN I meant about this.

(she holds up the document)

BERT Why, Jean, I'm surprised at you. We've got thirty days to worry about it. Why start now?

JEAN Because this time, they want to take my home. Our home.

BERT *(MUMBLING)* It's just like those bastards, those blind, narrow Quislings.

JEAN What did you say?

BERT Said, "We'll politely ask them to mind their own business." What'd you think I said?

(lights down on kitchen; up on the yard, as CAL enters; it is now quite dark)

CAL Carey! Carey! *(NO ANSWER)* Women! I tell you, it's enough to make you choke. If I had just one lousy nickel for every time she's stormed out of a room or stomped out of a house, or just plain got up and left for no apparent reason well, they'd have to create a new category for Income Tax. Crey! Carey! I mean, what did I do? I said, " Carey . . . I love you and I want to marry you." And, what did she do? Did she go all teary and say, "Oh, Cal, yes!" No! Did she go all teary and say, "Oh, Cal, no!" No! She jumped out of the car, slammed the door and stormed off into the dark. Carey! And, if that is the action of a reasonable human being, then thank God most people aren't reasonable! Carey!

BERT *(OFF)* Keep it down out there! What's the matter with you?

CAL I'm looking for Carey. I proposed to her and she ran off.

BERT Good for her.

CAL Thanks a lot, Bert. I appreciate the help.

BERT Cal, you're a little dense, aren't you?

CAL I probably am – I'm standing in a barn-yard, alone, in the dark.

BERT Letting your girl-friend's father insult you through a second storey window.

CAL You sure have a way of tying everything up neatly, Bert. I gotta thank you for putting things in perspective.

BERT You're welcome. Try the barn.

CAL You think she's in there?

BERT I have no idea, but it'll get you out from under my window.

CAL Well, goodnight, then.

BERT I hope so. Gods, what a face.

(CAL heads for the barn, talking to himself; lights up on the barn, where CAREY is doing likewise)

CAL I mean, reasonableness is all I ask for!

CAREY What are you, Carey Keilly? A woman or a mouse?

CAL Reasonosity?

CAREY Ha! Point me to the cheese.

CAL Reason! Give me one good reason why I should be chasing her around in the dark.

CAREY I've run ten miles on my little wheel today and haven't gotten anywhere.

CAL And, that's where I am, as far as she's concerned . . . in the dark.

CAREY Well, this is one rodent who intends to get off before the little wheel seizes up.

CAL Standing here in the dark, talking to myself, alone except for . . . what's that? Bloody hell, it's a bull!

(he runs out; CORBETT enters, wearing a head-piece with horn-like antennae; he takes a reading with a flashing instrument, points it in another direction and exits; lights down on the yard; CAL bursts into the barn at a dead run)

CAREY You're persistent, at least.

(CAL is out of breath)

CAL You! Don't move! Just give me a minute here.

CAREY You've had two years, already. Go away.

CAL There's a bull out there! I could have been killed or gored . . . or worse!

CAREY We don't have a bull!

CAL Well, then he's just stopped by for a visit. Mean one – big horns, teeth. A killer.

CAREY Probably just one of the cows got through the fence.

CAL I know the difference. This one didn't have all the plumbing.

CAREY Let's go have a look.

CAL I'm not going out there!

CAREY Don't be such a baby.

CAL You want to see a grown man cry?

CAREY Alright, you stay here with the rest of the rodents and I'll go look. Honestly!

CAL There IS a bull out there! Honestly!

CAREY A real bull?

CAL With hair, horns and halitosis.

CAREY So, what do we do?

CAL We don't go out there!

CAREY Alright. A real bull?

CAL Right. We may have to spend the night here.

CAREY Uh-huh. Well, that sounds like real bull to me.

CAL We'll just sit here for a while and maybe it'll go away. Alright?

CAREY Alright.

CAL What in heaven's name are you doing out here?

CAREY Getting some oil for my little wheel.

CAL Oh.

CAREY Do you know what I'm talking about?

CAL No.

CAREY I didn't think you would.

CAL Hey! I asked you to marry me.

CAREY No, you didn't. You said you wanted to marry me.

CAL Same thing.

CAREY No, it's a very different thing.

CAL You're being difficult.

CAREY Right! Would you want to marry someone like that?

CAL Sure! Ridiculous as it sounds. Now, will you marry me?

CAREY No!

CAL You're going to have to quit being indecisive about this.

CAREY You want decisiveness? Read my lips!

(with her back to the audience, she mouths two words)

Got that?

CAL I'm no good at lip-reading. Want to try Braille?

(she picks up a wrench, with which she holds him off)

CAREY Stop it! I'm serious.

CAL So, am I. I want an answer.

CAREY You'll get a three-eighths ratchet upside the earhole.

CAL So, what's the problem?

CAREY There is no problem!

CAL What's the problem?

CAREY There's more to life than lob-ball!

CAL Sure. There's slo-pitch, three-pitch, fastball . . .

CAREY AAAH!

CAL You don't like fastball?

CAREY Cal, don't you ever ask yourself . . . I don't know . . . why we're here?

CAL I just asked you that! Why are we here?

CAREY 'Cause there's more to life than lob-ball!

CAL That's it! I can't talk to you tonight! Goodbye.

(he exits, then returns immediately)

There's a bull out there!

CAREY We don't have a bull!

CAL Then, it's a mighty tough-looking heifer! But, I think I'd be better off taking my chances out there than in here.

CAREY Suits me fine.

CAL Alright, then, I'll go.

CAREY Good.

CAL Good. I'm going.

CAREY Good. I hope he does a remake of "Blood And Sand" on your behind.

CAL Yeah! What's "Blood And Sand"?

CAREY It's a Rudolph Valentin-oh, why do I bother?

CAL That's it! Make way out there! Bull or no bull, I'm coming through!

*(he throws open the door and starts out, stopping as
CORBETT enters wearing his fancy headgear)*

It's the bull!

CAREY It's my Uncle Corbett!

CORBETT It's my micro-wave detector, actually.

CAREY Some bull! You got yourself scared half to death over my Uncle Corbett?

CAL It was dark! How was I supposed to know? It looked like a bull!

CAREY And, they give him a gun.

CORBETT Excuse me, I'm afraid I have to ask you not to argue here. I'm going to talk to Saturn.

CAREY Can't you talk to Saturn somewhere else?

CORBETT As a matter of fact, no. Highest standing-wave rejection here, for some reason. Is it really essential that you argue in the barn? Can't you argue in the yard?

CAL Why not? We've argued everywhere else, tonight. Let's make it a hat-trick.

CORBETT Wouldn't that be lovely? Hold this, please.

(he hands CAL the colander, which he's converted into a micro-wave receiving dish)

A little higher, please. And, more to the left.

CAL I don't even know why we're arguing. All I did was ask you to marry me . . . all I did was ask her to marry me!

CORBETT Did you? How nice.

(CORBETT is setting up equipment)

CAL That's what I thought. That's what anybody would have thought . . .

CAREY That's exactly what you didn't do . . . think! You finally managed to figure out what you wanted and you didn't stop to consider anybody else.

CORBETT A little more to the left, please.

CAL I THOUGHT I didn't have to stop to think about what you wanted, because I thought I knew! You said you love me, didn't you?

CAREY Yes.

CAL Well, then?

CAREY Well, what?

CAL It's customary . . . ! . . . for the man to ask the woman to marry him, when they're in love!

CORBETT Only in certain societies, and even then it takes many forms.

CAL I'm talking about this society and the form that was good enough for my father!

CAREY You're a foundling!

CAL You know what I mean!

CAREY You want a girl, just like the girl, huh?

CAL You leave my mother out of this! Whoever she was!

CAREY You know, Cal, that's probably why you want to be married. A search for security . . .

CAL Look, I don't need an amateur Freud to tell me I resent not having parents. Is he really going to talk to Saturn?

CAREY Most likely. Quit trying to change the subject.

CAL I'm not, but Saturn . . .? Who's to talk to on Saturn?

CAREY How should I know? I've never been there. Ask him.

CORBETT Oh, I'm not actually talking to Saturn. That would be silly. There's no one there to talk to. No, Saturn's talking to me.

(he holds up the receiver)

Reflected radio waves from outside the solar system. I use the planet as a primary reflecting body, then focus the radio waves with this.

(he pats the colander)

Quite simple, really.

CAL And, what do you hear?

CORBETT The music of the spheres, my boy. The music of the spheres.

(he puts the headset on CAL)

What do you think?

CAL It'll never make the Top Ten. No beat.

CAREY Hey! You changed the subject.

CAL I tried to.

CAREY Do you know what your trouble is?

CAL Yes! Right at this moment, I'm staring at her! Listen, I may not be Errol Flynn, but I'm here.

CAREY That's not much to build a life on, is it?

CAL It's a start. I don't know what you're after, but if you ever do figure it out, let me know, I'd be interested. We'll see you around.

CAREY Hey! You're not leaving!

(CAL leaves)

He left. Do you think I handled that well?

CORBETT I think I'd better mind my own business. Hold this.

CAREY Now, what are you going to do?

CORBETT That's the question I was going to ask you. A little higher, please.

CAREY I don't know. I think Cal was an adolescent stage that I've grown out of. Big and strong, but not really on my level. Don't you think so?

CORBETT If you're past that stage, what stage are you entering?

CAREY My expansion stage; I'm going to do new things, find adventures.

CORBETT Good. More to your left. More. Good. Adventures. I've often wanted adventures. Climb a mountain; explore a jungle; go to the moon. Which ones interest you?

CAREY Haven't given it that much thought, yet.

CORBETT On the other hand, none of those things preclude marriage, you know, and marriage isn't a bad thing, all in all.

CAREY You never married.

CORBETT No. No, it didn't work out that way. I had other things to do, first.

CAREY So, do I.

CORBETT I know you do. We're much alike, you know. That's why you're my favourite neice.

CAREY I'm your only neice.

CORBETT So, it's very lucky that you're also my favourite.

CAREY And, you're my favourite genius uncle. How long do I have to hold this?

CORBETT Nearly there.

CAREY Is there any point to this?

CORBETT Well, I'm trying to determine . . .

CAREY No, I mean, in general. You're always doing little experiments, or big ones, but what use are they?

CORBETT What use is a baby?

CAREY What's this experiment?

CORBETT An attempt to use leptons as carrier-waves for ultra-microwave transmission. I have a message in digital code on this tape. I put it in here; aim the dish, so; throw this switch and . . .

(two explosions – one in the transmitter and one in the dish)

Oh, golly.

(lights down on the barn; up on the kitchen as JEAN prepares breakfast)

JEAN Coffee. Tiny little beans which grow for us to pick and crush and boil. An altogether convenient arrangement. Eggs, hard, yet soft, each perfectly shaped to fit in the holes on refrigerator doors. Do you think hens ever stop to think where all their children have got to? Bacon. The poor pork, lying in the pan, when he really wants to be lying in the mud. Oh, this is a happy world. One animal chewing on the hind leg of another, which chews on another while the first animal, in its turn, is chewed on by yet another. And, who are the chief chewers of the lot? Insignificant looking man. Who'd believe that we can chew up rivers, valleys, whole continents, planets, even? And, who chews on us? No one, except us. Each human, chewing away at his neighbour, feeding ourselves to ourselves, as in some carnivorous conundrum. And, where will we be then, I wonder? What will become of us?

(BERT enters from outside)

BERT 'Morning, what's for breakfast?

JEAN Oh, yes. You would, wouldn't you?

BERT I'm sorry.

JEAN You should be. How can you think of breakfast, with the world in the state it's in?

BERT You're right. I'll go see what I can do about it.

JEAN Don't be sarcastic.

BERT Did you sleep well?

JEAN I laid awake all night, trying to think of a way to stop this thing.

BERT Where's your faith, Jean? We'll think of something. I never lost a wink of sleep over it.

JEAN I know. We're losing our home and you're snoring.

(she demonstrates)

It's a wonder the house didn't come down ages ago. That's what happened to Jericho, you know.

BERT Are you comparing my snoring to the trumpets of the Lord? I'm flattered, but . . .

JEAN We're losing our home! Our family's home! Your father's and his father's and his father's back to . . .

BERT My great-great-great-great-grandfather, Caradoc. Cleared the first fields; built the old cabin.

JEAN And, all those generations, down to us. We can't let them turn this farm into a chemical dump. What'll the neighbours think?

BERT We don't have any neighbours. That's why they chose the place.

JEAN Well, then, what about your great-great-great-great-grand-father, Caradoc? He's buried out there, somewhere. What'll he think when the nuclear waste starts seeping in?

BERT Might perk him up.

JEAN We've got one month.

BERT Tell you what. Carey's got some welding to do on the tractor, so why don't you and I drive into town this morning and talk to a lawyer? Then, when that fails utterly, we'll come back and figure out what we'll really do.

JEAN Carey was pretty late getting in, last night. Is she out to the barn, already?

BERT Haven't seen her, yet. She's going to weld up the transmission housing on the Ferguson. I . . . we had some trouble with it, yesterday. I'll need a tie, if we're going to town. Should I change?

JEAN Just shine your shoes. If a man's got shiny shoes, it doesn't matter how the rest of him looks. He's obviously someone you can trust.

BERT Why, Jean, I never shine my shoes!

JEAN Well, you've learned something about yourself, then, haven't you? The reason I drove the tractor through the fence the day you proposed was that I was trying to get a good look at your shoes. They were shiny that day.

BERT They were brand new, as I recall. First time I wore them. What if I'd waited a week?

JEAN You weren't going to wait, because the day before that, you caught Ralph Thompson kissing me in the barn. Car coming up the drive. Shine your shoes.

(she goes out)

BERT It's Mrs. Preston. She's got somebody with her. Ralph Thompson, that jackass! Goes to the city and sells the farm out from under his sister. Where's the shoe polish? I should have punched him in the nose. I still might! Found it!

(CAREY comes in, in pyjamas, rubbing sleep from her eyes)

CAREY 'Morning. What time is it?

BERT Late. Nearly quarter-to-eight. Your mother and I are going into town, this morning.

CAREY Oh? What for?

BERT To see a lawyer.

CAREY A lawyer? What for?

BERT To stop them from expropriating the farm.

CAREY What? Who?

BERT The people at the door.

(a knock)

Come on in!

(MRS. PRESTON and FRANKLIN enter, rather diffidently; FRANKLIN is a pin-striped ascetic who looks like CAL)

BERT 'Morning! You're up bright and early, Mrs. Preston! Coffee? Breakfast? 'Morning, Cal. Where'd you meet up with Mrs. Preston?

(CAREY stifles an exclamation)

Am I missing something?

MRS. PRESTON I thought it would be best if this were dealt with at a high level right from the top, so I made some phone calls last night. This is Mr. Franklin Findlay, of my Department.

BERT Go on! That's Cal Cameron.

CAREY I feel a little faint.

MRS. PRESTON Mr. Findlay is the Deputy Minister.

BERT Of Land And Resource Management?

MRS. PRESTON That's right.

BERT You're sure?

FRANKLIN I'm sure.

BERT Don't that beat all? Nice to meet you, Frank. Oh, this is my daughter, Carey
...

FRANKLIN Yes. It's Franklin.

CAREY Is it?

BERT Mrs. Preston, Mr. Franklin.

(CAREY is increasingly confused)

CAREY Mrs. Franklin. Mr. Preston.

MRS. PRESTON Mrs. Preston. Mr. Findlay.

BERT Who's Findlay?

FRANKLIN I am.

BERT No, you're Frank.

FRANKLIN I am Franklin Findlay. FrankLIN.

BERT You poor fellow.

FRANKLIN I hope you'll forgive us coming out so early, but I know farm life. Up with the chickens, eh?

BERT Yeah, sure. I don't think I've ever met a Deputy Minister before. Nice suit. Government suit? You want some coffee, Frank? Carey, you going to stand there in your PJ's with your mouth open all day? Sit down, folks, sit down.

CAREY I'll just go change. Excuse me.

(she starts to exit, as JEAN returns, with a tie)

Why do they want to expropriate the farm?

JEAN To dump chemicals on, dear. Now, go and change.

CAREY Alright. *(SHE GOES OUT)* It seemed like such a normal day to start with. I got up, I came downstairs, I said, "Good morning" . . . and then it got real weird.

JEAN How did . . .

BERT It isn't.

JEAN But . . .

BERT Sure does.

JEAN How?

BERT Search me.

JEAN I see. You're out and about early, Mrs. Preston. Don't tell me civil servants keep hours like this all the time?

MRS. PRESTON Sometimes I don't bother going into the office until 2 or 3 O'clock . . . because I've been on case-work since 7. This is Mr. Findlay.

BERT Just call him Frank.

FRANKLIN Franklin.

JEAN I'll try, but it may be hard.

MRS. PRESTON Mr. Findlay is Deputy Minister of Land And Resource Management.

JEAN Is he? That's quite an accomplishment for someone your age, isn't it?

FRANKLIN So I'm told. I specialized in that area when I was in law practice.

JEAN Oh, you're an attorney, as well?

BERT Boy, look at all the attorneys we're getting to know!

FRANKLIN You've been talking to one, have you?

BERT Just putting on a tie and shining up my shoes, and we're off to see the shyster.

JEAN Bert.

BERT Sorry. The mouthpiece.

(JEAN kicks him)

Ouch! Lawyer?

FRANKLIN Yes, well, I wanted to make sure you fully understand the situation. I'm told you don't or won't open mail.

BERT We think that talking in person is so much more friendly. Don't you think so, Frank?

FRANKLIN It wastes a great deal of valuable time, Mr. Keilly.

BERT You get paid, just the same, don't you? This way you get out of the office, into the sunshine and the fresh, country air. What more could you ask for?

FRANKLIN Yes, I'm enjoying it tremendously. I was hoping to use this time to clarify our respective positions.

BERT Son, can I be frank with you?

FRANKLIN Why not? I've been Frank to you since I got here.

BERT You may be the hottest thing the Department's got going for it but you're still kinda dense, aren't you? Why don't I outline things, real quick and save a LOT of time? The Department's position, we all know . . .

(he holds up the court order)

It being extensively, if somewhat pompously set down here. Now, our position is that you can take your court order, fold it 'til it's all corners and shove it up your *habeus corpus!* How's that for a summary?

FRANKLIN Masterful. See how far it gets you in court. Was there any point in coming out here, Mrs. Preston? These people are hardly cooperative. Why bother?

BERT Why, you jackanapes! You come here with somebody else's face on, still damp around the . . . !

JEAN Bert! Shine your shoes. I'm sorry, Mr. Findlay. He gets a little cranky without his morning pick-me-up.

(she gets him a beer)

And, it's not helped by staring at your face. Our daughter has a boyfriend looks enough like you to be you.

FRANKLIN Well, well. How fascinating.

BERT Gol, I wonder how many more of them there are? Anyway, we have to get to work. We kind of slept in around here. Must have been, what?, 6:30 before we got up. Work piling up all around us as we talk.

(CAREY comes in)

Carey, here, didn't get up 'til after 7:30. What time'd you get in last night, anyway?

CAREY Not too late. Uncle Corbett and I stayed up to make sure the fire was out.

MRS. PRESTON You had a fire?

BERT We had a fire?

CAREY Only a small one. It started when Uncle Corbett's machine blew up. The one he talks to Saturn with.

FRANKLIN Your uncle talks to things?

CAREY Depends what you mean by "things". Golf-balls? Hedges? No. Planets?

Yes, but that's more of a place, like Alberta. You ever phone Alberta?

FRANKLIN You can't compare Alberta with a planet three-hundred million miles away.

BERT You ever been in Drumheller on a Sunday? Where was this fire?

CAREY It started in the barn, but we managed to get it all into the wheel-barrow and dump it in the creek. You know that pile of belts and hoses off the tractor? It should be entering Lake Ontario, just about now.

BERT I don't think I want to hear anymore.

CAREY Suit yourself.

FRANKLIN Well, this has certainly been educational, but it's not getting us anywhere. Perhaps if we started by looking over the property, we could find some way to settle this to everyone's satisfaction. After all, I'm sure some equitable solution can be reached.

BERT The only equitable solution we will accept is you people leaving us alone! Now, that's not a lot to ask, is it?

FRANKLIN It's not going to happen. A decision has been made.

CAREY By who?

JEAN By whom.

CAREY What she said.

BERT It's easy to make decisions about other people's lives.

FRANKLIN It takes thought, time and careful consideration.

BERT My god, he believes it!

FRANKLIN I certainly do, Mr. Keilly. I believe I can help people, otherwise I wouldn't be doing this.

BERT Expropriating homes?

FRANKLIN I'm sorry, sir, it's part of the job.

MRS. PRESTON Mr. Findlay, why don't you go look over the property, while I talk to the Keilly's?

FRANKLIN I can handle it.

BERT Yeah, you're doing a bang-up job.

FRANKLIN I'll go look over the property. If I may?

JEAN Look all you want. Looking can't hurt.

BERT I don't know, Jean. Give them an inch and they'll take your yard. Or whatever that is in metric. Speaking of yards, son, that's a barn-yard, out t
h
e
r
e.

FRANKLIN Yes, I could tell from the barn in it.

BERT Well, there's a few things a city-boy isn't used to out there. So, just so we know that you know the difference . . .

(he holds up the shoe-polish)

This is Shin-O-La.

CAREY Good one, Dad!

FRANKLIN I'll be outside when you're ready to leave, Mrs. Preston. Mrs. Keilly, it's been a pleasure. Bert, old boy, it's going to be a pleasure – in court.

(FRANKLIN exits)

BERT Now, who ruffled his feathers?

JEAN Carey, go and show him around the place. Bert, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You've been saving that up ever since he walked in.

BERT I've seen his type before. I didn't like it thirty years ago, and I don't like it now.

MRS. PRESTON Antagonizing the Deputy Minister is not going to help.

BERT And, how'd he get that? Friends in high places?

MRS. PRESTON I assure you, he's earned it. He's very competent.

BERT But, something of a jackass, too, eh? Alright. Carey, go tell him I said I was sorry and show him around.

CAREY Do I have to?

BERT I'd like you to.

CAREY It's spooky! Looking at Cal's face when he's not there! Anyway, I was going to do that work on the tractor. We're going to need all new hoses and belts, you know.

BERT I'm going to have to sell them the farm to buy parts for the damn tractor. Go

catch him before he gets his fingers caught in something. You get a city-boy around a farm and you never know what's going to happen.

MRS. PRESTON Yes, he could even start a fire.

BERT Right, he . . . what?

CAREY I think the word is "*touché*", Dad.

(she exits)

MRS. PRESTON Let me say right off the top that I think you are a most remarkable family. Most remarkable, and it's going to be a shame when we take away your farm.

(lights down on the kitchen; up on the yard, as FRANKLIN enters, followed a moment later by CAREY; FRANKLIN is poking around the outhouse)

CAREY Careful! Fall into there, and I'm not diving in after you.

FRANKLIN You don't still use it?

CAREY 'Course not!

FRANKLIN You never know.

CAREY My father was kind of rough on you. He says he's sorry.

FRANKLIN Your father fancies himself as something of a lion, but he's really just a pussy-cat.

CAREY Even pussycats have claws.

FRANKLIN I suppose so.

CAREY Why do you want to take away our farm?

FRANKLIN I don't want to. I have to. It's my job.

CAREY Yeah, well, it stinks.

FRANKLIN Miss Keilly, I didn't have to come out here. God knows, my job is difficult enough without dealing with all of these cranks.

CAREY My father is not a crank!

FRANKLIN Alright, but your uncle certainly qualifies. I'll need to talk with him, by the way. He lives here, doesn't he?

CAREY Yes, he does. Uncle Corbett lives in the attic.

FRANKLIN And, talks to planets. My god.

CAREY My uncle happens to be the most brilliant person I know.

FRANKLIN Don't get out much?

CAREY And, you are, without doubt, the most offensive.

FRANKLIN (*LOOSENING UP*) It's entirely possible. My mother used to throw me out of the house, 'cause I got on her nerves so much. People tell me I'm very intense.

CAREY I can think of other words.

FRANKLIN Sorry. I'll try to modulate it. Good looking cattle. Your father knows his stuff, crank or not.

CAREY What do you know about cattle?

FRANKLIN My mother used to raise Charolais. Long time ago.

CAREY I thought you were a city-boy? You are a city-boy!

FRANKLIN I am now. Thank God. I spent years on the farm, then my uncle persuaded my mother to let him take me under his wing. So I packed up and moved into the city, went to law school, and eventually went into public service. Uncle Ralph said, "Franklin, stay on the farm 'till you're twenty-five and you'll die on the farm." And, he was right.

CAREY You think so?

FRANKLIN I know so. What's your family got besides this land? You're here and you're not going anywhere. Or, rather, you are, but only because we're kicking you off.

CAREY Do you get a personal satisfaction out of this?

FRANKLIN Oh, no. Purely a professional one.

CAREY It's making me nauseaus.

FRANKLIN What is?

CAREY Looking at Cal's face on you.

FRANKLIN This is my face. If anyone else is using it, they can give it back. Cal's your boyfriend?

CAREY Used to be.

FRANKLIN That sounds final.

CAREY It's a long story.

FRANKLIN It usually is.

CAREY Want to hear about it?

FRANKLIN No. I have to be in Committee at one. A vital question must be decided today, which could affect the crawfish industry for years.

CAREY My gard.

FRANKLIN So, you see it's imperative that I be there.

CAREY You're in charge, are you?

FRANKLIN Not so much in charge, as being the head zoo-keeper. It's my job to keep the rabble away from the Minister, and the Minister away from the rabble.

CAREY That's pretty cynical.

FRANKLIN I'm in a cynical line of work. I keep the people happy.

CAREY You're not doing it very well.

FRANKLIN I'm doing a fine job.

CAREY Do you think people are happy with the way this country is run?

FRANKLIN Overwhelmingly so.

CAREY I'm not happy.

FRANKLIN But you're "a person". "The People" are quite happy.

CAREY What about all the scandals? Are they happy with them?

FRANKLIN We just don't get any good scandals, anymore. Where's Gerta Munsinger when you need her?

CAREY Who?

FRANKLIN See what I mean?

CAREY Well . . . what about all those protesters?

FRANKLIN Do you know how to handle the fringe element in a free and democratic society? You let them make all the noise they want to; you even encourage it by NOT coming out of your office to talk to them. Then, when they're most hysterical, you let the media at them. Afterward, when the rabble have gone home . . . YOU talk to the media, quietly, soberly, with pictures of dead prime ministers behind you, and you explain how you cannot and will

not allow this great country to be held hostage by a tiny group of . . . cranks. And, it works.

CAREY You make it sound like the whole system is just manipulation.

FRANKLIN It is, but, once you're aware of it, you can turn it around.

CAREY How do you mean?

FRANKLIN There's the users and the used. Which do you want to be?

CAREY A conspicuous consumer.

FRANKLIN I think I like you, Miss Keilly. Your father, I'm not too stuck on, but . . .

CAREY My father is one of the last of a dying breed. He figures you should be able to do it on your own, if you've got ambition and some guts. He also figures the system is set up so you can't.

FRANKLIN He could be right.

CAREY You're agreeing with him?

FRANKLIN Nobody said it was perfect. To help the weak, you take from the strong, but there's not many of the strong left. How do you turn it around?

CAREY Is that why you're in the public service?

FRANKLIN Good god, no. I'm in it for the subsidized lunches.

CAREY I think I detected an attempt at humour there.

FRANKLIN Deputy Ministers are allowed to make jokes . . . on our own time. And, I'm on coffee break, right now. What's in the barn?

CAREY Cows, mostly. A fairly dead tractor.

FRANKLIN What's wrong with it?

CAREY Hardening of the batteries. Multiple fractures of the crankcase.

FRANKLIN Let's check it out. Professionally speaking, of course. Coffee break's over.

(FRANKLIN heads for the barn; CAREY follows wonderingly)

CAREY My god, he's human. Or beginning to resemble one, anyway.

(she exits; after a moment, CORBETT enters from the outhouse)

CORBETT It will work! I've found the secret! It has to do with twisting the gyros around their axes. By creating a state of inertia, the gyro-magnetic effect actually . . . I thought there was someone out here . . . or I thought I thought.

(he takes out a tape measure and makes some some measurements; he checks a notebook and shakes his head)

But the working model may be too large. Of course! We can add a second hole.

*(he takes his device and leaves, excitedly; light down on yard; up on the barn as **BERT, CAL, JEAN** and **MRS. PRESTON** enter)*

JEAN Now, they came in this way, but they may have gone out again. Did you close the gate, Bert?

BERT Closed, barred and padlocked. He'll never get away.

JEAN Bert.

MRS. PRESTON I look at this place and can't understand why you want to stay so badly. For the price we're offering, you could get a much better place. And, a new tractor.

BERT Don't want a new tractor. Want this one.

MRS. PRESTON The court costs alone could break you. This could drag on for years! Tens of thousands of dollars – and, if you lose, every penny will come out of your pocket.

CAL It is a good price, Bert.

BERT Don't want a new farm. Want this one.

MRS. PRESTON Well, you won't do better than the current price, and you could do a lot worse.

JEAN Mrs. Preston, we're not afraid of fighting for what is ours. We have right on our side.

BERT Jean, that sounds a lot like what Poland said in '39.

JEAN I don't hear you coming up with any world-beating arguments.

BERT I kinda thought of myself as the second team. Saving myself up, you know. A good coach has to have some strategy.

CAL What's this Franklin guy look like anyway?

BERT Let's see. Your height, your build, your hair, your face. You.

CAL Yeah, but what's he look like?

BERT He looks like a lawyer. Stands like this. Only lawyer I've ever seen who keeps his hands in his OWN pockets.

MRS. PRESTON It's more than two hours, now.

CAL Well, I don't like it.

JEAN What's the matter, Cal? Don't trust Carey out of your sight?

CAL After the argument we had last night, we're finished. I had a premonition, that's all.

MRS. PRESTON Is there any way Mr. Findlay could have gotten hurt somewhere?

BERT Sure, lot's of ways. Hurt, lost, drowned, killed.

CAL Too bad you don't have a bull.

BERT We could get one.

JEAN Bert.

BERT Well, he gets under my shirt.

MRS. PRESTON I don't like it.

BERT Neither do I.

MRS. PRESTON I mean him disappearing like that. I had a premonition, too. A voice suddenly said, "Nothing good can come of this."

BERT What a sensible voice.

MRS. PRESTON This barn should be condemned. The whole place should be! Look at those beams!

BERT That's right. Look at those beams. That one right above you is where I fell from and nearly killed myself. Nine years old. The reason I fell is we were watching some eggs hatching in a nest in that corner over there, where it meets the crosser. Most amazing thing I'd ever seen; I was so engrossed that I stepped right off the beam. Fell into the hay-mow, there. Now, as to what went on in the hay-mow – well, that was a few years later, right, Jean? Stupid Ralph Thompson! But, you don't give things like that up.

MRS. PRESTON I can certainly sympathize with your emotional attachment, but the machinery is just too strong for a single family to fight. You'll lose in the end and it will have cost you everything. "You can't fight city hall."

JEAN In this neck of the woods, my husband's family built city hall. Or the town

hall, at least.

MRS. PRESTON You just won't take this seriously, will you?

JEAN As seriously as it deserves to be taken.

BERT How are we supposed to take something seriously when it comes from that collection of comedians in the capital? You ever watch the Parliamentary Debates? Funniest thing on TV.

MRS. PRESTON Well, you shouldn't have voted for them.

JEAN We didn't.

BERT All blathering and waffling at my expense. If they were worth half what they're getting paid, they'd be doing it for themselves.

MRS. PRESTON You have a very narrow view of the way these things work, Mr. Keilly.

BERT Well, it's only the one I've been squeezed into!

CAL Oh, oh! Grab something and hold on!

BERT You got your fiddlers, your button sorters and your paper shufflers, all of whom think they have the eternal right to go on fiddling, sorting and shuffling simply because they got their foot in the door in the first place. We ought to fire the lot of you.

MRS. PRESTON There is essential work to be done. Who's going to do that?

BERT Ten chimpanzees with abacuses! Abacusii?

JEAN Abacii. For the most part, the "essential work" is thinking up new rules and new forms to be filled out.

MRS. PRESTON Social assistance programs. Those are needed.

BERT What socialassistance? One third of the budget goes to paying the wages of people like you, one-third pays the interest on the national debt and one-third is deficit funding – it doesn't really exist. You want to know what the poor and needy get in this country?

(he has been checking off thirds and holds up a circled thumb and forefinger)

MRS. PRESTON An impressive demonstration. It doesn't change the fact that you're going to lose your farm. Can't you see I'm trying to help?

BERT You could help by collecting that shave-tail lawyer, wherever he went and . . .

JEAN Bert, take it easy. Mrs. Preston, I think it would be best if we left it for now.

Once we've talked to a lawyer . . .

(BERT chortles in disgust)

MRS. PRESTON Well, don't be too long about it. Eviction date is twenty-nine days from today.

CAL Well, I'm not going to stand around gassin' all day. I'm going to find this Franklin-fellow and my girlfriend. Which way did they go?

MRS. PRESTON Mr. Findlay hates farms.

JEAN If I know Carey, she's leading him up hill and down dale, the steepest way she can find. I don't think those two would have much to talk about.

CAL I don't care what they talk about, as long as they're still talking.

MRS. PRESTON What're you saying?

CAL Well, he's got two strikes against him, already. He's a lawyer AND he's a civil servant. That's a dangerous combination.

(CAL exits; BERT calls from the doorway)

BERT Cal! You go to the left; we'll go to the right! We'll head them off at the pass.

CAL *(OFF)* Gotcha!

JEAN I thought they were finished with each other?

BERT That was last night.

MRS. PRESTON I don't think that Mr. Findlay would . . .

BERT Oh, keep your wig on. Let's go out the back, here. We ought to be able to see them, if they're out in the fields. Now, you watch your step out here, Mrs. Preston. If you step in something, it won't be Shin-O-La.

(they exit; after a moment, FRANKLIN and CAREY stand up out of the hay; they have obviously been necking or whatever the current phrase is)

FRANKLIN It's amazing what you can find to talk about, if you put your mind to it. Despite differences in background.

CAREY Hurray for multi-culturalism.

FRANKLIN I ought to go.

CAREY Yes, musn't waste tax-payers' time.

FRANKLIN The last half-hour may be the best use to which I've put taxpayers' time since I started.

CAREY I'm blushing.

FRANKLIN I think I'm flushed, myself.

CAREY You've got hay sticking out of your collar.

(she brushes it away; they are close for a moment, and suddenly a little embarrassed)

CAREY Look, I'm a little surprised at myself.

FRANKLIN So, am I. At myself, I mean. I'm not sure about the parliamentarianism of this. I'll have to look it up in Roberts' Rules of Order.

CAREY Does this come under Affairs of State?

FRANKLIN No, but it's a fine state of affairs.

CAREY If my father saw you coming up the drive, he'd throw a conipation fit – after he shot you. Civil servant is a swear word around our house.

FRANKLIN Public servant, please. What's your opinion of the group?

CAREY The latest polls show they've gained a couple of percentage points since yesterday.

FRANKLIN Now, I'm blushing.

CAREY No, I think you're still flushed. If my father saw that, we'd both be in it.

*(she looks both ways, then moves to him and kisses him; they hold as **BERT**, **JEAN** and **MRS. PRESTON** return)*

BERT I don't know what it is. There's just something about that face.

CAREY Daddy!

JEAN Carey!

MRS. PRESTON Mr. Findlay!

FRANKLIN Mrs. Preston!

BERT Carey!

JEAN Franklin!

FRANKLIN Mrs. Keilly?

BERT Ralph Thompson!

JEAN Bert!

FRANKLIN Uncle Ralph?

*(just as **BERT** seems ready to go for **FRANKLIN**'s throat, **CORBETT** enters with his invention)*

CORBETT There you all are! Isn't it an exciting day?

(lights to black)

END OF ACT ONE

UNCLE CORBETT LIVES IN THE ATTIC

A Comedy

ACT TWO

(setting as before; at the top, an explosion in the outhouse, with smoke and flame; the door opens and CORBETT enters, all sooty and burned; he goes over a checklist)

CORBETT Red, yellow, orange . . . GREEN! . . . blue, violet.

(CORBETT re-enters the outhouse; BERT, CAL, and MRS. PRESTON enter, arguing; CAL is in police uniform for the first time in the play)

CAL Bert, you gotta move that stuff! Whether you like it or not, those bulldozers are going to come through here, today!

BERT I don't think so. The way I figure it, those fellas love machinery. Would anybody who loves machinery hurt a '52 Studebaker?

CAL Is that a '52? I don't think I've ever seen one.

BERT Most beautiful car ever built. Two-hundred and five thousand on the original engine.

MRS. PRESTON Will you treat this with the seriousness it deserves, or do I have to contact your superiors?

CAL I was sent out here for the purpose of keeping order. So far, I've been doing just that. Now, if you'll keep your shorts on, I'll continue to do that, and nobody'll get hurt. I don't want that, you don't want that and Bert don't want that.

BERT Doesn't want that.

CAL See?

MRS. PRESTON In five minutes, I'm going to order the bulldozers to plough through anything in their path, including '62 Studebakers.

BERT '52 Studebakers. And, there's only one. And, a '58 Hudson.

CAL I didn't see the Hudson. I remember the orphanage I was in had one, 'way back.

BERT Beautiful car. Big plush seats and a padded dash.

CAL Yeah, we used to like piling into the back seat...

MRS. PRESTON In six minutes, I am going to pick up a phone and call your superiors, Officer Cameron.

CAL Well, start walking. The nearest phone's twenty minutes that way. (*TO BERT*) It's got that big straight-8, right?

MRS. PRESTON This is ridiculous. It's absolutely primitive! People just don't behave like this!

BERT That's true. People are generally better trained, these days, aren't they? Don't know what happened to this family.

MRS. PRESTON This is hopeless.

BERT That's what I've been trying to tell you. Why not just admit it now and pack it in? Then we can all have a beer and calm down.

MRS. PRESTON Calm down? Calm Down! Do you know how much money it costs to keep six bulldozers idling for ten hours? Not to mention the crews, who are now on triple time.

BERT So, send 'em home.

MRS. PRESTON The Minister has let it be known that this matter will be concluded today, or heads will roll. Starting with this rapidly greying one in front of you.

BERT Yeah, you're getting older by the minute. Your husband won't recognize you when you get home.

MRS. PRESTON I'm a widow.

BERT Sorry. I didn't know.

MRS. PRESTON Will you remove those barricades?

BERT Can't.

MRS. PRESTON You heard him. Deliberate obstruction. I want him arrested.

CAL Now, calm down. He didn't say he won't. He said he can't.

MRS. PRESTON Can't? He put them there; why CAN'T he remove them?

CAL Bert, why can't you remove them?

BERT Well, finally! Somebody asks a smart question. See, I was removing them from the property, as per the court order, and, by jeez, if the one load didn't take and dump over, right at the gate. "Well," I thinks, "I'll take the other load out the back way, before I clear this stuff up." And, lo and behold, if THAT load didn't take and dump at the back gate! And, then, just to add insult to injury, the tractor won't start. So, I'm waiting for parts, so I can't move the stuff. See? Simple.

MRS. PRESTON And, when do you expect these parts to come in?

BERT Gol, I don't know. They're kinda hard to come by.

MRS. PRESTON Then, I'll have the bulldozers hook up to them and pull them aside.

BERT I don't think I can allow that. Those are valuable and irreplaceable antiques, you know.

CAL And, their owner is making every reasonable effort to remove them. We just have to have patience.

MRS. PRESTON The Department's patience with this family is wearing a little thin. We can't continue to chase after this one family of cranks. What would the world be like if everyone just ran around doing what made them happy?

BERT Vancouver?

MRS. PRESTON What's the use of talking to you? This entire project has been one headache after another. I'm getting one now, in fact. The only thing we've avoided, so far, has been the media. And, you don't have a phone.

BERT I talked to them yesterday, when I was in town. Let's see... the newspapers, The Fifth Estate, The Journal, Chamber of Commerce, Town Council, PTA, Humane Society and the Horticultural Society, too. They should start arriving anytime, now.

CAL And, you've got six wrecking crews, smoking cigarettes on triple time.

(MRS. PRESTON gets a panicked look and runs out the door)

CAL Your tractor's been broken down for two months.

BERT Did I say it wasn't?

CAL Are the TV cameras really on their way?

BERT Anything's possible. You want a beer?

CAL I'm on duty.

BERT We nearly sold the place to a brewery, a while back, 'cause of the natural springs out back, but they wouldn't agree to a pipeline into the kitchen, so the deal didn't go through.

CAL You're playing this pretty close to the chest, Bert.

(he is getting a beer)

BERT So close, I'm not even peeking at my own cards.

CAL How long do you think you can stall them? One day? Two?

- BERT** Long enough, maybe. We've got a couple of irons in the fire. Besides, it's just so much fun.
- CAL** You could have avoided all this, if you'd just open your mail, once in a while.
- BERT** The point is, we shouldn't have had to avoid all this! We're asking for nothing more than to be left alone. But, the poor fellow on his own doesn't stand a chance, these days, 'cause the only way to fight all the bureaucracy is to have one of your own. And, it shouldn't be.
- CAL** So, you need help.
- BERT** I talked to Charlie Phillips and the Township Council. He said they sympathized, but couldn't get involved 'cause they needed grants from the same department.
- CAL** That skunk! And, it's an election year, too!
- BERT** Carey spit right in his eye. Keith Harris ran some editorials, but I don't know. Everybody's got their own trouble. It's near got me stumped, Cal.
- CAL** I can only put them off for so long, you know. Sooner or later, I'm going to be ordered to remove you. And, I will.
- BERT** *Et tu, Brute?* You do what you have to do, Franklin.
- CAL** Dammit, Bert! You make me feel like a storm-trooper. It's bad enough, him stealing my face. You don't have to ride me about it.
- BERT** Sorry.
- CAL** You and Jean and Corbett, you're some of the best friends I've had. And, you know how I feel about Carey. But, the law is the law, and I'm supposed to enforce it.
- BERT** Okay, Coop. I guess it's you and me, out front of the barn, at high noon, huh? Can I borrow your gun? I don't have one.
- CAL** Don't even joke about it!
- BERT** You worry too much. Did you hear anything back from the Children's Aid?
- CAL** Not yet, but if this Findlay fellow is my brother, I may save you the trouble and shoot myself.
- BERT** So, what's wrong with him? Apart from the fact that he's been seeing Carey?
- CAL** That's more than enough.

BERT He's dragged her off somewhere, today. That a daughter of mine would willingly accompany a civil servant, anywhere!

CAL So, what are you going to do, Bert?

BERT Oh, she'll come to her senses.

CAL I mean, about this whole mess!

BERT Well, right now, I may have another beer.

CAL Just use your head, huh?

BERT It's a twist-top.

(JEAN enters from outside)

JEAN You'd better come and talk to your daughter.

BERT Why? Is she doing something stupid?

JEAN Not necessarily. Is chaining herself to the gate classified as something stupid?

BERT Which gate?

JEAN The barn-yard gate.

BERT That's not bad. I don't have a barricade, there.

(he starts to hunt in a drawer)

JEAN What are you looking for?

BERT Don't we have some padlocks around here, somewhere?

JEAN You want to padlock your own daughter to a gate?

BERT Only if she wants me to, dear. What kind of father do you think I am?

CAL Do you want my handcuffs?

BERT Oh, may I?

CAL No! I'm going to need them, later. Chaining herself to things! Who does she think she is?

JEAN Nellie McLung.

CAL She what?

JEAN Well, she stormed out of Franklin's car, charged into the shed, grabbed some chains and she's out at the gate, now, shouting, "If it's good enough for my grandmother, it's good enough for me!"

BERT I like that. It gives it a sense of history. Not that her grandmother ever did any suffragetting. I think her great-grandfather did once chain himself to a barstool, to protest Prohibition. Only quit when they ran out of Glen Fiddich.

JEAN Is Corbett finished, yet?

BERT Not yet. It's tricky. He tried to explain it, but I didn't catch on. Carey'll have to hold them for a while.

JEAN I don't want my daughter chained to a gate. There's such a limited future in it.

BERT I don't know. She could franchise the idea. A chain chain, linking the nation. She could have the market all locked up.

CAL Or she could get locked up. If she doesn't move the first time they tell her to, I'll have to arrest her. And, God help me.

BERT Yeah, she can be quite a handful.

CAL You won't think it's so funny when the judge says, "Thirty days or \$3,000."

BERT Won't be the first Keilly to spend some time in jail in a good cause.

CAL Or the last.

JEAN Lord, here they come!

CAL Here who come?

BERT Where who come?

JEAN In through the back! They got around the Hudson and they're heading for the barn. They've stopped! They can't get past Carey. Hold on, Carey! Mother's coming!

(she grabs a flyswatter and exits, running)

CAL Well, come on, Bert!

BERT No rush, no rush. Everybody charging around like a cat caught in a vacuum cleaner.

(he finishes his beer)

Now, let's proceed like civilized human beings, shall we?

CAL I always wanted to marry a doctor. Why don't I listen to myself?

(they exit; after a moment, MRS. PRESTON backs in, shouting off)

MRS. PRESTON And, don't think I won't!

(she sinks into a chair)

I don't need this. I could have had a nice, easy job with External Affairs, but I had to take this one. Water . . .

(she takes a pill)

Why don't people ever realize that it's for their own good? We have the facts; they don't. How can they know what's best for them? And, now, this bunch of . . . anarchists! Sacho and Vanzetti meet the Hatfields and McCoys. Where would we be if everyone were like them, that's what I want to know? Self-sufficient, independent, think they can just stay on their farm and do whatever it is that makes them happy. Where would this country be if everyone had that attitude? It certainly wouldn't be where it is now, that's for sure. It's government that makes this country what it is. Always. Since . . . well, since nearly thirty years ago! And, these people make a mockery of that tradition. With their "I'd rather do it myself." It's elitism is what it is. They think they're better than average. Well, we can't allow that. It makes me . . . ! I think I'm having a coronary edaema.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: she is NOT; it's simply hysterical exaggeration for humourous effect)

(FRANKLIN enters from the front)

FRANKLIN Hello? Anybody home? Mrs. Preston! Are you ill?

MRS. PRESTON Just a mild stroke. Not to worry, the medical plan will cover it.

FRANKLIN Are you joking?

MRS. PRESTON I don't think I've had a more serious day since 1966.

FRANKLIN Then I'd better call an ambulance.

MRS. PRESTON Why bother? These people are bound and determined to drive me into my grave. It might as well be today. Is my hair falling out?

FRANKLIN What is going on around here? The driveway's blocked with junk and old cars.

MRS. PRESTON It's a '52 Studebaker, actually.

FRANKLIN I stopped to find a way around it all and Carey jumped out and ran off

somewhere.

MRS. PRESTON I'm sure my hair is falling out. Can you see a bald spot starting?

FRANKLIN I think you'd better lie down for a bit. You'll feel better if you do.

MRS. PRESTON No! When this is over, I'll have plenty of time to lie down, if I live. I'm going to apply for that job with External.

FRANKLIN I thought that was on Cyprus?

MRS. PRESTON It is! And, it'll be a nice change, too! I think I'm fibrulating.

FRANKLIN I've had a meeting with the Minister. He is absolutely insistent that this be brought to a conclusion today. I've never seen him so adamant. And, everything's to be as quiet as possible. No publicity.

(MRS. PRESTON starts to giggle)

FRANKLIN If we can pull this off, it'll be a big feather in our caps.

MRS. PRESTON Big enough to cover my bald spot?

FRANKLIN Where is everyone? I thought the bulldozers would be laying waste to the place.

MRS. PRESTON They're all out back. Carey, too.

FRANKLIN I don't hear any buildings coming down.

MRS. PRESTON Very perceptive. Do you know what else you don't hear? You don't hear the Keilly's moving out.

FRANKLIN Why aren't the buildings coming down?

MRS. PRESTON Because there are Keillys chained to them.

FRANKLIN I see. Ubiquitous kind of people, aren't they? I suppose you've tried all the usual methods?

MRS. PRESTON Dealing with these people is like shouting down a barrel . . . when it's filled with molasses. I've never seen people so independent – it's almost American!

FRANKLIN Yes, I can see the problem. Well, perhaps I'd better take charge. I'll go talk to them and we'll do this quickly and quietly. I can be very persuasive.

MRS. PRESTON As we know all too well. How's that going, by the by?

FRANKLIN Very nicely, I think. We've agreed to disagree.

MRS. PRESTON Yes, well, wait for it.

- FRANKLIN** Where are they now?
- MRS. PRESTON** You can't miss it. There's six bulldozers, 18 construction workers and a girl chained to a gate. The girl's the one who rattles. The construction ~~wor~~klers ones with the big smiles.
- FRANKLIN** I see. Why?
- MRS. PRESTON** They're the ones getting paid triple time. I'm fibrulating, again. I'm definitely going to Cyprus.
- FRANKLIN** I'm going to go sort this out. Will you be alright, or should I have someone take you into town?
- MRS. PRESTON** Oh, don't worry about me. I'll just sit here and figure out the exchange rate on the drachma.
- FRANKLIN** A mind is a terrible thing to waste.
- (he exits; MRS. PRESTON sits a moment)*
- MRS. PRESTON** Orville, my silent friend, I sometimes feel that you are just the first in a series for that wall.
- (she measures her head with her hands and holds them up beside ORVILLE)*
- Yes, it should just about fit.
- (lights down on kitchen; up on the outhouse; from inside it, hammering then a flash and smoke pours out; CORBETT enters from the outhouse, smudged; he takes a checklist out of his pocket, crosses something off)*
- CORBETT** Of course! Energy equals MASS times the speed of light squared.
- (he goes back in; lights down on the outhouse; up on the yard and FRANKLIN, CAREY, BERT & JEAN)*
- FRANKLIN** Carey, the preposterousness of this is . . . well . . . preposterous.
- BERT** Preposterousness?
- JEAN** Preposterosity?
- FRANKLIN** Preposterousness! Look at you all with your futile gestures and your heroic attitudes. The time for heroes is long past.
- JEAN** And, isn't it a shame?
- FRANKLIN** It's about time, if you ask me.

CAREY Who asked you?

FRANKLIN What got under your bonnet?

CAREY Bulldozers!

BERT Big bonnet.

CAREY You said you'd hold off.

FRANKLIN I said I'd try. I wasn't given a choice. Don't yell at me. It's my job.

CAREY Alright, then, who do I yell at?

FRANKLIN The Minister.

CAREY And, how do I get to him?

FRANKLIN You don't. That's my job, too.

CAREY "If it's good enough for my grandmother, it's good enough for me!"

FRANKLIN And, knock that off!

CAREY Why?

FRANKLIN Because it isn't good enough for you! Just about everything that makes your life comfortable and secure and easy, your grandmother didn't have, and most of it due to governments. Socialized medicine and welfare and unemployment insurance . . . sliced bread, for heaven's sake!

JEAN Are you saying government invented sliced bread?

FRANKLIN No, but they could have passed a law against it. You are hanging on to useless things because you're too scared to change.

BERT Are you calling my farm useless?

FRANKLIN That silly tractor of yours is high up on the useless list. You're carting around junk in the name of history.

BERT Could be you're right.

FRANKLIN, JEAN & CAREY WHAT!!!

BERT It's hard to sort everything out, but, I'd rather cart around some useless baggage than part with even the tiniest portion of the important things.

FRANKLIN Like this farm?

JEAN If you'd asked us nicely, we'd probably have sold you the place, right off. A

few acres of rock and scrub don't matter in the least.

BERT But, there are other things that DO matter, and if you don't know what they are, right now, without me telling you, then may the Good Lord help you.

FRANKLIN Mr. Keilly, the human factor is a very important item of consideration in the development of policy, and we are well aware that human resources are a vital factor in the growth of this country.

JEAN Do you know what word you didn't use in the last two sentences?

FRANKLIN I don't follow.

CAREY People.

FRANKLIN What?

CAREY The word you didn't use . . .

JEAN People. Person. Man. Woman. Child. Sorry, Carey.

CAREY God, I'm twenty-two years old!

JEAN But you'll always be our baby.

FRANKLIN I said, "People."

JEAN No, you said, "human factor", and "human resources".

FRANKLIN Same thing.

BERT Now we're calling a spade a manual excavation unit! You people have listened to your own gobbledy-gook for so long you've forgotten what it's supposed to mean. Double-talk it 'til the problem goes away. No more "poor people"; just "economically disadvantaged human resources".

FRANKLIN It offends them to be called "poor".

BERT It offends them a hell of a lot more to be poor.

FRANKLIN We can't solve that.

BERT Then what are you there for?

FRANKLIN To run the country, and right now that means getting things moving here. The buildings are going to start coming down. Now.

CAREY You just won't give an inch, will you?

FRANKLIN We have performed acrobatics to give you people a chance. The bottom line is those chemicals have to be dumped and it's going to be here. The decision has been made and the Minister is insistent.

JEAN Why does it have to be dumped?

FRANKLIN What do you mean, why? Because it does. It's useless!

JEAN Is it?

FRANKLIN Would they throw it away if it could be used?

CAREY We throw away a billion tons of useful stuff every year.

BERT Today's garbage is tomorrow's miracle cure.

JEAN Yes! You know what it was they first made penicillin from, don't you?

CAREY I don't. What?

(they all whisper it to her)

Ooo, yuck!

BERT Do you know how many uses the manure pile behind the barn could have? Besides providing the place with rustic atmosphere?

JEAN They dump the stuff because it's easy and cheap, but there are alternatives.

CAREY Once it's in the ground, you can't get it back out.

FRANKLIN Even if what you're suggesting is possible, it'll take ten years to research it. It won't save your farm.

JEAN Might save some lives.

BERT I'd worry about saving your job, right now, Frankie.

FRANKLIN Now what?

BERT TV van just pulled into the drive. They're heading for the bulldozer boys.

FRANKLIN Heads are starting to roll.

BERT I'll get my knitting.

FRANKLIN I can't take anymore time with this. I've got a job to do and if I don't, then someone else will. This is a court order, compelling you to vacate these premises forthwith and empowering the department to seize all goods remaining on the said premises. I will give you twenty minutes, then I'll have the police execute the order.

CAREY And, I thought you were going to be straight with us!

FRANKLIN I am as straight with you as circumstances permit.

CAREY As straight as the coast of Norway.

FRANKLIN I'm going to have Mrs. Preston taken into town. She's starting to buckle.

JEAN Is she ill?

FRANKLIN It's an occupational disease. You get it from dealing with taxpayers.

CAREY I hope you can live with yourself.

FRANKLIN I'm not enjoying this, but, it's part of the job. I'm trying to do it the easiest way. Someone else might not.

JEAN Did you ever study etymology, Franklin?

FRANKLIN No, I'm sure I'd remember if I had.

JEAN It's the study of words and their origins. It's sort of a hobby with me. For instance, your name is quite interesting. It's Old French, and it means, "fair hero of the free-holder." I thought you'd like to know that.

(FRANKLIN exits without replying)

CAREY So, has anybody got a quick solution that's going to take twenty minutes or less? I'm getting tired of hanging around.

BERT Corbett's working on something, but I couldn't understand. Something about magnets and spinning tops. It's not ready yet. The media's our best bet.

JEAN No help from the town?

BERT Probably not. Like he said, the age of heroes is long past.

JEAN Time's running out.

(an explosion from the outhouse)

CORBETT *(OFF)* I know what went wrong! Of course! Of course! Why didn't I think of it before?

BERT There's still one alternative.

CAREY Oh, boy! Choices!

BERT Buckshot.

CAREY That's not a choice.

JEAN No violence, Bert. It's not worth it.

BERT Alright, no buckshot. How about some rock salt?

JEAN No shotguns. Should we go talk to the TV?

BERT Right. Carey, stay here.

CAREY What choice do I have?

(as they start to leave, CAL enters)

CAL There's a lot of people on the way up concession six. Trucks, cars, perambulators, even a couple of tricycles.

BERT My god, there are giants in these days!

CAL They should be here in twenty minutes or so.

JEAN That's cutting it close.

BERT I don't know. How long can it take for a lynching?

CAL Bert, don't start trouble!

BERT I didn't start it.

CAL I've got to enforce the law, around here.

CAREY Fascist.

CAL I'm not even talking to you! Of all the hare-brained stunts.

CAREY I'm sorry. Were you talking to me?

CAL About you, but not to you.

CAREY Well, have you got any better ideas? This was the best I could do.

CAL It seems to be the best any of you can do, but it's not good enough.

JEAN Give us a few more minutes and we might have something.

CAL Like what?

JEAN Not sure, yet, but I'll bet it'll be good.

CAREY Don't tell him! He's on their side!

CAL I am not on "their" side. I am on the side of the ones the law says are in the right. That's my job and I happen to like it.

CAREY Boy, I can see where being married to you would be a constant joy.

CAL So, who's asking?

BERT Would you two like to be alone?

CAL Are you kidding? She'd tear me limb from limb.

BERT Oh, come on, she's chained.

CAL So was King Kong, and look what happened to Fay Wray.

CAREY Are you calling me a gorilla!

(in her excitement, she hops about and rattles her chains in a decidedly gorilla-like manner)

BERT If so . . . Cal, do you see yourself as Fay Wray?

CAL And, I'm going to start throwing some fainting spells.

JEAN That's the spirit, Cal. When adversity gets you down, give up.

CAL It's not adversity that's getting me down.

CAREY Meaning what?

CAL I'm not talking to you.

CAREY Well, make up your mind. Sheesh!

CAL Why don't you just sit there and rust?

CAREY Oh, so, now I'm the Tin Man?

BERT Oh, come on, Carey, have a heart.

JEAN Bert, do you hear something ringing?

CAL I've had a ringing in my ears, all day.

JEAN I hear a phone ringing.

BERT We don't have a phone.

JEAN I know!

BERT Probably one of those silly servants with a car phone. Taxpayers' money on a car phone.

JEAN It's stopped.

BERT I didn't hear it.

CAREY I did.

CAL Probably your chains rattling.

CAREY I heard a phone. Up at the house.

BERT You're sure?

CAREY I know a phone when I hear one, and I heard one.

JEAN There it is, again! It is a phone!

BERT Well, come on, then!

(BERT and JEAN rush off)

CAL Who was it was complaining about cats caught in vacuum cleaners?

(CAL follows them; CAREY is left chained)

CAREY Wait for me! Hey, wait! Cal! Mom? Dad, you've got the keys to the padlocks!

(lights down on the yard; up on kitchen as MRS.PRESTON sits and mumbles a bit)

MRS.PRESTON If 4 DENARII are equal to one-quarter DRACHMA then one DRACHMA must be equal to 37 1/2 cents American or, with the exchange rate being what it is . . . I'd owe them money!

(a pulsing light begins to show from the stairs; it grows a la Stephen Spielberg)

Of course, I should have known. Nuts in the yard and aliens in the attic. Maybe, they'll take me to their planet and I won't have to go to Cyprus, after all. That 's a cheery thought.

(she goes to the stairwell)

Hello? Hello, there! *Klaatu burada nikto!* I'm coming up ready or not!

(she disappears up the stairs; FRANKLIN enters and searches a bit)

FRANKLIN They're doing this on purpose. They're trying to break me like they broke Mrs. Preston, but they won't do it. I'm a Deputy Minister. I can take anything the taxpayers can throw at me. I can take it. Uncle Ralph said they'd be tough, and they are, but I'm tougher. Only, where did Mrs. Preston go?

(BERT and JEAN run in)

BERT Did you hear a phone ringing?

FRANKLIN Of course not. You don't have a phone. It was just my imagination.

BERT & JEAN Oh.

(a beat)

JEAN If it was just your imagination, how come we heard it, too?

FRANKLIN I have a very vivid imagination. "Fair hero of the free-holder", indeed.

JEAN Well, a rose by any other name . . .

FRANKLIN Do you know, it took me a while, but I've found out what it is makes you people tick! Deep down, all you anarchists, you Tom Paine democrats, actually have a deep respect for authority.

JEAN Don't count on it.

FRANKLIN Oh, I've seen it before. The trick is to find the right approach.

BERT And, how do you go about doing that?

FRANKLIN I'm not quite sure. Where did Mrs. Preston go?

JEAN Isn't she where you left her?

FRANKLIN I left her right there.

JEAN She's not there.

FRANKLIN I know.

BERT You gotta keep your eye on these civil servants. Twisty, slidey little fellas. Remind me of your Uncle Ralph.

FRANKLIN I had a talk with my Uncle Ralph about you, too. He tells me you chased him across two fields with a pitch fork.

BERT I certainly did not.

FRANKLIN Are you calling my Uncle Ralph a liar?

BERT If the shoe fits! I never chased anybody with a pitch fork in my life.

FRANKLIN Oh, yeah?

BERT Yeah! It was a manure fork, and if I'd have caught him . . . whoa-ho-ho! I'll say this for him. He sure can run. Like I said, twisty, slidey, little fella.

JEAN But, where is Mrs. Preston?

BERT Maybe you'd better file a missing bureaucrats report. 'Course, it'll take two

weeks to process it.

FRANKLIN It's not funny. She wasn't feeling herself, at all. Anything could have happened to her. She could have fallen into a well . . .

BERT We don't have a well. Natural springs out back.

FRANKLIN . . . or been attacked by a bull.

BERT We don't have a bull.

FRANKLIN . . . or your tractor could have blown up!

JEAN Now, that's possible.

FRANKLIN If she's hurt, we'll sue!

BERT Everybody sues these days. A punch in the nose is much more satisfying.

FRANKLIN May we please go look for her?

BERT She's a grown woman; she can look after herself.

FRANKLIN But, she's not feeling well, and I feel responsible for it.

JEAN Whatever for?

FRANKLIN Uh . . . well, I just do, that's all.

BERT What do you mean, "You just do?" Swivel servants don't take on any extra guilt without a good reason.

FRANKLIN Well, she didn't want . . . that is . . . I thought it would . . . well, not me, the Minis . . . what an interesting deer.

BERT She didn't want to push for the closing today and you insisted! Right? Right!

FRANKLIN Not me! Uncle Ral . . . the Minister insisted . . .

BERT Ralph Thompson! Ralph Thompson's the Minister! That man will get me from his grave, if he can figure out how.

FRANKLIN It has nothing to do with any relationship you had with him! He disassociated himself from the selection committee. It was on the basis of fact alone.

JEAN I'm kind of interested in the fact that the Deputy Minister is the Minister's nephew.

FRANKLIN I won't even try to defend that. You've made up your mind, already. This decision has been made, and if overturned now, will only have to be made

again.

BERT *(ROLLING UP HIS SLEEVES)* You're right! Once a decision is made, follow it through!

(he lifts a fist as if to attack FRANKLIN; JEAN grabs his arm)

JEAN Bert! No violence!

BERT I'm not going to do anything violent. I'm just going to . . . STRANGLE HIM!

(BERT advances on FRANKLIN, dragging JEAN behind him, as she holds on)

I should have done this thirty years ago! But, today's just as good a day for it . . . and, when I'm through here, I'm going to find the Minister – and I'm taking my manure fork!

JEAN **BERT!**

(BERT reaches FRANKLIN and grabs him in a front head-lock; JEAN jumps on BERT's back; we end up with a precariously balanced pile; just then, CORBETT and MRS. PRESTON enter)

CORBETT Oh, lovely, everyone's here! Exercising, are you? Very good! Tone up the body, and the mind stays active as well. I often wish I had the time to exercise, but there's so much work to do. You all know Helen, do you?

JEAN Helen?

CORBETT Preston. This delightful woman here.

BERT Helen?

MRS. PRESTON Yes, that's right. Cory was showing me some of his inventions.

JEAN & BERT CORY!

CORBETT That's me, I'm afraid. I've been trying to explain the principle behind my gyro-magnetic generator . . .

MRS. PRESTON But, I'm a trifle fuzzy on unified field theory.

(FRANKLIN, JEAN and BERT are still tangled)

MRS. PRESTON Are you playing Twister?

BERT No, Twisty! Twisty, slidey . . .

(they untangle)

FRANKLIN Considering the circumstances, Mr. Keilly, I won't press charges.

BERT Oh? Let me try again!

JEAN *(HOLDING UP A ROLLING PIN)* BERT!

BERT No fun, whatsoever . . .

JEAN What'd you say?

BERT Said, "No sun . . .we got some weather!"

MRS. PRESTON Yes, it was starting to rain, so we came in, didn't we, Cory?

FRANKLIN It's raining? The bull-dozer crews . . . !

MRS. PRESTON I sent them home.

FRANKLIN Then you can get them back. You have exceeded your authority. I am in charge here. This matter must be dealt with today. The Minister insists that this court order . . .

MRS. PRESTON Oh, shutup!

(in the silence that follows a phone begins to ring; no one moves; finally, after several rings)

CORBETT Isn't anyone going to answer that?

JEAN *(GENTLY)* Corbett, we don't have a phone.

CORBETT Oh.

(more rings)

Then, what's that ringing?

BERT We've already been through all that.

JEAN Yes, it's just Franklin's imagination.

(a beat)

BERT Well, I suppose one of us ought to answer the phone.

JEAN Yes. Where is it?

(they all look around)

Corbett, do you know where the phone is?

CORBETT Didn't I tell you? I didn't have enough cable to bring it downstairs, so, temporarily, mind, I put it in the attic. On my workbench.

(BERT and JEAN rush up the stairs, then come back)

BERT It stopped.

JEAN First time a phone rings in this house and it quits before we get to it.

BERT Could have been worse. We could have been in the bathtub.

MRS. PRESTON What? All of us? Bert!

JEAN Corbett, what have you been giving her?

MRS. PRESTON Nothing whatever. He just showed me some of his inventions and explained some new ideas. Changed my mind about a lot of things.

FRANKLIN I get it, now. Well, it's not YOUR mind that must be changed. Time is up.

CORBETT But, it's ready!

JEAN It's ready?

CORBETT It's ready!

BERT It's ready!

FRANKLIN What's ready?

**CORBETT, JEAN
& BERT** Our gyro-magnetic generator!

FRANKLIN You're what?

**CORBETT, JEAN
& BERT** Our gyro-magnetic . . .

FRANKLIN . . . generator. Gyro . . .

CORBETT . . . magnetic. It's very new. In fact, it's the first practical application of new research into the unification of electro-magnetic and gravitic forces, just as the electro-magnetic generator was the first application of the unification of electric and magnetic forces. In recognizing a similarity, we begin to see how a total unified field theory could . . .

MRS. PRESTON Cory . . .

CORBETT Yes?

MRS. PRESTON Simpler.

CORBETT (AFTER A STRUGGLE) I'm sorry. I don't think I can.

FRANKLIN What is the point of this?

BERT We were saying that there could be some use made of those chemicals you want to dump here – if there was a way to alter them, change them . . .

FRANKLIN Change them?

CORBETT Transmogrify them, in fact.

BERT What he said. Change them into something useful or at least safe.

FRANKLIN Given time for research, it could be possible – in theory, but to do that, it would take huge amounts of power. Far more than we have. Oil is limited; coal pollutes. Nuclear power is half the problem! No answer.

JEAN But, there is.

FRANKLIN Gyro . . .

JEAN . . . magnetic.

FRANKLIN So, what's the big deal about it?

CORBETT Well, for one thing, it puts out 25 times more energy than you put into it.

FRANKLIN That's impossible.

CORBETT It works.

FRANKLIN The laws of thermodynamics prohibit . . .

CORBETT Too bad for thermodynamics.

FRANKLIN The entire structure of physics is based...

CORBETT Fortunately, the fellow who developed the idea wasn't a physicist, so he didn't know it couldn't be done.

JEAN Bumble-bees can't fly, either.

BERT According to physics.

CORBETT But, then, bumble-bees aren't physicists.

FRANKLIN You didn't invent this?

CORBETT Heavens, no. A fellow named MacLean, down in Texas. There's some cleverness left in those Americans, after all. But, the people in the Patent Offices all over the world won't even look at it. They send back his applications with the flat statement that it's impossible, so don't bother them.

FRANKLIN It is impossible.

CORBETT It's running this farm.

BERT Tell you what, Frank, stick your finger in that wall-socket there, and tell me whether it works or not.

FRANKLIN So, with enough of these . . .

CORBETT . . . or big enough ones . . .

FRANKLIN . . . you could have almost unlimited power to do . . . almost unlimited things.

JEAN Such as turning harmful chemicals into useful ones.

FRANKLIN Is it possible?

BERT Corbett?

CORBETT Oh, yes, it's possible . . . more than possible . . . sub-molar theory is in such a state of flux at the moment. Paul Dirac's work on the gravitational constant is very clear on this exact possibility. "Delta Lambda Psi 1, exponent 1, Psi 2, exponent 2 . . ."

FRANKLIN So, what is it? Some kind of nuclear reactor?

CORBETT Oh, no, it's a small generator. It's in the Privy Council. I didn't even need the extra hole, but two is so companionable.

FRANKLIN What's it run on? Uranium? Plutonium?

CORBETT A nine-volt Everready, at the moment.

FRANKLIN What!

JEAN There was a fellow in England who powered a window display in his shop for a year, by sticking two wires in a lemon. One year – one lemon.

FRANKLIN That was a stunt.

JEAN So was Ben Franklin and his kite.

FRANKLIN There's a trick to it.

CORBETT No trick, young man. (*he beckons FRANKLIN closer and whispers*) There's magic loose in the world!

BERT Tell you what, Frank. If you don't find a trick to it, if what Corbett's saying is true, you call off the bulldozers and start looking for better ways to handle this, right, Frankie?

FRANKLIN Conditionally.

BERT Well, that's something, at any rate. And, if you're right, if we're just trying to flummox you, you get to knock the place down, we go quietly, AND I'll quit calling you Frankie. How's that?

FRANKLIN I have natural law on my side.

BERT Yeah, but I've got my brother.

(they all start to exit; the phone begins to ring; they all freeze)

Okay, here's the plan. Corbett, take Franklin to the Privy Council and show him your whatchamadoodle . . .

JEAN **BERT!**

BERT Generator! Jean, go upstairs and answer the phone. Mrs. Preston, run to the front and see how Cal's doing with the TV people and I'll stay here!

JEAN Why?

BERT Alright, new plan. Franklin, go with Corbett to see his whatchamadoodle . . .

MRS. PRESTON **BERT!**

BERT . . . Generator! Mrs. Preston, go see how Cal's doing with the TV crew; Jean, answer the phone; and I'll stay here.

JEAN That's better.

(they all pause; the phone continues ringing)

CORBETT Shouldn't someone answer the phone?

*(sudden panic as they all rush about furiously, leaving **BERT** alone, to get a beer and relax)*

BERT Every once in a while, when you get a moment to stop and think about the silliness of it all, about the utter absurdity of the whole thing, you have to acknowledge that there must be, if not a god up there, with the beard and the halo, at least one hell of a practical joker. The kind of fellow you wouldn't dare bend over near. The kind of god who offers the right hand seat of favour, upon which is placed the whoopee cushion of life.

*(**CAL** enters)*

How's tricks out front?

CAL Well, I got them quieted down, but you never saw such a bunch of maniacs. They were ready to smash through anything in their way.

BERT Well, those wrecking crews have been here since six a.m., sent home, pushed around. I don't blame them.

CAL I meant the TV crew.

BERT How about the rest of them?

CAL Well, Charlie Phillips's got them under control for a while, but they're after blood. Keith Harris says he's sorry they're so late, but they got the time mixed up.

BERT Bloody typical.

CAL People are still arriving. There must be two hundred, already. Somebody burned an effigy of the Minister and a couple of fellows brought some rope.

BERT Gol, we got nice neighbours. Did you see Mrs. Preston on her way out?

CAL No, but I passed Corbett and that Franklin-fellow. Gods, what a face.

BERT It's your face.

CAL Just because it's mine doesn't mean I have to like it. Corbett was saying something about not even death and taxes being certain anymore. What'd he mean by that?

BERT He's showing Frank the new generator.

CAL You know what he'll say.

BERT Well, Cal, the world is a different place than it was ten years ago, even two years ago, but all of our bureaucrats are still making decisions like nothing will ever change. We can't afford to think like that anymore. In twenty years the world's going to be so different we won't even know it, and what we do now is going determine what it's like. As surely as it's raining outside that door.

(a pause while they look out)

CAL Is what Corbett was saying true? About not even death being certain, anymore?

BERT It's possible, but a long way off.

CAL That's too bad, 'cause I'm a dead man now.

BERT You're what? Why?

CAL 'Cause I left Carey chained to a gate in the rain.

(they do a take, then CAL runs out and immediately re-enters)

CAL Keys!

BERT Which?

CAL Keys! Chains! Rain! Keys!

(BERT digs them out and tosses them to CAL; JEAN has entered at the end of the above)

BERT There goes a brave man.

JEAN She'll catch her death out there.

BERT Carey? Take more'n a little rain to do her in. She's tough. Pioneer stock and all.

JEAN I suppose so. Aren't you going to ask who was on the phone?

BERT Alright, who was on the phone?

JEAN Ralph Thompson.

(a pause)

BERT And, how is the dear man?

JEAN He's very well. Quite well-off, apparently; playing the stock markets. Wanted to talk to Franklin, to check on the progress of things. Wanted to know if the springs out back were still springing.

BERT Did he?

JEAN And, I mentioned that Franklin and Cal, by the most remarkable coincidence, had the same face.

BERT Uh-huh.

JEAN He didn't seem surprised.

(lights down on the kitchen; up on the barn, as CAL enters, carrying a still-chained CAREY, very wet)

CAREY Put me down, you big lummoX! Now!

(CAL places her on the tractor)

Alright, get these chains off!

(CAL shuts the door)

I said, "Get these chains off!"

(CAL comes back and stares at her)

Cal? Are you mad at me? Huh? Are you?

CAL Don't give me that little girl routine.

CAREY Alright, get these damn chains off me!

CAL In a minute.

CAREY Which minute?

CAL First – are you in love with this civil servant?

CAREY Which one? There's been so many.

CAL You know which one! Your father told me about that bunch. Him and his whole family. You gotta watch him.

CAREY Franklin is as honest as February is long.

CAL He's honest, but you gotta watch him.

CAREY You just don't understand him.

CAL Damn right, I don't! And, I don't want to.

CAREY He's a pragmatist.

CAL Is it catching?

CAREY "If you accept the world for what it is, then you're on the road to making it what you want it to be."

CAL Findlay said that?

CAREY Among other things.

CAL The problem with that is, by the time you can accept what it is, you've lost sight of what it should be. If you join them, they'll beat you. Every time.

CAREY Who said that?

CAL Me.

CAREY Oh. You joined.

CAL Yep. Something that's good and useful.

CAREY I didn't know you thought about those things.

CAL Neither did I. So, one last time, then I'll unchain you. Will you marry me?

CAREY Oh, dammit, nothing's going right today!

(she has been fiddling with the tractor)

First, the bulldozers, then the rain, and now I'm going to get married. What else?

(the tractor starts; she stops it)

Has the rain stopped?

CAL *(CHECKING)* Sure has. Oh-oh, lot's of excitement up at the house. Bulldozers, TV, big crowd of people, all shouting and jumping up and down. I better get up there. Come on!

(CAL exits, running; CAREY is still chained)

CAREY Isn't it funny how some days just typify how the rest of your life will be? This is me all over. Hopping along behind, trying to keep up with the big people. I wonder what it'll be like to be a real grownup? I wonder if I'll ever make it? Hey, fellas! Wait up!

(she exits; lights down on the barn; up on the kitchen with CORBETT and BERT coming down the stairs)

CORBETT How goes the pow-wow? I thought that getting Ralph Thompson on the line might help.

BERT Well, considering that Ralph's who he is, and we're who we are, it might give us some leverage. But, I'd rather win it fair and square.

CORBETT I dislike politics.

BERT Yeah, but it's funny to watch. Franklin's up there, blue in the face and red under the collar, Jean's offering useless advice and Helen's sitting in the corner, chuckling and watching your computer print out random numbers. She keeps saying how pretty they are.

CORBETT They are, aren't they?

BERT You know, you've totally ruined her for paper-shuffling and button-sorting.

CORBETT Have I? Oh dear, I didn't mean to. I thought, that is, she seemed to be interesting . . . interested and she is very intelligent, you know.

BERT Corbett, are you interested in the Widow Preston?

CORBETT Oh no! No, she just seems very . . . that is . . . well, she is very intelligent, you know.

BERT After all these years. Who'da thunk it?

CORBETT Now, please don't start on me, Bert. You know I'm not very good at these things. Not like you are.

BERT Oh, sure. That's me, the Don Juan of the feed-trough. Do you think she's interested back?

CORBETT Oh, I don't know. Do you think she might be?

BERT Anybody ever call you Cory, before?

CORBETT Well, yes, there was one, a long time ago, but, well, it just didn't work out that way.

BERT I never knew that.

CORBETT Stupid Ralph Thompson.

BERT Oh-ho!

CORBETT Well, he was always big and handsome, and the girls all liked him.

BERT Yeah, I know.

CORBETT And, in the end, she married him, had twins, left him and dropped out of sight. I don't know what happened after that.

BERT Had twins?

CORBETT Yes, well, that's all steam through the turbine, now, isn't it? No sense having regrets at this late date.

(BERT gets CORBETT a beer)

BERT Here's to the next thirty years, Corbett! May they be as much fun as the last thirty.

CORBETT I could be persuaded to drink to that.

BERT And, perhaps not as lonely?

CORBETT No regrets.

BERT Life and love, Corbett.

(MRS. PRESTON, JEAN and FRANKLIN come down the stairs, arguing)

MRS. PRESTON Franklin, you're a prig! You know that don't you?

FRANKLIN And, you're having a nervous breakdown. When you recover you'll thank me! Magic loose in the world, indeed.

JEAN There's more making this world tick than you understand!

FRANKLIN There's more making this world tick than YOU understand!

(The brackets following indicate that the lines are spoken simultaneously)

MRS. PRESTON |But, you saw it working!

BERT |What's going on?

JEAN |The Minister insists!

FRANKLIN |Yes, I saw it working!

MRS. PRESTON |Well, then? How can you not believe it?

BERT |(The Minister insists?)

JEAN |He won't even listen.

FRANKLIN |I've got my career!

MRS. PRESTON You're thinking archaically!

FRANKLIN |Don't hand me that! I'm thinking ahead!

BERT |He's thinking self-preservation.

JEAN |We don't dare ignore the problems, anymore.

CORBETT |Why don't we all calm down?

BERT |When your head's in the sand, you know what's vulnerable?

JEAN |Wrong decisions now could kill us all!

(we hear, clearly, the end of JEAN's line; a pause, then continue)

FRANKLIN I have a career |to think about!

BERT |Now, we get down to it!

BERT |You haven't got the guts to do the right thing!

MRS. PRESTON |This isn't a question of expedience, Franklin! There's a moral choice!

JEAN |Don't you have the future to think about?

FRANKLIN |Don't try to blame me! It's . . .

. . . not my responsibility!

BERT |Then who's going to take it?

JEAN |You can't think like that anymore!

MRS. PRESTON |It's everyone's responsibility. Get up off your . . .!

(CORBETT has produced a small electronic device, which he triggers; a very loud "gunshot" sound is heard; he blows "smoke" from his "gun")

CORBETT I've always wanted to do that.

(CAREY enters, hopping, still in her cast-iron day wear)

BERT Just in time. Hop over and join the fun.

CAREY Get these chains off me!

BERT Cal's got the keys. Where's he?

CAREY Quelling a riot. They're out front singing "The Internationale" and handing out extremist pamphlets.

MRS. PRESTON Extremist?

CAREY Liberal campaign brochures. Around here that's extremist. What's this all about?

JEAN Franklin doesn't have the guts to make a decision on his own, even when he knows it's right.

MRS. PRESTON Morality isn't his strong point.

CAREY You don't understand. Franklin explained it all to me. Government isn't based on morality but expedience. Short term decisions to keep the people happy so you can be reelected and let the long term take care of itself.

FRANKLIN You make it sound very cynical.

CAREY Who was it taught me about cynicism?

FRANKLIN I still have orders. How long would my career last if I ignored them?

BERT How long will it last when word gets out who Uncle Ralph is?

FRANKLIN My relationship with the Minister is well known. It's entirely above board.

BERT Is it?

MRS. PRESTON What do you mean?

BERT Just thinking out loud.

CAREY And, what about the Minister's relationship to us? I can see the headlines, "Minister harbours grudge for 30 years, because woman wouldn't marry him."

JEAN Actually, he never asked me to marry him.

BERT Don't confuse the issue.

FRANKLIN You couldn't make that stick.

BERT Even if we couldn't, where do you think the axe would fall? On the Minister? Or his flunky?

MRS. PRESTON You have the look of a man caught between a rock and a hard place, Franklin.

BERT Frank, I've been trying to figure it. Where I've seen that face before; why you and Cal look alike; and why good ol' Ralph is so hot on dumping chemicals on this property? I think I got the answer.

JEAN You do?

BERT Remember the natural springs out back? Some beer company wanted to buy the place a while back, but we said no. But, the springs are still there, and so is the beer company.

FRANKLIN So?

BERT Where does Uncle Ralph make his money? Apart from his tiny, little salary as a cabinet minister?

FRANKLIN Stocks.

BERT Yep.

FRANKLIN He wouldn't! He couldn't! Full disclosure and . . . and . . . and . . .

BERT When did that ever stop any of them who really wanted to?

FRANKLIN Uhm . . .

BERT Think it through! With natural springs out back, we must be sitting on top of a lot of underground water. They've done the geodetic surveys here; your department knows about it. Nobody'd recommend dumping chemicals on that; think of the seepage. We'd have four-headed fish in a month. But, somebody hushed that up.

FRANKLIN But, he wouldn't do something like that!

BERT Corbett, tell him the story of the fellow who woos away another fellow's

girl, has twins, drives the poor girl away, puts one son in an orphanage and sends the other to his sister to raise.

CORBETT I don't know that one. What's the punch-line?

BERT The punch-line is this, Frankie: guess which one of the brothers grim you are?

FRANKLIN I have to think.

(he begins to pace, loudly clumping his shoes as he does)

BERT Noisiest thinker I've ever heard.

(the phone begins to ring)

That phone hasn't stopped ringing since we got it!

(CORBETT goes up to answer it)

CAREY I'm hungry. Is anybody hungry?

(she hops to the fridge and opens it)

FRANKLIN I just fed you a big lunch!

CAREY That was two hours and sixty pounds of chains ago.

(CORBETT returns, sits and does some calculations)

BERT Corbett?

CORBETT Hmm? I was just thinking about this ozone thing.

BERT Who was it?

CORBETT Americans, mostly. Underarm deodorants and so on.

BERT Who was on the phone?

CORBETT Oh! Ralph Thompson. He says he's just coming in the back-gate to settle this himself. What did he mean by that?

JEAN And, how could he be on the phone and coming in the back-gate?

FRANKLIN Cellular phone. Tax-payers' money on a cellular phone.

BERT *(AT DOOR)* There he is! He's stopping at the barn. Nice car.

FRANKLIN Yeah. Government car. Bert, where's your manure fork?

(FRANKLIN runs out)

BERT Franklin! Leave that manure fork alone! That's mine!

(BERT runs out)

JEAN Franklin! No violence!

(JEAN runs out)

CAREY Hey! Don't everybody . . .

MRS. PRESTON I'm fibrulating again. A woman in my condition shouldn't be doing this!
Mr. Findlay! Mr. Thompson!

(MRS. PRESTON runs out)

CAREY . . . run off and leave me here!

CORBETT There was something that occurred to me.

(he checks his notes)

Yes, that was it.

(on his way out, he stops)

Do you know, I didn't understand that joke about the twins at all.

(he exits)

CAREY AAAH!

(she hops to a chair)

Which one of you is doing this to me? Well, I suppose, if you're going to play with the big guys, you've got to be tough enough to take it. Besides it's fun, politics. And, important, sometimes. Is that what this is all about? Whichever one of you is responsible for this? Is this a sign?

(the lights in the house go out)

A simple "Yes" would have done quite nicely.

(the lights come back on; CORBETT comes out of the privy and shakes his hand as if he has stuck it somewhere he shouldn't have)

CORBETT Ow!

(he goes back in)

CAREY I think I'll lay down for a while.

*(she drops her head onto the table and stays; lights down on the kitchen; up on the barn as **BERT** enters)*

BERT You came in here, Franklin! Now, give me back my manure fork!

FRANKLIN *(BEHIND THE HAY BALES)* Won't! Need it!

BERT Now, Franklin, you don't have the experience to use it with finesse.

FRANKLIN No, but I've got enthusiasm!

*(he ducks down out of sight; **BERT** goes up to the loft and looks behind the bales)*

BERT Gone! Twisty, slidey, little fella! And, he took the manure fork. I'll give him this, though: he's getting gutsy.

*(**CAL** enters below)*

CAL Carey! I'm sorry, I forgot . . . now, where did she get to?

BERT *(ABOVE AND BEHIND HIM)* Try the house.

CAL Bert?

BERT Yep.

CAL Would you stop that? What's going on? New, that is?

BERT Franklin and I are chasing your father.

CAL I see.

BERT And, when we catch him – whoa-ho-ho!

*(**BERT** runs out)*

CAL I'm going to have to keep more in touch with things.

*(**CAL** exits as **MRS. PRESTON** comes in opposite)*

MRS. PRESTON Hello? Mr. Thompson? I wanted to talk about a transfer to Cyprus. Mr. Thompson?

(she goes back out)

(OFF) Ooo, yuck! Was that Shin-O-La?

*(**JEAN** enters)*

JEAN Bert, I hid the manure fork where you'll never find it.

(BERT enters with the manure fork)

BERT Jean! You'll never guess where I found the manure fork! Now, where's that Ralph Thompson?

(JEAN jumps on BERT's back and rides him out)

JEAN If you land in jail, I'm not going to visit you!

(FRANKLIN comes through a trapdoor)

FRANKLIN Daddy! Oh, Daddy! I want to talk with you!

(FRANKLIN exits; CORBETT comes through, with a calculator)

CORBETT Good heavens! Time DOES equal money!

(MRS. PRESTON enters in time to catch CORBETT)

MRS. PRESTON Cory! There you are! Where did you get to?

CORBETT I've been in the Privy Council. Thinking.

MRS. PRESTON I've been thinking, too, Cory. Do you like Cyprus?

CORBETT Oh, yes. Oranges, lemons, all of them.

MRS. PRESTON We'll work on it.

(they exit, arm in arm; a STRANGER, in beard and elegant attire enters and stands in the shadows; after a moment, JEAN enters)

JEAN Bert, I know you're in here, I saw you come in. Bert? Corbett? Franklin? Cal?

(the STRANGER comes forward and takes her in his arms)

STRANGER No, m'dear, wrong on all counts.

(he kisses her; just then, BERT appears in the hayloft, with his manure fork)

BERT Ralph Thompson!

STRANGER Well, well, well. Small world.

BERT Round two!

(the STRANGER takes to his heels; BERT after him with the manure fork)

JEAN It's just like old times!

(JEAN runs out after them both; lights down on barn and up on the outhouse as a glow begins inside)

CORBETT *(INSIDE)* . . . so you see, theory shows this idea to be safe, clean and potentially unlimited in application. Gyro-magnetic power could be THE answer to our problems in the next century. Imagine a power source the size of my finger, creating no pollution, running an automobile or . . .

MRS. PRESTON *(INSIDE)* That's all very well, Cory, but does it work?

CORBETT Of course, of course! It's on standby, right now. All I have to do is throw this switch and . . .

(black)

Dear, dear. Still a few bugs in the system.

MRS. PRESTON Oh, golly.

(lights change back to the barn; BERT enters)

BERT Alright, Ralph. It's just me and you, now. Come on out!

STRANGER *(OFF)* Nope! Not while you've got that pitch fork!

BERT MANURE fork! And, I can still use it like I used to forty years ago!

STRANGER Forty years. Say, Bert . . .

BERT What?

STRANGER Those were good times, huh? Hayrides, swimming, dances . . .

BERT Footraces across the fields.

STRANGER That Jean's still a fine-looking woman.

BERT And, my manure fork's still sharp. You didn't think you could get away with it, did you?

STRANGER Already have, Bert. I sold short when the news of you people putting up your road blocks broke. I knew I could count on you, Bert. Made a bundle.

BERT And, when that gets out?

STRANGER Prove it. There's not one syllable on one piece of paper.

BERT The beer company?

STRANGER Nope. Let's say, a major chemical firm.

BERT Like I said, twisty, slidey . . . So, if you got your money, why insist on tearing this place down?

STRANGER *Auld lang syne*, Bertie. I like to see the steam come out of your ears. Tell you what, though. I'm a fair man. You keep in good shape, do you?

BERT I don't have a lot of time for aerobics.

STRANGER I work out two hours a day. Weights, running. Here's the deal: my car's on Highway 5, just the other side of your fence. If I get there first, your farm comes down.

BERT And if I get there first?

STRANGER Whoa-ho-ho!

BERT Isn't that a little childish?

STRANGER Take it or leave it.

BERT I am not going to . . .

STRANGER Go!

(running OFF; BERT exits running; lights down on barn; up on kitchen; CAREY is still chained; CAL enters)

CAL There you are! If you'd hold still a minute, I'd get you out of those things.

CAREY Cal, I've had a sign.

CAL That's real nice. Not a lot of people get signs, anymore.

(he is unchaining her)

CAREY But, I know what I'm supposed to do! I'm going into politics.

CAL God help Parliament.

CAREY Don't laugh! I'd be good at it.

CAL I think you'd be conscientious, determined, open-minded and progressive, none of which are useful traits in a politician.

CAREY Well, you can't change any of that if you don't try.

CAL If you join them, they'll beat you. Every time.

CAREY Not if you don't let them.

CAL It's too slippery, too easy to let them. Politics is a no-win game, Carey. It chokes the life out of the good and the well-meaning and let's the sour cream rise to the top.

CAREY You've put forward more opinions today than in the two years I've known you. Cal, I'm astounded.

CAL How much is this career going to cost?

CAREY That's not important.

CAL Ha! Ah, hell, Carey Keilly for Prime Minister!

(CORBETT, JEAN and MRS. PRESTON arrive)

CAREY I haven't got my sights set quite that high.

CAL Uh-huh. Where are they set?

CAREY A Cabinet post. Minister of Land and Resource Management. I hear that department could use a good shakeup.

MRS. PRESTON It's getting one. We may need a whole new staff.

JEAN You're going to need a new Minister, at least, if Bert caught him.

(BERT enters, out of breath, with a note on the manure fork)

JEAN Bert, did you catch him?

BERT Only took me one field, too. Clean living, I guess. I got this from him. It's for you.

(BERT holds the fork and note out to MRS. PRESTON)

MRS. PRESTON *(READING)* To whom it may concern; On the basis of the evidence, when all is said and done, it would appear, at end of the day, that the premise upon which the original decision for expropriation was based, although valid at that point in time, cannot be said, with strict accuracy, to have maintained that validity in the face of new circumstances . . . which new circumstances?

BERT *(SHAKING THE FORK)* Whoa-ho-ho!

JEAN And, Franklin's court order?

MRS. PRESTON Will be rescinded, while a new investigation is initiated. I think Corbett should have a hand in setting that up.

CORBETT Oh, my, no! There are others who could do it much better.

MRS. PRESTON I doubt it, Cory.

CAL What about the people out front? And, the TV?

BERT I always wanted to be on national television.

JEAN Maybe, you'd better do it, Helen. If you want the Department of Land And Resource Management to come away with any credibility, whatsoever.

BERT Who wants to bet that they'll get away clear?

JEAN What? You're mumbling again.

BERT 'Said, "Now, that that's settled, who wants a beer?"

CAL Can't. I gotta get back, as soon as I straighten something out. Now, back in the barn, you said you were chasing my father?

BERT That's right.

CAL I'd appreciate it, if somebody'd explain.

JEAN Well! Ralph Thompson took and stole Corbett's girl, thirty years ago, married, had twins, she divorced him, he got the twins, sent one to his sister to raise as her own – that'd be Franklin – the other ended up in an orphanage in Go Home. That'd be you.

CAL Alright. So, Findlay IS my brother?

JEAN Uh-huh.

CAL And, this Thompson is my father?

JEAN Uh-huh.

CAL Where's the pin-striped pair, now?

BERT Oh! Frank's driving the Minister back to the city. Ol' Ralph didn't feel like driving much, and Franklin said he wanted to have a chat with him.

JEAN So, what do you think, Cal?

CAL I think I'm going to go think.

CAREY Cal? Drive me into the Town Hall.

JEAN What do you want at the Town Hall?

CAREY That's where you register if you want to run for office.

BERT Which office?

CAREY Well, I thought I'd start small, just to learn the ropes. Mayor, I guess. Come on, before they close for the weekend.

CAL God help the Town Council.

(they exit)

BERT So, who wants a beer? Helen?

MRS. PRESTON Yes, I'd like a beer, I think.

BERT Good for you. Corbett, how about you?

CORBETT Well, I've been thinking about this ozone thing . . .

(he takes out his tape and measures Orville)

Yes, that was it. It should work.

(he takes Orville down and exits up the stairs)

Depending upon the relative densities, of course.

JEAN You'll have to get used to that.

MRS. PRESTON I think I already am.

BERT By god, I knew I liked you, Helen!

(he clinks his bottle with hers; JEAN has been sorting mail)

JEAN Bills, bills, bills.

BERT Chuck 'em.

JEAN Bert.

BERT Oh, alright. Pay 'em.

JEAN Something here from the tax department.

BERT Oh, good. They finally wrote.

(he takes the envelope and rips it in two)

MRS. PRESTON Aren't you going to read it?

BERT Nope.

MRS. PRESTON But, it's from the tax department!

JEAN If it's important, they'll come talk to us.

MRS. PRESTON You people like stirring up trouble, don't you?

BERT You folks'd just run rough shod, if we all left you to it.

MRS. PRESTON What?

BERT 'Said, "I suppose it's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it."

(lights fade to black)

END OF PLAY