

THE GREATEST PLAY EVER WRITTEN

A FULL LENGTH PLAY

By Wade Bradford

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SYNOPSIS: Conflict, Genre, Character, Irony, Symbolism. In theory, if all of these literary elements came together in perfect harmony, you would have “The Greatest Play Ever Written.” In Wade Bradford’s latest play, an ambitious narrator attempts to do just that. Yet, no matter how brilliant a play might be, you can’t please everyone. When a critic in the audience becomes bored, she threatens to give the play a negative review, unless of course, the playwright agrees to revise the play...and kill the narrator!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(THIRTEEN MEN, SEVEN WOMEN, PLUS EXTRAS)

OLD MAN (M) PLAYS THESE ROLES:

OLD MAN (12 lines)

GORDON..... (14 lines)

WIFE (F) PLAYS THESE ROLES:

WIFE (37 lines)

GERTRUDE (10 lines)

YOUNG MAN (M) PLAYS THESE ROLES:

YOUNG MAN (3 lines)

Optional double as PROTAG (86 lines)

FIANCÉ (2 lines)

DOMINICK BOLDMAN (3 lines)

YOUNG WOMAN (F) PLAYS THESE ROLES:

YOUNG WOMAN (5 lines)

Optional double as WOMAN #1 (16 lines)

KATHAJACKIMYSTAJILL (2 lines)

NARRATOR TRAINEE (43 lines)

BUSINESS MAN (M) PLAYS THESE ROLES:

BUSINESS MAN..... (1 line)

Optional double as ANTAG #1 (23 lines)

MR. CRAIG JOHNSON (101 lines)

BUSINESS WOMAN (F) PLAYS THESE ROLES:

BUSINESS WOMAN (1 line)
CRITIC (43 lines)
MRS. CRAIG JOHNSON (47 lines)

ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS:

NARRATOR (M) (249 lines)
ANTAG #2 (M) (25 lines)
PRINCE (M) (58 lines)
PAPA BEAR (M) (34 lines)
MAMA BEAR (F) (27 lines)
BABY BEAR (M) (26 lines)
GOLDILOCKS (F) (36 lines)
AGAMEMNON (M) (4 lines)
HELEN (F) (14 lines)
PARIS (M) (29 lines)
COACH (M) (2 lines)
HECTOR (M) (2 lines)
CASSANDRA (F) (2 lines)
ODYSSEUS (M) (11 lines)
EXTRAS Stage hands. People wearing togas.
Partygoers. Lady with baby stroller.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE ONE: THE AUDIENCE
SCENE TWO: CONFLICT
SCENE THREE: THE PLAYWRIGHT
SCENE FOUR: GENRE
SCENE FIVE: THE CRITIC
SCENE SIX: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT
SCENE SEVEN: IRONY
SCENE EIGHT: SYMBOLISM
SCENE NINE: CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

SCENE ONE: THE AUDIENCE

The stage is empty with the exception of six theater seats.

An OLD MAN and his WIFE enter. I would say “old woman,” but that doesn’t seem polite, and even though the wife is perhaps the same age as her husband, she still maintains a youthful spark. The ELDERLY COUPLE examines their tickets and finds their seats – the center of the six chairs. We can tell that they have been to the theater many times before. She loves it, he tolerates it...barely. He wears a fisherman’s hat, complete with flies and lures.

Already bored with the program, he peers beyond the fourth wall, staring grimly at the imaginary stage of the show he is about to watch.

WIFE: Good seats.

OLD MAN: That’s the set? The stage is practically empty.

WIFE: That doesn’t mean it won’t be a good show.

OLD MAN: If I have to sit through two hours of stupidity, at least give me an interesting set. Give me some carpentry to admire. I bet they don’t have any costumes.

WIFE: You think they’ll be naked? *(She puts on her glasses.)*

OLD MAN: I mean decent costumes. Costume design. They’ll probably wear normal street clothes. And what’s with the title? “The Greatest Play Ever Written”? Can it get any more pretentious? I hope you haven’t dragged me to another minimalist, post-modern self-reflective piece of crap.

WIFE: *(Not looking up from her program.)* It is precisely because I have dragged you to such events that you know the meaning of the words “minimalist” and “post-modern.”

OLD MAN: Maybe. But I was happier when I didn’t know those things existed.

WIFE: *(Referring to the program.)* Oh, aren’t the director’s notes amusing?

The OLD MAN yawns loudly.

WIFE: You know, when I go on your fishing trips I pretend to be interested.

OLD MAN: Oh, you like fishing. You know why. Because it's not boring like – *(Refers to the theater around him.)* like this. You aren't just sitting and watching. You are sitting and *waiting*. Waiting to catch something.

WIFE: To catch something.

OLD MAN: Catch it, chop it up, and eat it.

WIFE: I don't think the actors would like that sort of treatment.

OLD MAN: Actors are happy as long as someone pays attention to them.

WIFE: Why did you wear that ungodly hat?

OLD MAN: Everyone in the world likes this hat except you.

A YOUNG COUPLE (early to mid-twenties.) enters. They stare at their tickets and look around. They are obviously not used to going to the theater.

YOUNG MAN: G-6 and 8.

YOUNG WOMAN: Darn, I thought we were seated together.

YOUNG MAN: We are. It's just the even seats.

YOUNG WOMAN: Where did the odd seats go? *(To the wife.)*
Excuse us.

They move toward their seats, scooting past the ELDERLY COUPLE.

WIFE: *(Standing to let them get by.)* Of course.

YOUNG MAN: Thanks.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(To the OLD MAN.)* I like your hat.

They all sit.

OLD MAN: *(Triumphantly, to WIFE.)* See.

A stereotypically wealthy-looking **COUPLE IN BUSINESS ATTIRE** enters. They sit down, the **BUSINESS WOMAN** next to the **WIFE**. Both the **YOUNG COUPLE** and the **BUSINESS COUPLE** are settling in. The **WIFE** looks around, quite pleased.

WIFE: (*Satisfied with the future of the arts.*) Ah, young people at the theatre.

Both the **YOUNG COUPLE** and the **BUSINESS COUPLE** begin text-messaging and using iPhones or other wireless gadgets.

WIFE: (*Crestfallen.*) Ugh. Young people at the theater.

The lights shift, and the play begins.

SCENE TWO: CONFLICT

The **NARRATOR** stands downstage right. Upstage left, a man – the **PROTAGONIST** (probably played by the **YOUNG MAN**.) – lies on the floor, curled up in a fetal position.

NOTE TO DIRECTOR: Feel free to use as many entertaining and amusing music and sound cues as you wish.

NARRATOR: A story begins.

*Lights come up on **PROTAGONIST**.*

NARRATOR: A child is born.

PROTAG (*as we shall now call him.*) stretches, and cries like a newborn baby.

NARRATOR: He grows into a man.

PROTAG quickly “grows” and assumes a manly pose.

NARRATOR: He experiences happiness.

PROTAG: *(Very happy.)* Ah!

NARRATOR: He experiences sadness.

PROTAG: *(Very sad.)* Aw . . .

NARRATOR: He meets a girl.

WOMAN #1 approaches PROTAG.

PROTAG: Hello!

WOMAN #1: Hello.

NARRATOR: They fall in love. They get married. They go on their honeymoon.

They awkwardly stare at each other, making a few failed attempts to physically connect.

NARRATOR: They have four children.

From somewhere offstage, an unseen cast member tosses four baby dolls. PROTAG lovingly catches them one after another. He drops the fourth one.

NARRATOR: Three children.

PROTAG and WOMAN #1 lean against each other, adoring their children.

NARRATOR: The children grow up and move away.

PROTAG: *(Tossing the babies back to cast member.)* G'bye, kids.

WOMAN #1: We'll miss you!

PROTAG: Good luck with college!

NARRATOR: There's a fifty-fifty chance that he and his wife will get a divorce.

WOMAN #1 flips a coin. She looks at it. Shrugs at PROTAG and starts to leave. With a quick idea, she turns back, takes the coin, and then exits.

NARRATOR: All alone, the man grows old.

PROTAG sags a little.

NARRATOR: Older . . .

PROTAG hunches over, waddling about like a very old man.

NARRATOR: Olllderrr . . . and dies.

PROTAG falls over, lifeless.

NARRATOR: The end. (*Golf claps.*)

The NARRATOR lifts up PROTAG's wrist and lets it drop down to the floor.

NARRATOR: Not very satisfying, is it? And why? The story had no conflict. Conflict is struggle, a quest, a battle, a challenge, a longing, an agony, a goal that seems forever out of our grasp. We, as an audience, desire, nay, we demand that our characters experience conflict.

As the NARRATOR speaks, he stands the PROTAG back up, and arranges him as if working with a sculpture or a mannequin.

NARRATOR: And why do we crave hardship for our main character? Why must he be tortured emotionally and sometimes physically? Because it is fun to watch. Here stands a man, but he cannot become a hero until I, the narrator, give him conflict. We need something besides the protagonist on stage. We need something. An object that will illicit desire and ultimately suffering. It could be anything, really . . . excuse me, madam . . .

He speaks to the WIFE OF THE OLD MAN.

WIFE: Yes?

NARRATOR: Do you have something in your purse we could use?

WIFE: Oh, like what?

NARRATOR: A stick of gum or eyeliner, perhaps. The first thing you find will do. We simply need an object of desire for our protagonist.

OLD MAN: (*Annoyed, sarcastic.*) Oh, great. Audience participation.

WIFE: I'm afraid all I have is a cantaloupe.

NARRATOR: That's perfect. Now we can begin the story again and generate enough conflict to please the cruelest of audiences. A story begins . . . a child is born . . . and at three years of age . . .

PROTAG: I'm thwee years old . . .

NARRATOR: At the age of three years, he discovers that he absolutely loves cantaloupes.

The toddler-minded PROTAGONIST sees the cantaloupe. The NARRATOR holds it out, enticing PROTAG. PROTAG toddles across the stage.

PROTAG: Canna-wope!

NARRATOR: That's right, little protagonist, that's right! No one knew why the little boy loved cantaloupes. Maybe it was the wondrous globe shape, maybe it was the subtle yet heavenly aroma, or maybe it was the fact that he severely lacked Vitamin C. Whatever the reason, he wanted this spherical fruit. But he could not have it.

The NARRATOR tosses the cantaloupe to ANTAGONIST #1, a man who behaves like an angry old farmer.

ANTAG #1: You rascal! Get off my property. This is my cantaloupe farm!

NARRATOR: Our first conflict, Man versus Man. The protagonist wants one thing . . .

PROTAG: Canna-wope!

NARRATOR: And the antagonist wants to prevent our hero from getting it.

ANTAG #1: Oh, no you don't, you ain't gettin' your fat, dirty fingers on my prize-winning cantaloupe. I'm building me a fence around my whole farm. You'll never get one of my cantaloupes! Ever!

PROTAG grabs the cantaloupe. They pull back and forth.

PROTAG: Mine!

ANTAG #1: No!

PROTAG: Mine!

ANTAG #1: No!

PROTAG: Mine!

ANTAG #1: I said NO!

ANTAG #1 pushes PROTAG to the ground. PROTAG cries.

NARRATOR: And so the forces against the protagonist win the first battle. But when our hero feels that all is lost, that is when a supporting character steps in to encourage him. *(Talks to the WIFE again.)* Excuse me again, do you happen to have a tissue?

WIFE: Why, yes I do.

NARRATOR: Excellent. Could you offer one to that young man over there?

WIFE: On stage?

NARRATOR: Yes.

WIFE: But . . . what do I do . . . ?

NARRATOR: Just be his mother . . . it shouldn't take more than ten minutes of your time . . . why look, he's reaching out to you.

PROTAG: *(Reaches out to WIFE as she approaches.)* Mama?

NARRATOR: Go to him. He needs you.

PROTAG: Mama!

WIFE: Oh, uh, here, junior . . . *(Offers tissue.)* Dry your tears. *(He wipes his whole face on her sleeve/blouse.)* Ugh. Now, uh, junior, why are you so sad?

PROTAG: Because I wanna canna-wope an' I canna have one!

ANTAG #1 waltzes across the stage, dancing about with the cantaloupe, teasing the PROTAG.

ANTAG #1: Looks delicious, doesn't it? *(Brings it close to PROTAG.)*

PROTAG reaches for it.

ANTAG #1: *(Quickly drawing back.) Can't have it! (Exits, laughing cruelly.)*

PROTAG cries some more while WIFE consoles him.

WIFE: There, there. Don't let Farmer Antagonist antagonize you.

PROTAG: Me want canna-wope!

WIFE: Well, junior, you're a smart boy. I'm sure you'll find a way to have a cantaloupe of your very own.

PROTAG: A canna-wope of my vewy own?

WIFE: Here, maybe this will help.

She gives him a book, pats his head and exits the stage.

NARRATOR: The book she gave him changed his life . . . as soon as he was old enough to read, that is . . .

PROTAG: *(As he reads, his voice changes from child-like, to cracking with puberty, to manly.)* "The Science of Cantaloupe Farming. Chapter One: Preparing the Soil."

NARRATOR: As the years passed, the Protagonist learned all there was to know about cantaloupes. He memorized that book from one cover to the next. By the time he was seventeen, he was ready to grow his own delicious melon.

PROTAG is now center stage, on his hands and knees, gardening.

PROTAG: There! The soil is just right. And now, to plant my cantaloupe seed.

ANTAG #1: So, finally getting around to making your own melon? Well, it won't taste as good as mine!

PROTAG: You're wrong about that, old timer! It'll be ten times better than your mangy vegetation, and you know why? Because I'm planting my cantaloupe with soil, compost, and the most important nutrient of all: love. *(Plants seed.)*

ANTAG #1 shrugs and walks away with a grunt.

NARRATOR: And yet there are many variations of conflict of Man versus Man. There is something for worse than Man versus Farmer. Enter the new conflict: Man versus Father.

A fatherly ANTAGONIST #2 enters.

ANTAG #2: Son! Oh son! I've got good news – hey what are you doing with that watering can?

PROTAG: *(Tries to hide the can.)* Uh, nothing!

ANTAG #2: Son . . . you've been trying to raise cantaloupes again, haven't you?

PROTAG: Dad, I –

ANTAG #2: How very disappointing. And I was just about to congratulate . . . I thought you were ready to come work for me . . . as my partner!

PROTAG: But Dad! I don't want to go into the pumpkin business!

ANTAG #2: Pumpkins aren't good enough for you? Huh?! You love cantaloupes exclusively, is that it?

PROTAG: I do. And I've just planted my first one. And I'm going to grow it on my own.

ANTAG #2: You disgust me. When you were younger I wanted to put a stop to this cantaloupe nonsense. No son of mine was going to be a fruity weirdo! But your mother said, "It's just a phase. He'll grow out of it." And now look at you, rejecting the family business for this . . . this frivolous desire. Well, I'm putting a stop to it. I'm digging up that seed before it takes root.

PROTAG: Father, I love you, but if you touch my cantaloupe seed, I'll never speak to you again.

ANTAG #2: So that's it, huh? You would choose a fruit over the wishes of your family.

PROTAG: I'm growing this melon, and there's nothing you can do about it!

ANTAG #2: Then I have no son!

ANTAG #2 exits.

PROTAG: Dad? (*Remorseful, then turns defiant.*) Fine . . . Fine! I don't need you. I don't need anyone. Right, little seed? Don't mind us humans as we argue over petty things. You just rest and grow.

NARRATOR: The days passed by without contact with his family . . . until . . .

WIFE (MOM.) enters carrying a blanket.

PROTAG: Momma?

WIFE: I brought you a blanket. Are you sure you don't want to come back into the house?

PROTAG: Not until Dad admits that he's wrong!

WIFE: Junior . . . your father and I are moving.

PROTAG: Moving? Where?

WIFE: To – uh – Pumpkinville.

PROTAG: When?

WIFE: Right now. Your father says he's never coming back. And we'll never see you again.

She sobs. She hugs her son and wipes her tears (and nose.) against her son's sleeves.

WIFE: Oh look! (*Points to the ground.*)

PROTAG: My cantaloupe! It's sprouting!

WIFE: Oh junior, your dreams are coming true! I wish you all the happiness in the world. Goodbye, my sweet baby boy. (*She runs away, crying. Exits.*)

PROTAG: Wait! Mom! Don't leave. I'll go with . . . (*He starts to follow, then slowly comes to a halt. He knows that he belongs by his garden.*) Goodbye, Mom. (*Kneels down next to plant.*) Don't worry, little cantaloupe. We don't need her either. Now that you're growing, that's all I need. Nothing will hinder us now.

Thunder sound effect.

NARRATOR: Man versus Nature. As the protagonist tended his garden, the elements fought against him.

Rain sound effect. PROTAG feels drops of rain. He covers himself, helplessly. The NARRATOR hands him an umbrella.

NARRATOR: Man versus rain.

Wind sound effect. PROTAG tumbles over, then stands up, acting as though he is fighting against a strong wind.

NARRATOR: Man versus wind!

PROTAG manages to get back to center stage.

NARRATOR: Man versus lightning.

Lighting cue and "ZAP" sound effect. PROTAG acts as though he's been suddenly electrocuted.

PROTAG: Ow!

Lighting cue: the stage glows with a red tint.

NARRATOR: Man versus extreme temperature.

PROTAG: *(Fanning the plant.)* Poor little cantaloupe. It's so hot. But at least it's a dry heat.

NARRATOR: Man versus humidity.

PROTAG lets out a sigh of frustration. He fans himself rapidly.

NARRATOR: Man versus mosquitoes.

Mosquito sound effect. PROTAG slaps himself, swatting at the bugs.

NARRATOR: Man versus killer bees.

PROTAG: *(Flailing about, warding off a swarm.)* Oh come on!

Lighting cue: the lights change to a tint of icy blue.

NARRATOR: Man versus extreme cold.

PROTAG: Don't worry, my little friend. I'll protect you from the frost.

He curls up around the plant. He seems to fall asleep.

NARRATOR: Months of struggling passed by . . . and finally, the day arrived. The day he thought all of his hopes and dreams had finally come true.

The NARRATOR places the cantaloupe center stage. PROTAG awakens.

PROTAG: My cantaloupe! You're here! You're finally here! Now at long last I can quench my desires and partake in your deliciousness.

NARRATOR: But then he encountered a conflict greater than the forces of nature.

WOMAN #1 steps onto the stage.

NARRATOR: Man versus woman.

WOMAN #1: (*Approaches PROTAG.*) Hello.

PROTAG: H . . . Hello . . .

They stare at each other.

PROTAG: Why are you looking at me that way?

WOMAN #1: Because I see a man who is no longer a boy and I am captivated by the sight of him. As I look at your rain-drenched clothes, I can feel the storms you have weathered, all alone, and it makes me want to end your loneliness. As I look at the dirt caked into the palms: of your hands, I can feel the struggle you have undergone, the struggle to create beauty, and I long to join you in your struggles. As I look at your eyes, I can feel them searching, searching for love, gazing endlessly; oh would that I could end your search.

PROTAG: I think you look pretty.

WOMAN #1: Thank you.

PROTAG: More than pretty. Beautiful. I . . . I love you.

WOMAN #1: And I love you.

PROTAG: *(Kneeling.)* Would you be my wife? I will share everything in the world with you. Even the thing that I hold dearest to me. *(Offers cantaloupe.)*

WOMAN #1: *(Guiding him back to his feet.)* Yes, my soulmate, yes! Let's run away and be with each other forever and ever. *(About to embrace, she pauses and notices the cantaloupe for the first time.)* But you'll have to drop the melon - I'm allergic.

PROTAG: My cantaloupe? But I . . .

WOMAN #1: It's me or the melon. Your choice. I can see you need time to think. I'll be waiting over here . . . thinking romantic thoughts . . .

She flits away, teasing as she goes. He watches her, then looks back at his cantaloupe.

PROTAG: But I haven't even tasted it yet . . .

He holds the fruit, arm outstretched. He weighs his choices.

NARRATOR: Man versus self.

PROTAG looks offstage to his lady love, then back to his cantaloupe. He does this a couple times.

PROTAG: Maybe just one bite.

WOMAN #1: *(From offstage.)* Don't take too long . . .

PROTAG: Just a moment, my darling one! *(About to bite into cantaloupe.)*

WOMAN #1: *(From offstage.)* And don't get cantaloupe juice on your lips.

PROTAG: *(Frustrated. Sets the fruit down; speaks to it.)* Goodbye. I'm so sorry it had to end like this.

He starts to walk away. He stops. He looks back. Then he runs to the cantaloupe, falls to his knees and cradles the melon in his arms.

PROTAG: I can't leave you!

WOMAN #1: *(Peeks back on stage, seductive.) Oh, lover... (She disappears again.)*

PROTAG: *(Abruptly abandons the cantaloupe.)* Gotta go!

He briskly walks towards offstage. Antag #1 enters from the opposite side.

ANTAG #1: Hey twirp!

PROTAG stops dead in his tracks.

ANTAG #1: I heard through the melon-vine that you've got yourself a measly little garden. Just came by so I could laugh at it.

PROTAG: That's right. I have a garden. And remember you said I'd never lay my hands on a cantaloupe. Well, look what I have!
(Proudly holds cantaloupe.)

ANTAG #1: Cantaloupe?! Who cares about cantaloupes?! *(Proudly holds up a large grapefruit.)* Grapefruit is the new king of produce!

NARRATOR: Man versus rival.

ANTAG #1: My grapefruit is far superior to your cantaloupe.

PROTAG: It is not!

ANTAG #1: It tastes better. It's smoother, rounder, filled with more vitamins. It's sleeker, shinier, firmer and faster -

PROTAG: Faster? What are you talking about? You're crazy.

ANTAG #1: You don't believe me? There's only one way to find out.
Let's race.

PROTAG: I'm not going to race my cantaloupe.

ANTAG #1: Because you know she'll lose. *(Turns to leave.)*

PROTAG: Wait. We'll race. We'll race, and by God, we're going to win!

ANTAG #1: Now you're talking, twirp!

They line up and prepare to roll their fruits. WOMAN #1 re-enters. She stands near their imaginary finish line.

WOMAN #1: What's going on?

PROTAG: On three. One. Two. Three!

ANTAG #1 cheats and rolls his grapefruit right before PROTAG says "Three." Each piece of fruit rolls across the stage, but the grapefruit is in the lead. It rolls into the hands of WOMAN #1. The cantaloupe loses.

WOMAN #1: I've never seen such a fast and virile grapefruit. Who owns this?

ANTAG #1: That would be me, ma'am.

WOMAN #1: *(Seductively.)* Hello.

ANTAG #1: Hello!

She takes his arm and they exit.

PROTAG: But my love . . . my soulmate . . . come back . . . uh . . .
(Tries to think of her name.) . . . whatever your name was...

Saddened and alone, he looks back at the cantaloupe.

PROTAG: How could I ever think of abandoning you? Can you forgive me? *(He bends to pick it up.)*

ANTAG #2, now dressed as a gypsy-like soothsayer, hobbles out on stage with a cane.

ANTAG #2: Young man! Do not touch that abomination!

PROTAG: Why not?

ANTAG #2: Because . . . it is CURSED!

LIGHTING CUE: Lights flash. SOUND CUE: Over-dramatic music.

NARRATOR: Man versus the supernatural.

PROTAG: Cursed? That's nonsense.

ANTAG #2: Cursed it is indeed. I can see it with my third eye.

PROTAG: You have a third eye? Where is it located?

ANTAG #2: You don't want to know. But never mind about me. I can sense the imminent danger, a dark aura is cast from this cursed cantaloupe. All who touch it are doomed, doomed to a life of unnatural agony and unspeakable shame!

PROTAG: But I've already touched it! I'm already doomed! Please, you have to help me! Isn't there something you can do to remove the curse?

ANTAG #2: *(Thinking.)* Hmm . . .

NARRATOR: Man versus con artist.

ANTAG #2: Give me fifty dollars.

PROTAG: Okay. *(Hands over money.)*

ANTAG #2: *(Waves hands over the melon and chants nonsense.)*
There you are . . . the curse is reversed.

PROTAG: Oh good. *(Picks up melon.)* Wait, "reversed"? What does that mean exactly?

ANTAG #2: When it was cursed, this cantaloupe hated you. It wanted to destroy you. But now I reversed the spell. Now it loves you. Thanks for your money.

Antag #2 exits, counting the dollar bills.

PROTAG: *(Regards cantaloupe.)* It loves me? That's ridiculous. It's just an inanimate object. Sure, it might be the most beautiful melon in the world . . . but it doesn't possess feelings. It can't love me back. Or can it?

He stares longingly at the cantaloupe and slowly draws it closer to his lips.

NARRATOR: Man versus self . . . yet again.

PROTAG is about to kiss the cantaloupe, but he stops himself.

PROTAG: What am I doing?! Snap out of it! (*He slaps himself a few times.*) I'm lonely and pathetic, but I'm not insane. I am not falling in love with my cantaloupe. I AM NOT FALLING IN LOVE WITH MY CANTALOUPE. I am not attracted to my cantaloupe in any way, shape or form. I am not falling in - oh who am I kidding?!

He embraces the cantaloupe, kissing it passionately.

Optional SOUND CUE: Romantic music begins to play. PROTAG's MOTHER (the WIFE character.) enters.

WIFE: Junior, I'm back from - eek!

PROTAG: Mom!

WIFE: What are you doing?!

WOMAN #1 and ANTAG #1 rush onto the stage.

ANTAG #1: What's happening?

WOMAN #1: Is he doing what I think he's doing?

ANTAG #1: For shame! Do we want that kind of libertine defiling our community?

WOMAN #1 / ANTAG #1: NO!

NARRATOR: Man versus society. (*Adopting the manners of a Southern preacher.*) Ladies and gentlemen of the audience, you also constitute part of society. As you can see, on stage, our protagonist is getting to know his cantaloupe in the biblical sense. This is something that should shock and mortify those of decent moral sensibility. So, as a society we must fight against this abnormality. So, if you will, please raise your hand (*Hopefully, the audience does this.*) point your finger at the protagonist. Now, prepare to self-righteously waggle your finger as we chant: "SHAME ON YOU!"

WOMAN #1 / ANTAG #1: (*Wagging fingers. Hopefully, along with the rest of the audience.*) Shame on you! Shame on you! Shame on you!

ANTAG #1: Society condemns you and your lusty cantaloupe.

PROTAG: Don't judge us just because you don't understand us . . . We're both consenting . . . things. If we love each other, and we don't bother other people or vegetables, why should you condemn us? If we want to be together, why should you stand in our way? And if we want to join each other in holy matrimony as man and melon, what of it? Who dares to stop us?

LIGHTING and SOUND CUE: Thunder, flashing lights.

ANTAG #2: *(From offstage in a booming voice.)* I DO!

NARRATOR: Man versus God.

ANTAG #2 enters dressed in a god-like robe and wearing a godly-looking beard. PROTAG remains standing, but all others bow down.

ANTAG #2: Junior of 241 Garden Lane, forsake your unnatural desires and cast away that cantaloupe!

PROTAG: I . . . I . . . I . . .

WIFE: Do what he says, Junior!

PROTAG: I . . . I won't do it! It's my cantaloupe. I won't give her up for anything or anyone.

ANTAG #2: You would defy God?

PROTAG: I don't know. I'm agnostic.

ANTAG #2 threatens him with a cardboard lightning bolt.

PROTAG: I'm sorry, sir, it's just that I refuse to give up the most wonderful thing in my life.

ANTAG #2: Hmm. And what if, instead of commanding you to change your ways, I offered you a trade?

PROTAG: What do you mean? What kind of trade?

ANTAG #2: Let's see what I have in my god bag.

NARRATOR hands ANTAG #2 a burlap sack. PROTAG is interested.

ANTAG #2: Would you give up that cantaloupe for . . . good health?

PROTAG: No.

ANTAG #2: How about . . . world peace?

PROTAG: Nope.

ANTAG #2: Eternal happiness?

PROTAG: (*Filled with anxiety and paranoia.*) I've already found it! I've made my decision. I am not giving up my cantaloupe.

ANTAG #2: So be it. Let the world forever know that thou art a weirdo. And as such you shall forever wander alone, without a friend in the world, with the exception of your cantaloupe. To all of those who obey my word, speak no words of disdain or compassion to this man. Depart and leave him to his own fate.

ANTAG #2 leaves. On his way, he passes in front of WOMAN #1.

WOMAN #1: Hello.

ANTAG #2: Hello!

ANTAG #1, ANTAG #2, and WOMAN #1 exit. MOTHERLY WIFE stands upstage, her back faces the PROTAG. She is emotionally distraught. She takes a few steps away.

PROTAG: Mom . . .

She stops.

PROTAG: You're not leaving me are you? Just because of what God said . . .

The NARRATOR approaches WIFE.

WIFE: (*Whispering to the NARRATOR.*) I don't want to be here anymore . . .

PROTAG: Mom?! Aren't you at least going to say goodbye?

WIFE: (*Distraught. To NARRATOR.*) Would you help me back to my seat?

PROTAG: Aren't you at least going to look at me?!

She sits back in her seat and hides her face behind the program. She leans next to whoever is sitting next to her.

WIFE: Tell me when it's over.

NARRATOR: And so the protagonist gained the object of his desire, yet lost all else in the process.

PROTAG: Oh shut up! Don't act like this is a sad ending! It's not! It's a happy one. I am triumphant. I overcame every one of those obstacles. I have survived all that you have thrown at me. I have endured every conflict there is.

NARRATOR: Almost every conflict. We forgot about one.

PROTAG: What?

NARRATOR: Man versus narrator!

The NARRATOR grabs the cantaloupe and throws it to the floor, as hard as possible, breaking the cantaloupe. [The NARRATOR might even jump on it a few times, depending on how messy the stage can get.]

NARRATOR: *(This line is optional.)* Oh no, what happened?!

PROTAG: Nooooo! My . . . my . . . cantaloupe. My sweet, spherical cantaloupe. *(Falls to his knees.)* She was my whole world.

NARRATOR: And with the object of his desire obliterated, the conflict evaporates . . . and the resolution can begin . . . the protagonist reviews his entire life's struggle, the peaks and valleys of his quest. He can now see more clearly and he experiences an epiphany.

PROTAG: Well, that sucked.

NARRATOR: Or perhaps he learns something a bit more uplifting and eloquent?

PROTAG: Perhaps . . . perhaps I shouldn't be so obsessed and single minded, for there is more to this world than mere melons and melancholy.

NARRATOR: Or perhaps he will be too consumed by tragedy . . .

PROTAG cries into the cantaloupe remains.

NARRATOR: And instead of leaving a lesson he will become overwhelmed by grief.

PROTAG: I'm a widower!

NARRATOR: And as he gazes at the remains of his beloved, his heart suddenly grows old . . .

PROTAG holds his chest, in pain.

NARRATOR: Older . . .

PROTAG lurches over, grasping the cantaloupe remains to him.

NARRATOR: Olllderrr . . . And he dies -

PROTAG falls to the floor, lifeless.

NARRATOR: —of a broken heart. We could end the story here, draw the curtains and raise the house lights, or we could speak of the next day. When the people found him . . .

ANTAG #1, #2 and WOMAN #1 enter and form a semi-circle around PROTAG.

NARRATOR: They scratched their heads. Though the townsfolk never understood the protagonist, they knew how he would want to be laid to rest. They dug a hole in the earth and buried him with the cantaloupe in his arms. Within the grave, the body of the man and the seed of the fruit mingled, and the protagonist and the object of his desire became one. And the following spring, the roots took hold, and up from the earth sprouted . . . a cantaloupe tree.

PROTAG: (*Lifts up his head from deathly slumber.*) But, cantaloupes don't grow on trees.

NARRATOR: That's what makes it such a beautiful ending.

SCENE THREE: THE PLAYWRIGHT

Lights fade, a spotlight stays on the WIFE who is clapping, but she isn't sure how she feels about this play. The NARRATOR has found a new spot on the stage.

NARRATOR: And now ladies and gentlemen, our scene changes to...

A hand waves at him from off stage. The hand is connected to an arm that flaps around, trying to get his attention.

NARRATOR: Oh. This must be our stage hand.

The arm waves negatively.

NARRATOR: No? Oh, of course, it's you. Why don't you come out here?

The arms waves VERY negatively.

NARRATOR: Too shy? Well, you needn't be. I think they like you. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to introduce you to the playwright.

The NARRATOR takes the PLAYWRIGHT by the hand and brings him out onto the stage.

The PLAYWRIGHT is in a suit. The PLAYWRIGHT has a balloon for a head, complete with drawn eyes and a smiley face.

NARRATOR: Are you nervous?

The PLAYWRIGHT'S balloon head bobs up and down.

NARRATOR: But the play is going well.

The balloon-headed PLAYWRIGHT shakes his head no.

NARRATOR: You're being too hard on yourself. Ma'am, how do you think the play is going?

WIFE: Oh, it's quite lovely.

NARRATOR: There, that's very encouraging.

The PLAYWRIGHT draws a smile on his balloon face.

NARRATOR: How about you, sir?

The OLD MAN'S hat is down. He snores loudly.

NARRATOR: Well, you can't expect to keep everyone awake.

The PLAYWRIGHT draws angry eyebrows over his eyes. And perhaps turns the smile into an open mouth with sharp teeth.

NARRATOR: Maybe we should send you back to the green room. There we go.

The PLAYWRIGHT exits.

SCENE FOUR: GENRE

NARRATOR: You know writers. Inflated egos. Now as I was saying, this next scene takes place a long time ago when I was employed by a prince.

PRINCE: *(Off stage.)* Narrator!

NARRATOR: A loud prince.

PRINCE: *(Off stage.)* Narrator, I grow impatient!

NARRATOR: A loud, impatient prince.

The PRINCE stamps onto the stage wearing something outlandishly foppish.

PRINCE: Nrrrrrrratoooooor!

NARRATOR: A loud, impatient, (*pause.*) eccentric prince.

The spoiled brat of a PRINCE sits in a throne-like chair. His feet dangle above the floor. The NARRATOR approaches respectfully.

NARRATOR: Yes, sire.

PRINCE: Is the story about to begin?

NARRATOR: If you wish it.

PRINCE: I do wish it.

NARRATOR: Then it is about to begin.

PRINCE: What is the name of today's story?

NARRATOR: The title is being placed as we speak, sire.

Two PLAYERS enter. They carry an easel that holds all of the title cards which will be used in the following scene. Each title card should be large enough for the audience to clearly see – and each word on the card should be written in large, clear letters. The first title card reads: "GENRE."

PRINCE: Oh, you expect me to read? I want to be entertained; I don't want to think. (*Looks at title, struggles to pronounce.*) "Guh-in-ree"? "Ginre"? "Juh-Nair"? "Jenner"?

NARRATOR: Genre.

PRINCE: What an idiotic title! I don't like it. I don't like it at all! Narrator, I shall destroy this title!

He takes off the title card and tries to rip it in two. It's too difficult for him.

NARRATOR: Shall I help you, sire?

PRINCE: I can do it all by myself.

The PRINCE struggles and the NARRATOR steps behind him. The NARRATOR gently holds the PRINCE'S wrists and pulls the card apart. The title card underneath appears blank.

PRINCE: See, I told you. Now, oh dear, there's no title.

THE GREATEST PLAY EVER WRITTEN

The PRINCE points to the blank title card on the easel.

NARRATOR: Allow me.

The NARRATOR flips the blank card to reveal a new title. The NARRATOR reads aloud:

NARRATOR: “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.”

Four PLAYERS enter, ready to begin the performance.

PRINCE: What sort of a story is that?

The NARRATOR removes the “Goldilocks” title card to reveal a new one. This one reads:

NARRATOR: A “Fairy Tale.”

PRINCE: Oh. You may proceed.

As the NARRATOR speaks, the four players (Goldilocks, Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear.) act out the story.

NARRATOR: Once upon a time, there was a curious little girl named Goldilocks.

GOLDILOCKS: *(Curtsies and waves girlishly to the audience.)* Hello, everyone!

NARRATOR: Her parents were much too busy with their household chores around the cabin, so she decided to go skipping through the woods.

GOLDILOCKS: *(Cheerfully skipping.)* Skippity, skippity, skippity, skip.

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, deep in the heart of the forest lived three bears. Papa Bear...

PAPA BEAR yawns and stretches in a manly sort of way.

NARRATOR: Mama Bear...

MAMA BEAR yawns and stretches in a motherly sort of way.

NARRATOR: And Baby Bear.

BABY BEAR yawns and stretches in an adorable sort of way.

NARRATOR: They awoke and sat down for breakfast.

PAPA: What's for breakfast, Mama Bear?

MAMA: Delicious porridge, Papa Bear.

BABY: (*Sweetly.*) May we eat, now, Mama? My tummy is growling.

PAPA and BABY BEAR sit down. MAMA BEAR brings them each a bowl.

MAMA: Here we are, my family. (*Tests the porridge.*) Oh deary me. I'm afraid the porridge is too hot.

PAPA: I think you are right, Mama Bear. Let us go for a walk and when we return the porridge will be just right.

NARRATOR: And so, they went marching into the woods, waiting for their breakfast to cool down. And just as they were gone, Goldilocks arrived at their door.

GOLDILOCKS: Yoo-hoo. Is anyone home? What an adorable little cottage. I wonder who lives here. Mmm...I smell porridge!

NARRATOR: Goldilocks couldn't resist trying the porridge. First she tasted from Papa Bear's bowl.

GOLDILOCKS: Oh dear, it's much too hot.

NARRATOR: Then she tried the porridge from Mama Bear's bowl.

GOLDILOCKS: Brr! It's much too cold!

NARRATOR: And then she tasted the porridge from Baby Bear's bowl.

GOLDILOCKS: Mmm! It's just right!

PRINCE: Wait a moment, wait a moment.

GOLDILOCKS freezes just as she was about to take another bite.

PRINCE: This fairy tale is ridiculously unrealistic.

NARRATOR: Because it has talking bears?

PRINCE: No! The temperature of the porridge. How could the father bear's porridge be scalding hot and the mother's porridge be insufferably cold? It was cooked in the same pot! I shall not tolerate such nonsense.

NARRATOR: Would you prefer a different story?

PRINCE: It's not so much the story as it is the style. I want more realism.

NARRATOR: Ah, then you don't want a fairy tale.

The NARRATOR removes the "Fairy Tale" title card, revealing the new one underneath. The new card reads: "Drama."

NARRATOR: You want a drama.

PRINCE: Yes... *(Struggling to read.)* A dram-ah...

NARRATOR: Once upon a time! *(Stops himself.)* Forgive me, force of habit. *(Starts again.)* Yesterday...there was a serious young woman named Goldilocks.

GOLDILOCKS: *(Very serious.)* Hello everyone.

NARRATOR: Her parents didn't pay very much attention to her because they were too busy arguing over child custody. So, she decided to skip school.

GOLDILOCKS: *(Very serious.)* Skippity, skippity, skippity, skip. *(Exits.)*

NARRATOR: Elsewhere, a family of bears woke up.

PAPA: What's for breakfast?

MAMA: Make it your own damn self!

PAPA: I work twelve hours a day and I can't even wake up to a bowl of warm porridge?!

MAMA: You call that so-called job of yours work? You wander around looking for honey and stealing picnic baskets!

PAPA: Oh, so now I'm a thief? I provide for this family! What do you do? That's what I want to know! What do you do?!

MAMA: I cry myself to sleep every night! There, are you happy?!

BABY BEAR walks onto the stage.

BABY: What's for breakfast?

MAMA and PAPA: Make it yourself!

BABY: Fine! I will! (*Sits down with bowl.*) Sometimes I wish I would just go to sleep and never come out of hibernation.

PAPA and MAMA sit down with their own bowls.

PAPA: What are you muttering about?

BABY: Never mind.

PAPA: (*Tasting the porridge.*) Ow! It's too hot! What are you trying to do, burn my tongue off?

MAMA: I'm just glad I can feel something.

PAPA: It's like molten lava. We won't be able to eat this for hours. What do we do now, stare at the walls?

BABY: Better than staring at you.

PAPA: What did you say to me?!

MAMA: Let's get out of this miserable place for a while. Besides, it's almost time for junior's appointment.

PAPA: Fine, let's go.

NARRATOR: So the family left for Baby Bear's therapy session with Mr. Owl. And as soon as they were gone, Goldilocks—

PRINCE: Wait, wait. This is depressing! Can't we liven things up a bit. You know, put in some laughs.

NARRATOR: Ah, sire, then might I suggest...

The NARRATOR takes away the title card to reveal a new one: "Romantic Comedy."

NARRATOR: Romantic comedy.

GOLDILOCKS has entered the cabin.

GOLDILOCKS: Yoo-hoo. Is anyone home? Uh-oh, I was supposed to house sit for my best friend's cousin's family. But I'm not sure this is the right place.

PAPA enters, being careful not to touch anything. His back is to GOLDILOCKS.

MAMA: *(From offstage – or outside the imaginary door.)* Darling, don't touch the furniture with those sticky paws.

PAPA: Just let me wash off this honey, and I'll return to our romantic picnic.

PAPA BEAR turns. GOLDILOCKS and PAPA BEAR gasp at each other.

PAPA: A beautiful woman!

GOLDILOCKS: A handsome bear!

PAPA BEAR tries to push her out of the room, worried that MAMA BEAR will discover her in their house.

PAPA: Miss, I don't know who you are, but you can't be here. If my wife sees you, she'll think—

GOLDILOCKS: Get your paws off of me!

PAPA: Please, you must get out of my cabin!

GOLDILOCKS: *(Now his paws are stuck on her.)* I can't! I'm stuck!

Now they are stuck together in a compromising position.

PAPA: Oh no! The honey!

MAMA: *(Entering.)* Yes, sweetheart? *(She is shocked by what she sees.)*

PAPA: This isn't what it looks like.

He sticks tries to push GOLDILOCKS away, but they wind up sticking closer together.

MAMA: Oh, Papa Bear! How could you?

PAPA: Mama Bear! You're the only one I love!

MAMA: Then what's she doing here?

BABY BEAR enters. He wears sunglasses and looks hip and cool.

PAPA: Hi Mom. Hey Pops. Whoa! What's happening here?

MAMA: Junior!

PAPA: What are you doing home?

MAMA: You're supposed to be away at college.

BABY: They expelled me for being too cool. Hey Pops, who's your golden-haired friend?

GOLDILOCKS: (*Flirty.*) Hello.

BABY: (*Equally flirty.*) Hello.

MAMA: She's a homewrecker!

BABY: Don't mind them. You know how parents are. It's a pleasure to meet you.

BABY BEAR kisses her hand slowly. His lips stay on her hand – stuck.

MAMA: Get this woman out of our house!

PAPA: But the honey—

MAMA: Don't you honey me!

She slaps him across the face. When the PRINCE speaks, they freeze in their post-slap position.

PRINCE: Oooh! I rather like this turn of things. Tell me, narrator, how violent does it get?

NARRATOR: Not too violent. That would be a different sort of genre, sire.

PRINCE: Well, give it to me. I want it.

NARRATOR: Perhaps you might enjoy a western.

PRINCE: What on earth is that? (*The Prince moves the card himself.*)

NARRATOR: *(Suddenly, a cowboy-styled NARRATOR.)* It's a rootin' tootin' tale of the Old West.

The players stand like cowboys and gun-slingers.

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the bear family sat down for a good-old-fashioned game o' high stakes poker.

They all sit down for a game of cards. Including the NARRATOR.

PAPA: Well, hombres, I'll tell you what. This poker hand I got in front of me is much too hot. I suggest y'all fold.

MAMA: My cards are much too cold. I'm out.

BABY: Well, my poker hand is juuuust right! *(Papa Bear and Baby show their cards.)* Read 'em and weep, you furry critters! Ha, ha, now I can afford to get me some new-fangled porridge bowls.

GOLDILOCKS: Wait just a jack-rabbit. Don't get yer paws all over my money. I don't know how you bears play poker, but where I come from, four queens beats a full house. *(Shows her cards.)*

BABY: Shoot! You won again!

MAMA: You sure do win an awful lot, stranger.

PAPA: It chaps my hide to say this, but you've plum beaten us ev'ry single hand, which is about as sneaky as a rattle snake in a baby's cradle.

BABY: As suspicious as a cactus in a wedding gown.

MAMA: Or a werewolf at a square dance.

PAPA: Or a man kissin' a cantaloupe.

NARRATOR: Wait a second, cowpokes. There's somethin' funny about these cards o' hers.

GOLDILOCKS: I don't know what yer talkin' about.

PAPA: *(Examining cards.)* Hey now. Someone's been marking my cards.

MAMA: What the heck? Someone has been marking my cards.

BABY: Someone has been marking my cards, and the cheatin' scoundrel is sittin' right there!

They all stand up.

GOLDILOCKS: Them's fightin' words!

They all pantomime drawing guns.

NARRATOR: Uh-oh. Looks like there's gonna be a shoot-out.

Optional: Western music begins to play during their stare-down.

GOLDILOCKS: Make your move, I dare ya.

PRINCE: A shoot out? I don't want blood stains on my royal carpet.
(Reaches for a new title.)

NARRATOR: Sire, if you continue to switch genres, you'll upset the characters.

The bears leave the stage. GOLDILOCKS remains.

PRINCE: Too bad!

The PRINCE pulls away the "Western" title card and reveals the new one: "Kung Fu."

Goldilocks assumes a Kung-fu position. She speaks very dramatically as if she were an action hero in a karate movie. PAPA BEAR and MAMA BEAR should be off to the side, filling in for BABY and GOLDILOCK'S voices. It's entirely the director's choice.

GOLDILOCKS: Ah! That porridge was tasty – ha, ha, ha. Now I wish to use my Kung-fu skill but there is no one for me to fight.

She does a few Kung-fu moves. Optional: Someone makes "wind" sound effects for her punches.

GOLDILOCKS: Ha, ha! I know. Since there is no one for me to fight, I shall battle with the furniture!

NARRATOR: So, the brave warrior Goldilocks approached the Papa Bear chair.

She bows in front of the chair. She assumes a “Karate Kid” pose.

GOLDBLOCKS: Hi-ya!

She strikes the chair and hurts her hand.

NARRATOR: But the mighty chair was too hard.

GOLDBLOCKS: I can see that this is a powerful chair. Much too hard for my fist. Ha, ha. I better attack a chair of a different kind.

NARRATOR: And so the honorable warrior faced the Mama Bear chair.

GOLDBLOCKS: Hi-ya!

She kicks the chair and it falls over.

GOLDBLOCKS: Ha! This chair is much too soft. It is no match for a Kung-fu master such as I. I must find another chair.

NARRATOR: Then Goldilocks saw the chair of the Baby Bear.

GOLDBLOCKS: Hi-ya!

She kicks or punches the chair and breaks it into pieces. BABY BEAR suddenly enters, perhaps wearing a headband or some sort of karate costume.

BABY: Someone has invaded our sacred cabin in the forest. (*Looks at table.*) Holy ancestors! Someone has been eating my porridge! (*Looks at broken chair.*) By the Great Wall of China! Someone has been kicking my chair. And there she is!

They circle each other, about to do battle.

BABY and GOLDBLOCKS: Hi-ya!

PRINCE: Switch! (*Reveals “Romance” title card.*)

NARRATOR: “Romance!”

GOLDBLOCKS: Why are we fighting?

BABY: When we could be kissing.

They embrace.

PRINCE: *(Looking at the next card.)* What's this one? *(He reveals it.)*

NARRATOR: "Fantasy!" Sire, you really shouldn't –

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