

# ANNOYED BY LIFE

A COMEDY IN FIFTEEN SCENES

By Donaco Smyth

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### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 MEN, 3 WOMEN OR UP TO 9 MEN, 10 WOMEN)

ACTRESS 1 (F).....Should be slightly overweight. This actress plays DIANE (58 lines), the BARONESS (32 lines), KATHERINE (155 lines), PINKY APPARATUS (59 LINES), OFFICE WORKER WOMAN (3 lines). (Total lines 307)

ACTRESS 2 (F).....Should be a black actress. This actress plays AMY (82 lines), ANNE (38 lines), and GRANDMOTHER (45 lines). (Total lines 165)

ACTRESS 3 (F).....This actress plays CASSIE (121 lines) and SUSAN (84 lines) (and also AMY in two of the later scenes). (Total lines 205)

ACTOR 1 (M).....This actor plays MOM, CLERK (56 lines), ANDREW (74 lines), MAN WITH ROOSTER (13 lines), FRED (12 lines), and EXCRUCIANUS (99lines). (Total lines 254)

ACTOR 2 (M).....This actor plays DENNIS (239 lines), THOMAS (88 lines), and JEREMY (23 lines). (350 lines)

### SYNOPSIS

*Annoyed By Life* is about some peculiar people who just don't seem to get what they want out of life. Everybody is a little annoyed about something, mostly their inability to find love. The show features three women and two men playing multiple characters. In tone and style, it has a lot in common with sketch comedy. Actually, that's what it feels like for the first few scenes, but all the plots eventually come together in unexpected ways as the show progresses. The characters deal with annoyances such as dating

services, yapping poodles, unrequited love, inappropriate hairpieces, and grandmothers who don't know if they are alive or dead.

The *L. A. Weekly* called the world premiere of *Annoyed By Life* "zany . . . intelligently fleshed out, most ingenious." *The Tolucan Times* said, "If you are in the audience and know you want something unusual and imaginative with lots of energy, wacky characters, good humor and great timing, you are getting what you want with this unique production."

**SETTING:** New York City, the present.

### SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- SCENE 1:** Way of Seeing
- SCENE 2:** A Passionate Man
- SCENE 3:** Killing It
- SCENE 4:** Memos
- SCENE 5:** Goods and Services
- SCENE 6:** The Lecture
- SCENE 7:** Worst Day Ever
- SCENE 8:** Fossil Theosophy
- SCENE 9:** Blacker Than Y'all
- SCENE 10:** Drinks, No Dinner
- SCENE 11:** Telephone Support
- SCENE 12:** In Tom's Absence
- SCENE 13:** Grandmother's Blessing
- SCENE 14:** The Ugly Underneath
- SCENE 15:** Elevator

### PROPS

*Way of Seeing*

- Suitcase .....DIANE
- Ladle .....AMY
- Purse..... CASSIE

*A Passionate Man*

Bathroom key.....on set  
Business card ..... DENNIS  
Tiara ..... BARONESS  
Lorgnette..... BARONESS

*Killing It*

Headset..... KATHERINE  
Mag light..... KATHERINE

*Memos*

Inventory list ..... ANNE  
Nail file ..... CASSIE  
Telephone.....on set  
Scissors, pens, stapler ..... on set  
Iguana..... on set  
Two metal washtubs ..... ANNE/CASSIE  
Spray water bottle ..... ANNE  
Stuffed terrier ..... ANNE  
Stuffed cat ..... PINKY  
Stuffed poodle..... BARONESS  
Stuffed rooster..... MAN WITH ROOSTER  
Two Frou Frou Tops ..... poodle and iguana  
Play money..... FRED  
Eyeglasses..... FRED  
Tiara ..... BARONESS  
Lorgnette..... BARONESS

*Goods and Services*

Swiffer .....on set  
Broom .....on set  
Box of chocolates..... KATHERINE

*The Lecture*

Pointer..... THOMAS  
Cell phone ..... THOMAS  
Easel..... SUSAN  
Fifteen lecture cards..... SUSAN

*Worst Day Ever*

Beer bottle.....JEREMY

*Fossil Theosophy*

No props

*Blacker Than Y'all*

Roses..... DENNIS

*Drinks, No Dinner*

Two tablecloths.....on set

Two menus.....on set

Purse..... KATHERINE

Cell phone..... KATHERINE

Wine glass..... EXCRUCIANUS

Large margarita glass.....EXCRUCIANUS

Business card ..... DENNIS

Several stuffed poodles.....on set

*Telephone Support*

Telephone..... KATHERINE, etc

*In Tom's Absence*

Two clipboards and forms..... AMY (1 and 2)

Two pens..... AMY (1 and 2)

*Grandmother's Blessing*

Paper fan..... GRANDMOTHER

Night cap..... GRANDMOTHER

Blanket..... KATHERINE

Boa..... KATHERINE

Microphone..... KATHERINE

*The Ugly Underneath*

Two easels.....on set  
Pointers ..... THOMAS  
Set of twelve lecture cards ..... THOMAS  
Set of fifteen lecture cards ..... SUSAN

*Elevator*

Tiara ..... BARONESS  
Lorgnette ..... BARONESS  
Two poodles..... BARONESS/GRANDMOTHER  
Briefcase ..... THOMAS  
Eyeglasses..... MAN WITH IGUANA

DO NOT COPY

SCENE 1: WAY OF SEEING

*AT RISE: AMY and CASSIE's living room. AMY greets DIANE at the door. DIANE has a small suitcase and she stares at AMY in disbelief.*

DIANE: Oh, my God! Amy? What happened to you?

AMY: (*Modeling.*) Do you like it?

*DIANE doesn't know how to respond.*

AMY: It's the new me!

DIANE: I don't . . . What?

AMY: You don't like it?

DIANE: What happened?

AMY: I was tired of being a white girl.

DIANE: You were . . .

AMY: That shit was wack.

DIANE: When did--

AMY: Two weeks ago. (*Happily.*) Your sister did it.

DIANE: Cassie?

AMY: She's been great. She is the best roommate.

DIANE: How did Cassie-- Is that your real hair?

AMY: True dat.

DIANE: Can I touch you?

AMY: I suppose. (*DIANE does.*) Diane, I don't want you to make a big deal out of this.

DIANE: This is for real. This is real skin.

AMY: Are you going to think of me as your black friend?

DIANE: I can't stop staring at you. Why did you do this?

AMY: Cassie did it.

DIANE: How did Cassie do it? Why? And . . . how?

AMY: Is this a problem for you?

DIANE: It's mighty weird, Amy.

AMY: Don't dis me.

DIANE: I'm not dissing you. Why are you a black girl?

AMY: I knew it! You think of me as a black person.

DIANE: You *are* a black person.

AMY: I can't talk to you.

*AMY starts to exit to the kitchen.*

DIANE: Oh, come on. What smells so good?

AMY: I'm cooking lamb . . . and greens.

DIANE: Amy, I'm sorry if I offended you. Can we be friends again?

AMY: I don't know. Can you be friends with a black girl?

DIANE: I want to. Come here and talk to me.

*AMY sits down beside her. DIANE wants to stare at her but she tries to be casual.*

AMY: So. How was France?

DIANE: France was fine. Are you getting along okay with Cassie?

AMY: We're great. She's a little strange, but she's been through a lot lately.

*CASSIE enters.*

CASSIE: I see a suitcase!

DIANE: Cassie! *(They hug.)*

CASSIE: Hi!

DIANE: Oh my God! How are you?

CASSIE: I missed you.

DIANE: I missed you.

CASSIE: Aww.

DIANE: How's Mom doing?

CASSIE: Oh, man. When she's not driving me crazy . . .

CASSIE AND DIANE: She's driving me nuts.

AMY: I'll be in the kitchen. Lamb tonight. *(She exits to kitchen.)*

CASSIE: Surprise. How long are you staying? Through the weekend?

DIANE: Yeah. Um, Cassie? Why is Amy black?

CASSIE: Oh, Amy. I don't want to talk about Amy.

DIANE: Why?

CASSIE: She's not a responsible person. I want to tell you my news.

DIANE: Amy says you're working now.

CASSIE: Yeah. It's a piece of shit. I'm gonna quit.

DIANE: Don't quit your job until you have a new one.

CASSIE: Ta dah! You should sit down. Some things have happened around here the last couple of months. It has been revealed to me that I am the goddess of wealth and material happiness.

DIANE: You're what?

CASSIE: I know! It's filled this void in my life that's been gaping for years. I always wanted a job where I could be useful to people. I have one now. People pray to me for a betterment of their financial situation.

DIANE: Now . . . What?

CASSIE: It's going really well, too. Oh, and you must meet my co-god, Excrucianus. He is so cool. And we wear togas. But we're very busy on the weekends because sometimes the worshipping goes on for, really, longer than what good taste would ordinarily allow.

DIANE: That's nice. So how did you get to be a goddess?

CASSIE: Diane, we all have a spark of the Almighty within us. We're all gods. Some of us just happen to realize it. And that makes all the difference.

DIANE: Okay . . .

CASSIE: Hey, if you want anything – riches, or expensive knick-knacks to impress all your French friends, or real estate, you'll have to invoke me during my office hours. Sundays, nine 'til noon. I'm not responsible for granting miracles or covenants at any other time.

DIANE: Yes. That's nice. I'll still be in town. I was hoping you'd go see Mom with me.

CASSIE: Mom. She's coming over later. She keeps pestering me to cause a plague on the Putnams, but I am not playing that game. It's not easy being a goddess, Diane.

DIANE: Hmm.

CASSIE: It's a lot of bullshit. My co-god, Excrucianus, has taught me a lot. You'll meet him on Sunday.

DIANE: Oh, good.

CASSIE: Most of it's great, but . . . everybody wants special favors. Amy has decided not to pay the electric bill this month because she's convinced I can "fix" it. Of course, I can, but I'm only going to fix my half of it.

DIANE: Are you two not getting along?

CASSIE: It's like having a wife.

*AMY enters.*

AMY: Diane, do you like curry?

DIANE: Um, yes. I guess.

AMY: Good. Cassie, you need to materialize some curry. And also, you need to fix my driver's license.

CASSIE: What's wrong with your driver's license?

AMY: It doesn't look like me anymore.

DIANE: Yes, how did you do that?

CASSIE: Me?

DIANE: Yes, you. Amy wasn't a black girl until she moved in with you.

AMY: I'm not *just* a black girl.

CASSIE: Amy is whatever she wants to be.

AMY: I had no idea you were this superficial.

DIANE: Superficial?!

AMY: Are you a racist, too?

CASSIE: Don't call my sister a racist.

DIANE: Cassie, you are a goddess, yes or no?

CASSIE: Yes.

DIANE: And you have powers incomprehensible to mortals?

CASSIE: Yes.

DIANE: (*To AMY.*) She used her powers to turn you from a white girl into a black girl, yes or no?

AMY: Yes.

CASSIE: No.

DIANE AND AMY: No?

CASSIE: No! I'm wealth and material happiness. This is out of my jurisdiction.

DIANE: Your jurisdiction?

CASSIE: We have rules. Sometimes I work with animals. But that's just because they have so little.

AMY: Here's the dealio. I didn't like being white and nobody in my family ever noticed me.

DIANE: So how did you switch?

AMY: She did it.

CASSIE: I did not! I don't have the power! I didn't touch you. You are not a black girl.

AMY: Not a . . . ?

DIANE: She *is* a black girl. It's the first thing I noticed when I walked in the door.

AMY: Superficial racist.

CASSIE: Stop it! (To DIANE.) You only noticed what she wanted you to notice.

DIANE: So she's not a black girl?

CASSIE: No.

DIANE: This girl is not a black girl?

CASSIE: No.

AMY: I am! I am!

DIANE: She's looking awfully tan to me.

CASSIE: That's fine. That's just what she wants you to see.

AMY: You changed me!

CASSIE: No, I didn't.

AMY: Liar.

CASSIE: I am the goddess of wealth and material happiness, and I don't think I need your opinion.

*AMY pouts on the sofa.*

DIANE: Amy, I don't mean to sound racist, but why are you black?

AMY: You wouldn't understand, Diane. It's just cooler, okay? The music's better, too.

CASSIE: She presents herself as a black girl, so she becomes a black girl. It is not hocus-pocus, people.

*A man (MOM) appears at the door.*

CASSIE: Hi, Mom.

DIANE: (In utter amazement.) Mom?

*BLACKOUT.*

SCENE 2: A PASSIONATE MAN

*A small office. The CLERK is sitting behind the desk when a tall man, DENNIS, walks in. DENNIS has a very odd manner and a very odd voice. He is noticeably nervous. DENNIS is bald with a small, silly hairpiece on the top of his head.*

CLERK: Good afternoon. May I be of some assistance?

DENNIS: Yes, thank you. I'd like to sign up.

CLERK: Very good. And how did you hear about us?

DENNIS: Oh, you know. The usual ways.

CLERK: Ah. Well, let me ask you some questions.

DENNIS: Yes, but . . .

CLERK: But what, sir?

DENNIS: I'm very shy.

CLERK: That's perfectly alright. You just be yourself.

DENNIS: Do you think that's wise?

CLERK: Well, I would . . . imagine . . . that . . . being yourself . . .

DENNIS: You see, there's a reason I'm single.

CLERK: Oh.

DENNIS: Most people don't care for me.

CLERK: Sir, I'm sure that's not--

DENNIS: I'm told I have bad habits.

CLERK: Why don't we do this? Let's just fill out the questions on this application and . . . see what happens.

DENNIS: All right.

CLERK: First of all, I'll ask about the kind of woman you're looking for. Then I'll ask questions about you. It's very simple, and quite a lot of fun.

DENNIS: I'm still nervous.

CLERK: Nothing to be nervous about.

DENNIS: And shy.

CLERK: Yes, but that can be very charming.

DENNIS: Can it?

CLERK: There *are* women--

DENNIS: Yes, I know.

CLERK: --who enjoy shy men.

DENNIS: Oh, my.

CLERK: Now, do you prefer tall women? Like yourself?

DENNIS: I'm not a tall woman.

CLERK: No. Yes, I understand.

DENNIS: You're making me very uncomfortable.

CLERK: What I meant was, do you like tall women?

DENNIS: Well, I'd like to try one.

CLERK: All right. That's very good. Do you have a preference for blondes or brunettes or redheads, that sort of thing?

DENNIS: I'm very passionate about redheads.

CLERK: I see.

DENNIS: In point of fact, I'll tell you I'm very passionate about . . . many things.

CLERK: That's very good.

DENNIS: I'm a very passionate human being. But I'm shy.

CLERK: Well, I think that's splendid. So you've had . . . experiences.

DENNIS: No. But that is my theory.

CLERK: What is?

DENNIS: That I'm very passionate.

CLERK: If I may, let's skip down to the questions that pertain to you.

DENNIS: I'll do my best.

CLERK: It's not difficult, sir. You just answer as honestly as you can.

DENNIS: (*Blushes.*) Oh, my.

CLERK: May I have your name, please?

DENNIS: Dennis Snit.

CLERK: Dennis, are you looking for . . . marriage?

DENNIS: That would be very nice.

CLERK: Do you consider yourself to have a sense of humor?

DENNIS: Oh, yes. I enjoy humor. I find it very amusing. From a sociological point of view.

CLERK: Listen. Are you . . . *from* this country?

DENNIS: Why?

CLERK: Um, it just seems like this all might make more sense . . .

DENNIS: I don't like to reveal that much information--

CLERK: All right. I understand.

DENNIS: Not until the second date. Will I be seeing you again?

CLERK: Uh, beg your pardon?

DENNIS: We seem to be hitting it off.

CLERK: Oh! Did you want to be registered in our gay listings?

DENNIS: No. I just . . . I thought you were coming on to me.

CLERK: No.

DENNIS: Oh. I'm confused.

CLERK: What did I do to confuse you, sir?

DENNIS: Well, we were having this nice conversation. And you asked me where I'm from. And we were talking about marriage and--

CLERK: But that was just--

DENNIS: And now you've dumped me.

CLERK: --just to complete the forms.

DENNIS: You and your forms. (*Pause.*) You've hurt me very deeply.

CLERK: I'm sorry.

DENNIS: I want to forgive you . . . I want to pick up where we left off. But I don't know if we are strong enough to overcome this.

CLERK: I suspect not.

DENNIS: Perhaps it's best if we stop this crazy madness. Let's just treasure the time we had together. And maybe in your next relationship, you won't be such a tease.

CLERK: I'll try to learn from my mistakes.

DENNIS: Mostly I like girls, and this is just too freaky.

CLERK: I agree. *(He extends his hand to DENNIS.)* Well, it was a pleasure to meet you.

DENNIS: Oh, you're teasing me again.

CLERK: Sorry.

DENNIS: This is no way to run a professional organization, treating people with such callousness.

CLERK: Sir, in no way did I mean to--

DENNIS: I am a human being with dreams and ideas . . . and I believe I already mentioned passions.

CLERK: You did. And shyness.

DENNIS: Yes. But that's not pertinent just now. What I want you to take away from this conversation, when you look back on our time together, is that even though you have this glamorous job, and this beautiful power desk, and you wear all the right clothes, and attend all the high-profile society functions, and you eat caviar, you are not better than other people. And by "other people", I mean me. And, well, yes, other people, too. But I was specifically referring to myself in this instance.

CLERK: I understand.

DENNIS: Thank you. And my point is this. I don't have to take this, and I won't. I'm going to walk out of here with my head held high. *(He doesn't leave.)* Um.

CLERK: Yes?

DENNIS: May I use the bathroom key?

CLERK: Certainly. *(He hands him the key.)*

DENNIS: Thank you. *(He sits down.)* This has all made me very nervous. *(Conspiratorially.)* I have to pee.

CLERK: Sir, I think it's best if you just leave now.

DENNIS: But . . .

CLERK: Please. Just give me the key and you can use the restroom in the downstairs lobby.

DENNIS: But . . . *(Holding his crotch.)* I have to go now.

CLERK: Please. *(He holds out his hand for the key.)*

DENNIS: No.

CLERK: What? Give me that key.

DENNIS: You gave it to me. I should be able to use it. It is within my constitutional rights to use this key.

CLERK: No, it isn't.

DENNIS: Oh. I thought it was.

CLERK: No. There is nothing in the Constitution about bathroom keys. May I have it back, please?

*DENNIS hands him back the key.*

DENNIS: I have to go now. I don't have time to listen to your lecture on the Constitution. I'm a very busy person. And I can get my own dates. With women. Goodbye. *(DENNIS exits and then returns.)* Thank you for your help. Here's my card, if you ever want your pet groomed. Have a nice day.

*DENNIS exits. Then the BARONESS enters, wearing a mink fur and a tiara.*

**BARONESS:** Good afternoon. I should like to avail myself of your matchmaking services. *(He stares at her.)* I require a gentleman from my own socio-economic background. Preferably a titled landowner from a reasonable Western European nation or duchy.

*The CLERK drops his head onto the desk.*

**BARONESS:** Let me tell you more about my expectations. You'll want to take this down. *(Lights fade during speech.)* Are you listening? You remind me of my first husband.

*BLACKOUT.*

### SCENE 3: KILLING IT

*KATHERINE and ANDREW enter. The set can be a simple black box set or it can look like a backstage area.*

**KATHERINE:** Damn it, Andrew. What is the problem?

**ANDREW:** I don't see a problem.

**KATHERINE:** You are killing this. Why? I don't understand what you're doing.

**ANDREW:** I'm sorry, Kitty. You need to clue me in, here.

**KATHERINE:** Your stupid pauses! Say your damn lines faster! Sound familiar? Is that clear enough?

**ANDREW:** Ugh. I am so tired of hearing about that.

**KATHERINE:** Pick up your pace. You are killing the show. It's YOUR show. And you're killing it.

**ANDREW:** I think if you understood the process of acting better, you would get what I'm trying to do.

**KATHERINE:** I understood that the audience was throwing things at the stage . . . because you were killing the show!

**ANDREW:** I was not killing it. I was responding truthfully to the action and the characters around me.

**KATHERINE:** You had pauses so long that they brought down the damn curtain!

**ANDREW:** Yes. That looked really bad. But I think I covered it okay. The bottom line is: you are the stage manager and your people are out of control. You need to talk to them.

**KATHERINE:** I'm trying to do that right now.

**ANDREW:** Here's the thing. We have a really good show. It has an important message. It's smart. I don't want to pander to my audience.

**KATHERINE:** Picking up the pace is not pandering.

**ANDREW:** You're being a smartass. I can't talk to you when you're like this, Kitty.

**KATHERINE:** Don't call me Kitty. I hate Kitty. Nobody calls me Kitty. Call me Katherine. Also, I'm breaking up with you.

**ANDREW:** You're not breaking up with me.

**KATHERINE:** Oh, yes, I am. I hate you. I hate this show. I hate it. I am embarrassed to tell people to come see this stupid show.

**ANDREW:** You are embarrassed, I think, because you don't get it. This show is about spiritual awakening. It's about our existence. It's about life itself.

**KATHERINE:** It's a show about a shrimp and a trilobite. I hate it. I hate everything about my life.

**ANDREW:** Let's just go have a drink. I'll explain the show to you. Again. We'll swing by the cast party and sort this all out.

**KATHERINE:** No. We can't.

**ANDREW:** Why not?

**KATHERINE:** We weren't invited to the cast part. We were specifically told not to come.

**ANDREW:** *(Pause.)* You know what I don't need in my life? Actors who don't appreciate me. A girlfriend who doesn't understand my show and has so many issues, she lashes out at me with imaginary complaints instead of dealing with her own shit.

**KATHERINE:** Your stupid pauses are not my imagination. Your pretentious show is not my imagination. And just so you know, you're a selfish, lousy lover with an empty parking lot for a brain.

*KATHERINE leaves.*

**ANDREW:** *(To himself.)* I am an exceptional lover.

**KATHERINE:** *(Off stage.)* And this show of yours . . . SUCKS!

**ANDREW:** *(To himself.)* I am an exceptional playwright. And an exceptional lover. I was a child genius. *(Pause.)* My pauses are interesting. And my parking lot is full. *(Thinks.)* Now what did I come in here for?

*ANDREW picks up the hidden costume shrimp's head and put it on his head. Then he walks off stage with the costume head on.*

**BLACKOUT.**

#### SCENE 4: MEMOS

*ANNE and CASSIE are at work in an office.*

**ANNE:** Here's that inventory list he wanted.

**CASSIE:** *(Makes a dismissive noise and puts it in a pile.)* Big whoop-de-doo.

**ANNE:** What's the matter with you?

**CASSIE:** Nothing.

**ANNE:** Excellent.

**CASSIE:** I am sick of this place.

ANNE: Oh, come on. Don't be like that. We have fun here.

CASSIE: No, we don't. *You* have fun here because . . . I don't know. Because you're mental.

ANNE: I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that.

CASSIE: That's what you do. You pretend everything is fine. Don't you notice how screwed up this place is? All these stupid rules. All those asinine memos he puts out.

ANNE: I like his memos.

CASSIE: "Memo: To all employees. The telephone must not ring more than two and one half times." Two and one half times!

ANNE: That sounds about right.

CASSIE: You're an idiot.

ANNE: You have an attitude problem.

CASSIE: Ya think? If he says one word to me today about pitching in and being a team, I shall cause a great plague upon him. And don't think I won't.

*DENNIS enters.*

DENNIS: Good morning, Anne. Good morning, Cassie.

ANNE: Good morning, Dennis.

DENNIS: We have a very busy day today. We all need to pitch in and be a team. Everybody. Now let's get out there and groom some pets! We have three new clients that I'm very excited about. And one that I'm not very excited about.

ANNE: Why aren't you excited about him?

DENNIS: He's . . . he's a poodle.

ANNE: And poodles are . . . bad?

DENNIS: Well, they're not good, are they? Poodles and I have never understood one another.

CASSIE: *(To ANNE.)* Didn't you get the memo?

DENNIS: I believe there was a memo.

CASSIE: It was right after the "Why We No Longer Do Fish" memo. And right before "There Should Be No Coffee in the Coffee Station Because it Makes Me Anxious."

ANNE: That must have been before I started.

DENNIS: Yes. And I'm very glad you joined our humble little operation. *(To CASSIE.)* Be sure to get her a copy of the Poodle Memo. Basically, it says that we want to move toward a poodle-free environment. I want to cater to more exotic pets, because that's where the money is. And there is no place for poodles in my new salon.

ANNE: So how come we booked one for today?

DENNIS: Because it isn't yet financially feasible to ignore the poodle market space. But one day . . . Damn those poodles!

*DENNIS walks away in a funk as PINKY APPARATUS enters. She carries a big, fluffy cat. This and all the other animals are stuffed toys.*

PINKY APPARATUS: Good morning. I need this cat washed.

ANNE: Hello. (*Filling out the form.*) Do you want it dried?

PINKY APPARATUS: Yes.

ANNE: Nails clipped?

PINKY APPARATUS: Definitely.

ANNE: Frou frou top?

PINKY APPARATUS: What?

ANNE: Do you want the Frou Frou Top?

PINKY APPARATUS: What's that?

ANNE: It's extra.

PINKY APPARATUS: I can do without it.

ANNE: (*Giving her a receipt.*) All righty. You can pick him up on Thursday.

PINKY APPARATUS: Thursday?

ANNE: It takes five days.

PINKY APPARATUS: Five days?!

DENNIS: We're very thorough.

PINKY APPARATUS: Yes, but what am I going to do without him for five days?

DENNIS: You could take a trip.

ANNE: You could eat tuna fish and not share any of it.

DENNIS: You could do things he wouldn't approve of.

PINKY APPARATUS: All right. I see your point. I'm in.

ANNE: Name?

PINKY APPARATUS: Pinky Apparatus.

ANNE: And your name?

PINKY APPARATUS: That was my name.

ANNE: And the cat's name?

PINKY APPARATUS: Just Pinky. No last name.

ANNE: (*Takes the cat.*) We'll take good care of him.

PINKY APPARATUS: See you Thursday. Goodbye, Pinkywinky. (*She exits.*)

DENNIS: That was very good, except for one thing.

CASSIE: You came to work this morning.

DENNIS: (*To CASSIE.*) You go wash this cat.

*CASSIE goes to a metal tub and starts washing the cat using one of those old-fashioned scrub boards. Maybe the actress can unobtrusively make some "meow" sounds now and then.*

DENNIS: (*To ANNE.*) Next time, try to push the Frou Frou Top. Otherwise, perfect.

I'm going to send around a training memo. I think you could both stand a brush-up on your people skills.

ANNE: Should I finish that dog I was working on yesterday?

DENNIS: Yes. Do that.

*ANNE pulls out a metal tub and scrub brush and then reaches in and grabs a dog and starts scrubbing. MAN WITH ROOSTER enters.*

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Good morning.

DENNIS: Good morning.

MAN WITH ROOSTER: I spoke to someone yesterday about sprucing up this rooster.

DENNIS: That would be me. How do you do?

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Very well. Do you do a lot of roosters?

DENNIS: Oh, yes. We are rooster specialists.

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Excellent, because I didn't much care for the last people who did him. They didn't understand roosters at all.

DENNIS: Sir, I assure you, my staff and I are perfectly capable of grooming your rooster.

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Splendid.

DENNIS: Wash and dry him?

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Yes.

DENNIS: Trim feathers?

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Yes.

DENNIS: De-louse him?

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Yes.

DENNIS: Frou Frou Top?

MAN WITH ROOSTER: What's that?

DENNIS: A little extra grooming. It's our specialty.

MAN WITH ROOSTER: I want that Frou Frou Top.

DENNIS: It looks very distinguished on roosters.

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Fine.

DENNIS: And all farm birds, actually.

MAN WITH ROOSTER: I'll pick him up in a few hours. *(Starts to exit.)*

DENNIS: All right. Um. No . . . It takes five working days.

MAN WITH ROOSTER: Hmm. *(Thinks.)* Well . . . All right, then. Maybe I'll take a trip. Goodbye. *(He exits and leaves the bird with DENNIS.)*

DENNIS: Well, then. It's turning into an excellent day. I suppose I should have got his name.

*DENNIS starts clipping the bird's wings with scissors.*

DENNIS: Guess who had a date last night?

ANNE: You did? Really? How was it?

DENNIS: It was fine. Except . . . I don't know if it was technically a date.

ANNE: What did you do?

DENNIS: We talked. And filled out a form.

CASSIE: Sounds hot.

DENNIS: I don't think we'll see each other again. For various reasons. But all in all, it was good for me. It let me know that I am, indeed, ready to get out there and "mix it up".

*The BARONESS enters.*

**BARONESS:** Is the proprietor on the premises?

**DENNIS:** That would be me. *(To CASSIE.)* I'll handle her. You do this. *(He hands her the rooster.)* I don't know anything about roosters. *(To the BARONESS.)* How may I help you?

**BARONESS:** I've come to pick up Trinket.

**DENNIS:** Trinket?

**BARONESS:** My dog.

**DENNIS:** Oh! A dog.

**BARONESS:** My poodle.

**DENNIS:** Oh! A poodle.

**BARONESS:** I dropped her off here last week before taking my cruise. I'm sure you remember. I am the Baroness of KrunkenWun--

**DENNIS:** I'm sure she's around here somewhere.

*CASSIE is having difficulty managing the rooster and the cat.*

**BARONESS:** I should hope she's around here somewhere.

**DENNIS:** I said that I'm sure she is. Anne, have you seen a poodle around here?

**ANNE:** I think I saw it in the supply room--

**DENNIS:** Would you go get it, please?

**CASSIE:** I need someone to help me with this rooster--

**DENNIS:** I'm tending to a customer right now.

**CASSIE:** Can't we get some cages?

**DENNIS:** Animals don't belong in cages. *(Smiling at the BARONESS.)* We're very much concerned with animal rights.

*ANNE enters with a white poodle. It sports a funny hairpiece on the top of its noggin.*

**BARONESS:** What is that on top of her head?

**DENNIS:** That's the Frou Frou Top.

**BARONESS:** Is that extra?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**BARONESS:** I'm not paying extra for that.

**DENNIS:** Yes, you are.

**BARONESS:** I didn't order it.

**DENNIS:** *(Taking the poodle from ANNE.)* I feel very passionately that the Frou Frou Top is the correct way to go.

**BARONESS:** Nevertheless, I didn't order it.

**DENNIS:** Yes, you did.

**BARONESS:** I remember telling you that I do not care for it.

**DENNIS:** Yes, you do.

**BARONESS:** I don't. And neither does Trinket. Come here, my baby. What did they do to you?

*CASSIE and ANNE struggle with their animals.*

DENNIS: Girls, please stop playing around back there.

CASSIE: I can't hold both of these animals.

ANNE: And this dog hates getting a bath.

BARONESS: I'll just take Trinket and go.

DENNIS: That will be two hundred and fifty-seven dollars and ninety-five cents.

BARONESS: That's outrageous.

DENNIS: It is not outrageous. We take great pride in our pet grooming abilities and we must charge accordingly.

BARONESS: I am very much put out about the Frou Frou Top.

*DENNIS takes the dog and pulls off the Frou Frou Top.*

DENNIS: I'll take the Frou Frou Top off this one and put it on the cat.

*He takes the cat and staples the hairpiece to the cat's head.*

ANNE: Um. No. She didn't order it for the cat. It goes on the rooster.

*DENNIS rips it off the cat and the cat goes crazy, jumping up in his face.*

DENNIS: Ah! Ah! Help! Someone get this kitty off me!

ANNE: Here. Hold still.

DENNIS: *(Stumbling about the room.)* Ah! Ow. He's going for my eyes!

ANNE: *(She squirts the cat with a squirt bottle.)* Bad kitty.

DENNIS: That doesn't seem to be working.

BARONESS: Trinket and I haven't the time for all this foolishness. We have a date. With the Twelfth Duke of Mountwestmontwindbattonchester . . . shire.

DENNIS: I'll just be a moment.

BARONESS: You may send me the bill. Minus the charge for the Frou Frou Top.  
*(Exits.)*

DENNIS: Have a nice day.

CASSIE: If you need me, I'm just over here trimming this rooster.

*FRED enters.*

FRED: Good morning.

DENNIS: *(Still struggling with cat.)* Good morning.

FRED: I've come to pick up my iguana.

DENNIS: Ah, yes.

ANNE: Are you okay with that cat, Dennis?

DENNIS: *(Cat is crawling all over him.)* I'm fine, but he seems to be feeling very alienated.

ANNE: Okay. Watch his back claws.

DENNIS: *(Ridiculous business with cat.)* Ow.

ANNE: You should be wearing gloves.

DENNIS: They hurt my hands. Ow. *(To FRED.)* How can I help you?

FRED: I'm picking up my iguana.

DENNIS: Oh, yes, right.

*DENNIS reaches down, grabs an iguana, and plops it on the counter. It wears a silly hairpiece.*

FRED: Looks great.

DENNIS: That's three hundred and seventy-seven dollars and twenty-six cents.

FRED: *(Slaps down the money.)* A bargain at twice the price. *(He takes the iguana and exits.)*

DENNIS: I like him.

ANNE: Do you need help with that cat?

DENNIS: *(Looks at the cat.)* Oops. Forgot about the cat. He seems to have calmed down. *(Pokes it.)* He's sleeping. Try to be very quiet. He's nasty when he's awake. Like a poodle. I hate him.

PINKY APPARATUS: *(Enters again.)* Hello again.

DENNIS: Hello. It's not Thursday.

PINKY APPARATUS: I know. Ah, look. He's so comfortable here.

DENNIS: We all just love him. He has quite a good sense of humor. But now he's sleeping.

PINKY APPARATUS: He sleeps a lot. Listen, I came back because . . . This might sound silly.

*ANNE and CASSIE struggle with their animals causing a bit of an uproar.*

DENNIS: *(Trying to help the girls, he grabs the rooster.)* Yes?

PINKY APPARATUS: You're very busy.

DENNIS: Not at all.

PINKY APPARATUS: I'm going to take a chance here. Are you seeing anyone?

DENNIS: I see . . . you.

PINKY APPARATUS: No. I mean . . . my friend . . . she likes tall men.

DENNIS: Oh, my.

PINKY APPARATUS: And she's single now.

DENNIS: Oh, my. Let me . . . get this rooster down.

PINKY APPARATUS: This is all so awkward.

DENNIS: Not at all. Let me . . . Let me . . . I need to close the shop.

PINKY APPARATUS: No. No. Listen. I'll talk with my friend. I'll tell you what she says when I come back to pick up Pinky.

DENNIS: Pinky? Oh, yes. Well. Yes.

PINKY APPARATUS: Okay, then. I'll see you on Thursday. Goodbye. *(Exits.)*

DENNIS: Goodbye. I like her. *(Picks up cat and strokes it, maybe gives it CPR.)*

CASSIE: Why?

DENNIS: She represents just what we are looking for, a better class of clientele.

Like that gentleman with the iguana. *(Has an idea.)* Cassie, I need you to take a memo.

CASSIE: Oh, sweet bleeding Jesus.

**DENNIS:** I'll dictate while you write. Anne, you pet the kitty. To: All employees. Subject: Reaching out to a better class of clientele. From now on . . . in order to attract a better class of customer, all employees will be required to wear formal attire once a week. The gentlemen will wear suits or tuxedos and the ladies should wear ball gowns. Ooh! Ooh! We'll call this "Formal Fridays."

**ANNE:** Can I go wash this cat now?

**DENNIS:** Yes, but do it quickly. We have to make room for . . . more interesting animals. Like rhinoceroses! We'll be able to charge quite a handsome sum to groom them. Because they can kill you.

*ANNE exits with cat.*

**DENNIS:** Cassie, what happened to that memo I posted about not letting the telephone ring more than two and one half times before picking it up?

**CASSIE:** I don't know. Somebody must have ripped it down and tore it up and threw it away and spat on it.

**DENNIS:** I need you to sort of spy around and see if you can find out who did it.

**CASSIE:** I did it, Dennis. I tore it down because it's idiotic. Two and a half rings!

**DENNIS:** I feel very passionately that the phone should not ring and ring and ring. That's three rings. It's too much.

**CASSIE:** You are a stupid, mortal idiot! Hey, I quit! Life is too short for this bullshit.

**DENNIS:** If you quit, I'll . . . I'll . . .

**CASSIE:** You'll what?

**DENNIS:** You'll never groom a pet in this town again.

**CASSIE:** Is that a threat?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Can't you quit after you clean this rooster?

**CASSIE:** Do not threaten me. You don't know what powers you're messing with. Mark my words. You will rue the day you ever threatened an immortal goddess.

*CASSIE climbs on her chair and strikes her goddess pose. FRED enters with his iguana.*

**FRED:** Excuse me.

**DENNIS:** Yes?

**FRED:** I don't know what this is. It was stuck to his head.

*He hands DENNIS the hairpiece and exits.*

**DENNIS:** I hate these people.

*BLACKOUT.*

SCENE 5: GOODS AND SERVICES

*EXCRUCIANUS and CASSIE sit in their temple.*

**EXCRUCIANUS:** I had to tell him. I said, "Darling. Darling, you are so dear, the way you idolize me."

**CASSIE:** He is dear.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** And then I said unto him, "I must have room to be adored by all. Not just the homosexuals."

**CASSIE:** For you are a god.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** I am a god. As are you a goddess.

**CASSIE:** It is true. I am a goddess.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** "Darling," I said to him. "My little human, you are so precious. And yet, you are destined to feel nothing but pain."

**CASSIE:** Pain. So much pain.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** I told him he must become more . . . insouciant.

**CASSIE:** He is deficient in insouciance.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** It troubles me. And yet . . . I do not dwell on it.

**CASSIE:** To relieve his pain, I shall bestow upon him the gift of insouciance.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** No. You mustn't. They must feel their pain.

**CASSIE:** Then they SHALL feel pain!

**EXCRUCIANUS:** I told him he must strive—as all must strive—to attain a higher consciousness.

**CASSIE:** Yes, as I have done.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** Yes, much like what you have done. But without the malicious pettiness. He must be free as I am free. So I left him alone with his thoughts . . . and his cable TV.

**CASSIE:** My malicious pettiness . . . serves me well.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** It gives you character. But I fear you use it as a crutch. For example, in your dealings with your employer.

**CASSIE:** My ex-employer.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** You killed him?

**CASSIE:** No. I quit.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** Ah. You took the gracious way out.

**CASSIE:** I did. I was gracious. But not before I promised him a taste of my malicious pettiness.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** I see much pain for him.

**CASSIE:** Oh, yes, there will be pain for him. The pain of poodles shall reign down upon him. Wheels are in motion for a plague of poodles!

**EXCRUCIANUS:** You have become a powerful goddess.

**CASSIE:** And when it is over, I shall take my malicious pettiness and, no longer needing it, I shall release it into the universe and it will forge its own path toward enlightenment.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** My own path toward enlightenment is . . . fraught with senseless killing.

**CASSIE:** Pity.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** I am speaking metaphorically.

**CASSIE:** As you so often do. Release the senseless killing. Set it free, free to grow and learn and spread love through each of the universes.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** It is gone.

**CASSIE:** All gone.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** And in its absence, I seek empathy and deeper understanding.

**CASSIE:** Much like what I, myself, have sought.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** Yes, much like what you, yourself, have sought, but without the appetite for base and vulgar pleasures.

**CASSIE:** I have base and vulgar pleasures?

**EXCRUCIANUS:** Yes. It's not a bad thing.

**CASSIE:** Are you referring to that time I stupidly told you I loved you?

**EXCRUCIANUS:** Is it so stupid to love me? There are many who feel it is the wisest decision they ever made.

**CASSIE:** I was making a joke.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** It was the wisest joke you ever made.

**CASSIE:** You're a dip. And that's why we don't have a very big congregation.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** We don't have a very big congregation because we don't have a book. We need a book.

**CASSIE:** I told you, now that I no longer have a job, I will write the goddamned book.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** I, too, will co-author this book. I will relate "true stories" about my divinity.

**CASSIE:** As will I.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** *(Pause.)* You're the one who told the worshippers they no longer need to make sheep sacrifices. People don't know what to do with that.

**CASSIE:** I am sick of lamb!

**EXCRUCIANUS:** I like it!

**CASSIE:** I didn't make them stop entirely. I told them it's an optional thing. I suggested chocolate instead.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** An optional thing . . . You don't know the first thing about mortals. They need to be told what to do. You can't just give them choices; they'll stand there staring at you like idiots.

**CASSIE:** I should have said money. We need money.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** Hark. A supplicant approaches.

*KATHERINE enters.*

**CASSIE:** Come, ye mortals, into the temple.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** Come and look with wonder upon the gods who have manifested themselves before you.

**CASSIE:** It is I, Cassie, the goddess of wealth and material happiness.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** And I am I, Excrucianus, god of out-of-town tryouts and theaters below 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

**KATHERINE:** *(Kneeling.)* I'm kind of new at this religion.

**EXCRUCIANUS:** You're doing very well.

**CASSIE:** Your aura is opening.

KATHERINE: Is it?

CASSIE: Oh, yes. And your generous spirit is making great strides toward perfection.

EXCRUCIANUS: You are learning, as all must learn, to give of one's self.

CASSIE: To give until it hurts.

KATHERINE: Can I ask a question?

EXCRUCIANUS: All questions are answered. All answers are questioned.

KATHERINE: I'm looking for guidance in my love life.

EXCRUCIANUS: Have you brought tokens of your appreciation to share with the universe?

KATHERINE: Your website said this was an acceptable offering. *(She hands EXCRUCIANUS a box of chocolates.)*

CASSIE: Technically, yes, chocolates are acceptable. But next time, you might consider being more pragmatic.

EXCRUCIANUS: Come, my child. There is much to say about you and your love life.

KATHERINE: I broke up with my boyfriend.

EXCRUCIANUS: You did. I know. But even so, there was a very strong connection betwixt you. Within and without you. He is a man, like so many are men, but yet, conversely, he is also a man like no one else is capable of being.

KATHERINE: That is so true.

CASSIE: This boyfriend of yours, he dumped you because you are cheap?

KATHERINE: I'm not cheap. I'm in the theater.

EXCRUCIANUS: Ah, yes. And you are looking for your name in lights.

KATHERINE: Not really. I'm a stage manager, not an actor. And I dumped him.

CASSIE: Ah. Usually we get the actors . . .

EXCRUCIANUS: Are you sure you don't want to be an actor?

CASSIE: It will bring you pain.

EXCRUCIANUS: So much pain.

KATHERINE: I'm actually just trying to find some spiritual fulfillment.

EXCRUCIANUS: This boyfriend of yours, did you dump him because he is insufferably retro-chic?

KATHERINE: I . . . I don't think so.

EXCRUCIANUS: But yet it is possible, isn't it?

KATHERINE: I guess it's possible.

EXCRUCIANUS: That's all I wanted to hear.

CASSIE: Did you dump him because you caught him licking your pillowcase? And did it turn out that he was the one who was stealing your roommate's lampshades? And did he go around naming all the sinks?

KATHERINE: No.

CASSIE: Oh.

EXCRUCIANUS: He was a life lesson for you. You learned your lesson and now you must move on.

KATHERINE: He was just so clueless and self-involved.

EXCRUCIANUS: He is not as clueless as he appears. He is in fact . . . a homosexual.

CASSIE: Oh, sweet bleeding Jesus.

KATHERINE: I'm not really interested in him so much. I want to know what's in store for me.

EXCRUCIANUS: You desire to know the future.

CASSIE: Your man is out there. He is aware of your desires.

EXCRUCIANUS: And your desires are well aware of him.

CASSIE: Your future will be very satisfying for the two of you.

EXCRUCIANUS: Satisfying and . . . insouciant.

CASSIE: I see much insouciance for you.

EXCRUCIANUS: You must prepare to meet your soul mate.

CASSIE: You must cleanse yourself.

EXCRUCIANUS: You must be the woman that you are meant to be.

CASSIE: You must donate goods and services to the needy and also to religious organizations.

EXCRUCIANUS: That's the important one.

KATHERINE: Can you make my soul mate appear?

CASSIE: We can.

EXCRUCIANUS: *(To CASSIE.)* I'll do this one. She and I have that theater connection.

CASSIE: Fine.

EXCRUCIANUS: How long, using time as a reference, do you need before you meet your soul mate?

KATHERINE: I can meet him today.

EXCRUCIANUS: No, can't do it today.

CASSIE: Were you paying attention? You need to get crackin' on those goods and services.

EXCRUCIANUS: This temple needs some spiffing-up.

KATHERINE: I can Swiffer these floors.

EXCRUCIANUS: And then you shall have your miracle! *(A Swiffer appears.)*

CASSIE: Swiffer in peace. And know that you shall receive a miracle from the gods!

EXCRUCIANUS: You'll need to sweep before you Swiffer. *(A broom appears.)*

KATHERINE: Thank you! Thank you. *(She grabs a broom and starts sweeping.)*

CASSIE: You may thank us by spreading the news of your miracle.

EXCRUCIANUS: And handing out flyers at the mall.

KATHERINE: He doesn't have to be classically handsome. Or rich. Or anything. I mean, I don't want a total loser . . . He should be able to speak coherently.

EXCRUCIANUS: And you. What is your name, my dear?

KATHERINE: Katherine.

EXCRUCIANUS: Kathy, wouldja let me handle it?

KATHERINE: Sorry.

EXCRUCIANUS: Your soul mate can speak.

CASSIE: Kathy, don't you think, deep in your heart, this is worth more than a box of chocolates and a clean floor?

EXCRUCIANUS: Another thing about your soul mate. He does not possess a full head of hair.

KATHERINE: I don't care.

CASSIE: And he's currently in prison for grand theft auto. (*Pause.*) I'm just kidding.

EXCRUCIANUS: Anyway, you tend to that which you must attend. He will come.

KATHERINE: Thank you! (*She sweeps away from them.*)

CASSIE: You are so sexy when you grant miracles.

EXCRUCIANUS: I know.

CASSIE: We should push for more cash, though.

EXCRUCIANUS: Bring in the next worshipper. (*Very serious.*) And no more prison jokes.

*BLACKOUT.*

## SCENE 6: THE LECTURE

*THOMAS and SUSAN are on a bare stage.*

SUSAN: We were talking backstage.

THOMAS: Trying to make this experience a little better.

SUSAN: Funnier. We were trying to make it funnier.

THOMAS: We were desperately trying to make it funnier.

SUSAN: And suddenly we thought, "Hey. (Maybe they don't really want 'funny'. Maybe what they want is something 'real'. Something they need to come to terms with."

THOMAS: Or even something sad. A little depressing, you know?

SUSAN: Right. Because everybody has to be funny nowadays.

THOMAS: Everybody wants to make you "feel good".

SUSAN: They think they have to "entertain you".

THOMAS: Like you're some kind of . . . baby.

SUSAN: And I'm just sick of it.

THOMAS: Because, as I think you'll agree, you're not a baby.

SUSAN: You shouldn't let them treat you that way.

THOMAS: You're better than that. You're smart. You're good-looking.

SUSAN: Don't flirt with the audience.

THOMAS: I'm not flirting.

SUSAN: You kind of were.

THOMAS: I'm trying to show them that they have what it takes to amount to something.

SUSAN: You were flirting.

THOMAS: I was flirting with a couple of them, but not all of them.

SUSAN: They're not interested in you.

THOMAS: Can we continue?

SUSAN: Yeah. How 'bout we pick it up from before you started messing with their heads?

THOMAS: (*To audience.*) So the lecture you're going to hear tonight is a bit serious.

SUSAN: It's about heavy issues.

THOMAS: Depressing situations.

SUSAN: It can get very intellectual and kinda dry sometimes.

THOMAS: A lot of it is going to be boring.

SUSAN: You might fall asleep.

THOMAS: Or you could have an aneurysm.

SUSAN: We're not going to sugarcoat it. (*THOMAS shakes his head gravely.*) But please try not to snore as we go through the various facts and figures . . .

THOMAS: Statistics, lists of dates . . .

SUSAN: Pie charts . . .

THOMAS: Algorithms.

SUSAN: We'll be diagramming sentences.

THOMAS: We have maps.

SUSAN: Flow charts.

THOMAS: I've got a pointer. (*Shows pointer.*) So we'll be getting a little lively.

SUSAN: But not so lively that we lose the importance of the issues.

THOMAS: Did I say we were going to lose the importance of the issues?

SUSAN: Excuse me?

THOMAS: I believe I can use a pointer, keep the people involved, and still maintain the integrity of the subject.

SUSAN: Well, ya know, that's where you're wrong, big guy. When you get that pointer out, suddenly . . . Ooh, it's all about you, isn't it? "Look at me. I have a pointer."

THOMAS: What is your deal?

SUSAN: I'm just saying that sometimes you can be a bit . . . prop-centric.

THOMAS: Okay, I don't think I'm any more prop-centric than the other people up here on this stage.

SUSAN: Let's just drop it.

THOMAS: No. You know what? Why don't we . . . poll the audience?

SUSAN: Argh. Don't poll the . . . Thomas.

THOMAS: No. You might be bringing up a valid point. On the other hand, this might be an example of your insecurity and a reason why we're not together anymore. (*They pause.*) We need to find out.

SUSAN: They don't want to get involved in your little games.

THOMAS: Little games . . . I didn't start this. But I am going to finish it. (*Pulls out a calculator.*) Here. I've got a calculator. We're going to find out what percentage of the audience agrees with your stupid "prop-centric" theory. (*Suddenly embarrassed by his calculator, he puts it away.*) We can probably do this with just a show of hands.

SUSAN: (*To audience.*) Don't encourage him. He has the mind of a six year old.

THOMAS: Maybe I should just continue doing this all by myself. Why don't you go back to the home you stole from me and I'll finish up here?

SUSAN: I'll tell you why. Because, unlike your views of marriage, we're working together in this.

THOMAS: Nah, you can take off. I'll handle this. (*To audience.*) Good evening and welcome.

SUSAN: What are you doing?

THOMAS: (*Ignoring SUSAN.*) I'm Thomas.

SUSAN: And I'm Susan.

**THOMAS:** And I don't hear anything on that side of the stage. And I don't think you should hear anything either.

**SUSAN:** You are such an ass.

**THOMAS:** I want you to just focus on me.

**SUSAN:** Everybody, listen. We have an excellent lecture planned for you this evening.

**THOMAS:** I want you to take your hands and cup them around your eyes, like this, so you can see only me.

**SUSAN:** What are you doing?

**THOMAS:** Try to block out all other noises and . . . disturbing sights.

**SUSAN:** All right, ding-dong. Two can play at this game. *(She exits.)*

**THOMAS:** Very good. You have learned to draw your consciousness inward and make all the outside disturbances disappear. This is a very advanced meditation technique. If this is the only thing you get out of the lecture tonight, it's well worth the admission price. And you mustn't forget who taught it to you. Thomas Denton. By himself.

*SUSAN enters, pushing a large, wheeled easel. There are many posters stacked on it, ready to be displayed. The front card simply says "Lecture Visuals".*

**SUSAN:** Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to draw your attention over to this side of the stage where something is actually going on.

**THOMAS:** Now close your eyes and listen only to the sound of my voice. But before you do that, I want you to notice who has just wheeled onstage a very large . . . what? A prop. Okay. Now, back to the sound of my voice.

*SUSAN reveals the first poster. It says, "A Successful Marriage Friendship Working Relationship Takes Work".*

**SUSAN:** The key to a successful marriage, I mean working relationship, is mutual respect.

**THOMAS:** Hello? I'm over here. You people are not focusing. I don't know how you expect to get anything out of this--

**SUSAN:** Yes, you'll fight with each other. And yes, you will throw a waffle iron at him. But it's important that when you have disagreements, you remember to fight respectfully.

**THOMAS:** --if you don't at least attempt to do some of the exercises I'm trying to teach you. You, right there. You have been sitting there with your hands like this the whole time. You didn't do the eye covering thing . . . that everybody else got so much out of.

**SUSAN:** *(Revealing another poster, a drawing of a waffle iron.)* There is a respectful way to throw a waffle iron at someone. It is considered rude to throw a waffle iron directly at someone's head. That can be dangerous.

**THOMAS:** I'm going to be the adult here. Susan, this is . . . Susan, if you don't have a pointer, this is just asinine. You can't expect people to follow "waffle irons" and "working relationships" without a little help.

SUSAN: I think it's going fine.

THOMAS: You're messing it up.

SUSAN: No, I'm not.

THOMAS: You're leaving out all sorts of stuff.

SUSAN: I am not.

THOMAS: Did you mention that you need to unplug the waffle iron before throwing it?

SUSAN: I was coming to that. Why don't you just grow up and continue with the lecture?

THOMAS: I believe I already mentioned that I was going to be the adult.

SUSAN: *(Rolls her eyes.)* How about you go get your easel and we'll pick it up where we left off?

THOMAS: Fine.

SUSAN: Fine.

THOMAS: I'm going to go get my easel. *(THOMAS exits.)*

SUSAN: As many of you know from reading our books, the divorce hasn't adversely affected us. It's made us stronger, actually. We're more focused. And it's made the workshops more engaging. More rich. And it certainly makes it a better experience for our audiences. They tell us that all the time. I mean, like, all the time. We get so many letters. And emails. And phone calls. We got a balloon-gram once. That was fun. *(The lights come down slowly as she speaks.)* People really seem to have a strong response to us lately.

*BLACKOUT.*

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