

Arguments With Myself

by

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Whenever a section of *Arguments With Myself* is performed outside of the context of the whole piece, the program should identify it after the title as, for example, *Section 3 of Arguments With Myself*. So long as this is done, the six short parts that make up *Arguments With Myself* may be performed separately or together, in any order, and in any combination.

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Men / Women

In finally putting this little whatever it is on paper, I faced a small dilemma, a dilemmllet: Should I keep the text entirely without stage directions, so that the actors and the director would be free, as I wished them to be, to play with the possibilities of the text and bring their own emotional colors to each line? That was, after all, the whole idea of the piece. Or should I carefully specify a meaning for each line, making the shape of the piece clear and explicit? If I did that everyone would understand it, but I couldn't help but feel that all the fun would go out of the thing!

I wrote a whole succession of drafts in which I tried to compromise, but compromise is the enemy of art. So here it is, virtually naked. Now it's yours.

So play. Have fun. Have LOTS of fun! Feel free to expand it or contract it to suit the performers and the situation. And never exactly the same way twice.

I look forward to seeing what you make of it!

A Man and a Woman stand on opposite sides of the stage facing out toward the audience. They remain this way throughout the piece, and never at any time ever look at each other.)

SHE (*neutral*). Men.

HE (*neutral*). Women.

SHE (*intrigued*). Men.

HE (*rueful*). Women.

SHE (*she knows what they're like*). Men.

HE (*dismissive*). Women.

SHE (*dismissive*). Men.

HE (*intrigued*). Women.

SHE. Men.

HE. Women.

SHE. Men.

HE . Women.

SHE (*beginning to get angry*). Men.

HE (*placating*). Women.

SHE. Men!

HE . Women.

SHE . Men!

HE (*angry*). Women!

SHE . Men!!

HE . Women!!

SHE. Men!!!

HE. Women!!!

SHE. Men!!!!

HE . Women!!!!

SHE. *MEN*——

HE. *WOMEN*——

SHE. *MEN*——

HE. *WOMEN*——

SHE (*totally totally furious*). MEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

HE (*even angrier*). WOMEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(long pause)

SHE. Women?

HE. Men?

(pause)

SHE (*decides*). Men.

HE (*decides*). Women.

SHE. Men.

HE. Women.

SHE . Men.

HE. Women.

SHE. Men.

HE (*teasing*). Women.

SHE. Men.

HE. Women.

SHE (*seductive*). Men.

HE. Women.

SHE. Men!

HE. Women!

SHE. Men!

HE. Women!

SHE. MEN!!

HE. Women!

SHE. MEN!!

HE. WOMEN!!

SHE. MEN!!!

HE. WOMEN!!!

SHE. *MEN!!!!*

HE. *WOMEN!!!!*

SHE. MEN!!!!

HE. WOMEN!!!!

TOGETHER. MEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
WOMEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(long pause)

SHE *(neutral)*. Men.

HE *(neutral)*. Women.

The Man Who Ran From Death

a danceplay

(based on an old Italian folk tale)

This is a danceplay, to be performed by dancers, a few of whom must also be actors, under the direction of a choreographer.

Very little that is literal—strange angular shapes emerging from darkness.

Music is essential, a wind ensemble with uncanny chimelike percussion out of tune with the winds.

Lots of puppets.

It should last about 35 minutes.

THE STORYTELLER. Once there was a man who ran from Death.

*ECHOES. There was a man
from Death
from Death*

(gong)

THE STORYTELLER. It was a time of Death

(DYING)

*The Rats came and brought the Death
And the Rats feasted on the Dead
And the Town was filled with the smell of bodies*

(RATS)

*And he began to scream and thought
I cannot live with Death
And so he ran from Death*

(He FLEES as the RATS and the DYING try to HOLD him back)

And he ran
 He ran until he came to a tall Mountain
 And at its foot sat an Old Woman.

OLD WOMAN. Where are you running?

THE MAN. I am running from Death.

OLD WOMAN. Stay here with me

This is my pet ant Piccolino

Every day Piccolino climbs to the top of this Mountain

And carries down a tiny grain of dirt

And until this Mountain is levelled to the Plain

Death cannot touch you here

THE MAN. But Death will come here at the end?

(THE MOUNTAIN)

I must go on

STORYTELLER. And he ran

And so he came to the Sea

And on the Seashore sat an Old Woman

SECOND OLD WOMAN. Where are you running?

THE MAN. I am running from Death

SECOND OLD WOMAN. Stay here with me

This is my pet snail Smeralda

Whenever she is thirsty, Smeralda takes a sip of the Sea

*And until Smeralda has drunk this Ocean dry
 Death cannot touch you here*

THE MAN. But Death will come here at the end?

(THE SEA)

I must go on

*THE STORYTELLER. And so he ran
 He ran through the forest of trees and trees
 Through owls and eyes and claws and bramble
 He ran*

Until he came to a House

(THE HOUSE OF CLOCKS)

(He knocks on the door)

(an Old Man)

OLD MAN. What do you want?

THE MAN. I am running from Death

OLD MAN. Then enter.

(INSIDE THE HOUSE)

THE STORYTELLER. And he led him through the House
And the House was filled with Clocks

CLOCKS. Tick

Tock

THE STORYTELLER. And they ticked
CLOCKS. Tick

Tock

THE STORYTELLER. And whirred

(*CLOCKS*)

And rattled and chimed

CLOCKS. Tick

Tock

Tick

Tock

Whirrr

Tock

Bong

Tick

Whirrr

Whirrr

Tick

Bong

Tock

Chime

Chime

Whirrrr

Bong

Rattle

Tock

Chime

Crack

Tock

Tock

Whirrrrrrrrrrrrr

THE STORYTELLER.

They struck and rattled and tocked and chimed

And yet, however much they moved,

When you looked at them

The hands stayed always at the same place

OLD MAN. And will you join me at a game of Chess?

(CHESS)

THE STORYTELLER. So he sat down with him and played

And yet, however long they played

The pieces stayed always at the same place

And finally he said

THE MAN. I want to visit my old town.

OLD MAN. Very well

Follow me

(THE STABLE)

(HORSES)

Take this horse

She will carry you back to your town and here again

Ride her. But remember

(THE WHITE HORSE)

Do not dismount

Until you are safely here again

THE STORYTELLER. And so he rode

He rode through the forest, he rode and rode

Until he came to the Sea

*But the Sea was dry
And on its Shore*

*(THE SHORE)
(THE SUN)*

*Lay the Bones of an Old Old Woman
And the empty shell of a Snail*

And so he rode

He rode and rode

Until he came to the Mountain

*But the Mountain was gone
And the Sun was hot on the harsh and empty Plain*

(THE HARSH PLAIN)

*And on that Plain
Lay the Bones of an Old Old Woman
And the dried out hull of an Ant*

And so he rode

He rode and rode

Until he came to the Town

(AND CHANGED)

*And everything was changed
 The Men were changed
 The Women changed
 The Clothes had changed
 The Manners changed
 Strange strangers filled the square
 Small children
 Pointed at him and laughed
 And threw stones.
 And his Mother was dead
 And his Sister was dead
 And no one remembered their names*

And so he left the Town

(THE ROAD)

To return to the House of Clocks

(THE MOON)

*And as he rode along the road
 He saw far before him
 An old hooded Woman pulling along a Cart*

(THE OLD WOMAN)

*And as he watched
 She stumbled*

*And the cart rolled onto her so that she could not stand
And so she called out*

THE OLD WOMAN. Help me!

*THE STORYTELLER. So he got down from the White
Horse*

*THE MAN. Here, let me
(he frees her from under the cart)*

*THE STORYTELLER. And she grabbed his arm
And the cloak fell back from her face
And it was*

*ECHOES. Death
Death
Death*

(THEY DANCE)

*THE STORYTELLER. And She led him to the Cart
And She pulled back the cover
And it was filled with*

(OLD SHOES)

Old Shoes

And She said

DEATH. Here are the Shoes I've worn out chasing after you.

(End)

The Invincible Chastity of Arnie Bielowski

*S*ort of a cross between a cartoon and a three-ring circus. A glorious chaos. Everything happens at once. Improvisation is welcome, but keep the focus on the scripted stuff. Vivid colors, broad caricatures, curves everywhere. Almost like clowns. A mix of life-size puppets and actors.

[*n front of the curtain)*

(Early morning; Mort, a middle-aged businessman carrying a suitcase, and Arnie Bielowski, a middle-aged slob; Arnie is fat and bald, and wears a sleeveless undershirt)

MORT. It's a disaster! It's a catastrophe! It chills my very heart down to the ventricle!

ARNIE. What is it, Mort?

MORT. Arnie, my best friend Arnie, you've got to help me!

ARNIE. Anything I can do, Mort.

MORT. Arnie, it's about Lulubelle. As you know, Arnie, there's a slight age difference—

ARNIE. What's thirty-one years where there's love?

MORT. Well, the fact is, Arnie, I'm getting old. Eight, nine times a night and I'm tuckered, worn out, pooped. And, sure, they might think eight is something in [*location of theater*], but this is BROOKLYN! What's worse, Lulubelle's a Brooklyn girl and, you know, at her age, well, I'm afraid she's getting restless. And, worst of all, Arnie—

ARNIE. You can tell me, Mort!

MORT. I have to spend three days in Plattsburgh. The Medical Protrusion Supply and Large Rubber Prostheses Convention. And I'm afraid, Arnie—

ARNIE. Yes, Mort!

MORT. I'm afraid, when she's all alone for three whole days in Brooklyn, Lulubelle is going to go wild. So, Arnie, what I'm asking you is—

ARNIE. Say it, Mort!

MORT. Stay close to Lulubelle. Keep an eye on her. Make sure she—

ARNIE. No, Mort, no—you can't ask me that!

MORT. Aren't you my best friend, Arnie?

ARNIE. No, it's not that, Mort, you don't know what you're asking, it's, if I stay close to Lulubelle, it's, don't you see, Mort—I'm *irresistible*!

(*pause*)

MORT. You're what?

ARNIE. I'm *irresistible*.

MORT. You're turning me down because

ARNIE. I don't understand it either, Mort. But I'm telling you, if Lulubelle sets eyes on me—

MORT. I don't mean to be tactless, Arnie, but I'm prepared to take that risk.

ARNIE. Please—don't ask me, Mort!

MORT. I can't stand here arguing, Arnie, I have to catch the 7:19 for beautiful Plattsburgh.

ARNIE. No!

MORT. Arnie, you are my dearest lifelong chum, buddy, pal, and I'm asking you to do this for me. The risk is on me!

(going)

Thanks, Arnie!

(Mort is gone)

ARNIE. Mort!

(Arnie remains onstage as the curtain rises on a gustily exuberant Brooklyn shopping street; along the right side of the stage, as seen by the audience, is a large brick apartment building with the doorway facing front; along the rear of the stage is a row of such storefronts as:

SAUSAGE SURPRISES: EROTIC SALAMI ART OUR SPECIALTY;

MADAME INGA, ADVISOR: ESP - TAROT - INSURANCE;

KEN FINKELSTEIN, PLUMBING & SCULPTURE;

IRV'S LARGE FISH; and

VEGGIE'S, a restaurant festooned with Grand Opening banners;

everything very two-dimensional, colorful, exaggerated, cartoony;

Arnie is standing near the doorway of the apartment building)

ARNIE. Oh no, what do I do? My best friend's wife! If Lulubelle gets a look at me, she won't be able to control herself! And Mort is counting on me to keep an eye on her! If I stand over here, I'll see anyone who goes into the

building. But Lulubelle will spot me here, and then——

(pause)

There's only one thing to do. I'll pretend that I'm a fire hydrant!

(Arnie stands very still)

(a Police Officer comes by, looks at Arnie, looks at a parked car, and starts to write out a ticket)

MAN *(rushing out of Madame Inga's)*. Officer! Officer! What are you doing?

OFFICER. Figure it out, Einstein. Parked in front of a

MAN. But—officer, I swear it, officer, that fire hydrant wasn't here when I parked here!

OFFICER. Sure, sure, it follows you around. *(hands him the ticket)*

GERTIE *(sees Arnie)*. Oh my God, Mabel, will you look at that incredibly attractive—

MABEL. Control yourself, Gertie. It's just a fire hydrant.

(two cars)

CAR. Beep! Beep!

CAR2 *(opposite direction)*. Honk!

CAR. Beep!

CAR2. Honk-honk!

CAR. Beep!

(they shake hands and pass)

ARNIE. Thank God. Nobody's gone in so far. Mort was worrying about nothing.

(Lulubelle leans from her window, hangs out a huge banner—HE'S OUT OF TOWN!—and lowers a rope ladder from the window. Throughout what follows, an endless succession of handsome young men dash up the ladder, vanish through the window, and emerge shortly after, happily dazed and exhausted, from the doorway below)

(Veggie and Gloria)

VEGGIE. This is it, Gloria. I've dreamed about this day since I was a little sous-chef. And now, at last, the Grand Opening of

(unveils banner)

"VEGGIE'S: Brooklyn's Only Topless Health Food Restaurant!"

And this very day we're being visited by Everett Watkins Smolensky!

GLORIA. You mean *the* Everett Watkins Smolensky?

VEGGIE. That's right: New York's Most Influential Topless Restaurant Critic!

LITTLE OLD LADY *(sees banner)*. I don't understand, Edna. What is topless health food?

BORO PRESIDENT *(shaking hands)*. Hello, I'm your Boro President. I'm your Boro President. I'll be happy to answer any questions

A LADY. I have a question!

BORO PRESIDENT. Yes?

LADY. Just what is it a Boro President does?

BORO PRESIDENT. Well, well, that is a hard one, isn't it?

PAMPHLET LADY. Good morning, have you found God?

MAN. I'm Jewish.

PAMPHLET LADY (*tries another*). Good morning, have you found God?

OTHER. I'm Catholic.

PAMPHLET LADY (*tries Arnie*). Good morning, have you found God?

ARNIE. I'm a fire hydrant.

MORON MAJORITY LEADER. We are the Moron Majority!

DEMONSTRATION (*cheers*)!!

MORON MAJORITY LEADER. Some people have accused us of being stupid. Well, I say to you, if God hadn't *meant* us to be stupid, He would have given us brains!

DEMONSTRATION (*cheers*)!!

GORGEOUS DAME (*breathlessly*). Excuse me, but—Aren't you Arnie Bielowski?!

ARNIE. No, I'm sorry. I'm a fire hydrant.

GORGEOUS DAME. That's funny. You *look* like Arnie Bielowski.

ARNIE. Yes. I'm often complimented on the resemblance.

RADIO REPORTER. Here I am, Wilfred Fuzzgood, Reporter, with another

man-in-the-street interview to try to answer the age-old question, "Who would fardels bear?" Excuse me, sir, would you bear fardels?

MAN-IN-THE-STREET. Sure, glad to. Lemme tell you, there's nothing I like better after a hard day at work than to just get down and bear a few good fardels.

RADIO REPORTER. And would you tell our listeners *why* you like to bear fardels?

MAN-IN-THE-STREET. Well, speaking personally, it's that the dread of something after death puzzles the will.

STREET PEDLAR. Hot watches. Hot watches.

DRUG DEALER. Smoke. Smoke.

STREET PEDLAR. Hot watches. Five dollars. Hot watches.

CUSTOMER. Here's five, I'll take one of those.

STREET PEDLAR. Here you are, sir

CUSTOMER. *Ouch!*

STREET PEDLAR. I told you they were hot watches.

(Dog, a dog, enters)

DOG. Bowsa wowsa, howsa doin, Arnie!

ARNIE. I'm not Arnie, Dog, I'm a fire hydrant.

(pause)

DOG. You're a fire hydrant?

ARNIE. I'm a fire hydrant.

DOG. You're *sure* you're a fire hydrant

ARNIE. I tell you, I'm a fire hydrant!

(pause)

DOG. O-kay, if you say so

(Dog goes off; returns humming to himself—"Dum de dum dum doo dum de dum doo dum"—and carrying a large folding screen; still humming, he sets up the screen in front of Arnie; goes behind screen)

ARNIE *(uneasy)*. Hey, uh, what's the screen for, Dog?

DOG. Even a dog likes a little privacy.

(pause; Arnie looks out at Audience)

(Dog emerges, folds up the screen, and heads off, still humming)

DOG. Bowsa wowsa, Arnie.

(goes)

DRUG DEALER. Smoke.

VEGGIE. Still no sign of Everett Watkins Smolensky?

BORO PRESIDENT *(still campaigning)*. Hello, I'm your Boro President. I'll be happy to answer any—

LADY. I have a question, Mr. Boro President.

BORO PRESIDENT. Yes?

LADY. Mr. Boro President, what is your name?

BORO PRESIDENT. My name? My name? Larry, Al, does either of you remember what my name is?

AL. You're the Boro President, Boss

LARRY. Nobody remembers what your name is

BORO PRESIDENT. I'm sorry, nobody remembers what my name is. But I'll try to look it up for you.

(a Walking Tour)

TOUR LEADER. Now this. I mean. This. *This*. Is a *great*. Fire hydrant. Excuse me. We're the. Great Fire Hydrants of New York. The Walking Tour. Could you tell. Us. How long. Long. Have you been a. Fire hydrant?

ARNIE. Ever since I was a little ingot.

TOUR LEADER. What—

ELDERLY WOMAN *(sees Arnie, rushes up to him)*. Arnie! Arnie Bielowski!

ARNIE. I'm not Arnie, Mother, I'm a fire hydrant.

(pause; more pause)

MOTHER. Just so long as it makes *you* happy, Arnie.

(she goes)

TOUR LEADER. Good life?

ARNIE. The life of a fire hydrant has everything. Romance. Adventure. Travel to exotic places.

TOUR LEADER. Sense. Responsibility?

ARNIE. Sure. It gets you down sometimes. What if I run dry? What if my big fire finally comes and I can't squirt?

TOUR LEADER. Squirtless. Heavy. (*goes*)

PIGEON (*flying over*). Oh boy. Oh boy. Look at that beautiful fire hydrant. Now, when I see a beautiful fire hydrant like that, what I like to do is . . .

(settles down on Arnie's head)

ARNIE. Hi, Pigeon.

PIGEON (*to himself, happily*). Poop!

(flies off)

CLAUDIA JUNE. Uncle Arnie! Oh, Uncle Arnie!

ARNIE. I'm not your Uncle Arnie, Claudia June, I'm a fire hydrant.

CLAUDIA JUNE. Oh! What'll I do? I need to speak to my Uncle Arnie! I'm—

ARNIE. Shh. Keep your voice down. I am your Uncle Arnie. I'm just pretending to be a fire hydrant. You see, it's my best friend Mort has asked me to keep an eye on his dear but appreciably younger wife Lulubelle, and

CLAUDIA JUNE. Right. Your old problem of being irresistible.

ARNIE. Bingo. (*notices woman in Audience*) Control yourself, lady. (*to Claudia June*) You see? So just sort of stand here and act like you're talking to a fire hydrant and tell me what's the matter.

CLAUDIA JUNE. Oh, Uncle Arnie, it's about my boyfriend Attila, whom I

love deeply even if he is a bit loud sometimes. You see, Attila is jealous.

ARNIE. Jealous? What's he jealous about?

CLAUDIA JUNE. He thinks I'm getting letters from other men.

ARNIE. What makes him think you're getting letters?

CLAUDIA JUNE. Oh, he delivers them. Attila is my mailman. That's how we met.

ARNIE. He delivers them? But—

CLAUDIA JUNE. Oh! There's no time to explain everything—Here he comes now!

ARNIE. Okay, now just stand back a little out of the way, Claudia June.

(Attila the Mailman enters)

Yo, Hungarian individual!

ATTILA. What? Who said that?

ARNIE. It's me, the fire hydrant.

ATTILA. The fire hydrant? But—

ARNIE. Don't tax your brain. Accept it. I'm a talking fire hydrant.

ATTILA. Well, what do you want?

ARNIE. Look, dumb one, Claudia June is a good kid. Stop giving her a hard time.

ATTILA. I'll tell ya, fire hydrant, I love Claudia June. She's Priority Mail for me. I don't wanna give her a hard time—

PASSERBY. Will you look at that mailman—talking to a fire hydrant!

ATTILA. Except, Claudia June is cheating on me!

ARNIE. What makes you think she's cheating on you?

ATTILA. I don't think! I never think—I'm a mailman! I know! Claudia June is getting letters!

ARNIE. Everyone on your route is getting letters, goulash brain! Does that mean they're all cheating on you?

ATTILA. But Claudia June is getting love letters!

ARNIE. Hold it. Claudia June, could you step over here?

CLAUDIA JUNE. Hi, Attila.

ATTILA. Claudia June! Do you know this fire hydrant?

CLAUDIA JUNE. This fire hydrant is my Uncle.

ATTILA. I didn't know you had a fire hydrant in the family.

ARNIE. We're dedicated to public service.

ATTILA. As you know, Claudia June, I am a gentle and sensitive mailman of Hungarian ethnicity and I would never do anything to hurt you. So all I want to know is: Where is he??? I know you're seeing someone! Where is he????

CLAUDIA JUNE. I'm not seeing anyone!

ATTILA. You can't fool me! I'm your mailman! I know you're getting letters! I deliver them! Look—at this! And this! And this! (*pulls letters out of his sack*)

CLAUDIA JUNE. But they're not—

ATTILA. Love letters! Love letters! Mailmen can tell! They pulse and throb with postal passion! They steam where he licked the stamps! My sack is filled with yearning. Who is he?? Let me at him!

CLAUDIA JUNE. But—

ATTILA. I'll kill the guy! I'll tear him in little pieces and use him for Christmas seals! I'll stuff him in a box and mail him to himself return receipt requested! I'll—

CLAUDIA JUNE. But—

ARNIE. So why don't you open them, insufficient postagehead! You say she's seeing someone, she says she's not, so why not open the letters and find out!

CLAUDIA JUNE. I've tried to get him to, but—

ATTILA. Claudia June, I am an employee of the United States Postal Service, and it would be profoundly unethical were I to read your letters.

CLAUDIA JUNE. Attila is very ethical.

ATTILA. So just tell me who the guy is and I'll murder him!

CLAUDIA JUNE. But—

ARNIE. Hold on to your epistles, letterhead—

ATTILA. You're getting love letters!

ARNIE. But she's not getting love letters!

ATTILA (*pulling more from his sack, tossing them in the air*). Look! Look! Look!

ARNIE. But they're not love letters!

ATTILA. They are love letters!

ARNIE. They're not—you tell him, Claudia June!

CLAUDIA JUNE. But they are love letters.

ARNIE. They—

ATTILA. I knew it! I knew it! Let me at him! Let me at him!

ARNIE. They—

ATTILA. Who are they from??? I'll murder him! I'll stamp him Fragile and stomp all over him! Who are they from?? I'll—

CLAUDIA JUNE. But they're from you.

(pause)

ARNIE. From him?

ATTILA. From me?

(pause)

ARNIE. From him?

ATTILA. From . . . How can they be from me??? I'm not romantic, I'm a mailman! I never write love letters!

CLAUDIA JUNE. That's why I write them for you.

ATTILA. What?

CLAUDIA JUNE. That's right. Several times a day I sit down and write a love letter to me from you and then I go out and mail them. Well, you can't expect a girl to get along without love letters from her boyfriend.

ATTILA. Are my love letters good?

CLAUDIA JUNE. You write me the most wonderful love letters. You just don't realize it, but, you know, Attila, you're really a very romantic letter carrier.

ATTILA. I am? Gee, Claudia June.

CLAUDIA JUNE. Thanks, Uncle Arnie.

ARNIE. Don't mention it.

ATTILA. Thanks, fire hydrant.

(they go)

A PRIEST. Yes, we thought of having a flea market, but we decided that there weren't enough people in this neighborhood looking to buy used fleas.

PARISHIONER. True.

PRIEST. So instead we decided on holding a special benefit screening of *Dirty*

Harry Meets Bambi.

EDNA. Have you heard, Bernice? They say that a huge, ferocious, ravening, bloodthirsty, maneating Polar Bear has just escaped from the Zoo!

BERNICE. I do hope it doesn't eat Harold.

(a huge, ferocious, etcetera, Polar Bear enters)

RADIO ANNOUNCER *(over a boombox radio)*. Your attention please! The Boro President's office has just contacted us to deny reports that a huge, ferocious

(the huge, and so on, leaves)

ravening, bloodthirsty, maneating Polar Bear has escaped from the Zoo. Everybody please stay calm. There is no Polar Bear. Please do not be alarmed. There is no danger. We repeat, there is no Polar—Erg! Ack! Ogg! Oogh!

(pause)

POLAR BEAR'S VOICE *(over radio)*. Rrroooaarrr!!

WOMAN CUSTOMER *(coming out of Sausage Surprises)*. Oh yes. They make the best mortadella dildoes in New York.

ELM *(shivers, a leaf falls)*. There goes one. There's another. It doesn't seem just. I mean, I don't deserve this. A sequential nakedness. Oh. This is just so embarrassing.

TRAFFIC LIGHT. Stop

Go Stop Go
 TRAFFIC. Beep! Beep-beep! Beep-honk!
 Honk Barra Stop Honk Honk
 Shurp Brummm Grunf Beep Frakka-kork!
 Runka-runka Beep
 Stop Beep Hatcher hatcher hatcher! Stop
 Beep Runka Ork ork!
 Honk! Kronk!

CAR. Outa my way, bumper brain, before I crease your chrome!

EDDIE CAR. Oh yeah, I—

JOEY CAR. Hey, guys—a *pedestrian!*

OTHERS. Get him!

OTHERS. Get him! *Rubarubaruba!!*

TRAFFIC LIGHT. You guys just don't listen. So stop already.

A CAR. Eh, your mother sucks electrons!

TRAFFIC LIGHT. Yeah? You're full of gas!

TRAFFIC. Honk!

CAR. Hey—*get the traffic cop!*

OTHERS. Right! The traffic cop!

OTHERS. The traffic cop!

(they take off in pursuit of the cop)

ALL. Zhrrrooooooom! Honk! Frakka!

(some huge Street Wrestlers begin to set up a ring)

STREET WRESTLERS. We Are Wrestling Students, Working Our Way Through Wrestling School!

(throughout what follows, they bash, stomp, and choke each other as passersby toss quarters into their open guitar case)

PROTEST. Make Brooklyn Safe For Ducks!

(Arnie's Mother has returned)

MOTHER. Arnie, I was just thinking. Now that you're a fire hydrant, are you sure you have a nice warm winter coat?

ARNIE. A winter coat?

MOTHER. You know, it gets really cold out here in February, and if you're working outdoors all day

ARNIE. Mother, have you ever seen a fire hydrant in a winter coat?

MOTHER. Just because the others don't take care of themselves, that's no reason you shouldn't. It's your health, Arnie.

ARNIE. Thank you, Mother.

(Ken Finkelstein and an angry customer)

FINKELSTEIN. Harry, calm down.

HARRY. Calm down, I—

FINKELSTEIN. Plumbing, sculpture, sculpture, plumbing. I do both. What's

the big deal? So I get a little confused.

HARRY. A little confused! I paid you to fix my toilet, and instead you did a bust of my wife!

FINKELSTEIN. Right. So your toilet doesn't flush. But now your wife finally has a great bust.

STREET PEDLAR. Wallets! Fine used wallets!

DRUG DEALER. Smoke!

STREETWALKER. Me!

PASSERBY. Look!

ANOTHER. It can't be!

ANOTHER NOTHER. No!

YET ANOTHER NOTHER. It is!

ANOTHER. Everett Watkins Smolensky!

AWESTRUCK. New York's Most Influential Topless Restaurant Critic!

(Everett Watkins Smolensky enters)

SMOLENSKY *(he happens not to have a head)*. How do you do? I'm Everett Watkins Smolensky, New York's Most Influential Topless Restaurant Critic. Could you direct me to Veggie's?

(they do)

(trouble at Iro's Large Fish)

ROCCO. That fish, sir, is singularly unattractive.

VINNIE. Rocco!

AUGIE. No one ever calls Irv's fish singularly unattractive!

IRV. What did you call my fish?

ROCCO. I said, that fish, sir, is singularly unattractive.

IRV (*picks up a large fish*). You call my fish, my finny felicity, my piscine so paradisiac, singularly unattractive? (*stepping outside*) You know what I do when someone calls my briny bliss, my deepwater delectation, my saltwater sublimity, my *poisson d'amour* singularly unattractive? I hit him like THIS (*hits Arnie with fish*) and THIS (*hits Arnie with fish*) and THIS (*hits Arnie with fish*)!

ARNIE. Er—

IRV. And THIS (*hits Arnie with fish*)!

FASHION PHOTOGRAPHER (*sees Arnie*). Babette! Great! Let's do a couple with the fire hydrant!

(they set up for a lingerie shoot)

STREETWALKER. Hi. Looking for a good time? Hey, green, don't be mean. Hey, gimme a smile.

PAMPHLET LADY. Do you realize there are small children in this neighborhood!

STREETWALKER. I'm sorry, ma'am, I don't do it with small children. I have my principles.

FASHION PHOTOGRAPHER. There's something unbelievably attractive

about this fire hydrant.

BABETTE (*draped over Arnie*). It smells like fish.

RADIO REPORTER. Here I am again, Wilfred Fuzzgood, Reporter, to ask again, “Who would fardels—”

(the huge, ferocious, and so on, Polar Bear)

Bear? Bear? BEAR!!!!

POLAR BEAR. Rrroooaarrr!!

(a karate instructor)

KARATE INSTRUCTOR. No, wooden boards, cinder blocks, they no longer satisfy. To harden my hands, I feel a need for something bigger, harder, why, of course—that fire hydrant!

ARNIE. Er, wait, er—

KARATE INSTRUCTOR. Eee-YAA!!! That felt good.

(Dog returns)

DOG. Bowsa wowsa, Arnie. Or, as my aged father, that canine paterfamilias, my top pop, used to say, woof-a-diddly-o-woof!

ARNIE. Hello, dog, I—

(a pigeon flies by)

PIGEON. Thank God, the fire hydrant at last!

(settles on Arnie's head)

ARNIE. Hi, Pigeon

PIGEON. I don't think I could hold out much longer.

ARNIE. Hold out . . .

PIGEON. Poop!

(flies off)

MANIAC *(with groceries)*. Oh! Oh! I can't help myself! Every time I see a fire hydrant—*(pulls out a meringue pie)*

ARNIE. Er—

(he smashes the pie in Arnie's face)

MANIAC *(sighs)*. That felt good.

DRUG DEALER. Smoke. Smoke. *(he notices)* Smoke!!

(smoke is pouring from a nearby upper window)

SHOUTS. Smoke! Fire!

(bells; sirens; a fire truck pulls up; firemen jump out and attach a fire hose to Arnie's crotch; they twist his head, and the hose lifts itself up and straightens; the fire is extinguished)

TESTIMONIAL *(at Moron Majority rally)*. Hello. I used to be a theoretical physicist. Then I read the new bestseller *How to Lower Your IQ*. Today, I have a career in pizza transport.

MORON MAJORITY *(cheers)*!

BRIDE *(at Irv's Big Fish)*. This is where we met. So I felt this is where we should get married.

POLAR BEAR (*the groom*). I'm just another Polar Bear in love. Yummy salmon.

(a scream from inside Veggie's; a topless waitress runs out, pursued by the headless Everett Watkins Smolensky)

SMOLENSKY. Stop! Stop, my little turnip green! My succulent bean sprout! Come back, my little rutabaga! I haven't finished my review!

(the Wrestling Students are strangling the Boro President)

DOG (*sniffing a female of another breed*). Well, arf and arf again, my sweet young puppykins, my canis so callipygous, my peachy pooch, you annihilating incarnation of schnauzer sensuality.

ARNIE. You know, Dog—

DOG. Don't interrupt me, Arnie. I'm working like a dog.

SMOLENSKY (*in hot pursuit*). Come back! I need to taste all the tender tarts!

ANOTHER MANIAC (*with seltzer bottle*). Oh! Oh! I can't help myself! Every time I see a fire hydrant I have to—(*whips out the seltzer*)

ARNIE. Er, wait, I—

(squirts Arnie with the seltzer)

MANIAC (*sighs*). That felt good.

(a flock of pigeons flies by)

PIGEON. There! There he is! That's the fire hydrant I was telling you about!

(they start to settle on Arnie)

PIGEONS. Hey! This is great! Let's—Oh boy!

ARNIE. Wait! Wait!

PIGEONS. Let's—Poop!

ARNIE. Wait!

PIGEONS. Poop!

ARNIE. Wait!

PIGEONS. Poop! Poop!

ARNIE. Wait! Wait! Enough, genug shayn, basta! I admit it! I'm not a fire hydrant! I'm Arnie Bielowski!

WOMEN *(everywhere)*. HEY GIRLS!

IT'S ARNIE BIELOWSKI!

MORE WOMEN. *ARNIE BIELOWSKI!!*

MORE MORE WOMEN. *IT'S ARNIE BIELOWSKI!!!*

(they mob him)

(they start to carry him off)

*

(Lulubelle's bedroom; Arnie is in bed with Lulubelle; satiated female legs draped over chairs, under the table, sticking out of closets, everywhere)

(Mort, suitcase in hand, is standing over them)

MORT. Arnie! My best friend Arnie!

ARNIE. Er, Mort, Mort, I can—

LULUBELLE. Gee, Mort, I—

MORT. I asked you to stay close to Lulubelle. To keep an eye on her. To make sure my darling wife wasn't restless.

ARNIE. Mort! You have to let me—

MORT. And now I see, Arnie, you did exactly what I asked you to. Thank you, Arnie.

ARNIE. You mean I—

MORT. Arnie Bielowski, you are a true friend.

LULUBELLE. Oh yes, Mort.

MORT. When I needed you, you stood up for me.

LULUBELLE. Oh yes, Mort.

MORT. You were firm. You were strong.

LULUBELLE. Oh yes, Mort.

MORT. You were untiring. How can I ever thank you, Arnie? From now on, everything that's mine is yours.

LULUBELLE. Oh yes, Mort.

ARNIE. Everything?

LULUBELLE. Oh yes.

DOG (*sticks his head out from under the bed*). Like they say, folks, believing is seeing.

LULUBELLE. Anything else I can do for you, Arnie?

DOG. And the moral of this story is: Watch out. You may be *irresistible* too!

Bowsa wowsa.

(Indeed)

Life Among the Flowers

This is a play for puppets, ideally for rod puppets, although other types of performers, even animate ones, are possible. Keep it clear, delicate, light. Always simple, always intimate, always gentle.

A garden. A bright autumn morning. Far in the distance, rolling hills and a hint of forest. Marvin, a chrysanthemum, pushes his way up from below.

MARVIN. Uh, hi! I'm new in this garden, my name's Marvin. I'm a chry . . . a chry . . . a chrymafrolum!

ALICE. A what?

MARVIN. A chrymafrolum?

ALICE. A *what*?

MARVIN. A mum.

ALICE. You mean a chrysanthemum!

MARVIN. Uh, yeah, a chry . . . a one of those. Hey, uh, what's your name?

ALICE. I'm Alice. I'm a dahlia. Do you think I'm pretty?

MARVIN. Gee, I sure do, Alice.

ALICE. I think pretty is one of the nicest things to be. Would you like to kiss me?

MARVIN. Oh gosh, oh gee, I—

ALICE. I'm sorry, I'd really have to know you better first

MARVIN. Oh. Hey. Look at this. Look at this. I can cross my eyes. (*he does*) See? Betcha never saw that before! Huh? Huh?

ALICE. That's very nice, Marvin

MARVIN. Wanna see somethin else? I can wiggle my ears! Look at this!
Wasn't that somethin? Huh? Wasn' it?

ALICE. Oh. Yes.

MARVIN. Wanna see another? Huh? Why I can do all sorts of things! I
can—

ALICE. Later, Marvin. I, uh, I have an appointment at the petal parlor.

MARVIN. Hey. Uh, do you think you know me good enough yet to uh

ALICE. Not quite yet, Marvin. You'll have to wait a little longer. Bye.

(she goes)

MARVIN. Bye. Oh gosh, she sure is purty. Hey, maybe she'll let me kiss her
when I see her again. I never kissed anybody before. I sure hope she liked
the way my eyes crossed.

(he goes below)

(Honey Sue, a ladybug)

HONEY SUE *(deep South)*. Almost winter, and I'm still not so much as
engaged to an insect of suitably high net worth and compound interest, and
how, how will I ever become a socially prominent widow if I can't even get
myself engaged? And time is running short, why only yesterday I counted
two entire wrinkles, though, after all, that's only to be expected this late in the
year, and ladybugs with glossy wings and a figure like mine are not traded

over the counter.

(Al, a butterfly of affairs with a large moustache and a larger cigar, enters)

AL. There aint nothin as good as a good cigar.

HONEY SUE *(sniffs)*. I do declare I smell the sweet perfume of capital gains in the air. Oh! Sir! Would you help me sir!

AL. Somethin wrong, lady?

HONEY SUE. Oh! Oh! Sir! I do believe there's something in my eye!

AL. Yeah? Here, lemme just—

HONEY SUE. Oh!

AL. I don't see—

HONEY SUE. Oh, thank you, sir, I do believe it's out now. I simply don't know how I can express to you my gratitude, I don't believe I've ever met an arthropod so strong and yet so gentle. Oh, how can a poor lonely ladybug ever hope to repay you for your kindness in removing that dreadful object from my private sector?

(pause)

AL. Er, I, um, mighty warm weather we're having, aint it?

HONEY SUE. Why, not especially. Tell me, though, what is your name, kind sir?

AL. Al . . . that is . . . Alfred, Miss.

HONEY SUE. You can call me Honey Sue. Bye now, you handsome

lepidopteron, you.

(she goes)

AL. If that don't beat cigars

MARVIN *(pops up from below)*. Uh, hi there!

AL. Whoooooee!

MARVIN. I'm Marvin, I'm new in this garden, what's your name?

AL. Pleased to meetcha, Marv, the name is Al. Now—

MARVIN. Hi, Al, I—

AL. Look, Marv, I'm a busy butterfly

MARVIN. Hey, I was just think—

AL. Look, I said I'm busy

(Al flies off)

MARVIN. Uh, hi Al. He sure is busy. Gee, it sure is nice here with everyone all friendly and—Uh, hi there! Who are you? My name is Marvin, I'm—

WEEDE *(a weed, passing by)*. Weede, the name is Weede, you get that, Weede.

MARVIN. Hi, Mr. Weede, I'm new in . . . Bye, Mr. Weede. Gee, I sure am makin friends here quick. I was scared when I was pushing my way up maybe I had sprouted in the wrong sort of place, you know, all full of mushrooms or somethin. I sure am glad I'm here. I wonder where Alice is? I'd sure like to see her again. *(sighs)*

MABEL. Hi.

MARVIN. Oh—hi!

MABEL. Who are you?

MARVIN. I'm Marvin

MABEL. You're new here, aintcha? I'm Mabel. I'm a caterpillar. That's why I'm so green. And when I grow up I'm gonna be the most beautiful butterfly in the whole wide lawn and all the handsomest bugs and movie stars in the entire microclimate will fall in love with me. Wanna know how I know that?

MARVIN. Gee, how?

MABEL. Somebody read my legs. Really I eat plants, but I won't eat you because you're nice. Besides, I don't really eat much, I just nibble a little.

MARVIN. Oh.

MABEL. You know something?

MARVIN. Uh, what?

MABEL. Having twenty-six legs is a real bummer. It's awfully hard to feel sexy with twenty-six legs.

MARVIN. Gee, I never thought of that before

MABEL. But that's okay. When I grow up I'll only have six. Six is sexy.

MARVIN. I wish I had six legs.

MABEL. How come?

MARVIN. I wanna be sexy. Chryfathrolums don't have any legs at all.

MABEL. Oh, gee, that's okay. For guys it doesn't matter *how* many legs you

got. Besides, no legs is sexy too.

MARVIN. Is it?

MABEL. Just about anything is except twenty-six. What a bummer.

MARVIN. Gee, I'm sorry

MABEL. Well, it could be worse

MARVIN. Uh, yeah, Mabel

MABEL. I could have twenty-six *heads*.

MARVIN. Twenty-six heads isn't sexy?

MABEL. Not unless you're really into kissing. Besides, think if you got a headache.

MARVIN. Hey—Mabel?

MABEL. Yeah, Marv?

MARVIN. If I was sexy and I liked a flower, do you think she'd kiss me?

MABEL. Sure, Marv. Everyone'll kiss you if you're sexy.

(Alice enters)

ALICE. Hi, Marv, hi, Mabel!

MABEL. Hi, Alice!

MARVIN. Hey, uh, Alice, I uh

ALICE. Later, Marvin

(she goes)

MARVIN. Tell me how to be sexy, Mabel!

MABEL. What do *you* wanna be sexy for?

MARVIN. I think it'd be nice.

MABEL. Marv, you don't wanna be nice if you wanna be sexy. When I grow up I won't be nice at *all!* Sexy is cool and suave and *sophisticated*—I'm precocious, did you notice?

(Alice enters from other direction)

ALICE. Hi, Mabel, hi, Marv!

MABEL. Hi!

ALICE. Mabel, I just bought the most wonderful shade of leaf polish!

MARVIN. Hey, uh, Alice, do you

ALICE. I'll see you later, all right Marvin?

(she goes)

MABEL. Hey, Marv, do you really want me to teach you to be sexy?

MARVIN. Yeah, Mabel

MABEL. Okay! I can be your manager. Listen, kid—if I'm your manager, I'm supposed to call you "kid"

MARVIN. Sure, Mabel

MABEL. Okay, now pretend I'm grown up already

MARVIN. Uh, yeah, Mabel

MABEL. And I'm the most glamorous bug in the whole eastern seaboard.

Pick me up.

MARVIN. Uh, okay

(he starts to lift her)

MABEL. *Not like that!* Say hello to me.

MARVIN. Hi, Mabel!

MABEL. Marvin, be suave!

MARVIN. Hi, Mabel?

MABEL. No, Marvin. Say, *(French accent)* "Bonjour, my beautiful one"

MARVIN. Boat you're my bootiful—

MABEL. "Nevair in all of ze Casbah have I seen eyes expressive of such depth, such tragedie!"

MARVIN. I can cross my eyes, wanna see?

MABEL. Marv!

MARVIN. See!

MABEL. No, Marv, *say* it!

MARVIN. Say what?

MABEL. Okay, try this one: "I'm suave, sophisticated Marvin, beautiful. With looks like yours and cool like mine, we should make quite a team. You haven't been loved till you've been loved by a chrysanthemum!" Did you get it, Marvin?

MARVIN. I'm swerve serphistercatered Marvin beautiful

MABEL. Yes?

MARVIN. With looks like ours—

MABEL. Go on!

MARVIN. And wool like mine—

MABEL. You're getting it!

MARVIN. We should make quite a team you've never been loved till you—

MABEL. Keep going!

MARVIN. 've been loved by a chrysafrililiolium!! That's me.

MABEL. You did it, sort of!

MARVIN. Did I?

MABEL. Yes! Now all we need—

MARVIN. I was sexy?

MABEL. Is—

(Alice enters)

ALICE. Hi, Marv, hi, Mabel

MABEL. Try it on Alice, Marv

MARVIN. Really sexy?

MABEL. Yes, Marv!

MARVIN. Well

MABEL. Try!

MARVIN. Okay. Uh, hi, Alice, I'm uh soph . . . uh, sophph . . . I, uh, er well,

I

ALICE. Marvin, is something wrong?

MARVIN. Uh, hi, Alice, I'm

ALICE. What?

MARVIN. Soph . . . soph . . . soph . . .

ALICE. I don't understand

MARVIN. I'm soph . . .

ALICE. Are you all right?

MARVIN. Wait, I'm

(Al flies by)

AL. Howdy, young uns, how's it goin'?

ALICE. I think Marvin's ill

MARVIN. I'm . . . I'm soph

AL. What's the trouble there, Marv?

MARV. Sophoph

AL. Huh?

ALICE. Do you think we

MARVIN. Soph soph soph

ALICE. Marvin, should—

MARVIN. *SOPHISTROLATED!! I'M SOPHLISTROLATED!! I'VE GOT IT!!*

I'M SOPHLISTROROOPLYISTROLATED!!

Hey, Alice, you wanna kiss me now?

ALICE (*puzzled*). Not yet, Marvin.

MARVIN. Mabel, I don't think I was sexy.

MABEL. Sophisticated, Marv

MARVIN. Oh.

(he exits below)

AL. Hey, Mabel, what's with Marv?

MABEL. He was trying to be sexy

ALICE. *Marvin?*

MABEL. Yeah

ALICE. Marvin's so funny. You know, I—

(Weede enters)

WEEDE. Look at the dames. They're all the same.

ALICE. I'm sorry, I don't believe I

WEEDE. Weede, the name is Weede. Baby. Not bad. Not bad. For a broad.

ALICE. You're not nice at all.

WEEDE. That's right. Come on.

(he goes)

ALICE. But I . . . but . . . Well, he does seem interesting

(she follows him)

(pause)

(Honey Sue enters)

HONEY SUE. Oh, Mister Alfred, I do feel so awkward and embarrassed, why my heart is just fluctuating like a little old market price. You don't think it was wrong of me to have let you pick me up like that the other day?

AL. Why—

HONEY SUE. I know I should have refused to let you talk to me, but there was that awful object in my eye, and seeing such a big strong masculine arthropod like you, I simply couldn't help myself, and before I knew it, there I was just pouring my poor little old heart out to you, you don't think it was too bold of me?

AL. Well, now, Miss, I—

HONEY SUE. I knew you'd understand! Well now, Mister Alfred, I guess now I should say goodbye and go off to my

AL. Er, Miss Honey Sue

HONEY SUE. Yes?

AL. Could I er see you again some time? I know a cozy little spot where they serve a fine poached pollen, and for you I'm told the roast aphids are very juicy and tasty.

HONEY SUE. I do confess, I am an avid aphid eater.

AL. And I understand there are some very talented crickets performing there this evening

HONEY SUE. Why, Mister Alfred, you do set my leading economic

indicators all aflutter. Why, I should be delighted, sir. Bye now, y'all.

(she goes)

AL. Mabel. Don't laugh at me.

MABEL. No, Pop.

AL. Fine lady, very charming

MABEL. *Hey, Pop*—do you think it's getting colder?!

AL. Just a little, Mabel, nothing to worry about

MABEL. Oh.

(Alice enters)

MABEL. Hi, Alice! . . . Hi, Alice

ALICE. Oh wow.

MABEL. Alice? Did something—

ALICE. Like a dream

(pause)

MABEL. Alice? Are you—

ALICE. Oh *wow!*

MABEL. Alice, what *happened?*

ALICE. Oh, yes! Just fabulous. We cross-pollinated.

(pause)

MABEL. Really good, huh?

ALICE. Oh wow.

MABEL. Hey, Alice—

ALICE. What a weed. What a weed!

(Marvin enters)

MARVIN. Hey, Mabel—I betcha I can do it right this time! Look at this! Uh, hi, Alice! *(pause)* Alice?

(pause)

ALICE. Oh, it's you, Marvin.

MARVIN. Uh, hi, Alice!

ALICE. Hi, Marvin, isn't life beautiful?

MARVIN. Uh, yeah, Alice.

ALICE. Oh, *yes*, Marvin!

MARVIN. Uh, Alice, I bet you uh

ALICE. Oh wow *(sigh)*

MARVIN. Uh, Alice, is uh somethin on your mind?

ALICE. Nothing *(sigh)*

MARVIN. Uh, it sure is nice weather out today, huh Alice?

ALICE. Oh, yes! Yes, Marvin!

MARVIN. Gee, Alice, you seem sort of different

ALICE. Do I?

MARVIN. Uh, I sort of like you like this, Alice

ALICE. Do you, Marvin?

MARVIN. Uh, yeah.

ALICE. I'm glad you do, Marvin.

MARVIN. Gee, are you really?

ALICE. Oh, yes!

MARVIN. Uh, Alice, I uh, well, you see I

ALICE. Are you trying to say something, Marvin?

MARVIN. Uh, yeah, I

ALICE. Go on, Marvin

MARVIN. Gee, Alice, what I wanted to say is—

ALICE. Yes?

MARVIN. I—

(Weede enters)

WEEDE. Well, if it aint old Marvin

MARVIN. Uh, hi

WEEDE. Howya doin, Marv. *(to Alice)* Hey, baby, by the crocuses again in half an hour

ALICE. Oh yes!

WEEDE *(to Marvin)*. So long, fluffface. Gimmy regards to your buggy friends. Don't get yourself picked, kid. Heh heh.

(he goes)

MARVIN. Uh, Alice

ALICE. Yes, Marvin?

MARVIN. I was about to say uh

ALICE. What, Marvin?

MARVIN. Gee, Alice, I sure do like talkin to you and I—

ALICE. Bye, Marvin

(she goes)

MARVIN. Uh, oh, uh bye.

MABEL. Pop, did you see what I just saw?

AL. I saw it, Mabel

MABEL. Poor Marvin. Hey, Marv

MARVIN. Uh, hi, Mabel

MABEL. Marv, about Alice

MARVIN. Didja see that?

MABEL. Marv, I'm sorry

MARVIN. SHE LIKES ME!!!

MABEL. What?

MARVIN. I'm the happiest plisaffrolum in the whole lawn! YIPPEEE! She likes me!

MABEL. But Marv

MARVIN. Didja hear her? I said I liked her and she said that she was *glad!!!*

YIPPEEEEE!!

MABEL. But

MARVIN. Mabel. I'm in love!

(pause)

MABEL. Oh, uh, that's great, Marv.

MARVIN. Do you know why I love her, Mabel?

MABEL. Why, Marv?

MARVIN. I love her because she's nice.

(he goes below)

MABEL *(very softly)*. Oh bummer.

—Hey, Marv?

MARVIN *(sticks his head up)*. Yeah, Mabel?

MABEL. Take care of yourself, okay?

MARVIN *(puzzled)*. Gee, sure, Mabel.

(goes again)

MABEL. Pop?

AL. Yeah?

MABEL. Is he really that dumb?

AL. You remember old Harry the Worm who never figured out which end was front?

MABEL. Yeah?

AL. Harry was smarter.

(they go)

(Honey Sue enters)

HONEY SUE. I do declare, my market is on an uptick. Why, just this very day, I did receive a personally inscribed poem from Mister Alfred:

(reads)

This is a poem

From Guess-Who

Cigars are great

And so are you

Admittedly, a little lacking in literary distinction, but the sentiment is laudable.

(Al enters)

AL. Howdy, Miss Honey Sue

HONEY SUE. Why, Mister Alfred, you should have told me that you were a poet of true genius, I don't know how I even dared to talk to you!

AL. I always did think I could be a good writer if I had the time.

HONEY SUE. Indeed, you are too modest, sir. Why, you know, you've never really talked to me about yourself, though I can see just looking at you that you are a butterfly of the world. Tell me, where is it you originally come from?

AL. I'll tell you, Miss, I come from out West, where the flowers grow big and the butterflies flap tall.

HONEY SUE. I should have realized from your masterful personality and gross personal product. And yet, could I be wrong in thinking I detect some secret sorrow?

AL. It's true. My late wife. She was eaten by a sparrow.

HONEY SUE. Why, sir, you just liquify my assets. Oh, sir, I do so feel for you in your great sorrow

(they go)

(Marvin enters)

MARVIN. I sure am happy. I think I'll write Alice a letter askin her to meet me here so I can tell her how I love her, and she'll be happy too, and maybe if I tell her how I love her she'll say, "Marvin," she'll say, and I'll say, "Alice?", and she'll say, "Marvin? Marvin, I love you too," and then I'll cross my eyes so she'll feel proud of me. I'll write the letter right away. D-E-R-E A-L-I-S-S . . .

(he goes)

(Al and Mabel)

AL. Er, Mabel

MABEL. Yes, Pop?

AL. Mabel, any day now, you're going to feel winter in the air. And when that happens, you just make yourself a nice cocoon and go in there and sleep. And when you wake up, you'll be a butterfly like your old man.

MABEL. Except a lady, right, Pop?

AL. You'll be *my* little lady, Mabel.

(*pause*)

MABEL. Hey, Pop? What happens to *you* when winter comes?

AL (*bravely*). Don't think about your old man, Mabel.

MABEL. Okay.

(*they go*)

(*Alice and Weede*)

ALICE. But he wrote me a letter asking me to meet him here!

WEEDE. Heh. I didn't know the dumb mum knew *how* to write. We're goin.

Baby.

ALICE. But he *is* nice

WEEDE. Nice, is he? Huh! Okay, stay. It's goodbye to you. Baby.

(*starts to go*)

ALICE. No!

WEEDE. Then come on. Baby.

ALICE. Please. You know I love you. Let me talk to him this once.

WEEDE (*considers*). Heh. Okay. In fact, I think I'll hide down here and watch old Marv try and turn you on. Should be quite a laugh. Baby.

ALICE. But—

WEEDE. Do I stay or do I go?

ALICE. You stay.

WEEDE. Heh heh heh heh heh heh heh

(he hides)

ALICE. He wrote that it was really important that I talk to him. I wonder what it could be all about?

(Marvin enters)

MARVIN. Uh, hi, Alice.

ALICE. Hi, Marvin. I got your letter.

MARVIN. Gosh.

ALICE. How are you, Marvin?

MARVIN. Oh. Gee. How are *you*, Alice?

ALICE. Oh, Marvin, I've never been so happy in all my life.

MARVIN. Gee, Alice, me too. I'm the happiest chryfathrolum in the whole world!

ALICE. I'm glad you're happy, Marvin.

MARVIN. It's on account of you that I'm so happy, Alice.

ALICE. I don't understand?

MARVIN. Because *you're* happy.

ALICE. Why . . . Marvin. That's sweet.

MARVIN. Oh gosh, Alice.

ALICE. You're really one of the nicest flowers I know, Marvin

WEEDE (*peeks up*). Heh! What a pair of jerks. (*hides back down*)

MARVIN. Golly.

ALICE. Marvin, have you ever been in love?

MARVIN. Oh gee, Alice, gosh I er I

ALICE. Oh, Marvin, you *are*! I can see! Then you understand how *I* feel, Marvin!

MARVIN. Oh gosh, Alice, I sure do

ALICE. Oh, Marvin, that's wonderful! Is it someone I know?

MARVIN. It sure is, Alice

ALICE. Oh, who?! Tell me, Marvin!

MARVIN. Oh gee you'll laugh at me

ALICE. I won't laugh!

MARVIN. Oh golly

ALICE. Please tell me, if you tell me who it is, I may be able to help you!
Please

MARVIN. Alice, it's . . . it's . . . Oh gee I'm scared

ALICE. Marvin, don't be frightened

MARVIN. Alice . . .

Oh gee oh gosh I sure do love you Alice.

(*pause*)

ALICE. Me?

MARVIN (*nods yes*).

ALICE. Marvin—me?

(*Marvin hides his face*)

Nobody's ever said that to me before. Oh poor Marvin, you're so sweet

MARVIN. Alice . . . ?

ALICE. Oh, Marvin, I don't know what to say. I do like you, Marvin. But . . . give me time. Please.

MARVIN (*happy*). Do you really like me, Alice?

ALICE. Marvin, I promise you, I *will* come to you, but—

(*Weede enters*)

WEEDE. Hiya fluffface. Hey, kid, whatsamatter? You look like you been cryin. Well, another little mosey by the crocuses should fix that fast. See ya later, Marv.

ALICE. Marv, I have to go now

MARVIN. Sure, Alice

WEEDE. Hey. Casanova. Lemme tell ya somethin. I was watchin yer little show there. Alice asked me to. And there's somethin ya should know. Yer a flop. You get that? And ya know why, Marv? Because yer nice. Yer nice, Marv. Yer a goddamn nice little flower, that's why. Me, I'm a weed. And I don't care for nobody. See ya, Marv. Hey, Alice tells me ya can cross yer eyes—keep it up, I bet it's really sexy heh heh heh heh!

(he goes)

ALICE. I *will* be back. I promise.

MARVIN. Sure, Alice.

(she goes; Marv remains)

(Honey Sue and Al enter)

HONEY SUE. Oh, sir, my poor little heart here beats in sympathy for you and your poor young daughter all alone with all that accrued equity, all without a mother's legal tenderness to guide her—(Why, what a handsome though not very bright-looking young flower that is, just the very sort with whom I would so like to establish a favorable exchange rate after my wealthy husband whom I have not married yet has sadly passed away)—You must feel so lonely with no one to appreciate you, you charismatic six-legged hunk, you
AL. Er, Miss Honey Sue, I was wondering if . . .

HONEY SUE. Yes?

AL. I'd like to ask you if you'd like . . . a cigar

HONEY SUE. No thank you, kind sir

(pause)

AL. Miss Honey Sue, will you marry me?

HONEY SUE. Why, sir, you simply take me by surprise, you overwhelm my reserves, I don't know what to say—(I do believe I was afraid it would be winter before he asked)—Sir, I would be honored to become your chief

financial officer and wife, and I just happen to have an attorney friend, a certain beetle of the law, before whom we could draw up an agreement concerning our future commercial relations

(they go; pause)

(Mabel enters)

MABEL. Hi, Marv

MARVIN. Hi, Mabel

MABEL. Are you okay?

MARVIN. Alice promised she'd come back to me, and I'm not moving till she gets here

MABEL. I just saw Alice, Marv. She's very happy.

(Al enters)

AL. How's it goin, Marv? Have a cigar. Mabel, your old man's gettin married.

MABEL *(a bit doubtfully)*. Congratulations, Pop

AL. I'll tell ya, Marv, I feel like a new butterfly. I was all worn out—I'll bet you think it's fun all that flittin from flower to flower, upanddown, upanddown, well it's not, it's hard work, but after this, I'll tell ya, I feel twenty days younger. You'll like Honey Sue, Mabel. You know, Marv, why don't you get married, I'll bet it'd do you a world of—

MABEL. *Hey, Pop, what's that?*

AL. What's what, Mabel?

MABEL. It's getting colder

AL. That's nothing, Mabel

(the sound of the WIND)

(Al is being blown away)

MABEL. Pop!

AL. Just a stray gust, Mabel!

MABEL. Pop! Come back!

(Al is gone)

(a strange modal melody; Pan appears on the hills in the distance, playing on his pipes))

PAN *(sings)*.

The Summer splashes the shade with light

And grass is green

And the Sky is bright

The water laughs in the dancing stream

And the hills are all sprinkled with blue, pink, and gold

Fade leaves, now the wind does blow

And the rain grows cold

And it turns to snow

Fade green, now the hills are grey

And the water is still in the stream

(Pan vanishes)

(pause)

MABEL. Marv, I've gotta go make my cocoon and sleep

MARVIN. Uh sure, Mabel.

MABEL. Marv, it was nice knowing you.

MARVIN. It was nice knowing you, Mabel.

MABEL. I'm sorry, Marv.

(she goes)

MARVIN. I know Alice will come back before I . . . Oh gee, it's so cold. I'm freezing.

ALICE'S VOICE. Weede! Weede! Don't leave me! Come back!

(Alice enters)

ALICE. Marvin, have you seen Weede, he ran away from me

MARVIN. I knew you'd come back, Alice

ALICE. Not yet, Marv. I have to find Weede before it's too late!

MARVIN. But you—

ALICE. Oh, I will, Marvin. I mean it. But not yet. I have to find Weede first.

MARVIN. But Alice, we're dying.

(pause)

ALICE. Not yet, Marvin. It's not winter yet.

MARVIN. Alice.

ALICE. It's still summer, Marvin. Why did he run away from me, he knows it isn't winter yet. Is it? It's going to turn warm again any minute now. I know it will, Marvin. It—Oh God, I'm so scared.

MARVIN. Alice, love me for a moment before we die

(pause)

ALICE. Marvin, I'm too cold

MARVIN. Please, Alice

ALICE. I'll love you when it's warmer, Marvin. I promise I will.

MARVIN. *Alice!*

ALICE. Marvin, you have to give me time. It's too cold now.

MARVIN. Love me.

ALICE *(dying)*. Marvin, he ran away from me.

MARVIN. I love you, Alice. Please love me.

(silence)

(snow begins falling; Al flutters in weakly and sinks to the ground; far in the distance, Pan's pipes begin playing again)

MARVIN *(whispers)*. Love m . . .

(Marvin dies)

(lights dim slowly as the snow falls)

Chang and the Dragon's Daughter

*E*verything simple. Windchimes and plucked strings, silk and metal and wood.
*E*A mix of puppets and actors. The stage should be a place where something
is about to happen.

A moment of utter stillness: almost as if the space itself is holding its breath.
 Then, softly, windchimes, and the Immortal Mao Nu, more than nine feet tall and beautiful and strange, appears, shimmering. As she becomes visible, she sings.

MAO NU (*sings*). *The rivers rise, the rivers fall*

And men pass like a mist, like shadows on a wall

Do not be sure of who you are

I am the Immortal Mao Nu

And I am come to show you in a dream

That lasts until tomorrow

Of true things

(wordlessly singing, she vanishes)

(the sage Fa Yun, carrying a broom)

FA YUN. I am the Sage Fa Yun

The Temple is silent

Below in the valley, I see two travellers draw near

(Chang Yu, a young scholar wearing eyeglasses, and his servant Han Lo

enter; Han Lo is piled high with bundles)

HAN LO. Oh! Oh! Oh!

CHANG YU. What is it, Han Lo?

HAN LO. No. Is nothing. Only twisted ankle—oh! suffering torment! No. Han Lo still walk. At least Han Lo still stand. Master no worry. Han Lo manage somehow. Oh!

CHANG YU. Here, will it help if I carry this, Han Lo? *(takes one of the bundles)*

(pause)

HAN LO. Ah! Han Lo feels better now.

(they walk)

HAN LO. Oh! Oh! Oh!

CHANG YU. What is it, Han Lo?!

HAN LO. Only shoulder. Is nothing. Master no—oh anguish, oh misery entire, oh grievous sensation!

CHANG YU. Does this help, Han Lo? *(takes the second bundle)*

(pause)

HAN LO. Ah! Han Lo feels better now.

(they walk)

HAN LO. Oh! Oh! Oh!

CHANG YU. What is it, Han Lo?!

HAN LO. Han Lo is dizzy, everything going black—

CHANG YU. Does this help, Han Lo? *(he takes the last bundle)*

(pause)

HAN LO. Ah! Han Lo feels better now.

CHANG YU. You're cheating me, Han Lo.

HAN LO. If master must be cheated, it is better he be cheated by Han Lo who has only master's good at heart than by some stranger who cares only for himself.

CHANG YU. How very true. And yet, I fear, carrying these packages, Han Lo's master may unfortunately stumble. How sad to think that after such an accident Han Lo would have to carry not only packages but also master.

(pause)

HAN LO. Shoulder better now. *(takes back one bundle)*

(pause)

Ankle better. *(takes back the second)*

(pause; considers)

Still dizzy.

CHANG YU. Look!

Up on that cliff against the Sea—a temple!

(a chime; Fa Yun steps forward)

Holy Sage, what is this place?

FA YUN. The Temple of the Great Stone Buddha

(pause)

CHANG YU. My name is Chang Yu

My parents have been dead for many years

Twice I have attempted the Imperial Examination

And both times I have failed

Holy Master, may I study here a while?

FA YUN. There is a room above the Sunrise Sea

Realm of the Sacred Dragon King

CHANG YU. Holy Sage, I thank you

FA YUN. Follow

(he leads them in a circle around the stage)

Here among these ancient stones

Find peace in the old wisdom

(he goes)

CHANG YU *(looking around, to Han Lo)*. Shh

HAN LO. If learned scholar should desire dinner, Han Lo would not presume to contradict honorable appetite.

CHANG YU. How beautiful the silence

How still the life within these walls

HAN LO. Ah, if master not eat, knowledgeable belly will rumble—end to

silence.

CHANG YU. The fading light, the bare stone floor

HAN LO. Terrible, terrible, temple all disturbed by educated stomach

CHANG YU. Han Lo

HAN LO. True digestion is path to understanding

CHANG YU. Be quiet now

(Chiung Lien, an extraordinarily beautiful young woman, enters with her maid Mei Hsiang)

CHIUNG LIEN.

My name is Chiung Lien, my Father is the Sacred Dragon King

Drawn by a strange longing, I have come up from the Sea

To watch the Moon come out above the shore

MEI HSIANG. Your Father must be worrying, shouldn't we turn back,

Chiung Lien?

CHIUNG LIEN. I don't know. My spirit calls me here

MEI HSIANG. This is a pretty spot, why—

CHIUNG LIEN. No.

MEI HSIANG. But we've been walking such a time. Let's sit.

CHIUNG LIEN. Not yet

MEI HSIANG. Ohh—look! A temple!

We should have temples back home in the Sea!

CHIUNG LIEN. Temples? No. Can you compare a solid wall of stone
 With the liquid walls that form my Father's Palace
 The work of men with the crystal caves and corals of the Sea?

MEI HSIANG. But still, a lovely temple

CHIUNG LIEN. The works of men are blades of grass
 Swept in an Autumn duststorm
 Now it is Spring for them, then Summer comes, then Fall
 How will they escape white Winter?

The rooster crows in morning
 A leaf falls in the night
 And in between a life is gone, all vanished

CHANG YU. In the silence
 A bird cries out
 Does it too remember grief?
 Light an incense stick and bring my *ch'in*
 It's good to play awhile and think
 Let single notes float out
 Where do they go?
 They leave their footprints in the wind

Vanish.

(he takes the ch'in)

Perhaps my tune

Will entertain some poor wandering

Fish of musical inclination.

Light the lamp, Han Lo.

(Han Lo lights the lamp)

(Chang Yu begins to play)

MEI HSIANG. Chung Lien, we're really much too late, your—

CHIUNG LIEN. Music!

MEI HSIANG. Well, yes, but—

(Chiung Lien stops her)

CHIUNG LIEN. I wonder who it is that plays that tune?

MEI HSIANG *(surprised)*. Just someone in the temple, we—

(Chiung Lien stops her)

CHIUNG LIEN. His fingers touch the strings like secret lovers

Look! There he is! He seems a scholar, and so handsome

CHANG YU *(noticing)*. Is someone there?

CHIUNG LIEN. His voice is gentle— *(steps into his space)* Sir?

CHANG YU *(sees her)*. She is so beautiful

(pause)

CHIUNG LIEN. Please play some more

(she sits before him in the flickering lamplight)

(staring into her eyes, he plays)

CHANG YU *(as he plays)*. You must love music

CHIUNG LIEN. I do. You play so well, sir

CHANG YU. Thank you.

(pause) The night is beautiful

CHIUNG LIEN. What is your name?

CHANG YU. I am Chang Yu. My parents died when I was four years old.

I am on my way to the Capital for the Examination

And in my travelling I happened here

(pause)

I am not married yet

CHIUNG LIEN. I am not married either

MEI HSIANG. Chiung Lien, he's just—how can you—

HAN LO *(to Mei Hsiang)*. Han Lo is not married either.

MEI HSIANG. Some women are blind, sir. Don't give up.

CHANG YU. I'm very poor

Will you marry me?

CHIUNG LIEN. Yes.

MEI HSIANG. But—but—but—

CHIUNG LIEN *(to Mei Hsiang)*. Shh

(to Chang Yu) But first you must come to my Father's house

On the Day of the Mid-Autumn Moon

CHANG YU (*softly*). Must I wait so long?

HAN LO. Must Han Lo wait too?

MEI HSIANG. Not long: Till fish grow beards and magpies eat with chopsticks.

CHIUNG LIEN. You must

CHANG YU. I will then

CHIUNG LIEN. Go to the Capital, take the Examination

And when you return it will be time

CHANG YU. You won't forget me?

CHIUNG LIEN. If you love me

CHANG YU (*still softly*). I must ask you then, where is your Father's house?

CHIUNG LIEN. My home is under the laughing waves

Under the azure Sea

Where the dolphins play

And the great whales sing

In the Crystal Cave of the Sunrise Sea

My guards have scales and horns and teeth

I am Chiung Lien, third daughter of the Sacred Dragon King!

Will you come to me?

CHANG YU. I will

CHIUNG LIEN. Then I will wait for you

(she goes)

HAN LO *(following Mei Hsiang out after her mistress)*. Wait!

Where will Han Lo be granted to see beautiful Mei Hsiang again?

MEI HSIANG. Fill a bucket up with water

And if you put your head in it perhaps you'll see me there

(they go)

(Chang Yu is alone)

CHANG YU. I will

(blackout)

(the lights come up on Chang Yu)

CHANG YU. Eight months have passed

And today is the Day of the Mid-Autumn Moon

I have been to the Capital, I have passed the Examination

And now I have come back to this spot:

This morning I shall swim down to the bottom of the Sea

To find Chiung Lien

(he enters the scene)

How huge the waves are, cold and grey the Wind

How can I swim this Ocean!?

(some actors toss a blue cloth in the air)

(Han Lo runs in)

HAN LO. Master! Stop!

CHANG YU. Let go of me, Han Lo!

HAN LO. But listen—

CHANG YU. No!

HAN LO. You'll drown!

CHANG YU. So?

HAN LO. Wait!

CHANG YU. I'm going!

HAN LO. No!

CHANG YU. Let go!

(he breaks away from Han Lo, throws himself into the blue cloth sea, and vanishes in the waves as the actors sweep him and the cloth offstage)

HAN LO. Master—wait—master—stop—no—

Master—*come back!*

(pause)

Master?

The ancients say there are many ways to die, and, of them, death by water is indeed the wettest. Oh, master! Did you have to swim the sea? Must you die for love? Han Lo asks, what is love? Does it taste as good as cabbage?

No? Will it cure a headache? No? Then Han Lo say is better live without love and without headache than with love and with headache. And Han Lo say is better yet live without love and without headache than be without life, without headache, and without love. Oh, master, were there not enough deaths on dry land that you must throw yourself into the Sea? Look, master: Han Lo is crying.

(pause)

They say that there are rabbits on the Moon.

(pause)

Master is seafood now.

(he steps forward, lifting his trouser legs to keep them from the surf)

The sea is a restless dreamer.

(he takes a few steps forward; pause)

Oh, master. Han Lo is empty.

(a bucketful of water pours on him from above)

Ah, water.

Look! A wave as tall as fifteen men rushing to the shore! Han Lo will catch cold! Han Lo will drown! Help!! Water! Wet! Too wet!

(Han Lo runs off)

(two actors enter from the opposite side carrying the blue cloth, and hang it as a backdrop; the light changes; a multitude of sea-creatures, some suspended from

above, others supported by actors, fill the stage; two actors, seating themselves on either side of the stage, begin blowing soap bubbles across the stage)

(Chang Yu enters swimming)

CHANG YU. It is now three hours I have been swimming in the Sea

Deeper beneath the waves I glide

How will I find the Crystal Cave

Palace of the Sacred Dragon King?

Mister Porpoise!

PORPOISE. May I be of service, sir?

CHANG YU. How can I reach the Crystal Cave, home of the Sacred Dragon King?

PORPOISE. Ah, I see you're new here. Well, you'll want the scenic route then

CHANG YU. I—

PORPOISE. Just swim on to your right until you reach our very famous Coral Reef, then turn down, up again, left, right, right, around, down, left, down, and up, then an hour as fish flies to the old school, up around, left, swimming all the while with a gentle undulating motion, leaping in the air now and again for sheer enjoyment's sake, right again, down, left, under, take a turn by the sunken ship, and then you're there. Do you have that?

CHANG YU. I—

PORPOISE (*swimming off*). Not at all, not at all, that's perfectly all right. Do watch out for the shark, though.

CHANG YU (*swimming further*). Right . . . the Coral Reef . . .

CLOWNFISH (*singing to herself*). *Meet me in anemone*

CHANG YU. Excuse me, Mister Turtle?

SEA TURTLE. Eh? Eh?

CHANG YU. Mister Turtle, could you—

SEA TURTLE. Eh? Speak up there

CHANG YU. Could you

SEA TURTLE. What's the trouble? What's the trouble?

CHANG YU. Could you tell me how to find the Palace of the Sacred Dragon King?

SEA TURTLE (*swimming off*). Very true, very true.

CHANG YU. I'll have to keep on swimming

(Chang Yu swims off)

ANCHOVY. Doctor, I have a problem

PHYSICIANFISH. Yes?

ANCHOVY. Doctor, I think there's been a mistake. I wasn't meant to be an anchovy.

PHYSICIANFISH. Is that so?

ANCHOVY. I was meant to be an aardvark. Waddle, waddle—that's the life

for me. It's so hard for an ordinary anchovy to seriously waddle!

PHYSICIANFISH. How—

ANCHOVY. I know—you think it's strange. You think my ambition is peculiar. Inappropriate. That's what they all say: Stick to the water! Here you are, a dashing young anchovy. What more could you want? If they'd only understand!

(Chang Yu swims on)

CHANG YU. The water's dark, everywhere I look I see
 Seaweed and stone, rotting wood, and strange small fish
 With eyes above their heads
 Still flowers dance and send out hungry mouths
 A huge Squid sprays the water with its ink
 Dark and heavy floats the ooze
 Small fish with fangs, their prey grows from their heads
 A fish that pulls its stomach by its side
 Another hides its belly in the sand
 One is a stone that glows and grabs
 The jewels themselves have bloody tongues
 And on a stalk there turns a colored eye
 A fish that sings
 A fish that weeps

A fish that lives inside another's mouth

And one that floats a bubble in the sea pink speckled

And threads come from its heart

PHILOSOPHERFISH (*surrounded by his school*). As a golden fish might swim along a river, first to one bank, then the other, so we pass our lives in waking, dreaming, waking, dreaming

(the Great Sinister Shark swims in)

SHARKEY. Look! A young thtudent thwimming the in Thea! Little doeth he thuthpect that I, the Gweat Thinithter Thark, am on hith twail!

ANCHOVY. If I were an aardvark, I could eat termites!

CHANG YU. Oh, Chiung Lien, how will I find—

SHARKEY. Pertheive and twemble!

CHANG YU. Help! A shark!

SHARKEY. Yeth! I'm going to thwallow you up!

CHANG YU. Oh no!

SHARKEY. Ho! Think not to thway me, Mithter Thtudent, with thy pleath for merthy! I am wemorthetheythly inflekthible—thy fate ith thealed!

CHANG YU. Oh Shark, why are you going to eat me!?

(pause)

SHARKEY. Well, you may not have notithed, but I have a thlight thpeetth defect.

CHANG YU. A what?

SHARKEY. A thepeth defect.

CHANG YU. Why no, I never notithed that. It theemth to me that you
thpeak beautifully

SHARKEY. I—I do?

CHANG YU. Abtholutely

SHARKEY. Oh, you're dthutht thaying that to make me feel good

CHANG YU. No, I thintherey mean it

SHARKEY. Weally?

CHANG YU. Weally.

SHARKEY. But I thuppothe I'm dthutht bawwing you with all thith

CHANG YU. Pleathe go on!

SHARKEY. Yeth?

CHANG YU. It' th faththinating!

SHARKEY. Well, it thtarded when I wath a little thark. Whenever I thtarded
thpeaking, all my fwiendth would laugh at me

CHANG YU. No!

SHARKEY. Yeth

CHANG YU. How tewwible faw you!

SHARKEY. But thoon I dithcovered that if I ate them they would thtop
laughing!

CHANG YU. Bwilliant!

SHARKEY. Yeth. And tho I thwore a tholemn oath then alwayth to eat evewybody.

CHANG YU. What a thtory! I'm thpeatthlethth!

SHARKEY. And tho you do underthtand I have to eat you now

CHANG YU. Of courthe!

SHARKEY. Nothing perthonal, you underthtand. I eat evewybody.

CHANG YU. Yeth yeth, go wight ahead

(pause)

SHARKEY. Being a thark ith a gwave wethponthibility.

CHANG YU. Athtoniththing! Eloquenthe itthelf!

SHARKEY. Oh gee

CHANG YU. But, before you devour me, o gweat thark, may I have your autogwaph?

SHARKEY. Mithter Thtudent. You won't be offended if, theeing ath we're fwiendth, I don't devour you after all?

CHANG YU. But I couldn't athk you to dithwegard your tholemn oath!

SHARKEY. No, no, I pwefer not to

CHANG YU. Well, that'th all wight then, if you weally don't want to

SHARKEY *(relieved)*. Thank you, Mithter Thtudent! It wath twuly a pleathure! Bye!

CHANG YU. Bye!

SHARKEY. Have a nithe twip!

(goes)

CHANG YU. Whew.

ANCHOVY. They say that chomping termites is one of life's great pleasures

CHANG YU. But now I must find Chiung Lien! Mithth Oyth—Miss
Oyster—

OYSTERESS. No!!

CHANG YU. I only want—

OYSTERESS. I know what you want—pearls! You want my pearls!

CHANG YU. No, I—

OYSTERESS. I made them, they're mine! Oh, they're so smooth and
round—

CHANG YU. But—

OYSTERESS. You can't have them!

CHANG YU. Please—

OCTOPUSESS *(taps him on the shoulder)*. You might ask me

CHANG YU. Oh, Miss Octopus, can you tell me where to find the Crystal
Cave, home of the Sacred Dragon King?

OCTOPUSESS. Why, you're almost there—just follow down along that ridge
and you'll be there

CHANG YU. Thank you!

OCTOPUSESS. You know, you're kind of cute

CHANG YU. Goodbye

(he swims away)

OCTOPUSESS. I guess he's not a leg man

CHANG YU *(swimming)*. Almost there!

MOTHER SEA HORSE. Children!

BABY SEA HORSES. Mommy!

CHANG YU. Along the ridge . . .

Look!

MOTHER SEA HORSE. Follow me!

(she goes, followed by the babies)

CHANG YU. Down there! The Crystal Cave.

(as he stands there, a baby sea horse approaches him)

BABY SEA HORSE *(wondering)*. You're not a fish

(pause; it shies away)

CHANG YU. Hello

BABY SEA HORSE. Are you a . . . boat?

CHANG YU. I'm called a man

BABY SEA HORSE. "Man"?

CHANG YU *(turning away)*. Chiung Lien—

BABY SEA HORSE. I know about boats. *(pause)* Are you going to eat me?

CHANG YU *(smiles)*. Don't worry. Here. Come here.

(it approaches timidly; he strokes it on the nose)

MOTHER SEA HORSE *(returns)*. There you are!

BABY SEA HORSE. Mommy!

MOTHER SEA HORSE. I was afraid you had been eaten! You stay right . . .

(they swim off)

CHANG YU. At last

(he starts to swim)

Down and the Sea grows bright

(some fish float by on balloons; one by one the sea creatures start to move away)

A wall of crystal stands before me covered with a thousand jewels

An entranceway, and strange lights glow inside the stones

This is the Palace of the Dragon King!

(he wipes his glasses)

Chiung Lien, I gave my word and I have come

Passed through every danger of the Sea

To hold you in my arms

Today is the Day of the Mid-Autumn Moon

I love you as I loved you in the moment that we met

Come to me, Chiung Lien!

THE DRAGON'S VOICE. *Who is in my Palace!?*

(the ocean floor quakes)

Who is come down to the water world?!

(the Dragon enters)

DRAGON. You! Why have you

Finless detestable only fit for land

Dared come into my Kingdon! Why!?

CHANG YU. Help me, Sacred Dragon King

Take pity on a thing of land, of two legs

Clumsy on the earth, clumsy in water

A baby creature ignorant of worth

An angry monkey

Cruel, incapable, at best a brief disturbance of the living earth

Sacred Dragon King assist me!

DRAGON. You!

CHANG YU. I am Chang Yu, a scholar

Recently I have passed the Examination

DRAGON. You awe me, Master Scholar

CHANG YU. Now through all this Sea

Of deadly shapes and monsters of the slime

Ferocious gulleets floating free in brine

Alone I come

All for a smile and pain

A pain that brings forth smiles

A smile that brought my pain

DRAGON. And so?

CHANG YU. O Sacred Dragon King

I once was in the Temple of the Great Stone Buddha

I sat and played the *ch'in* and playing met a girl

More beautiful than any of the world

Love is a seed lodged in my heart

And sorrow is the color of its flower

Help me!

DRAGON. Ah, you wish me to assist you to gain your love in marriage?

CHANG YU. Yes

DRAGON. Who is she? Speak

CHANG YU. She is Chiung Lien your daughter

I ask you to receive me as your son-in-law

(pause)

DRAGON. I am the Sacred Dragon King who rules the Sunrise Sea

My skin is red, my eyes are green

And if I show my teeth and spread my claws
And lightly lift my head's blue horns
Waves crash, mountains shake, the rivers twist like snakes
I can grow small to hide inside a mustard seed
And large enough to eat the burning Sun
Clouds, mists, obey my will
Wind, rain, storms of dust
For you, in honor of your impudence
Since you would have my daughter
I raise these walls of stone to hold you here
A prisoner
Until you die!!

*(he holds out his arm, and with a roar walls of paper streamers rise up
around Chang Yu; then there begins a harsh wailing music full of angry drumbeats,
and the Dragon King starts to dance a wild thrashing dance of fury and triumph; at
its climax, the Dragon gives a terrible shout of rage that shakes the boulders, and
rushes out)*

(silence)

CHANG YU. Now I must die
The Ancients say all life is an illusion
Time a fading flower

Here, there, the sunlight shades

The sea is land, the mountains turn to rain

Unreachable

And yet, Chiung Lien, I love you

I love you even now

High on the Mountain of Hao Lu

Above the place of Hsieh T'iao's song

Beyond the grove

There is a ledge of yellow stone

And there you take a path

Down to a rushweed pond

Over it there stands a gentle willow tree

And at its foot there grows bamboo entwined

Entwined bamboo

But I shall never kiss your breasts like down of snow

Your jewel fingers will not twine with mine

O little heart

How cold the wind blows

Under the Sea

(quietly, Chiung Lien comes on)

CHIUNG LIEN *(she cannot see him)*. Chang Yu

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien!

CHIUNG LIEN. The day is almost over

That you promised you would come

Like tears, have you forgotten me?

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien! I'm here!

CHIUNG LIEN. And now the day is over

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien—can't you hear me!?

CHIUNG LIEN. Chang Yu, the Sun is being swallowed

CHANG YU. Hear me!

CHIUNG LIEN. Black the night comes

Black the hour

To a young girl hard is an empty bed

Her life is in her

No

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien!

CHIUNG LIEN. This silk I chose, Chang Yu, to please you

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien, I'm here!

CHIUNG LIEN. I waited for you as I said I would, Chang Yu

CHANG YU. I'm here!!

CHIUNG LIEN. Every day I thought of you

CHANG YU. I'm here!!!

CHIUNG LIEN. How strange the water flows

There are so many hours in the night

CHANG YU. Hear me!!

CHIUNG LIEN. And since you have not come the night is heavy

CHANG YU. Oh my love! My love!

CHIUNG LIEN. Now I will die, Chang Yu

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien, I'm here!

CHIUNG LIEN. I will die because I love you

CHANG YU (*as she goes*). Wait! I love you! I'm here, Chiung Lien, I'm here!

Wait! No!

(she is gone)

Now I cannot bear to live

If Chiung Lien dies I must die too

(sings)

This world is full of empty noise

And like the flowers fade its joys

Faint snow in Spring, our eyes dissolve

Our days are dreams, their shapes revolve

Before our eyes

In empty lies

So let death come now and the night

And the rough wind blow above the sea

And waves beat madly on the shore
Chiung Lien will never know I love her
I thought to kiss your body smooth as jade
Our legs outstretched, our hair entwined
Alone in this stone chamber now I die
If I could be by you!
One by one the stars go out in every ending
I shut my eyes and wait
And all the sorrows of this life will vanish

(Mao Nu magically appears)

MAO NU. Why are you here, child?

CHANG YU. Who are you?

MAO NU. Speak, are you unhappy?

CHANG YU. Are you one of the Immortals?

MAO NU. Yes.

CHANG YU. Forgive me!

MAO NU. I am called Mao Nu

CHANG YU. Oh great Mao Nu, I am terribly unhappy.

MAO NU. There, child, it is good.

For all things in this world must have an end. So sorrow.

CHANG YU. Help me

MAO NU. Cry

CHANG YU. I feel such pain

MAO NU. Cry, child

CHANG YU. All into nothing

MAO NU. Cry

How you cried when you were born

CHANG YU. Lost

MAO NU. You understood then, but you have forgotten

Weep

Tell me, child, what brought you to this pain?

CHANG YU. Love

MAO NU. Good

And once so small and red

Then know the High Immortals wish to help you

CHANG YU. How?

MAO NU. Why, child, we give to you this pot.

(pause)

CHANG YU. Oh Great Mao Nu, this pot is very beautiful

MAO NU. It is

CHANG YU. And yet, more than a pot, I would wish to have Chiung Lien.

MAO NU. You are a child difficult to please

CHANG YU. Forgive me

MAO NU. Very well. Because we wish you to be happy

We give you now this lamp.

Rejoice!

(pause)

CHANG YU. Oh Great Mao Nu

Wondrous and glorious is this lamp

That burns beneath the Sea

And yet—

MAO NU. You still are not content?

CHANG YU *(apologetically)*. I would have Chiung Lien.

MAO NU. Ah, you would?

CHANG YU. Forgive me.

MAO NU. Very well, child.

At last we give you what you wish for.

Behold—this skin of water!

CHANG YU. But—

MAO NU. Farewell!

CHANG YU. Sacred Immortal

MAO NU. Yes?

CHANG YU. Always I shall treasure this gift of pot and lamp

Received from your Immortal hands

A skin of water too is very fine

Even beneath the Sea

And yet—

MAO NU (*smiles*). You want Chiung Lien?

CHANG YU. I do

MAO NU. But I have given you Chiung Lien

CHANG YU. This is not what I think of as Chiung Lien

MAO NU. Poor child

The clay that formed that pot is clay of Hanging Garden

This lamp lit Wang Tzu-ch'iao along the way

The water is the water of the stars

CHANG YU. And with these I shall win Chiung Lien?

MAO NU. You shall

For you shall boil the Sea!

(she vanishes)

CHANG YU. Boil the Sea! But how?!

A lamp, a pot, and water

Then I can light the lamp

(he does)

There. And if I take the pot

(he does)

And into it I pour some water

(he does)

Then I can boil—But surely she can't mean—

And if she does, am I to be afraid?

(he adjusts his eyeglasses)

I hold the pot above the flame

And wait

SWORDFISH *(swimming by)*. Hmm . . . it's getting rather warm

LOBSTER. If it didn't seem a little pointless, I'd ask for a glass of water

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien, at last I hope to win you!

Soon—

But look! The sea outside my chamber here is bubbling

As in my pot the water starts to boil!

But how can it be that the Sea outside and water here

Do both the same?

And yet—

THE DRAGON'S VOICE. *Owwoooooo! Owwoooooo! Owwoooooo!*

Who is boiling my Sea!?

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien, I believe your Father soon

Will wish to speak to me

(the terrible cries of fish in pain are heard)

(the Dragon King enters)

DRAGON. I do not understand

What can be the source of this calamity

How can—

(he sees Chang Yu)

You—sir Scholar—what are you boiling there?

CHANG YU *(not looking up from his pot)*. I am boiling the Sea.

DRAGON. Good Master Scholar

Can't you hear the screaming of the fish in pain?

The Sea is steaming, mist and vapor

Pillar to the sky

Surely you won't lay waste all this Ocean

Merely to enjoy my daughter?

CHANG YU. Yes.

DRAGON. Master scholar, this is madness!

CHANG YU. Yes.

DRAGON. Is *this* the gentleness you learned by all your study!?

CHANG YU. I tell you plainly, Sacred Dragon King,

I will not stop until I have your daughter

DRAGON. No! Never!!

You—oh!—oh!—

I tell you, stop!!

(Chang Yu turns the flame higher)

I am the Sacred Drag—*owooooooooo!*

My eyes *owooooooooo*

I rule *owooooooooo*

Stop, please stop, good Master Scholar!

CHANG YU. And your daughter?

DRAGON. Yes, oh yes, my daughter only STOP!!!

(Chang Yu blows out the flame)

CHANG YU. I stop.

FISH VOICES. Oh! It's cooling off! The current! Oh!

DRAGON. You understand that it is only

If she will desire to have you

CHANG YU. It is enough

DRAGON. Then I have you now, Master Scholar!

All this plot of yours has been for nothing!

(to a fish) Call my daughter!

FISH *(going)*. Yes, *sir*, one more minute and you could have served me with
bean sauce!

DRAGON. Do you really think my daughter will consent to have you?

You? Ha ha ha ha ha!

She'll turn you down at once!

(music)

(spectacularly costumed, Chiung Lien enters)

(pause)

DRAGON. Well, master scholar, prepare yourself for a disappointment.

Third daughter, try not to be angry

But this scholar here

This dryskinned landliving skinny little bookfish who

Can't even see without a lens before his eyes

Wants to ask if you would marry him! Ha ha ha ha!

CHIUNG LIEN. Chang Yu, you did come for me

DRAGON. Ha ha ha—what?

CHANG YU. I did

DRAGON. Oh—you've met

CHIUNG LIEN. I knew you would

CHANG YU. Though every ocean, every desert, every waste

Lay stretched between us

(assorted sea things start to enter)

SEATHINGS. What's happening? What's happening?

CHIUNG LIEN. This is the man that I will marry, Father

DRAGON. Third daughter, this is not what I expected

Oh—all right! Get married if you want to!

SEA THINGS. Hooorrayyy!

There's gonna be a wedding!

Happy New Year!

SEA TURTLE. Eh? Same to you, same to you

HAN LO (*floats in by harness*). Master! See, Han Lo here too!

CHANG YU. Han Lo!

HAN LO (*sees Mei Hsiang*). Ah! Beautiful Mei Hsiang, will you marry Han Lo?

MEI HSIANG. No, but, if you wish, I'll hit you on the head just as if we were married

SEA TURTLE. Very well, thank you

HAN LO. Also here is venerable Sage Fa Yun!

FA YUN (*enters, holding his nose*). Wetness is but illusion

SHARKEY. Hooowwwaaaayyyyyy!

ANCHOVY. I may have the body of an anchovy, but I have the romantic soul of an aardvark.

SEA THINGS. Yipppeeeeeee!!!!

CHANG YU. Chiung Lien, at last

CHIUNG LIEN. My darling

CHANG YU. I will be so happy

CHIUNG LIEN. Yes

DRAGON. Young man, you know, you almost poached your father-in-law

CHANG YU. Forgive me, Sacred Dragon King

DRAGON. Very well, you have my blessing.

And now—

(windchimes; the Immortal Mao Nu appears)

MAO NU. I understand your sufferings

But do not be afraid in your great problems and perplexities

For I shall help you!

DRAGON. O Great Mao Nu

We are always grateful for your help

But we are still more grateful that right now

We have no need of help

MAO NU. Ah, but you do

You all have problems that you know not of!

Sacred Dragon King, you believe this girl to be your daughter?

DRAGON. Yes

MAO NU. And you believe yourself to be Chang Yu?

CHANG YU. I do

MAO NU. Mere appearances

ALL. What!! Hubbub hubbub!

SEA TURTLE. Not at all

MAO NU. I shall explain

Once in the Time of the Jasper Pool`

A Golden Page and a Green Jade Maiden

Two spirits in the realm of the Immortals, dared

To fall in love. As punishment it was decreed

They should be born into this world of sand

(soft windchimes, and the lights change)

And today it is done:

The Golden Page is born a boy into the Chao-Chou family Chang

She into the family of the mighty King who rules the Sunrise Sea

(as she speaks, a woman carrying a baby passes across the stage)

The Sacred Dragon.

Now, let a few years pass

They grow: He into a handsome scholar

She, the loveliest of girls

Soon they will meet and in the torment of a mortal love atone

And now they have and are forgiven

I am the Immortal Mao Nu

DRAGON. Then Chiung Lien is not my daughter?

MAO NU. No

DRAGON. Or he my son-in-law?

MAO NU. It was the will of the Immortals

CHIUNG LIEN. But great Mao Nu, we were going to be happy

MAO NU. Happiness comes and happiness goes

It does not matter in the long years of eternity

(taking their hands; very tenderly)

Now come, Chang Yu, and come, Chiung Lien

You are not who you thought you were

We must return unto the realm of the Immortals

Where all your sad existence on this world

Will be forgotten as a dream

And vanish

Say farewell to each other in these earthly forms you loved

And then I will return you to yourselves

(a strange soft music begins)

CHIUNG LIEN. Then I never was Chiung Lien or you Chang Yu

CHANG YU. No. And yet, Chiung Lien, I loved you

CHIUNG LIEN. Yes. And I loved you.

(they begin to vanish)

CHANG YU. Farewell, you world of bitter dust

CHIUNG LIEN. And the endless salt-stained Sea

BOTH. Farewell

(they all have faded; the music goes on for a few more seconds; for an instant strange fluorescent fish become visible and then slowly vanish)

(then even the music is gone)

or Cinderell

This is a play for dancers and for puppets of various sizes. In general, the bigger the event the smaller the puppets, but there's no need to be consistent.

Use the dance to expand the text. Think inside out and upside down and sideways. Let it breathe like magic.

A harp and woodblocks and silences that flutter in the night.

THE STORYTELLER. I heard this story a long time ago
 And I'm not sure how much of it I still remember,
 But I'll try to tell you as much as I can.
 It's a Scandinavian version of Cinderella, called

(ASKUNGA)

Askunga

*And for the first half of the story,
 Up to where ours ends in happily ever after,
 It's pretty much the same, except
 Where ours has a Fairy Godmother to help Askunga*

*There was a Magic Ermine, small and clever
 With white white coat and a black tipped tail*

And when she came back from the Ball, the Ermine looked at her

And said

ERMINE. Now, have I served you faithfully and well?
ASKUNGA. Of course you have, why—
ERMINE. Accomplished every purpose, answered every need?

ASKUNGA. You have
 ERMINE. Then help me now as I helped you
 ASKUNGA. Whatever I can—

(THE DAGGER)

THE STORYTELLER. And he handed her a dagger
 ERMINE. Cut out my heart
 ASKUNGA. But—
 ERMINE. Please!
 ASKUNGA. I can't—
 ERMINE. Quickly!
 THE STORYTELLER. And she took the dagger
 And stabbed him in the heart

(THE PLUNGE)

(THE PLUNGE)

(THE PLUNGE)

The blood spurted out and splattered his white white coat
 She cut open his chest
 And saw the beating heart

(THE HEART)

And cut and pulled it out
 And held it in her hand

And he lay dead

So the Prince married Askunga
 And they had a little child
 And there came a great sailing ship
 To take them back to the Prince's land of Norrland
 But when they were about to leave
 One of Askunga's sisters came to her on the pier and said

SISTER. Dear Sister, I have been cruel to you
 Stone to your weakness, iron to your tears
 Will you forgive me?

ASKUNGA. I forgive you

SISTER. Sweetness for sorrow, softness for scorn,
 Healing for harm
 With all your will
 With all your heart?

ASKUNGA. I do

SISTER. Then take me with you
 To your Prince's land of Norrland
 To be your poorest maid, your drearest drudge
 Your slightest servant
 All to help you.

THE STORYTELLER. And so she came with her on board
 the ship

(THE SHIP)

Now this sister, and her name was Ylleste,
 She was a troll-kenny wight
 Crafty in crookedness
 And when the boat was far from land

*She went down to the bottom of the boat
And lit*

(CANDLE)

three

(CANDLE)

candles

(CANDLE)

*And she took of Bloodroot and Snakewort and Monkshood
Feverwort, Deathcup, and Aconite*

And puffed them in the flames

(THREE PUFFS, THREE COLORS)

And the chamber was filled with the chokestench of the herbs

And she called out

YLEESTE. Askunga! Come to me, Askunga!

(ASKUNGA)

THE STORYTELLER. And Askunga came

*And Ylleste spoke three words
And lightning shook the ship
The deck lurched, wood groaned
She made a sign*

(SCREAMS VISIBLE)

And Askunga was become screaming wet and twisting

(SCREAMSERPENT)

A dripping horror of the Sea

The water rose

Ylleste spoke a word

The hull opened up

Crash of Water, shower of Fire, Waveburst and Thunderrush

Water swirled around her and washed Askunga

Out into the Sea

And the hull closed up behind her

And when Askunga was gone

Ylleste took a mirror and looked at herself

And she looked so like Askunga

That only a Soulseer could tell the foul one from the fair

And so she came up from the bottom of the ship

(YLLESTE AND THE PRINCE)

And she laughed with the Prince and slept with him

And took Askunga's baby

And no one knew that she was not Askunga

But the baby cried and cried

And Askunga's little dog whined through the night

*And they came to the Prince's town
And all joy shriveled up from the land of Norrland
The people complained under the false Askunga
The Prince was without rest
And the baby cried alone in the high Tower
And the little dog whined through the night*

*And Winter came
And the dark nights ate into the day
The wind had bitter teeth
And the foam Sea crashed against the Tower*

One night

*As the Prince sat lonely in his Chamber
He heard a scratching at the door
And when he opened it
It was Askunga's little dog
And the dog looked up at him and
Spoke with human speech*

*THE LITTLE DOG. Three more nights, and
Askunga will return*

*THE STORYTELLER. And ran away
And on the next night,*

*He heard a scratching at the door
 And when he opened it
 It was Askunga's little dog
 And the dog looked up at him and spoke*

*THE LITTLE DOG. Two more nights, and
 Askunga will return*

THE STORYTELLER. And ran away

*And on the next night,
 He heard a scratching at the door
 And when he opened it
 It was Askunga's little dog
 And the dog looked up at him and spoke*

*THE LITTLE DOG. Prepare three basins
 One of milk
 And one of wine
 And one of the blood of newborn doves*

*THE STORYTELLER. And he prepared the basins
 One of milk
 And one of wine
 And one of the blood of newborn doves*

*And the little dog looked up at him in the doorway
 And barked for him to follow*

So the Prince took up the basins

And followed

And the little dog led through twists and windings

(WALLS STONE)

Corridors of stone

Through dungeon passageways and hidden stairs

Higher and higher they climbed

(AND WALLS)

Up curves and spirals and mossy steps

And finally they came to the top of the high Tower

Where Askunga's baby cried and cried

Above the Sea

And the Prince set up the three basins

And they waited

And the morning came

(THE SUN)

They waited

(STILLNESS)

The Sun blazed high and the noontime came

They waited

The Wind stopped still and the Sea grew calm in the afternoon

They waited

And slowly

Endlessly

Slowly

Like an inchworm descending by its thread

The Sun slipped down into the Sea

They waited

And
 It
 Was

Night

(A GREAT BREATH)

The room was dark
 The Prince lit a candle
 The little dog began to whine

And there was a sound like something coming up the stairs

And the moon rose up
 And the Sea rose up like a great breath
 A gust blew out the candle

And there was a sound like something coming up the stairs

(THE RED MOON)

And a sound like something
 It began to rain
 Lightning
 Waves pounding on the Tower
 Flamecrash and thunderhammer
 Closer
 Waveshudder cloudswirl
 Twist sky and splitshatter

Wavescrash burst against the Tower
 The water rushed up the stairs
 The water surged, smashed against the door
 The door bulged, groaned
 The water heaved
 And suddenly the door burst from its hinges (THE DOOR)
 Foam like old lace spilled across the floor
 And into the room writhed a thing with coils and fangs

The Prince stepped back
 The horror coiled around him
 He could not breathe, pulled, shuddered, fell
 Into the basin filled with milk
 The horror screamed, pulled back

And its green skin peeled away to black

Then it was on him, worse than before
 Wrapping, coiling, squeezing at his breath
 Twisting at his neck
 Staggering he managed
 Fell
 Fell together into the basin fell filled with wine
 The horror twisted, screamed, let go

And slowly its black skin peeled away
 To bloody flesh

Then bleeding, writhing, it came at him again
 It opened its great mouth

*And the huge fangs green with slime
Reached for his throat
As they fell*

fell

falling

fell

Into the blood of newborn doves

And then

But that is all that I remember

(THEY STAND FROZEN

AS THE LIGHTS

FADE)

About the Author

I like to write plays that are mostly somewhere on the outskirts of conventional theater— As you've already figured out, if you've gotten this far, I love using puppets and masks and dancers and onstage musicians, and basically I have a lot of fun doing all the things that people keep trying to tell me not to do.

I was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and, in the course of a peripatetic childhood, lived in Minnesota, Georgia, Puerto Rico, Georgia again, and finally the Bronx, where I went to the Bronx High School of Science. I attended Harvard College, where I graduated with honors in Applied Math and Physics. This was followed by a year of wandering around Europe at Harvard's expense, and then, after being expelled from the Iowa Writers Workshop(!), by theater school at Ohio University, where I got a M.F.A. in Playwriting. I then returned to the Bronx and a long lonely period in which nobody seemed to understand the sort of fusion of dance and puppetry and masks and music and theater that I was doing. Nevertheless, I kept writing.

I'm really thrilled that, with the arrival of a new young generation of theater artists and audiences, there's been a wonderful explosion of interest in my work, both in the United States and internationally. There have now been fifteen productions of my plays (which used to be described as "impossible to stage"), most recently *Francesca* in Leiden, The Netherlands, and *The Woman from the Sea*, which was commissioned by Terry Schreiber and directed by him in New York City.

You can find out more about my work by visiting www.SpencePorter.com.