

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

A FARCE IN TWO ACTS

By Eddie McPherson

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VIRGIL'S WEDDING

By Eddie McPherson

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(APPROXIMATELY TWELVE WOMEN, EIGHT MEN, EXTRAS)

MS. DELANIE	A wedding director from the city (165 lines)
BARBIE.....	Ms. Delanie's assistant (64 lines)
MARGARET HOOPER	The bride (107 lines)
BERTHA MAE.....	Margaret's best friend (66 lines)
VIRGIL SLUDGE	Margaret's fiancée (97 lines)
ELLARD.....	Virgil's best friend (79 lines)
MAMA HOOPER.....	Margaret's mother (74 lines)
PAPA HOOPER	Margaret's father (44 lines)
MAMA SLUDGE*	Virgil's mother (44 lines)
PAPA SLUDGE.....	Virgil's father (42 lines)
MR. WRIGHT	Ms. Delanie's boss (56 lines)
MOE MOE*	Acts as the wedding host/ess (61 lines)
GRANDMA*	Virgil's grandmother (35 lines)
MR. PERKY	Margaret's great-grandfather (24 lines)
TINY	Margaret's cousin (6 lines)
UNCLE LESTER.....	A deaf relative (3 lines)
AUNT POLLY.....	Lester's deaf wife (2 lines)
CURLY SUE	Moe Moe's sister (3 lines)
LARRY SUE	Moe Moe's other sister (6 lines)
REVEREND DAVIS	An absent-minded minister (29 lines)
EXTRAS	Wedding guests

* *MAMA SLUDGE and GRANDMA can be played by the same actor. This adds to the fun of the play. If this option is used, see the DUMMY OPTION in the PRODUCTION NOTES. Also, MOE MOE can be played by either a man or woman, line changes are marked in the script.*

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play is written to be simply staged in the following ways:

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: Ms. Delanie's office. This scene can be played in front of the permanent set of the chapel. A simple card table may be used with a plant sitting to the side to establish an office mood.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: Margaret's dressing room. This scene is also played in front of the permanent set. The card table from SCENE 1 can now be moved down stage center for Margaret's dressing table. An oval mirror on a stand and/or a floor lamp may be brought in for the background. When the characters look into the dressing table's mirror, they're actually looking out over the audience.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3: The Chapel. See below.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4: The forest scene. A refrigerator box turned on its side makes a perfect lizard trap. It may be covered with brown burlap or a camouflage covering or painted. An artificial undecorated Christmas tree may sit to the side but is optional. If available, have cricket or bird sound effects in the background.

ACT TWO: The Chapel.

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THE CHAPEL:

The wedding chapel needs only a small platform up stage center with a lectern sitting on it where Reverend Davis will perform the ceremony. Chairs sit around the stage or playing area. A cardboard cutout of a stained glass window may hang right behind the lectern to set a nice chapel mood. There needs to be a place up stage right for a few characters to exit. (Bertha Mae pulls Margaret out to that area and Grandma exits and re-enters there as well as Margaret when entering in ACT TWO.) This area acts as the back room of the chapel. All other entrances and exits are from stage left. A couple of simple, yet elegant flowers or ferns need to be brought in for ACT TWO as well as a couple of candle stands if possible. The audience can fill in the rest with their imagination. If you have a curtain, pull it close for SCENES 1, 2, and 4 in ACT ONE.

CEREMONY:

For the wedding ceremony, the guests should sit on each side of the stage facing the audience. Bertha Mae stands on the lectern beside Reverend Davis facing Margaret, Ellard stands on the other side of the Reverend facing Virgil. Virgil and Margaret face Reverend Davis but turn toward the audience when they exchange their vows.

DANCE OPTION:

If you choose to have Margaret, Virgil, and Mr. Wright dance in Margaret's daydream in ACT ONE, SCENE 3, you may want to have a light change but it's not necessary.

MARGARET'S WEDDING DRESS:

The wedding dress she actually wears in ACT TWO isn't the ugly one Mama brings out of the box in ACT ONE. Barbie has found a different dress for her. This doesn't have to be a real wedding dress. It can be a simple white dress that fits Margaret nicely. A small veil may or may not be worn. Margaret should look absolutely beautiful in ACT TWO. Her makeup is perfect and her hair is lovely.

DUMMY OPTION:

If you use the dummy option, the actor who plays Mama Sludge in ACT ONE returns as his Grandmother in ACT TWO. The dummy hangs on a stand in the back of the chapel wearing an ugly dress and a large rimmed hat. The dummy portrays Mama Sludge who is mad and sulking. This adds to the fun especially when Grandma is talking to her “daughter” and Papa dances with it at the play’s finale. If you choose to use two actors, the dummy isn’t used. Either way will work.

PROPS

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

- Phone/intercom, papers, file folder (Ms. Delanie)
- Pad of paper and pencil (Barbie)

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

- Empty shoe box (Ellard)
- Small tape/CD player, Broom (Margaret)

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

- Ugly plastic flowers (Mama Hooper)
- Wild wig (Margaret)
- Clipboard (Ms. Delanie)
- Small ugly lawn decoration (Mama)
- Box of decorations (Papa Sludge)
- Another box of Christmas decorations including garland and a string of Christmas lights (Virgil)
- Shoe box with stick inside (Ellard)
- Piece of Christmas garland (Ms. Delanie)
- A dress box with an ugly dress inside (Mama)
- Box of matches (Papa Hooper)

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

- Shoe box with stick inside (Ellard)
- Various small stuffed animals/rubber snake

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ACT TWO

- Registration book/pen (Moe Moe)
- Various bandages/arm sling (Papa Sludge)
- Umbrella (Grandma)
- Walking cane (Mr. Perky)
- A bottle of mouth freshener (Grandma)
- Little black book (Mr. Wright)
- Purse (Mama Hooper)
- [Optional] Boa (Tiny)
- Shoebox with stick inside (Ellard)
- Two large funnels (Polly, Lester)
- Large piece of tape (Curly Sue)
- Various pages of notes (Reverend Davis)
- Bouquet of flowers (Margaret)
- Sheet of paper (Virgil)
- Promotion certificate (Mr. Wright)
- Suitcase (Virgil)
- Garter (Virgil)

A WORD ABOUT CHARACTERIZATION

Lickskillit is a very small rural community in the middle of nowhere. The people who live there are simple country people but aren't hillbillies. Though their qualities are exaggerated, they still need to be played somewhat down to earth and not so much like a melodrama (except maybe when Margaret is telling Mr. Wright that she can't marry him). The audience will care more about them. They need to dress tacky and silly, especially for the wedding. In contrast, Ms. Delanie, Barbie, and Mr. Wright should wear sophisticated suits, dresses, etc. The Reverend may want to wear a black robe or a nice suit.

SOUND EFFECTS

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ACT ONE, SCENE 3: | Explosion |
| ACT ONE, SCENE 4 (OPTIONAL): | Crickets/Birds chirping |
| ACT ONE, SCENE 4: | Truck driving off |

BY EDDIE MCPHERSON

. . . AND FINALLY

This is a farce. The action should move very quickly to be effective. Slow moments and long blackouts between scenes will be annoying and distracting. Keep it moving and have fun AND check our web site for full color posters for THE VIRGIL SERIES.

THE VIRGIL SERIES includes “Virgil’s Wedding,” “Virgil’s Family Reunion,” “Virgil and The City Slickers,” and just in time for the Christmas season, “Virgil’s Christmas Catch.” Check our website for new releases by this same author and expect the fun to continue “Virgil’s Wedding—The Musical.” Preview the music and artwork at www.hitplays.com.

DO NOT COPY

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING:

It's an office scene. A small desk and chair sit a little off center left and a small plant off to the side.

AT RISE:

MS. DELANIE sits behind the desk talking on the phone. She is dressed in business attire.

MS. DELANIE: Yes, sir, I understand completely. I really appreciate this opportunity. This wedding will put me at the fifty mark. Yes sir, I understand, the company is counting on me and I won't let you down. I'm ready sir. Thank you again, sir. Goodbye. *(She hangs up the phone and presses a button on her intercom.)* Barbie, would you come in here please? *(She straightens some papers on her desk as her assistant, BARBIE, enters with a pad and pencil.)*

BARBIE: Yes, Ms. Delanie?

MS. DELANIE: Barbie, come in, I'd like to talk to you for a few moments. Have a seat. *(BARBIE has a seat in the chair across from MS. DELANIE.)* I was wondering if you would be interested in a big assignment?

BARBIE: An assignment? Me?

MS. DELANIE: I am going to direct my fiftieth wedding this weekend and you my dear are going to assist me.

BARBIE: Assist in directing a real wedding?

MS. DELANIE: I spoke to my boss just now. If I successfully direct this wedding, my promotion to Executive Director will take effect next month and, well, they'll have to fill my position. As far as I'm concerned, my job should go to you.

BARBIE: Me? Oh, Ms. Delanie, I couldn't accept such an important position as that.

MS. DELANIE: You're a very sufficient office assistant. Why shouldn't you take over my position?

BARBIE: Why, you're just the best wedding director in the world, that's all. I could never take your place.

MS. DELANIE: Of course you couldn't take my place. No one is that good, but you have been at the company longer than any other person in the office and they do like to promote from within

BARBIE: Oh, Ms. Delanie, I would just die if I were a real Wedding Director, just die!

MS. DELANIE: Well, don't die before the wedding this weekend. Because it's such an important mile marker, the president will be watching every little move I make. If the ceremony doesn't go off without a hitch, it will be another fifty weddings before I'm promoted. And, if **I'm** not promoted, **you're** not promoted.

BARBIE: Yes ma'am. But who's wedding are we directing?

MS. DELANIE: *(Looking in a file.)* Oh, just some simple girl over in Lickskillit.

BARBIE: Lickskillit? But I thought you said you would never direct a wedding where people married their own cousins?

MS. DELANIE: Yes, I did say that. The people are so backward there they wouldn't know a good wedding ceremony if it bit them in their patch covered britches. As far as they know, a wedding is still conducted with shotguns.

BARBIE: That sounds a little dangerous.

MS. DELANIE: Not to worry, Barbie dear. No matter what I do, it will be a great wonder to them.

BARBIE: Oh, I see. Then your boss will see you directing a wedding with no effort at all. That's a great plan, Ms. Delanie. What are their names?

MS. DELANIE: *(Looking.)* Let' see . . . Margaret Hooper and Virgil Sludge.

BARBIE: They sound like they're from Lickskillit. Are they cousins?

MS. DELANIE: If you traced their family tree far enough, I'm sure you'd find they were from the same nut.

BARBIE: *(Laughing with a shrill giggle.)* Ms. Delanie, you're so funny.

MS. DELANIE: Barbie, would you please do me a favor?

BARBIE: Wow. My first assignment as your new assistant. What can I do?

MS. DELANIE: *(Handing her an empty coffee cup.)* Get me a cup of coffee. That will be all.

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BARBIE: *(Deflated.)* Yes ma'am. *(She takes the coffee cup and exits. MS. DELANIE opens up the file folder again and leans back in her chair.)*

MS. DELANIE: Lickskillit U.S.A. Boy, will this be a piece of cake. *(BLACKOUT.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING:

MARGARET'S bedroom. There is a chest of drawers stage left. This doubles as the preacher's pulpit later. Check PRODUCTION NOTES. The table, which acted as a desk in SCENE 1, is now a dresser, which sits down stage center. It has hairbrushes and other odds and ends spread out over it. The "mirror" is invisible. The people who look into it are actually looking out to the audience.

AT RISE:

MARGARET enters followed closely by BERTHA MAE, her best friend. MARGARET wears a housecoat, big fluffy house shoes and some type of beauty mask on her face. She has curlers in her hair covered by a hair net.

BERTHA MAE: What's the matter, Margaret? What did you want to show me?

MARGARET: *(Sitting down at the dresser and looking into the mirror.)* There, Bertha Mae. Right there. It's awful?

BERTHA MAE: *(Looking at MARGARET in the mirror.)* What's awful? All I see is your reflection.

MARGARET: Exactly. I was practicing my makeup this morning and all of a sudden it dawned on me. Why would Virgil want to marry somethin' that looked like that?

BERTHA MAE: Oh, Margaret. You just have cold feet is all. You know Virgil loves you regardless what you look like.

MARGARET: Thanks a lot.

BERTHA MAE: What I mean is, Virgil's no Prince Charmin' himself so he can't be all that choosy.

MARGARET: *(Putting her head down.)* Ohhhhhhhhhh.

BERTHA MAE: Margaret, you remember when you and Virgil helped me and Ellard get together. We was both so shy, but you two kept boostin' our confidence so that we would feel comfortable around each other? That's what you need right now. I'm just sorry I don't know how to do it.

MARGARET: That's okay, Bertha Mae. You're right. I'm just nervous I guess. But lately all these doubts have been comin' into my head.

BERTHA MAE: Doubts about what?

MARGARET: Doubts about Virgil's love for me. Can I make him happy? When we wake up in the mornin's and he sees this, will he be sorry he married me?

BERTHA MAE: You've got a point there.

MARGARET: What?

BERTHA MAE: What I mean is if Virgil can see you like that and **still** love you, you know that he's **really** got to love you. What I mean is . . .

MARGARET: That's okay Bertha Mae. That's what I love about you. Your primitive honesty.

BERTHA MAE: Virgil's my brother and I know for a fact he loves you, Margaret. He talks about you all the time at home.

MARGARET: (*Stands.*) He does? What does he say?

BERTHA MAE: He talks about what a good fisherman you are and how you make him laugh when you do your beaver impressions and how that there's nobody who can milk a cow with the poise and confidence that you have.

MARGARET: Have you ever heard him say lately that I was beautiful, or pretty or even mildly attractive?

BERTHA MAE: Well -

MARGARET: That's what I thought. (*Looking back into the mirror.*) I'm just plain ugly and Virgil's going to realize it before he says I do and he'll call the whole thing off.

BERTHA MAE: That's silly talk, Margaret.

MARGARET: Maybe I should have waited for Mr. Right.

BERTHA MAE: Who's Mr. Right?

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MARGARET: My mama always told me that when Mr. Right came along I should hang on to him and marry him because he will be the man I was meant to marry. But I never met a Mr. Right. Virgil came along and I fell in love with **him** so I just knew he was the man for me. Why didn't I listen to my mama.

MARGARET plops back down and buries her face in her arms.

BERTHA MAE: Well, Virgil **is** Mr. Sludge. That sounds a little bit like Mr. Right. That reminds me, Virgil said him and Ellard was gonna stop by on their way to check Ellard's lizard trap.

MARGARET: What? Virgil's comin' here? Bertha Mae, why didn't you tell me?

BERTHA MAE: I just did.

MARGARET: I can't let Virgil see me lookin' like this. He'll stop lovin' me for sure. Here, help me get these curlers out of my hair.

VIRGIL: *(Off stage.)* Margaret? Where are you - you little love dove you.

MARGARET: They're here? Bertha Mae, I will never forgive you for this!

BERTHA MAE: Here, I'll get this one. *(She pulls a curler.)*

MARGARET: Ohhhhhhhhh!

VIRGIL: *(Off stage.)* Margaret, are you decent?

BERTHA MAE: *(Yelling back.)* Yes, Virgil.

MARGARET: *(Scolding her.)* Don't tell him that!

VIRGIL and ELLARD enter.

VIRGIL: Hey Bertha Mae. *(Sees MARGARET.)* Hello. *(Turns to BERTHA MAE.)* Bertha Mae have you seen Margaret?

BERTHA MAE: Huh?

VIRGIL: I was gonna see if she wanted to go over to the holler with us.

ELLARD: You can go with us, Bertha Mae. *(Holding up a shoe box.)* I'm gonna catch myself a red-tailed lizard to put in this here box.

BERTHA MAE: *(Turning to MARGARET.)* Why, she's right . . . *(MARGARET stomps her foot.)* lyyyyyyyyyyyy!

VIRGIL: She's right where?

BERTHA MAE: (*Looking at MARGARET and getting her cue from her.*) She's . . . right . . . on the other side of town picking up some things for the weddin'.

VIRGIL: That's what I love about my Margaret. Always on top of things when somethin' needs to be done. (*Turns to MARGARET.*) Bertha Mae, aren't you going to introduce me to your friend?

BERTHA MAE: Well, this here is Mar . . .

MARGARET: Hmmmmmmm.

BERTHA MAE: Mar—go, Margo. She's a friend of mine who has come in for the weddin'.

VIRGIL: Nice to meet you Margo. I'm Virgil, the groom to be and this here is Ellard, my best man. (*MARGARET doesn't say anything.*) Oh, I see. Shy huh? I can understand that.

ELLARD: Yeah, most homely lookin' people are shy.

BERTHA MAE: Ellard! (*MARGARET runs out crying.*) Ellard, that was a terrible thing to say.

ELLARD: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt her feelin's. It just slipped out. (*VIRGIL and ELLARD begin to snicker.*)

BERTHA MAE: Your brains must have slipped out for sayin' such a cruel thing to a girl.

VIRGIL: You have to admit, Bertha Mae. Your friend is kind of ugly. The guy that ever marries her sure will be a loser. (*VIRGIL and ELLARD laugh even louder.*)

BERTHA MAE: I'm ashamed that you are even my brother!

VIRGIL: I'm sorry, but it's just that your friend there needs to go back to her coffin before the sun comes up. (*ELLARD and VIRGIL fall on each other's shoulders with laughter. BERTHA MAE puts her hands on her hips with contempt.*)

BERTHA MAE: Stop that silly immature behavior right now! She's goin' to the beautician tomorrow.

ELLARD: Beautician? She needs a mechanic. (*The boys laugh more.*)

BERTHA MAE: Stop it! Both of you! (*They try to straighten up, but now they've got the giggles.*) Virgil, it's hard to believe you are gettin' married this weekend the way you're behavin'! (*Running after MARGARET.*) Margaret? Where did you go? Margaret? (*She exits.*)

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ELLARD: *(Still laughing.)* Guess we are pretty mean, Virgil. Callin' that girl ugly.

VIRGIL: *(Also laughing.)* I know, Ellard. I guess it's just my nerves actin' up before the big weddin' and all. *(They stand there grinning looking out to the audience. VIRGIL holds his grin as he says his next line.)* Ellard?

ELLARD: Yeah, Virgil?

VIRGIL: What did Bertha Mae call that girl as she ran out just now.

ELLARD: *(Still laughing a little.)* Sounded like Margaret.

VIRGIL: *(Holding his grin as it slowly sinks in.)* You don't suppose that could have been **my** Margaret standin' here just now?

ELLARD: I don't know, but if it is you'd better be runnin' for the hills come this weekend. *(ELLARD laughs but VIRGIL doesn't this time. Suddenly, BERTHA MAE enters pulling MARGARET in behind her.)*

BERTHA MAE: Come on now. You might as well face the music right now than later.

VIRGIL: *(Quickly crossing to her.)* Uh, hello there Margaret. You sure are lookin' awful—

MARGARET: *(Cutting him off.)* That's a terrible thing to say to your fiancée just before you are about to marry her!

VIRGIL: You didn't let me finish! I was sayin', you sure do look awful nice today.

BERTHA MAE: Awful and nice don't even belong in the same sentence.

ELLARD: Margaret, I'm sorry I called you homely. If I knew it was you I would have kept that little remark to myself.

MARGARET: But you still would have thought it.

ELLARD: Well, yeah.

BERTHA MAE: You're not helpin' matters, Ellard.

MARGARET: That's okay, Bertha Mae. At least the truth is out no matter how it hurts. *(Says the following in one breath.)* I'm homely and ugly and Virgil if you marry me, you're goin' to have to see this every mornin' for the rest of your life so if you want to change your mind about goin' down that isle, you had better do it now so we still have time to call everybody on the telephone and tell them the weddin's off. *(Her speech ends in tears.)*

BERTHA MAE: Margaret, you're talkin' crazy. (To VIRGIL.) Virgil, tell her she's talkin' crazy.

VIRGIL: (Trying his best to help.) You're crazy Margaret.

MARGARET: (Starts to cry and sits down in front of the mirror of her dresser.) Now, I'm ugly and crazy!

ELLARD: Ugly and crazy. Gosh, Virgil you sure you want to marry her?

BERTHA MAE: Ellard, get on out of here!

ELLARD: What did I say?

BERTHA MAE: (Grabbing the shoe box out of his hand and ushering him to the door.) Just get on out of here before you mess up the whole weddin'!

ELLARD: I didn't do nothin'! Give me my shoe box. I'm gonna catch me a lizard! (She throws him out and crosses over to VIRGIL and pulls him away from MARGARET.)

BERTHA MAE: Virgil, Margaret is just gettin' all nervous about the weddin'. She thinks you might not really love her. A lot of girls go through this before their weddin' day. You need to talk to her and reassure her of your commitment.

VIRGIL: Are you sure that's my Margaret?

BERTHA MAE: Just go. I'll be right back. (She exits.)

VIRGIL: (Crossing to MARGARET.) Margaret, I know you've been nervous and all for these last few days and just to be honest with you, so have I. Them butterflies I've had flyin' around in my stomach have turned into buzzards. Big buzzards. Big, ugly buzzards just flappin' around in there. But I know that once all this is over with, what with the weddin' and all, them buzzards will turn back into butterflies again and we'll both be back to normal. But don't think for one minute I don't love you cause that **is** crazy.

MARGARET: (Stands and hugs him.) Oh, Virgil. Thank you for sayin' that. You must think I'm just the silliest thing.

VIRGIL: Well . . . (Then looks at her and realizes he can't say anything negative.) nooooooooooooo. Now you keep on doin', uh, what you've been, uh, doin' there with your face . . . and hair and all and, uh, I'll see you later after me and Ellard get back.

MARGARET: Okay, Virgil. (VIRGIL begins to leave.) Oh, Virgil? (He turns.) Are you sure you're last name's not Right?

VIRGIL: No, it's Sludge.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

MARGARET: What about your middle name?

VIRGIL: Nope. Why?

MARGARET: Ah, nothin'. See you tomorrow, Virgil.

VIRGIL: Bye.

ELLARD: (*Re-entering.*) Virgil, are we going?

VIRGIL: I'm comin'! (*BERTHA MAE enters and MARGARET sits back down looking into the mirror.*)

ELLARD: Gosh, ugly **and** crazy!

VIRGIL: Shut up Ellard! (*VIRGIL pulls ELLARD out.*)

BERTHA MAE: (*Crosses to MARGARET.*) Well? Are you feelin' any better?

MARGARET: He was so sweet Bertha Mae. He told me I was beautiful and that he truly does love me.

BERTHA MAE: Then everything's okay.

MARGARET: Do you think he really meant it? Maybe he was just sayin' it because he felt sorry for me.

BERTHA MAE: You're drivin' me coo-coo. Now, I'm goin' with the boys and if you knew what was good for you, you would go too and give your mind a rest.

MARGARET: No, I need some time alone, Bertha Mae.

BERTHA MAE: Okay, suit yourself. Just stay here and throw your little pity party.

MARGARET: (*Not hearing BERTHA MAE. She's in a trance.*)

Bertha Mae, when I was a girl growin' up I always dreamed of being a queen and everyone adored me and there were balls where we danced 'til all hours of the night and my Prince would come to the ball, handsome and tall and he would take me into his arms and we would float around the dance floor lookin' into each other's eyes and he would kiss me and I would just melt.

BERTHA MAE: (*Caught up in the moment and snapping out of it.*)

Now, you got me depressed. I've got to go spend the day lookin' at Ellard. See you in a bit. (*BERTHA MAE exits.*)

MARGARET looks into the mirror another second then stands and hits “play” on a small tape or CD player sitting on her dresser. The song, “Dancing Queen” starts to play. MARGARET grabs a broom that’s leaning against the wall. She pretends it’s her Prince as she dances around the room. She passes the mirror, stops and bends down to look into it. She hits “stop” on her tape player and sits at her dresser. She touches her face.

MARGARET: Ugly and crazy? (She lays her head on the dressing table and cries as the music continues. BLACKOUT.)

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

SETTING:

It’s the chapel. The table is taken off and about ten chairs are brought in and set up. Check the PRODUCTION NOTES for set up options.

AT RISE:

MAMA HOOPER comes rushing in carrying some rather ugly plastic flowers. She’s yelling back to PAPA HOOPER who hasn’t entered yet.

MAMA HOOPER: Get a move on, now. All the family will be porin’ in here later on and we need to have all this work done. (She looks for a place to set the flowers. She rushes over to the pulpit and places them at its base. She looks again off stage.) Are you bringin’ those flowers in? Move it! (She takes the flowers from him.)

PAPA HOOPER: (He enters stooped over as far as he can carrying some more ugly flowers.) I’m movin’ as fast as I can. My back just went out on me again.

MAMA HOOPER: Not your back again of all days. What happened?

PAPA HOOPER: I was just gettin’ out of the car and somethin’ clicked in there. Ohhhhh, the pain!

MAMA HOOPER: I told you to be eatin’ more bananas. Your bones are weak.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

PAPA HOOPER: Ah, now dumplin', don't scold me. The pain is killin' me.

MAMA HOOPER: *(Taking off her shoes.)* All right, get down on the floor. You know we've got lots of work to do don't you? *(She continues to talk as PAPA HOOPER lies face down on the floor center stage as she steps up on his back.)* Our little girl gettin' married tomorrow and all and now here you are with a bad back again. I told you to eat more bananas. Potassium, that's what your body needs.

PAPA HOOPER: A little higher Mama.

MAMA HOOPER: *(Walking on his back.)* I can't believe our Margaret is walkin' down the isle this weekend. It seems like just yesterday she was a little baby in my arms, lookin' up at me through those little thick rimmed glasses and blowin' those bubbles with her little mouth.

PAPA HOOPER: It was gas.

MAMA HOOPER: *(They've had this conversation before.)* It was not gas!

PAPA HOOPER: That girl had enough gas when she was a baby to drive a Greyhound Bus to New York City.

MAMA HOOPER: It wasn't gas. She was gurglin' tryin' to form her first words, 'I love you mama'.

PAPA HOOPER: A little lower. That's it.

MAMA HOOPER: I always told Margaret not to rush love and to wait for Mr. Right to come along and I think she's found him. Virgil's a fine boy.

PAPA HOOPER: Little to the left.

MAMA HOOPER: That's enough. *(Stepping off.)* Now, get up. There's work to be done. *(She bends down and helps him to stand, but when he does he's still stooped over.)* Are you feelin' any better?

PAPA HOOPER: I think it's worse. Honey, are you puttin' on a little weight?

MAMA HOOPER: No and that back pain's not gonna get any better with you sleepin' on the couch.

PAPA HOOPER: I don't sleep on the couch.

MAMA HOOPER: You will if you keep up those little remarks. *(MARGARET rushes in. Her hair is a complete mess.)*

MARGARET: Mama! Mama, look what they did to me?

MAMA HOOPER: Honey, what in the world happened to you?

PAPA HOOPER: What? What's wrong? What's the matter?

MARGARET: I went to get it fixed just now and she put too much curly in my hair. Look at me mama, look at me! (*She falls on her mama's shoulder and starts to cry.*)

PAPA HOOPER: What did they do to you? What's wrong?

MAMA HOOPER: There now. Don't cry. We'll fix it tonight.

PAPA HOOPER: Fix what? What's the matter?

MARGARET: Everything is turning out just terrible, Mama. The day before my weddin' and I look like a worn out paintbrush.

MAMA HOOPER: Now, honey it's not as bad as all that.

MARGARET: I can't let everybody see me like this, Mama. I just can't.

PAPA HOOPER: Would you please tell me what you're talkin' about.

MAMA HOOPER: Honey, your daddy wants to see it.

MARGARET stoops down so PAPA HOOPER can see her hair.

MARGARET: I feel so ugly.

PAPA HOOPER: (*Lifting his head to see her hair.*) Good night girl, what have you done to yourself?

MARGARET: Daddy, what are you lookin' for?

PAPA HOOPER: Relief, baby. Relief.

MARGARET: Well, I don't think you're going to find it down there. (*Faces MAMA HOOPER.*) Mama, are you sure we can fix it?

MAMA HOOPER: Of course, now stop your fretin'. Help me get these flowers arranged.

MARGARET: Where did you get such beautiful flowers, mama?

MAMA HOOPER: A yard sale over on the ridge. We'll rub them down with Vaseline and they'll look just like new.

MARGARET: Has the city lady from Mason's Junction been here yet?

MAMA HOOPER: Should be any minute. That's why I was tryin' to get things in order. I don't want her to think we don't have any class. This chapel is goin' to be the prettiest it has ever been when I'm through with it.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

MARGARET: You're the envy of Lickskillit when it comes to decoratin', Mama.

PAPA HOOPER: Oh, my poor achin' back.

MAMA HOOPER: *(Crossing over to the window.)* I think I heard a car drive up. Yep, it's Ms. Delanie. *(She starts fluffing her hair.)* How does my hair look?

MARGARET: Next to mine it looks wonderful.

MAMA HOOPER: *(Crossing to PAPA.)* Dear, can't you try to stand up. These people are classy. We can't let them see you all stooped over like that. *(She tries to help him stand.)*

PAPA HOOPER: Ohhhhhh, I can't do it! I'm doomed to be a cripple the rest of my life.

MS. DELANIE and BARBIE enter. MS. DELANIE carries a clip board

MS. DELANIE: Excuse me, I'm looking for the Hooper–Sludge wedding.

MAMA HOOPER: This is the place. I'm Mrs. Hooper. This is Margaret, my daughter and this is my husband. I'm afraid his back has gone out. *(PAPA HOOPER lifts his head to get a glimpse of the two ladies. When he sees them he stands straight up with no trouble at all. He stands there with his mouth hanging open staring at the two ladies.)*

MS. DELANIE: *(shaking their hands)* Hello Mr. Hooper, Margaret. This is my assistant, Barbie Withers. *(To MARGARET.)* So, you're the auspicious demoiselle who is to stroll down the isle of marital bliss?

MARGARET: No ma'am, I'm the one gettin' married.

BARBIE laughs to herself.

MS. DELANIE: Yes, of course.

PAPA HOOPER: *(Has been staring this whole time.)* I think you two ladies are the preetiest thing I've ever laid these eyes on.

MAMA HOOPER: (*Ushering him to the door stage left.*) There are some more flowers out in the car, dear. Why don't you fetch them in like a nice husband. And take your time. (*She pushes him out.*) Us women need time to talk about the weddin'. (**PAPA HOOPER** exits.)

MS. DELANIE: (*She hands BARBIE the clip board and rubs her hands together as she looks around.*) Now, let's see. Barbie, take notes. Oh, dear, look at all these atrocious flowers.

MAMA HOOPER: Thank you, I picked them out myself.

MS. DELANIE: You mean, these are for the wedding?

MAMA HOOPER: Yes ma'am, and if you think they are pretty now just wait 'til I rub them down with Vaseline.

MS. DELANIE: Oh, no, Mrs. Hooper. Those just won't do. They won't do at all. We must bring in freshly cut flower bouquets and posy.

MARGARET: But my mama went to a lot of trouble to find these flowers.

MAMA HOOPER: Now, that's all right, honey. Ms. Delanie is the professional. She knows what she's doin'.

MS. DELANIE: Besides I can't let my boss . . . I mean your guests see nothing but the best.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Entering with PAPA SLUDGE who carries a box of stuff. MAMA SLUDGE carries a rather ugly lawn decoration.*) I'm here everybody. Sorry I'm late, we had to drive over on Harley Wayne's four wheeler. My hair must be a mess.

MS. DELANIE: It is rather loathsome.

MAMA SLUDGE: Well, good. I was afraid it might look bad. Like I always say, a bird of a feather always shows itself at supper time. That reminds me I ran over an opossum over on highway forty. I'll freeze it and we can barbecue over at my house next week. It's a big sucker. Come on out and take a gander at it.

MAMA HOOPER: Bernice, we'll look at it later. I'd like for you to meet Ms. Delanie, the weddin' director and her assistant, Barbie. This is Mr. and Mrs Sludge, the groom's mama and papa.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Has not taken his eyes off MS. DELANIE since entering.*) If you don't mind me sayin' so, you look like somethin' out of a magazine ad.

MS. DELANIE: (*Flattered.*) Oh, go on.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

PAPA SLUDGE: Okay, (*Drops his box.*) where we goin'?

MS. DELANIE: That was just a figure of speech.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Looking her up and down.*) Speakin' of figure, do you mind me sayin' you . . .

MAMA SLUDGE: Don't go there Harley Wayne.

PAPA SLUDGE: Where **are** we goin'?

MAMA SLUDGE: You're goin' to the dog house if you keep up that talk.

PAPA SLUDGE: All I said was she looked like a model out of one of them there advertisements.

MS. DELANIE: (*Enjoying every minute.*) Why, thank you Mr. Sludge.

MAMA SLUDGE: How come you never told me I look like somethin' out of a magazine?

PAPA SLUDGE: I did honey. Just last week.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Patting her hair, flattered.*) I don't remember, tell me again.

PAPA SLUDGE: Yeah, baby, I was clipin' that coupon from the Alpo ad and I said—

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Cutting him off.*) Never mind, I remember after all.

MS. DELANIE: Mr. Sludge, you're so funny.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Sarcastically.*) Yeah, he's just a laugh a minute.

PAPA SLUDGE: I am pretty funny. Ms. Delanie, did I ever tell you the one about the Corn Flakes and the Rice Krispies who had a fight?

MS. DELANIE: No.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Without a pause.*) Just as soon as I remember the answer, I'll tell it to you.

MAMA SLUDGE: Harley Wayne, stop wasting perfectly good oxygen and go get them other boxes. (*He drops his head and exits. MAMA SLUDGE turns to MS. DELANIE.*) I'm glad you're here. I brought this little lawn decoration that sets down by our well house. I thought it would look rather good somewhere close to the alter.

MS. DELANIE: But that will look insipid and hackneyed.

MAMA SLUDGE: Glad you agree. *(She pulls MS. DELANIE down stage center and puts her arm around her.)* This is so excitin' marryin' off our two babies. Why it seems that just yesterday they was knee high to a grasshopper. Like I always say, a mother's joy is never complete until opossum stew is simmerin' on the stove. *(Looks at MARGARET and crosses to her.)* Margaret, I love that new hat you're wearin'. I tell you it sure is amazin' what they can do with skunk fur these days.

MARGARET: I had a little accident over at the beauty shop this afternoon.

MS. DELANIE: I hate to break up social hour ladies but we do have quite a bit of work to do before tomorrow.

MAMA SLUDGE: Well, at least I've got the center piece decoration here. I've still got to get those plastic flamingos from Gracy's garage. And the flowers look wonderful Eloise.

MS. DELANIE: Flamingos? Could I see you for a moment Barbie. *(She pulls BARBIE to the side.)* Excuse us please. *(They cross stage left while MAMA SLUDGE joins MAMA HOOPER and MARGARET who are arranging the chapel.)* Where did these people come from?

BARBIE: *(Innocently.)* I think they are charming.

MS. DELANIE: They're incompetent barbarians who don't know the first thing about social graces. How am I supposed to look good for management with plastic flamingos in the chapel?

BARBIE: There is something sweet and innocent about these people don't you think? It's like they haven't been spoiled by the outside world.

MS. DELANIE: There's nothing sweet about not getting a promotion.

BARBIE: But they are so cute with their way of talking.

MS. DELANIE: Barbie, you can not become emotionally attached to your clients. We're here to get a job done and that's it.

BARBIE: But—

MS. DELANIE: And that is it! Now just keep your eyes open and your mouth closed and watch how I handle the situation. *(They cross back to MAMA SLUDGE.)*

MS. DELANIE: Excuse me Mrs. Sludge, but—

MAMA SLUDGE: *(Interrupting.)* You ladies just go ahead and make all the suggestions you want. You're the professionals.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

MS. DELANIE: (*Following her around the stage.*) I'm glad you feel that way Mrs. Sludge, because I do have a few garnishing proposals I would like to constitute, of course, with your approbation.

MAMA SLUDGE, MAMA HOOPER and MARGARET stop and stare at MS. DELANIE.

MAMA SLUDGE: Did you just cuss me out?

BARBIE: No, Mrs Sludge, what Ms. Delanie meant was would you mind very much if we made a few decorating suggestions here in the chapel?

MAMA SLUDGE: Well, why didn't she say so in the first place?

MS. DELANIE: (*Through her teeth.*) Barbie, dear, you're my assistant, not my translator.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*To MS. DELANIE.*) Sure, Ms. Mahogany, make all the decoratin' suggestions you want as long as I get to use my plastic flamingos.

MS. DELANIE: But that's just it, plastic flamingos would look dowdy, seedy, and frumpish.

MAMA SLUDGE: Don't forget classy.

VIRGIL and ELLARD enter.

VIRGIL: (*Carrying a cardboard box with a few Christmas decorations sticking out the top.*) Hey everybody.

MAMA SLUDGE: Come on in Virgil.

MAMA HOOPER: Hello boys, you're just in time to help us decorate.

VIRGIL: (*Crossing center stage setting the box on the floor or in a chair.*) That's why we're here. Mama, these are the decorations you wanted me to get out of the basement.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Pulling red and green garland out of the box.*) This garland is goin' to look so good wrapped around the porch banisters outside.

MS. DELANIE: Christmas garland wrapped round the porch banister?

VIRGIL: I couldn't find the lava lamp so Ellard said we could use the one in his room.

MAMA HOOPER: That sure is sweet of you, Ellard.

MS. DELANIE: *(To BARBIE.)* Lava lamp? I feel a headache coming on. I have some aspirin out in the car. Cover for me until I get back.

MAMA SLUDGE: Don't worry about a thing in here, Ms Bologna; we got it covered! *(MS. DELANIE holds her head and exits.)*

MARGARET: Virgil, aren't you goin' to say anything about my hair?

VIRGIL: *(Sees her hair but pretends not to notice it. Looking around with his entire head.)* Your hair? Is there somethin' wrong with your hair?

MARGARET: The woman at the beauty shop put too much curly in it—

VIRGIL: Well . . . I didn't even notice it, uh, Margaret. It, uh, sure is . . . big.

ELLARD: *(Staring at MARGARET'S hair.)* That reminds me, Virgil, you've got to help me pull them weeds from the garden next week.

MAMA HOOPER: Now, we'll have it back to normal before the weddin' gets here.

ELLARD: *(Referring to BARBIE who is looking over her clip_board.)* Hello there sophisticated lookin' lady. *(Holds out the shoe box he's holding by a piece of string that's wrapped around it.)* Do you want to take a look at my red tailed lizard? I named him Bernard. *(The box he's holding shakes wildly as though something is running around inside.)*

BARBIE: He seems a little restless.

ELLARD: I don't think he likes staying in this here box very much. *(To the box.)* Now you settle down in there little Barney. I call him Barney 'cause that's short for Bernard. *(Holds up the box to her.)* He won't hurt you if you want to pet him.

BARBIE: Well —

MAMA SLUDGE: Ellard, don't open that box in here. That lizard will get loose and we'll never be able to find it. Like I always say, a lizard loose is a penny earned. Come on Eloise, let's see what this garland's goin' to look like out on the porch. *(They exit excited.)*

BARBIE: *(Turning back to ELLARD.)* So, do all the boys grow as tall and strong as you out here in the country?

ELLARD: No, sometimes they look like Virgil.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

BARBIE: All the boys in the city are pampered and soft. Only thinking how they can make life easy for themselves.

VIRGIL: *(To MARGARET on the opposite side of the stage.)* Margaret, are you gettin' any more hairy, I mean nervous?

MARGARET: I get knots in my stomach sometimes but then they go away. What about you?

VIRGIL: I'm as nervous as a long tailed cat in a room full of rockin' chairs.

BARBIE: *(To ELLARD.)* Feel of those muscles. How do you get so brawny?

ELLARD: *(Thinks a second.)* I brush my teeth a lot.

BARBIE: You say the waggish things.

ELLARD: Is that good or bad?

VIRGIL: I keep gettin' these panic attacks, Margaret. I have to keep steppin' outside for a breath of fresh hair - air.

MARGARET: *(Touching her hair.)* Does it look that bad?

VIRGIL: What?

MARGARET: My hair. It keeps popping up in your words.

VIRGIL: I . . . hardly even noticed it lookin' like a briar patch.

MARGARET: *(Buries her face in her hands.)* Ohhhhhhh.

BARBIE: So, do you have a steady?

ELLARD: A steady what?

BARBIE: Girlfriend.

ELLARD: Yeah, I have a girlfriend but she's not very steady. As a matter of fact she's down right clumsy. But I'm clumsy too, neither one of us is very steady.

BARBIE: *(Flirting.)* She's a very propitious girl.

ELLARD: If that means clumsy, that's my Bertha Mae.

VIRGIL: Well, I need to go see if I can find that lava lamp for mama, I guess I'll see you later on.

MARGARET: *(He turns to leave but she stops him.)* Virgil, are you sure you...love me?

VIRGIL: *(Thinking for a moment then smiling sweetly.)* Is the Pope Presbyterian? *(He crosses to ELLARD leaving MARGARET behind smiling.)* Come on Ellard, we need to go get that lava lamp.

ELLARD: Did you hear that Barney, we're goin' for a little ride. *(The box shakes.)* Just hold still there little buddy, just hold still.

BARBIE: If that were to ever get loose, you'd never find it.

ELLARD: I'm gonna catch me another lizard to put in there with him.
That will help settle him down.

BARBIE: How in the world do you catch something that quick?

ELLARD: I built a box. I call it my lizard catchin' box. That's 'cause I catch lizards with it. Virgil named it.

VIRGIL: Ahh, Ellard it was nothin'.

BARBIE: You two amaze me with your imbecility.

VIRGIL: Thanks. Like my mama always says, "Great minds are never born in Lickskillit."

MARGARET: (*Has been thinking about it the whole time and crosses to VIRGIL.*) Wait a minute. The Pope's not Presbyterian, Virgil.

VIRGIL: Huh?

MARGARET: I asked you if you loved me and you said, 'Is the Pope Presbyterian?' But the Pope's not Presbyterian so that means you don't really love me.

VIRGIL: I made a mistake, I thought the Pope was Presbyterian.

MARGARET: It was psycho-traumatic. That was your subconscious way of saying you're sorry you're marryin' me at all.

VIRGIL: Are you sure the Pope's not Presbyterian?

ELLARD: I think he's Baptist.

VIRGIL: Oh. (*To MARGARET.*) Ask me again if I love you.

MARGARET: Do you love me Virgil?

VIRGIL: Is the Pope Baptist?

BARBIE: The Pope is **not** Baptist.

MARGARET: Ohhhhhhhhh, Virgil!

VIRGIL: Thanks a lot Ellard. The Pope's **not** Baptist!

ELLARD: Well, you said he was Presbyterian.

MARGARET: I knew it! It's all psycho-traumatic. Virgil don't love me at all.

ELLARD: (*Sincerely.*) Maybe it's your hair.

VIRGIL: Ellard!

BARBIE: (*Crossing to MARGARET.*) Listen Margaret, I know a little about cosmetology. I think maybe I can help you with your hair.

MARGARET: Do you really think so?

BARBIE: (*Picking at MARGARET'S hair.*) Sure, we can have it looking as beautiful as ever with the right tools.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

ELLARD: Like a weed-eater? *(He laughs but nobody else does. They just stare at him. He pretends to pull a string on a weed trimmer and makes a cranking noise with his mouth. They just stare. He drops his head in embarrassment.)*

VIRGIL: *(As a warning.)* Ellard, I don't think I would go there if I was you.

MS. DELANIE enters followed closely by PAPA SLUDGE and PAPA HOOPER. She unknowingly drags a piece of Christmas garland that has stuck to the bottom of her shoe.

MS. DELANIE: I really appreciate your offer gentlemen, but I really can't think of anything for you to do at the moment.

PAPA HOOPER: Are you sure Ms. Delanie? I can sweep or mow the grass or climb ladders, anything you need.

PAPA SLUDGE: And I can wash your car or build you a house.

MS. DELANIE: I'm sure you want to help, but really I don't need you right now.

VIRGIL: Don't look now ma'am, but you're being trailed by a piece of Christmas decoration.

MS. DELANIE: *(Snatching it off her foot.)* Really! They're out there decorating the whole chapel stoop with two-dollar Christmas garland.

PAPA HOOPER: You want to watch me drive my tractor?

MS. DELANIE: Not in the near future, no.

PAPA SLUDGE: Would you like for me to be funny for you some more Ms. Delanie? Did I tell you the one about the Corn Flakes and the Rice Krispies who had a fight?

MS. DELANIE: If you'll excuse me. *(She walks away.)*

PAPA SLUDGE: I can never remember how the last part of that goes. *(To PAPA HOOPER.)* Do you know?

PAPA HOOPER: Say it again.

PAPA SLUDGE: Did I tell you the one about the Corn Flakes and the Rice Krispies who had a fight?

PAPA HOOPER: I can't tell you the end, it's a serial.

ELLARD: *(His box shakes wildly.)* I think Barney's gettin' hungry Virgil.

MARGARET: What time do you want to work on my hair, Ms. Barbie?

BARBIE: Why don't I pick you up around eight.

MS. DELANIE: (*Crossing and standing between BARBIE and MARGARET.*) What do you mean "work with your hair?" (*Turns to BARBIE.*) What does she mean, "work with her hair?"

BARBIE: I told Margaret I would see what I could do to help her with her hair problem.

MS. DELANIE: You are not her personal stylist, do you understand?

BARBIE: But I thought I could do it after hours so that –

MS. DELANIE: I said NO!

PAPA HOOPER: I'd be glad to assist you with anything you need Ms. Delanie.

PAPA SLUDGE: I'll even assist you with anything you don't need.

MS. DELANIE: Please sit down and stop interrupting. (*They sit quickly.*) Virgil, would you and the nincompoop please take these flowers out and burn them somewhere?

ELLARD: What did she call me?

VIRGIL: Nincompoop!

ELLARD: (*Moving to the flowers.*) I was just wonderin'.

VIRGIL: But Mama Hooper spent a good deal of time finding those flowers.

MS. DELANIE: Look, I have a head ache. Two women are outside hanging garland on the front stoop, the bride's hair looks like something from an Alfred Hitchcock movie, and plastic flamingos are being brought in to decorate the alter! I'm not in the best of moods right now so I would suggest you do as I ask or other wise I might have to get nasty. (*She ends this speech right in VIRGIL'S face. He stands there for a second.*)

VIRGIL: Are you upset Ms. Delanie?

PAPA HOOPER: (*Standing and pushing VIRGIL out of the way.*) I'll get rid of the flowers for you Ms. Delanie.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Standing.*) I can do that too.

MS. DELANIE: Fine! (*She crosses up stage with her clip board.*)

ELLARD: Let's go, Virgil. (*To BARBIE.*) Goodbye Ms. Barbie. I guess I'll see you later on.

BARBIE: See you later, you brawny thing you.

VIRGIL: What did she mean by that?

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

ELLARD: I'm not sure but I think she likes my teeth. *(The box shakes as he runs off the stage.)*

MARGARET: Virgil, aren't you goin' to kiss me before you leave?

VIRGIL: You mean with my lips?

MARGARET: That's okay, Virgil. You don't have to kiss me.

VIRGIL: *(He knows he'd better kiss her.)* Now Margaret, don't go and get any crazy ideas, it's just that you know how shy I am around strangers.

MARGARET: I said I understood, Virgil. *(He pauses then crosses to her and kisses her on top of the head.) (Sarcastically.)* That was real romantic Virgil.

VIRGIL: I'll see you tomorrow, okay?

MAMA SLUDGE and MAMA HOOPER enter each carrying some garland. MAMA HOOPER carries a small shopping bag.

MAMA SLUDGE: Virgil, where you runnin' off to? Are you goin' to get me that lava lamp?

VIRGIL: Yes ma'am, just as soon as Ellard and me find him another lizard for his box. *(He exits.)*

MARGARET: *(Having a seat stage right.)* Mama, I think Virgil hates me.

MAMA HOOPER: *(Holds up a strand of Christmas tree lights.)* Where can we hang these lights so they get the most attention?

MAMA SLUDGE: I thought we could hang them around the stained window. The glow of the lights will bring out the colored glass.

MARGARET: Maybe this whole weddin' thing is all wrong. I'm afraid Virgil is afraid to tell me he really don't love me.

MAMA HOOPER: That's nice dear.

MAMA SLUDGE: *(Sees that PAPA SLUDGE and PAPA HOOPER have gathered the flowers into one pile.)* I don't think them flowers need to go in one big pile like that.

MAMA HOOPER: Papa, what in the world are you all doin'?

PAPA HOOPER: We're gonna take these flowers out back and burn 'em

MAMA HOOPER: *(With hands on hips.)* Says who?

PAPA SLUDGE: Ms. Delanie.

MS. DELANIE: *(Crossing downstage.)* Those plastic fabrications don't belong in a wedding ceremony.

MAMA HOOPER: They're not plastic fabrications, they're plastic azaleas.

MARGARET: Does anybody care that my whole life is ruined if Virgil don't want to marry me?

MAMA SLUDGE: Look, Ms. Delicatessen . . .

MS. DELANIE: It's Delanie . . .

MAMA SLUDGE: Whatever! If you take them flowers out of here, you might as well just reach right into Mama Hooper's insides and yank her heart out.

MS. DELANIE: I'm not her social worker Ms. Sludge. My job is to make sure this wedding is the prettiest affair this backward county has ever seen.

The MEN are about to carry out some flowers.

MAMA SLUDGE: *(Standing in front of him.)* You just march right back over there and put them flowers back down.

They turn and see MS. DELANIE.

MS. DELANIE: And I say, they should go outside and be destroyed.

MAMA SLUDGE: They stay!

MS. DELANIE: They go!

BARBIE: It's certainly a shame something as beautiful as Margaret won't be noticed.

MAMA SLUDGE: What do you mean, Miss Barbie?

BARBIE: If you use something as beautiful as these flowers, I'm afraid they will take all the attention off the bride.

MAMA HOOPER: You think so?

BARBIE: Everyone will be so overcome with the splendor of the foliage, Margaret could possibly be overlooked.

MAMA HOOPER: I didn't think of that.

MARGARET: *(To herself.)* I guess there are other things I could do besides get married.

MAMA HOOPER: I certainly don't want to take attention away from my little girl.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

MAMA SLUDGE: Miss Barbie, do you really think we're as dumb as all that?

BARBIE: I beg your pardon?

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Repeating sarcastically.*) "Take all the attention off the bride . . . Margaret could possibly be over looked." Come on now.

BARBIE: Of course they'll take all the attention off of **you** as well.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Quickly.*) What are you boys doin' standin' around, get them flowers out of here!

MARGARET: I guess I could become a nun and join one of them there cornvents.

PAPA HOOPER: Is it okay Ms. Delanie?

MS. DELANIE: That will be fine Mr. Hooper.

They take a couple of them and exit.

MS. DELANIE: (*Pulls BARBIE down stage.*) Okay, you got me out of that one, but don't forget I'm the one in charge. I would have thought of that flower thing given enough time. (*Walks away from her.*)

BARBIE: (*To herself, a little frustrated.*) Well, you didn't think of it and I did.

BERTHA MAE: (*Enters with a man.*) Right this way sir, everybody should be in here. Here they are.

MS. DELANIE: (*Rushing over to him.*) Ohhhh, yes, we've been waiting for you. How was your ride out to Lickskillit?

MR. WRIGHT: It was a little bumpy, but quite uneventful.

MS. DELANIE: Allow me to introduce you to the family. This is Mrs. Sludge, the groom's mother—

MAMA SLUDGE: Well, how do you do?

MS. DELANIE: And this is Mrs. Hooper, the bride's mother.

MAMA HOOPER: It's very nice to meet you.

MS. DELANIE: (*Crossing to MARGARET.*) And this is the sweet little bride herself, Margaret.

MARGARET: My hair's not usually this big.

MR. WRIGHT: It's nice to meet all of you I'm sure.

MS. DELANIE: *(Pulls MR. WRIGHT center stage as though she's introducing the President.)* Everyone, this is my distinguished boss, Mr. Wright.

MARGARET: *(Slowly stands looking straight out as she whispers the words.)* Mr. Right?

MAMA SLUDGE: Well, three city slickers in Lickskillit all in one day. What a treat! Like I always say every dog has his day.

MARGARET: *(Crossing to MR. WRIGHT and MS. DELANIE.)* Did I hear you right Ms. Delanie?

MS. DELANIE: Did you hear what right?

MARGARET: Did I hear you say this gentleman's name is Mr. Right?

MS. DELANIE: Yes I did. *(Turning to her boss.)* Mr. Wright, I have so many ideas I would like to share with you if we could begin outside on the front sidewalk.

MR. WRIGHT: *(To BARBIE.)* And you must be Barbie.

BARBIE: Yes sir, I'm assisting Ms. Delanie this weekend.

MS. DELANIE: *(Taking MR. WRIGHT by the arm.)* Assist is the key word here, right Barbie dear?

MAMA SLUDGE: Ms. Donahue, while you show Mr. Wright around, we'll just finish up with the garland on the porches and—

MS. DELANIE: *(Interrupting.)* I tell you what ladies, why don't you go on out and we'll join you shortly.

MAMA HOOPER: *(As she exits.)* I do like how you talk so fancy.

MS. DELANIE: Barbie, would you bring the clipboard? *(Everyone but MARGARET and BERTHA MAE exit.)*

MARGARET: *(She's visibly upset.)* Bertha Mae. This is the worst day of my life.

BERTHA MAE: *(Touching MARGARET'S hair.)* Margaret, it's not that bad. It will grow back out.

MARGARET: I'm not talkin' about my hair. Bertha Mae, I was just introduced to Mr. Right.

BERTHA MAE: So?

MARGARET: Don't you remember what I told you yesterday? My mama always told me that when Mr. Right came along that I should -

BERTHA MAE: *(Catching on.)* Oh, Margaret, you don't mean -

MARGARET: Virgil's not my Prince Charmin' after all, it's a total stranger.

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

BERTHA MAE: It can't be Margaret. What does this mean?

MARGARET: (*Thinking it through.*) Mr. Right just walked into my life. If it was meant for me to marry Mr. Right, then this means I can't marry Virgil.

OPTIONAL: Lights change as VIRGIL enters and begins dancing with MARGARET as "Dancing Queen" plays. Then MR. WRIGHT enters and pushes VIRGIL out of the way and begins dancing with MARGARET. VIRGIL is visibly hurt, puts his hands in his pockets and exits with his head down. Lights change as MR. WRIGHT exits.

BERTHA MAE: Margaret? Margaret? (*MARGARET snaps out of it. If OPTION isn't used, BERTHA MAE says:*) Margaret, this is terrible just terrible. What are you going to do?

MARGARET: I tell you what I'm **not** goin' to do. I'm **not** goin' to walk down that isle tomorrow with the wrong man on my arm.

BERTHA MAE: Poor Virgil.

MS. DELANIE re-enters with MR. WRIGHT and BARBIE.

MS. DELANIE: And I thought in here we would decorate with posies. A nice candelabra here. Did you get that Barbie dear.

BARBIE: (*Writing on her clipboard.*) Candelabra, yes ma'am.

MS. DELANIE: And I thought a nice recording of soft piano music would fit nicely during the processional.

MR. WRIGHT: It sounds as though everything is in order Ms. Delanie. (*Crossing to MARGARET.*) It fills my heart with such merriment to see fine young people joined together in Holy matrimony.

MARGARET: Don't worry Mr. Right I'll do the right thing.

MR. WRIGHT: I beg your pardon?

BERTHA MAE: Margaret, don't jump into anything. I need to talk to you in the back room for a minute. (*To the rest.*) Excuse us please. (*BERTHA MAE pulls MARGARET out upstage right.*)

MS. DELANIE: I'm afraid this is turning out to be quite a challenge. But don't you worry Mr. Wright, I will make sure this is the wedding of all weddings.

MR. WRIGHT: I think they are charming. So down to earth, so real.

MS. DELANIE: (*Surprised and thinking quickly.*) You know, I was telling Barbie that very thing earlier.

BARBIE: You were?

MS. DELANIE: I'm afraid Barbie isn't yet quite experienced in the area of dealing with the people. But I told her that it's the people who matter the most, not the decorations.

BARBIE: (*Innocently.*) But—

MR. WRIGHT: That's good advice. Barbie, listen to Ms. Delanie and you'll go far with the company.

BARBIE: Yes sir.

MR. WRIGHT: (*Turns to MS. DELANIE.*) I'll need to interview the bride and groom each of course as part of the general procedure. I'll interview Margaret first and ask her the big question.

MS. DELANIE: Yes sir. (*Turning to BARBIE.*) Did you get that, Barbie?

BARBIE: (*Writing on her clipboard.*) Interviews. Yes ma'am. And if I may ask, what is the big question?

MR. WRIGHT: If she has been pleased with all the wedding preparations. If the answer is 'yes' that's a big plus for Ms. Delanie.

BARBIE: I'm sure it will be 'yes'.

MR. WRIGHT: (*Looking around.*) You know, every time I see the preparations of a wedding, I can't help but get a little excited about my own.

MS. DELANIE: You're getting married sir?

MR. WRIGHT: Well, hopefully. What I mean is if she says 'yes'. I'm proposing this weekend.

BARBIE: I'm so excited for you Mr. Wright. Who's the lucky girl?

MR. WRIGHT: Her name is Samantha. A sweet girl I've only know a short while.

MARGARET and BERTHA MAE enter unknowingly to the others.

MS. DELANIE: Yet, you already know she is the one for you.

MR. WRIGHT: The moment I walked in and looked into her eyes, it was love at first sight. I knew she was Mrs. Wright.

BARBIE: What was the first thing you noticed about her Mr. Wright?

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

MR. WRIGHT: I know this is going to sound silly, but it was . . . her hair. (*MARGARET'S eyes grow wide as she touches her hair.*) It's a good thing I met her when I did.

MS. DELANIE: Why is that Mr. Wright?

MR. WRIGHT: Well, it's just that she was engaged to marry someone else and I'm not sure how she is going to feel about leaving her fiancée.

BARBIE: Better to find out now that she doesn't love him than to wait until after they are married.

MR. WRIGHT: That's what I intend on telling her as soon as I get up my nerve.

MARGARET whines.

MS. DELANIE: (*Sees MARGARET and BERTHA MAE.*) Oh, Margaret, I didn't know you were here.

BERTHA MAE: We just came in and we didn't hear a word you just said about Mr. Wright gettin' married.

MS. DELANIE: What?

MR. WRIGHT: (*Crossing to the girls and taking MARGARET'S hand.*) So, Margaret. You're the lucky girl.

MARGARET: What do you mean by that?

MR. WRIGHT: Before the ceremony tomorrow, there is a question I would like to ask you if you don't mind.

MARGARET: (*Looking at BERTHA MAE.*) Question? To ask me? You mean in front of all these people?

MR. WRIGHT: That's right. The question is strictly routine.

MARGARET: Routine? You mean you've asked this question before?

MR. WRIGHT: Oh, yes, hundreds of times.

MARGARET: Does my Mama know that you are goin' to ask me?

MR. WRIGHT: I had to get her permission first.

MARGARET: Well, I ought to talk to Virgil first.

MR. WRIGHT: Don't worry, I'll take care of Virgil tomorrow.

MARGARET: (*Starting to cry a little.*) Well, it doesn't seem very fair showin' up like this the day before the weddin'. It doesn't give a girl time to think things through and all.

BARBIE: (*Crossing and consoling MARGARET.*) Margaret, it's okay. (*Turning to MR. WRIGHT.*) She's had a very disappointing day. I'm afraid she's afraid she's a little distraught.

MARGARET: No, I'm worried.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, I can certainly understand that. Most brides get nervous just before the wedding.

MARGARET: (*Out of nowhere.*) The answer is no! (*Everyone is staring.*)

MS. DELANIE: (*Pause.*) What was the question?

MARGARET: It's no use tryin' to hide it Ms. Delanie. I know why Mr. Right is here.

MS. DELANIE: So?

BERTHA MAE: She knows all about his plans to propose and to get rid of Virgil tomorrow.

BARBIE: Get rid of Virgil?

MARGARET: I don't care if you are Mr. Right, I can't marry anybody but my Virgil. He's the only one for me. (*Becoming dramatic.*) I know this breaks your heart Mr. Right. We were just two ships who passed in the night! You must pick up the broken pieces and move along and search for another

MR. WRIGHT: I beg your pardon?

MARGARET: Oh, please don't beg! It's hard enough to say this. Just go. GO! And be gone and I won't have to look upon your sad countenance any more.

MS. DELANIE: (*To MR WRIGHT in almost a whisper.*) See what I was telling you? (*To MARGARET.*) Listen you poor simpleton, Mr. Wright wasn't going to propose to—

MR. WRIGHT: (*Stopping her.*) That's all right Ms. Delanie. Margaret is right. If she loves her Virgil that much then who am I to stand between such a match made in heaven? She knows what is best. My loss is Virgil's gain. I will just drift into the distant landscape never to forget the woman who's name will always be upon these kissless lips, Margaret, Margaret (*Looks at his little book.*) Hooper.

MARGARET: You mean you're not goin' to try to talk me into marryin' you?

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

MR. WRIGHT: And have you live in agony forever? Never! It's clear to see that (*Looks at his little book.*) Virgil is your true love. And he's the one you should spend the rest of your life with.

BERTHA MAE: That sure is nice and understandin' of you Mr. Right.

MARGARET: I hope I didn't break your heart too much Mr. Right.

MR. WRIGHT: My poor heart has been crushed into a million pieces. But not to worry; I will survive your rejection somehow. (*On his knees.*) Make me one promise Margaret Hooper!

MARGARET: What's that?

MR. WRIGHT: If it doesn't work out with Virgil, you will be betrothed to me.

MS. DELANIE: Uh, Mr. Wright I wouldn't say that if I were you.

MARGARET: It's a deal Mr. Wright. That's the least I can do for you after you've been so understandin'.

BERTHA MAE: But don't get your hopes up Mr. Wright, 'cause Virgil will be here! Virgil loves Margaret and nothin' will keep him out of this chapel tomorrow. Nothin! Come on Margaret, before you change your mind.

BARBIE: I'll be at your house first thing in the morning Margaret. We'll take care of that hair and I'll bring my make up.

MARGARET and BERTHA MAE exit.

MS. DELANIE: Mr. Wright, what were you doing?

MR. WRIGHT: (*Snapping out of it.*) I . . . I don't know. I guess I just got a little caught up in the drama of the moment. It's my exhaustive desire to want to please the customer.

BARBIE: But if Virgil doesn't show up tomorrow, you sure will be in a great deal of trouble.

MR. WRIGHT: You don't think there's a chance of that do you? (*Silence.*) Do you?

MS. DELANIE: Don't worry, nothing will keep these hillbillies from getting married. Birds of a feather flock together. I guess that goes for coo-coos as well.

MR. WRIGHT: In all the confusion I forgot to conduct my interview.

MS. DELANIE: Not to fear Mr. Wright, I'll take care of all that tomorrow.

MAMA SLUDGE and MAMA HOOPER rush in.

MAMA HOOPER: It's here, it's here! Just in time! It's here!

MS. DELANIE: What's here?

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Holding up a dress box.*) Margaret's weddin' dress. Thelma just dropped it off on her way to the strawberry fields. She's the valley's seamstress.

MAMA HOOPER: We paid an arm and a leg for it, but it is worth every cent.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Brings out a very ugly dress.*) Ohhhh, look at that will you?

MAMA HOOPER: Have you seen anything like it in all your life?

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Putting it up to her, turning to MR. WRIGHT.*) What do you think?

MS. DELANIE: That's the most awful looking thing I have ever—

MR. WRIGHT: (*Jumping in.*) She means awesome! The most awesome looking thing she has ever seen.

MS. DELANIE: Oh, yes. That's what I meant.

MAMA HOOPER: I wish Margaret hadn't left so she could try it on.

PAPA HOOPER enters.

PAPA HOOPER: Ya'll want to come watch the bonfire?

MAMA HOOPER: What you yappin' about, bonfire?

PAPA HOOPER: We're goin' to burn them flowers like Ms. Delanie said. We siphoned some gas out of the four wheeler and soaked 'em real good. Papa Sludge's about to put a match to it.

MAMA HOOPER: I was goin' to use those flowers to put out on the front porch.

BARBIE: (*To PAPA HOOPER.*) That sounds a little dangerous.

MAMA HOOPER: No, I put flowers on the front porch all the time.

MAMA SLUDGE: Last time I asked Harley Wayne to burn some leaves he burnt down the barn and the chicken coop. (*Crossing to the door stage left and shouting out to him.*) Harley Wayne, don't be strikin' no match so close to the four wheeler!

PAPA HOOPER: (*Getting matches out of his wife's purse.*) Here, Harley, I found some matches! (*He runs out.*)

MAMA HOOPER: I can't look!

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

MR. WRIGHT: He's going to do it!

MS. DELANIE: Maybe someone should stop them!

MAMA SLUDGE: Ah, they're just like little boys when they get around gasoline and matches. Like I always say, a wise man changes his mind but the road to hell is paved with idiots.

MAMA HOOPER: Mr. Wright, too bad you're not marryin' my Margaret. You could be the one watchin' her walk down that isle in this dress to your open arms.

MR. WRIGHT: (*Nervously.*) Ms. Delanie, could you get me a glass of water? I'm feeling a little faint.

Suddenly, there's an explosion off stage.

MAMA HOOPER: There it goes!

MAMA SLUDGE: (*All gather at the door looking off stage.*) Well, he's on fire. (*Shouting off.*) Harley Wayne, get down on the ground! Get down on the ground! Stop, drop and roll! Papa Hooper, stop laughin'!

MS. DELANIE: Is he alright?

MAMA SLUDGE: Yeah, he's out now! But that four wheeler will never be the same again! (*BLACKOUT.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

SETTING:

It's out in the forest. One or two trees have been brought out as well as ELLARD'S lizard trap which sits center stage (See PRODUCTION NOTES for an easy way to make a lizard trap.)

AT RISE:

VIRGIL and ELLARD enter and cross to the trap.

ELLARD: Here's the trap, I wonder if it's caught any lizards yet.

VIRGIL: How do you know if it's caught anything?

ELLARD: I have to crawl inside it to see. *(He hands VIRGIL the box he's holding and the box shakes wildly.)*

VIRGIL: Hold on in there Barney. It's just your old buddy Virgil.

ELLARD: *(Before he opens the end of the box.)* Now be careful Virgil, if there's somethin' wild in there, it'll come runnin' out the end. *(ELLARD slowly opens the end of the box. Nothing happens so he crawls half way inside.)* Let's see here. Well, hello there little fellow, what are you doin' in here. *(He holds up a stuffed rabbit and VIRGIL takes it and lets it run free off the stage. Then ELLARD holds up another small animal handing it to VIRGIL. Then he hands up a skunk. VIRGIL reacts and throws it off stage. Then out comes a snake. VIRGIL screams and throws it out to the audience. NOTE: Use your imagination concerning what to pull out of the box. Maybe a fish, a bat, etc. But, let the last thing be a rubber snake. ELLARD crawls out.)* Well, that's it.

VIRGIL: It caught everything in the forest except a lizard.

ELLARD: *(Taking his lizard box again.)* Well, little Barney, it seems you're going to have to be a single lizard until I can get you a girlfriend.

VIRGIL: *(Looking the trap over.)* How in the world does this thing work anyway, Ellard?

ELLARD: It's really neat, Virgil. My daddy helped me build it. *(As he demonstrates the box.)* You see, the door on the end here opens into the box. The animal runs in but the door won't open out so he can't get out unless someone opens it up from the outside.

VIRGIL: What's this hole here on top?

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

ELLARD: A breathin' hole. So the lizards can breath.

VIRGIL: What do you use for bait?

ELLARD: *(Pause.)* Bait?

VIRGIL: Yeah. Don't you put somethin' in the box to lure the lizard?

ELLARD: *(Pause.)* Lure the lizard?

VIRGIL: To make him want to go inside?

ELLARD: Ohhhhhhhhhh! No . . . I never thought of that before.

VIRGIL: Duh! Ellard. A lizard's not goin' to go in there unless there's a reason to go in there. You need some lizard bait.

ELLARD: *(Digging in his pockets.)* I got some jelly beans.

VIRGIL: Lizards don't eat jellybeans, Ellard. They eat bugs and stuff like that.

ELLARD: Of course, Barney loves bugs.

VIRGIL: So all we have to do is find some bugs. *(Points stage left.)* You look over there and *(Points stage right.)* I'll look over here.

ELLARD: *(Gets down on his knees.)* Okay. Here buggy buggy buggy . . .

VIRGIL: I can't believe I'm out in the middle of the woods lookin' for bugs on the day before my weddin'.

ELLARD: It shows what kind of true friend you are, Virgil.

VIRGIL: I wouldn't do it for anybody but my best friend that's for sure.

ELLARD: You'd do it for Margaret.

VIRGIL: I'd do anything for Margaret. I tell you, all this nonsense about me not lovin' her. She can get the silliest notions in that head of hers.

ELLARD: You'd **have** to love her if you marry her after seein' her yesterday.

VIRGIL: I don't care what she looks like. Like my mama always says, 'Beauty is in the eyes of the shallow minded'. *(Pauses to think.)* That didn't sound right.

ELLARD: I think you're thinkin' of the sayin' that goes, "He who laughs last just saw Margaret without her make up."

VIRGIL: When we first started datin', some people tried to tell me it was just puppy love.

ELLARD: What did you say to that?

VIRGIL: I told 'em that if it was puppy love, I sure like the way she wagged her tail.

ELLARD: That's the way I felt about Bertha Mae before I had anything to compare her to.

VIRGIL: What do you mean?

ELLARD: I got my first up close look at a real city girl today when I was talkin' to that Ms. Barbie. One look at her and I clean forgot about red-tailed lizards FOR A CLEAN THIRTY SECONDS.

VIRGIL: Them city girls are okay to look at but you wouldn't catch me marryin' one.

ELLARD: If I didn't know better, and I didn't, I would have thought she was flirtin' with me.

VIRGIL: (*Sarcastically.*) Yeah sure and that box is full of red-tailed lizards.

ELLARD: She told me she thought I was brawny.

VIRGIL: (*Standing and crossing to the box.*) That probably just means she thinks your clumsy, or stupid or somethin' like that.

ELLARD: (*Meeting VIRGIL at the box.*) Gosh, and all this time I thought she liked me.

VIRGIL: Well, your heart is with Bertha Mae just like mine is with Margaret so just stop thinkin' nonsense. I can't wait to see Margaret walkin' down that isle tomorrow lookin' as pretty as a sweet honey suckle shootin' forth its springtime vinery through the soft wetness of a dewy mornin'.

ELLARD: (*Turning a romantic moment into a crass one as he holds up a large worm.*) I just hope she gets her hair pruned in time.

VIRGIL: Well, after tomorrow is over with and I say "I do" at the alter, maybe she'll finally know that I truly do love her. Here, Ellard, I'm going to put these bugs down in this hole. (*He sticks his hand inside the hole and brings it out again.*)

ELLARD: And here's mine. Do you think this will be enough bugs?

VIRGIL: I think so. Any lizard will be crazy not to come runnin' to this feast.

ELLARD: Well, I'll check back day after tomorrow and see if it worked. We better get goin'. I've still got to get that lava lamp.

VIRGIL: Here we have wasted a whole hour checkin' your lizard trap. I've still got to go over to Ms. Harper's and borrow more Christmas garland for mama.

ELLARD: What time is it anyway?

VIRGIL'S WEDDING

VIRGIL: *(Looks at his arm and notices his watch is missing.)* That's funny, my watch band must have broke and fell off some where. Never mind that, Ellard, you take the truck and run on over and get the lava lamp. I'll cut through the woods here on foot to Mrs. Harper's house. She only lives about a mile from here. I'll get the decorations and I'll see you at the chapel tomorrow.

ELLARD: Okay, Virgil. I sure do appreciate you helpin' with the lizard trap.

VIRGIL: Look for my watch on your way back to the truck. If you find it bring it to me tomorrow.

ELLARD: Okay. Bye, Virgil. *(He exits.)*

VIRGIL looks around for his watch for a second. He may accuse a few people in the front row of the audience of stealing the watch or ask if they've seen it. He walks all the way around the box. He stops and kneels down and peeps in the hole on top of the trap where he placed the bugs. He feels around in the hole but comes up empty handed. He thinks a moment then moves down to the main opening to the trap. He opens the end of it and looks inside. He can't see anything so crawls a little way inside the trap. Then a little more. Finally, all that's showing is his feet. Then his feet go in. The end of the box closes. There's a pause. The box shakes a little. Then a little more.

VIRGIL: *(Calmly.)* Ellard? *(We hear ELLARD'S truck drive off. Loudly:)* Ellard?!!!!! *(Pause.)* Anybody? *(Pause.)* Nobody? *(Seven-second pause then a song emerges from the trap.)* "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows my sorrow..."

The lights fade slowly to a . . . **BLACKOUT.**

BY EDDIE MCPHERSON

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