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and other plays

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# THE SADNESS OF EINSTEIN

and other plays

Charles Deemer



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## **The Death Cycle:**

The Stiff

The Obscene Interruptions of War

The Death of Teng Yin-feng



## **THE STIFF**

### **THE CAST:**

President John Jones, the leader of the people  
Mrs. Eunice Jones, his wife  
Chi Chi, his mistress  
Neck, the mortician  
Charles, his assistant  
Dr. Alberts, the doctor

### **THE TIME:**

Any time

### **THE PLACE:**

A back room in the Public Hall in a foreign country.

### **THE SET:**

Upstage center is a table on which is a casket. A window, upstage left, looks out upon the square. Entrance into the room is stage right. Modest furnishings: this is the room in which the corpses of public figures are kept before being put on display to the people.



*(AT RISE: DR. ALBERTS has his back to the audience, inspecting a body in the casket. Waiting expectantly are MRS. JONES, NECK and CHARLES. Mrs. Jones, who is in mourning, is dressed in black. She holds a black lace handkerchief over her sobs. The doctor turns and moves away from the casket.)*

**NECK:** Well, doctor?

**DR. ALBERTS:** Your suspicions are correct. I find the organ to be tumescent.

*(Mrs. Jones breaks into tears.)*

**CHARLES:** Please, Mrs. Jones.

**MRS. JONES:** *(struggling)* It's sca- ... scan- ... it's scanda-

**CHARLES:** Now, now.

**NECK:** Perhaps you could give her something.

**DR. ALBERTS:** Comes, Mrs. Jones. You must try to relax.

*(The doctor and Mrs. Jones start out.)*

**NECK:** Thank you, doctor.

**DR. ALBERTS:** I feel I should be the one thanking you. In my long career I've never seen anything like this before.

**MRS. JONES:** *(sobbing)* It's scandalous ...

**DR. ALBERTS:** Come with me. I'll administer a sedative.

*(The doctor escorts her off.)*

**CHARLES:** What do we do now?

**NECK:** I'm not sure.

**CHARLES:** You could display only half the body. The upper half.

**NECK:** And compromise my reputation? I didn't get where I am by displaying only half the body. People expect a full deck.

**CHARLES:** They've been waiting out there for hours. The lines are

**NECK:** I know how long the lines are. Let them wait. We can't display the body as it is.

**CHARLES:** Of course not.

**NECK:** We've got to get rid of it.

**CHARLES:** Perhaps if ...

**NECK:** If what?

**CHARLES:** If we dismembered ... it was just a thought.

**NECK:** I do not mutilate bodies. The entire body will be viewed intact or not at all. I have my reputation to think of.

**CHARLES:** It was just a suggestion.

*(A pause.)*

**CHARLES:** Perhaps it will go away.

**NECK:** Perhaps.

**CHARLES:** We can wait and hope. We can pray.

**NECK:** Yes, we can pray.

*(They pray. Then they approach the casket and look at the body.)*

**NECK:** No luck.

**CHARLES:** They must be getting impatient out there. The lines started forming as soon as his death was announced.

**NECK:** I know, I know.

**CHARLES:** He certainly is popular. Even dead. I suppose because he was so average. According to the polls, there was never a more average man.

**NECK:** We have to think of something.

**CHARLES:** At least Mrs. Jones noticed the problem before the doors were opened. If the people had been let in before anyone noticed ...

**NECK:** If you want to thank Mrs. Jones, send her flowers.

**CHARLES:** I'm sorry.

**NECK:** We have to think of something.

**CHARLES:** Yes.

**NECK:** I must have done something wrong.

**CHARLES:** Do you think so?

**NECK:** Perhaps I was nervous without knowing it. I've never prepared a President before. Something inconsequential could have slipped my notice, and consequently have become consequential. If I had somehow erred in draining

all the blood, for example. Perhaps such an error would explain it.

**CHARLES:** That might be an explanation.

**NECK:** On the other hand, the blood measured five point three quarts, which is average.

**CHARLES:** Then that must not be it.

**NECK:** Perhaps it has even happened before. I'm much too busy to read all of the literature. New findings are always popping up. A premature ossification, for example. I've heard rumors of such a thing.

**CHARLES:** That might be an explanation.

**NECK:** On the other hand, then one would presume that the organ would ossify in its normal state.

**CHARLES:** Then that must not be it.

**NECK:** Unless, of course, he died while the organ was ...?

**CHARLES:** You don't think he died like that?

**NECK:** Suppose he did. Followed by premature ossification.

**CHARLES:** Sounds unlikely to me.

**NECK:** There's one way to find out. I'll question his wife.

**CHARLES:** About that?

**NECK:** It's a delicate matter, I know. But we must find out. It could be the explanation. Get Mrs. Jones.

**CHARLES:** But the doctor was going to give her a sedative.

She'll be resting.

**NECK:** A sedative will make the matter less delicate. Get Mrs. Jones.

**CHARLES:** Yes, sir.

*(Charles exits. Neck moves to stare at the body. Mrs. Jones and Charles enter.)*

**MRS. JONES:** You wanted to see me?

**NECK:** Yes, ma'am. Please sit down.

**MRS. JONES:** The doctor suggested I nap until the matter is settled.

**NECK:** This will only take a minute. Charles, perhaps you would leave us alone.

**CHARLES:** Of course.

*(He exits.)*

**NECK:** Madam, I don't want you to think that I'm being overly personal. But this matter is highly unusual, as you know. I have never seen anything like it in all my years as Public Mortician. Nor has Dr. Alberts seen anything like it, as you heard for yourself. So the explanation, which we must find before correcting the difficulty, is likely to come from unexpected directions. Therefore, we must follow every clue. However delicate.

**MRS. JONES:** What is it you want to know? I'll help in any way I can.

**NECK:** Very good. You are standing up admirably.

**MRS. JONES:** Please be quick. I'm very tired.

**NECK:** Certainly. Mrs. Jones, were you near your husband when he died?

**MRS. JONES:** Yes.

**NECK:** How near?

**MRS. JONES:** Pardon me?

**NECK:** Did he die, by chance, in bed?

**MRS. JONES:** Yes. How did you know?

**NECK:** A wild guess. Now madam, this will seem to be none of my business, but there is something else I must ask you.

**MRS. JONES:** Simply ask it.

**NECK:** When your husband was in bed, just before he died ... were you by chance ... making love?

*(Mrs. Jones breaks into tears.)*

**NECK:** I know the matter is very personal, madam. But it might be the clue we need. If you were making love, you see, and if he died with ... the way he is now, madam ... and if premature ossification occurred, which is not unheard of ... then, you see ...

**MRS. JONES:** We haven't made love in ten years.

**NECK:** Oh.

**MRS. JONES:** We've had separate bedrooms for fifteen.

**NECK:** I see.

**MRS. JONES:** I tried to get him interested. God knows, I tried. But always without success. Always without ... that happening. And now for him to respond while dead ... is God so cruel?

**NECK:** Take your nap, Mrs. Jones. You've been helpful.

**MRS. JONES:** How can we show the body?

**NECK:** We'll think of something.

*(Mrs. Jones exits. Charles enters.)*

**CHARLES:** Well?

**NECK:** They haven't slept together in years. As far as she's concerned, he was impotent.

**CHARLES:** Without meaning to sound crude, sir, if that's impotence, many a man would embrace it.

*(Dr. Alberts enters.)*

**DR. ALBERTS:** What did you say to her? She's more upset than ever.

**NECK:** We're trying to find out the cause of this, doctor.

**DR. ALBERTS:** Yes, I can see why you'd want to.

**NECK:** Perhaps you have an explanation.

**DR. ALBERTS:** If I did, it would revolutionize medical theory.

**NECK:** We have to get rid of it before we show the body.

**DR. ALBERTS:** I suppose you do.

**NECK:** Not only would it be highly irregular to show him like this, I would be held personally accountable for an utter disregard of decorum. The people would eat me alive.

**DR. ALBERTS:** Perhaps you exaggerate.

**NECK:** Never under-estimate the seriousness of a breach of decorum.

**DR. ALBERTS:** I wish I could be of more assistance. Unfortunately, the reproductive system is not my area of specialty. And I do have to get back to the hospital.

**NECK:** We appreciate your coming. A second opinion is always useful in a case like this.

**DR. ALBERTS:** I can report without qualification that the corpse has an erection.

**NECK:** Thank you very much, Dr. Alberts.

**DR. ALBERTS:** Glad to be of help. Oh yes – Mrs. Jones is resting in the lounge.

*(He exits.)*

**CHARLES:** What do we do now?

**NECK:** We think of something.

*(Charles goes to the window.)*

**CHARLES:** They don't look very patient to me.

**NECK:** I can well imagine.

**CHARLES:** You don't have to imagine – you can come see for

yourself.

**NECK:** I prefer to imagine!

*(A pause.)*

**CHARLES:** Perhaps if ... ?

**NECK:** Well? If what?

**CHARLES:** We covered it with flowers.

**NECK:** I have never heard of displaying flowers in the crotch.

**CHARLES:** But it would cover it up.

**NECK:** Only as a last resort. Flowers in such a place would be too irregular. What would the reviewers think?

**CHARLES:** It was just a suggestion.

**NECK:** On the other hand, if we folded his hands over it ...

**CHARLES:** I don't think so, sir. Without meaning to sound crude, if I saw such a thing, I'd think he had been playing with himself.

**NECK:** But you think flowers would work? I wonder.

*(Chi Chi enters, dressed as a nun.)*

**NECK:** May I help you?

**CHI CHI:** Is that him?

**NECK:** If you mean the body of the President, it is. The services will begin directly, sister. Please wait in the auditorium.

**CHI CHI:** Oh. I'm ... Miss Jones. His sister.

**NECK:** I didn't realize.

*(She starts toward the casket but is intercepted by Charles.)*

**CHARLES:** Maybe you shouldn't look just yet.

**NECK:** The viewing comes later, Sister Jones.

**CHI CHI:** But I want to look now.

**NECK:** If you looked now, consider how anticlimactic the formal viewing would be. All that inspiring oratory for nothing. We'll be starting very soon – please.

**CHI CHI:** Oh, all right. But I wish you'd hurry.

*(She exits.)*

**CHARLES:** I didn't know he had a sister.

**NECK:** Nor did I.

**CHARLES:** Do you smell something?

**NECK:** Sweet?

**CHARLES:** Sort of.

**NECK:** I can't put my finger on it.

**CHARLES:** Did she strike you as peculiar?

**NECK:** Not as peculiar as our friend. Our responsibility, I'm sorry to say.

*(Mrs. Jones enters.)*

**MRS. JONES:** Did the nun perform the rites already?

**NECK:** No, ma'am.

**MRS. JONES:** Where's Dr. Alberts?

**NECK:** He returned to the hospital. You shouldn't be up, madam.

**MRS. JONES:** I was lying down in the lounge when I felt as if someone was staring at me. When I opened my eyes, the doctor was there. Then he vanished. I thought perhaps he wanted to see me about something. Or was it all my imagination?

**NECK:** Your imagination, I think.

**MRS. JONES:** I can't sleep.

**NECK:** It would be difficult, yes.

**MRS. JONES:** But I do feel better. I'm very much in control of myself now.

**NECK:** I'm pleased to hear that.

**MRS. JONES:** I've even found an amusing side to everything. This is exactly something John would do. He was always trying to be different. I suppose because he was so average. Lately he had taken to fads. Mysticism. Meditation. Trying to control his heartbeat with his mind.

**NECK:** Trying to control his heartbeat?

**MRS. JONES:** Mind over matter, and all that. He would get in this ridiculous position, what do you call it? With his legs crossed, the way they do in the East. Japan, I suppose it is. He had taken to talking about Japan in his sleep.

**NECK:** You heard him?

**MRS. JONES:** Now and then, when I would stop by his bedroom to see if ... yes, sometimes I'd catch him talking about Japan in his sleep. His next vacation, perhaps. I take it everyone sits cross-legged over there, with blank expressions on their faces. He would sit that way for hours and not say a word, hardly seeming to breathe. He claimed it improved his circulation.

**NECK:** Mrs. Jones, we've thought of a way to display the body.

**MRS. JONES:** You can get rid of it?

**NECK:** We can hide it. We can cover it up with an arrangement of flowers.

**MRS. JONES:** Flowers? There?

**NECK:** Yes. Especially if you publicly arrange them yourself. The people would regard it as erotic tenderness. They'd grant you a certain flair for intimacy. They would love you for it. And then they would pass by the body and see only the flowers, nothing else.

**MRS. JONES:** You know how that must hurt me.

**NECK:** I'm sorry, madam. This is no time for delicacy.

**MRS. JONES:** If there's no other way ...

**NECK:** There's no other way.

**MRS. JONES:** Then it must be done.

**NECK:** Bravo, madam. Come. You have bouquets without end to choose from. The people have mourned your loss with an

unprecedented run on floral shops. You pick the flowers, and Charles and I will do the rest.

*(They all exit. A beat.)*

*(In the casket, Jones sits up and looks around. He wiggles a bit, stretching, getting comfortable. Hearing someone, he gets back down.)*

*(Chi Chi enters and approaches the casket.)*

**CHI CHI:** *(seeing his erection)* Boopy, shame on you!

*(She giggles. Jones sits up.)*

**JONES:** What are you doing here?

**CHI CHI:** I wanted to see how you look as a corpse. And really, boopy.

**JONES:** Nothing's going as planned.

**CHI CHI:** I can see that.

**JONES:** I couldn't help it. I keep thinking about you.

*(He grabs for her.)*

**CHI CHI:** Hands off. You're supposed to be dead.

**JONES:** Lock the door. It will solve everyone's problem.

**CHI CHI:** You're supposed to be on display.

**JONES:** They refused to show me like this.

*(Chi Chi giggles.)*

**JONES:** It isn't funny.

**CHI CHI:** I think it's cute.

*(Dr. Alberts enters. Hearing him, Jones starts to get back down in the casket, then sees who it is.)*

**DR. ALBERTS:** It's only me. *(To Chi Chi)* What are you doing here in that ridiculous outfit?

**CHI CHI:** I wanted to see how he looked as a corpse. No one stops a nun from going where she pleases.

**DR. ALBERTS:** You haven't helped matters, Mr. President.

**JONES:** I tried my best.

**CHI CHI:** He couldn't take his nasty mind off me.

**DR. ALBERTS:** They're getting flowers. This plan is to ... of course, you already know about that. You were here.

**CHI CHI:** I don't know.

**DR. ALBERTS:** You shouldn't be here in the first place.

**JONES:** Leave her alone. There's nothing to be done about it now.

**DR. ALBERTS:** You and your powers of meditation. I thought you could control your bodily processes. You're lucky another doctor didn't get the case and pronounce you alive.

**JONES:** My blood pressure would have fooled them.

**DR. ALBERTS:** Your erection wouldn't!

**CHI CHI:** You really should be ashamed of yourself, boopy.

Having those thoughts in a coffin ... I'm not sure I appreciate that.

**DR. ALBERTS:** Get back down before they come in with the flowers.

**CHI CHI:** What are the flowers for?

**JONES:** They're hiding my problem with a bouquet.

**CHI CHI:** How darling!

**DR. ALBERTS:** Get down! (Jones does) And you get out of here. We don't have all

*(Neck and Charles enter with a large bouquet of mums.)*

**NECK:** Doctor, Sister Jones. Is something the matter?

**DR. ALBERTS:** Not at all.

**NECK:** I thought you had to return to the hospital.

**DR. ALBERTS:** I phoned in. They don't need me, so I thought I might be of use here.

**CHARLES:** We solved the problem.

**DR. ALBERTS:** Mrs. Jones told me. I ran into her in the lounge. I congratulate you.

**CHARLES:** My idea.

**DR. ALBERTS:** I think it will work.

**NECK:** I'm sorry you had to be exposed to this, sister. It is highly irregular, I assure you.

**CHI CHI:** I think it's a cute idea.

**NECK:** You do?

**DR. ALBERTS:** *(to get Chi Chi out)* We'll leave you to your business ...

**CHI CHI:** Only I think roses would be more romantic.

*(The doctor exits, getting Chi Chi out of there.)*

**CHARLES:** She's right.

**NECK:** Be grateful we talked her out of skunkweed.

**CHARLES:** It's remarkable, isn't it?

**NECK:** What?

**CHARLES:** The whole idea of it. I mean, one doesn't think of such a thing happening to the President. At least, I never have. As average as he was, I still put him up on a pedestal. Can you imagine the President going to the john with the Sunday paper on the morning after? Imagine having to use the toilet next and having the place stink to high heaven – by the President! He always seemed above all that. Even though I knew he was average.

**NECK:** If you ask me, he's one of a kind. Let's give him the flowers and move him out.

**CHARLES:** I can't imagine him being impotent. It must have just happened with his wife.

**NECK:** The flowers.

*(Charles approaches the casket with the bouquet.)*

**CHARLES:** Well, old sport, we have to hide you from the public.

*(He playfully flicks the hidden erection with an index finger and Jones immediately sits up, grabbing his crotch in pain.)*

**JONES:** AARGH!

**CHARLES:** Be Jesus!

**NECK:** Mister President!

**CHARLES:** *(falling to his knees)* Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done

**JONES:** Stop that! I've not risen from the dead. I'm quite alive.

**NECK:** I was led to believe ... I myself prepared the body

**JONES:** It wasn't me.

**NECK:** I would have sworn it was.

**JONES:** That's only because I'm so average I look like anyone else. How do you suppose I got elected President? Everyone thought they were voting for themselves.

**CHARLES:** I always said you were a regular chap.

**JONES:** Too regular.

**NECK:** But the lines outside, Mr. President. Dr. Alberts pronounced you dead. It was in the papers. The public is waiting outside to view the body.

**JONES:** Don't worry, they'll get to see the body. Just give me

a minute. Why on earth did you do that?

**CHARLES:** I'm sorry, I did it without thinking. I was overcome that even the President, even the corpse of the President

**NECK:** Imbecile!

**JONES:** It doesn't matter now. Only, gentlemen, I'm afraid you're going to have to be sworn to secrecy about this.

**NECK:** I'm a man of ethics, Mr. President.

**JONES:** How much?

**NECK:** Half a million.

**JONES:** Split between the two of you. No bargaining. Remember, I'm still Commander-in-Chief.

**NECK:** *(to Charles)* Seventy-thirty.

**CHARLES:** Forty-sixty.

**NECK:** Sold.

**JONES:** Dr. Alberts will make the arrangements.

**NECK:** He also knows?

**JONES:** He's in love with my wife. He expects to marry her. Unfortunately, he's not her type. But he won't know that till I'm long gone.

**NECK:** The matter appears to be very complicated.

**JONES:** All you have to know is that I'm dead. Now put those flowers on me and ...

**CHARLES:** It's gone, Mr. President.

**NECK:** It must have been the blow.

**JONES:** Do we still need the flowers?

**NECK:** I'm not sure. Your wife

**JONES:** Please – the widow Jones.

**NECK:** She will be expecting flowers.

**JONES:** Then we'll have flowers. Let's get moving, the people have been waiting for me long enough.

**NECK:** There was nothing we could do, Mr. President.

**JONES:** I'm not blaming you.

**DR. ALBERTS:** (*off stage*) It's the wife's prerogative to choose the flowers!

**CHARLES:** Someone's coming!

(*Jones gets down in the casket. Chi Chi enters, carrying a bouquet of roses, followed by Dr. Alberts.*)

**CHI CHI:** The President deserves the best. Roses.

**DR. ALBERTS:** You are being difficult.

**NECK:** Doctor? Sister Jones?

**CHI CHI:** Use these.

**DR. ALBERTS:** Mrs. Jones would not approve.

**JONES:** (*sitting up*) Chi Chi, what is it now?

**NECK:** Chi Chi?

**CHI CHI:** I'm not going to let you have less than roses. Especially down there. It's gone!

**DR. ALBERTS:** I've had enough of your go-go dancer, Jones. It was quite satisfactory to go along with this so you could run off to Japan with her, but when she begins getting in the way, ruining our cover, that's another matter entirely. I pronounced you dead. My reputation is at stake.

**JONES:** Chi Chi, please. Let the Widow Jones have her way. She's in mourning.

**DR. ALBERTS:** You'd better straighten this out, and quickly.

The people won't put up with waiting out there much longer. They'll be storming the hall.

*(He exits.)*

**NECK:** Can he be trusted?

**JONES:** Of course. If I'm not dead, my wife is not a widow. Let's dispense with the flowers and get moving.

**CHI CHI:** But flowers is a darling idea. It just should be roses.

*(The doctor hurries in.)*

**DR. ALBERTS:** Your wife is coming!

**JONES:** Please. The Widow Jones.

*(He gets down. Mrs. Jones enters with a bouquet of skunkweed.)*

**MRS. JONES:** Are we ready?

**NECK:** We found a way to correct the matter after all, madam, and flowers won't be necessary.

**MRS. JONES:** But I want flowers. I want these.

**NECK:** Skunkweed, madam?

**MRS. JONES:** I've changed my mind about mums. They suggest mummies.

**DR. ALBERTS:** But skunkweed is hardly appropriate.

**MRS. JONES:** On the contrary. Where did the roses come from?

**DR. ALBERTS:** The sister was paying her respects.

**MRS. JONES:** Is it the roses I smell?

**CHI CHI:** It's called Burning Desire. You like it?

**MRS. JONES:** Who are you?

**CHI CHI:** Oh. His sister.

**DR. ALBERTS:** She means the Lord's sister, of course. I believe it's time to open the doors ...

**MRS. JONES:** I want a moment alone with my husband.

**NECK:** We are pressed for time, madam.

**MRS. JONES:** I won't be long. I have that small right, don't I?

**NECK:** Of course.

**MRS. JONES:** *(to Chi Chi)* Perhaps you would stay.

**DR. ALBERTS:** I'm sure the sister has urgent business elsewhere.

**MRS. JONES:** I would find it comforting if she stayed for just a moment.

**CHI CHI:** Okay.

**NECK:** Please be quick, madam. The people have been waiting for so long to pay their respects.

*(All exit but the women and Jones down in the casket.)*

**MRS. JONES:** I feel I must make a confession.

**CHI CHI:** Sure.

**MRS. JONES:** Are you really wearing perfume? I didn't think it was allowed.

**CHI CHI:** Oh. Well, only on special occasions. I mean, since he was President and all. What is it you want to confess about?

**MRS. JONES:** I have been unfaithful to my husband.

**CHI CHI:** Really?

**MRS. JONES:** Many times.

**CHI CHI:** I guess only the first time's the rough one.

**MRS. JONES:** Sometimes in this very room.

**CHI CHI:** Far out.

**MRS. JONES:** With Charles, the mortician's assistant. We've

been seeing each other for years. In this very room.

**CHI CHI:** Sounds pretty kinky. Were dead bodies in here?

**MRS. JONES:** (*ignoring this*) I want to be alone with my husband now.

**CHI CHI:** What for?

**MRS. JONES:** To pray, of course.

**CHI CHI:** Oh. Well, sure. But I think they're in a hurry.

*(She exits. Mrs. Jones speaks to the casket.)*

**MRS. JONES:** And so we are alone at last, my darling. Do you know how long it's been? How long I've had to share you – first with them, the people your constituency? Who elected you because you are so average. And later sharing you with your fads, your beloved meditations and mysticisms. And all along I still loved you. Charles is nothing. Charles is itching a scratch. I still love you, and this is why I must kill you. Even though you're already dead, I must kill you. For once, you must not get the last word. The coda will belong to me.

*(She removes a knife from her person and approaches the casket.)*

**MRS. JONES:** You'll never know I'm doing this. But I'll know. God, if he cares, will know. The final rejection belongs to me.

*(She raises the knife and looks down at the body. Dr. Alberts enters.)*

**MRS. JONES:** You've lost your erection!

**DR. ALBERTS:** Eunice, don't!

*(The knife starts down as Jones grabs her hand. There is a struggle and the doctor joins in. Breaking free, Mrs. Jones thrusts wildly and stabs the doctor. He falls. Mrs. Jones thinks she has stabbed her husband.)*

**MRS. JONES:** John, forgive me! Forgive me!

*(Neck, Charles and Chi Chi enter.)*

**NECK:** What happened?

**MRS. JONES:** I murdered my husband—

*(She sees Jones sitting up, quite alive.)*

**JONES:** Hello, Eunice.

**MRS. JONES:** But I thought

**JONES:** Dr. Alberts looks dead to me.

**NECK:** The doors have been opened! The people expect oratory and a view of the body!

**JONES:** Then let's put the doctor in the casket.

**NECK:** It won't work, Mr. President. They expect you.

**JONES:** But who am I? The man who the polls called more average than anyone. Help me with the body.

**NECK:** There's too much blood. It will compromise my reputation.

**JONES:** We'll cover him with flowers. Everywhere but the face. They'll want to see the face.

**NECK:** Your face.

**JONES:** An average face. One is as good as another.

**NECK:** But what about you?

**JONES:** I am dead. This is my body.

**NECK:** But our arrangement ... ?

*(Jones begins to scribble a note.)*

**CHARLES:** What about my forty percent?

**JONES:** I'll give you something for the bank.

**CHI CHI:** Is it still to Japan, boopy?

**MRS. JONES:** Boopy? You and my husband? With a nun, John?

**JONES:** She dances. I'm sorry, Eunice. I tried to make it as painless as possible.

**CHI CHI:** He kept thinking about me in the coffin. You think you're kinky.

**MRS. JONES:** I would call it something else.

**JONES:** *(handing the note)* Take this to the bank.

**NECK:** Very good, Mr. President.

**JONES:** Come on, Chi Chi.

**MRS. JONES:** Chi Chi?

**CHI CHI:** Sayonara!

*(Jones and Chi Chi exit.)*

**NECK:** Well, Charles, let's give the people their body.

**CHARLES:** I hope they don't notice the difference.

**NECK:** Perhaps we should cover the face as well. Just to be on the safe side. The eyes should suffice. Easy now ...

*(The doctor is put into the casket.)*

**MRS. JONES:** Charles?

**CHARLES:** Yes, ma'am?

*(They regard one another. A beat.)*

**CHARLES:** Do you want me to come back?

**MRS. JONES:** No. We can come back later. First I must make my appearance. I must show my grief.

**NECK:** The people would expect grief, madam.

**MRS. JONES:** What the people expect, they deserve. What they deserve, they get. Always.

*(All exit and BLACKOUT.)*

**THE OBSCENE INTERRUPTIONS  
OF WAR**

**THE CAST:**

Henderson,  
McCall,  
Smith,  
Friply,  
Peters and  
Sgt. Willards all American soldiers  
The Prostitute

**THE PLACE:**

An Army post near a war zone

**THE SET:**

The latrine of a military billets. Facing the audience are six toilets. The toilet to the audience's right is painted red; the others are white. The stage is bare except for the toilets.

**THE TIME:**

Any



*(AT RISE: the four toilets to the audience's left are occupied, left to right, as follows: Henderson, McCall, Smith, Friply. Each soldier wears fatigues. It is Sunday morning. The soldiers are defecating and reading an old newspaper from the States, except for McCall, who is reading a book. Each soldier has his own roll of toilet paper and is protective of it. Toilet paper is a luxury in a war zone.)*

**HENDERSON:** *(to audience)* The first interruption.

**MCCALL:** *(to audience)* Language is obscene.

*(A beat.)*

**SMITH:** *(straining to defecate)* Uhhhhhhhhh ... uhhhhhhhhh ... uhhhhhhhhh ...

**HENDERSON:** Who has fucking Sports?

*(No reply.)*

**HENDERSON:** Sports, goddamn it!

**FRIPLY:** I've got fucking Sports. Wait a goddamn minute.

**SMITH:** *(straining, to Henderson)* Uhhhhhhhhh ... what you got, man?

**MCCALL:** I've got healthy bowels.

**FRIPLY:** The motherfucker talks!

**SMITH:** I was talking to Henderson. Uhhhhhh ...

**HENDERSON:** Say something else, McCall. Just for the record.

*(A beat.)*

**SMITH:** Uhhhhhh ... uhhhhhh ...

**FRIPLY:** McCall, you gonna speak up or not?

**HENDERSON:** Read us something from that jack-off book.

**SMITH:** Uhhhhhh ...

**HENDERSON:** *(grabbing the back of McCall's neck)* Read, goddamn it!

**MCCALL:** *(reading)* Out of the hollow / of the Great Buddha's nose / flew a swallow

**HENDERSON:** *(releasing him)* Fuck. Friply, you gonna give me fucking Sports or not?

**FRIPLY:** In a fucking minute, shithead.

**HENDERSON:** Suck on your tags.

**FRIPLY:** Tastes better than your cock.

**SMITH:** What you got, Henderson? I got Comics.

**HENDERSON:** I've seen the fucking Comics. Where the hell is Entertainment?

**SMITH:** You want Entertainment? Should have said so, man.

*(Smith fetches the Entertainment section from the floor.)*

**HENDERSON:** I've got fucking Travel.

**SMITH:** Uhhhhhh ... Fucking-A. Here ...

*(They exchange sections of the paper, passing around McCall, who continues to read his book.)*

**FRIPLY:** Goddamn Can you believe that the fucking White Sox—

**HENDERSON:** You say one word, motherfucker, and your ass is grass. I want to read fucking Sports for myself.

**FRIPLY:** You seen Sports yet, Smitty?

**SMITH:** Uhhhhhh ... uhhhhhh ...

**HENDERSON:** I'm fucking next for Sports, man.

**SMITH:** Uhhhhhh ... uhhhhhh ... AH! Oh! Holy goddamn ..

**MCCALL:** Congratulations.

**SMITH:** No one asked for your opinion, Einstein. How come you've always got your nose in a fucking book?

**MCCALL:** I enjoy reading. There's nothing else to do.

**HENDERSON:** You'll get something to do soon enough.

**FRIPLY:** Hey, asshole, I'll trade you Sports for your fucking book.

**HENDERSON:** I'm next for fucking Sports!

**FRIPLY:** What say, McCall? You got any lose-ups of cunt in there?

**HENDERSON:** Pass the fucking Sports, Friply.

**FRIPLY:** Sports for the book.

**MCCALL:** I don't think it would interest you.

**HENDERSON:** I reserved fucking Sports, man. You heard me, Smitty. Didn't I reserve fucking Sports?

**SMITH:** It's between you guys, man.

**FRIPLY:** Hey, asshole, how the fuck to you know what interests me? Pass the book and I'll let you know.

*(A beat.)*

**HENDERSON:** Sports, goddamn it!

**FRIPLY:** Fuck it. Where are the fucking Comics?

*(Friply passes Sports to Henderson via the others. Smith fetches Comics off the floor for Friply.)*

*(A beat.)*

*(Henderson suddenly throws down the Sports section. Friply starts laughing.)*

**HENDERSON:** Fucking White Sox. I'd like to stick a bat up their ass. How could they fucking blow it?

**MCCALL:** Do you always have to swear all the time?

**HENDERSON:** Fuck you.

**FRIPLY:** Fuck fuck you, McCall.

**SMITH:** Fuck fuck fuck fuck you.

**HENDERSON:** FUCK YOU!

**HENDERSON & FRIPLY & SMITH:** Fuck fuck fuck fuck

fuck fuck fuck fuck you!

*(A beat.)*

**FRIPLY:** Just one time, McCall. Pretty please? One little “fuck” from that stuckup mouth of yours.

**MCCALL:** So you’ve got freedom of speech. Congratulations. If you’d just use a euphemism now and then, it wouldn’t be so boring.

**HENDERSON:** A you-fucking what?

*(A beat.)*

**SMITH:** So fucking entertain us, man. We bore you, you entertain us.

**MCCALL:** You’ve already entertained us.

**SMITH:** What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

*(Friply whispers something to Smith.)*

**SMITH:** You leave my fucking bowels out of it, McCall! My bowels ain’t none of your fucking concern.

*(Henderson grabs McCall’s book.)*

**MCCALL:** Damn it!

**FRIPLY:** What? Did you hear that? He swore! McCall fucking swore!

**SMITH:** What’s the book, man?

**HENDERSON:** Buddhism. Holy shit.

**MCCALL:** Return it, please.

**HENDERSON:** Say pretty fucking please.

**MCCALL:** Pretty please.

**HENDERSON:** Fucking please.

**FRIPLY:** Stomp his ass, McCall. It's your fucking book. Don't put up with that shit.

*(Peters enters, very hung over. He moves to the vacant white toilet and starts to sit down.)*

**FRIPLY:** Peters!

**SMITH:** Don't you sit your contaminated ass down there.

*(Peters grins and moves to the red toilet. Peters hasn't brought any toilet paper.)*

**PETERS:** I need some paper, man.

**FRIPLY:** I need a fucking discharge.

**PETERS:** I'm erupting like a volcano here. I'll pay you back next week.

**FRIPLY:** You run out already?

**PETERS:** Couldn't help it, man. I'm on fire.

*(Friply gives Peters some toilet paper.)*

**PETERS:** Appreciate it.

**HENDERSON:** What do you want to read, Peters? How about a book on Buddhism?

*(McCall grabs the book back.)*

**FRIPLY:** You gonna let him get away with that, Henderson?  
Stomp the motherfucker.

**HENDERSON:** Fuck it. What's the point? Be like fucking a  
gook.

**SMITH:** Kraut.

**FRIPLY:** Nip.

**SMITH:** Chink.

**PETERS:** Spick.

**FRIPLY:** Slope.

**SMITH:** Wop.

**PETERS:** Kike.

**HENDERSON:** Nigger.

*(A beat.)*

**MCCALL:** *(reading)* The mysterious smile / on the Great  
Buddha's face / is a frown / if you stand on your head

*(A beat.)*

**PETERS:** *(to audience)* The second interruption.

**HENDERSON:** *(to audience)* Fear is obscene.

*(The soldiers get up, zip up, and move forward. Facing the  
audience, they go through the motions of brushing their teeth,*

*shaving, washing, etc.)*

*(Sgt. Willards enters.)*

**SGT. WILLARDS:** You children have exactly fifty-eight minutes before we move out and see what kind of men you are. So I don't want to see no dragging ass.

*(He exits.)*

*(McCall starts to shake, close to tears. He cuts himself while shaving, reacts. Henderson notices McCall's state and begins to whistle happily, "Over there, over there ...")*

**SMITH:** Leave him be, Henderson.

**HENDERSON:** You blowing breath my way, soldier?

**SMITH:** Lay off. It's no picnic we're going to.

**HENDERSON:** I don't know about that. I've always enjoyed stepping on ants. That's all there is to it, man. Stepping on fucking ants.

**FRIPLY:** Could you keep your drooling to yourself?

**HENDERSON:** You chickenshit, too? Fuck, man. Time's are bad when a soldier's got to shave next to a lineup of fucking children. Time's are fucking bad. See you chickenshits in the war.

*(He exits. McCall starts to weep.)*

**FRIPLY:** Fuck.

**SMITH:** Lay off.

**FRIPLY:** I don't want to brush my teeth next to no goddamn

crybaby!

**SMITH:** You're as scared as I am.

**FRIPLY:** I ain't no fucking crybaby. Am I? Look at me. You see any fucking tears?

*(McCall weeps.)*

**FRIPLY:** Somebody shut him up!

**MCCALL:** McCall? Hang in there, man. Crying on like that ain't gonna do shit.

**FRIPLY:** Fuck.

*(He exits.)*

**SMITH:** Cool it, man. No use worrying about shit you got no control over. Hang in there.

*(He exits.)*

**PETERS:** You afraid to die, man?

*(McCall weeps.)*

**PETERS:** What if they bombed your hometown and you died that way? You like that any better? You ain't the first to shed tears, man. You just don't have the good sense to do it when nobody's around. I've cried a little myself. So I'll leave you alone, man. Bawl all you want. Cause later, man, when we're out there, ain't no time for that shit. You read me? We got no time for that shit out there. So get it out of your system now.

*(He exits.)*

*(McCall weeps. A beat.)*

*(Friply and Smith enter, taking the white toilets to the left and right.)*

**FRIPLY:** *(to audience)* The third interruptions.

**SMITH:** *(to audience)* Sex is obscene.

*(McCall moves to the toilet next to Smith. He reads his book. The others read the paper.)*

**SMITH:** Where's Sports?

**FRIPLY:** Beat you to it.

*(Henderson enters.)*

**HENDERSON:** Morning, heroes.

**FRIPLY:** What say.

**SMITH:** Morning.

**HENDERSON:** I was talking to McCall.

*(He laughs and takes the toilet between Friply and McCall.)*

**SMITH:** Friply's got Sports and I'm next.

**HENDERSON:** I think I'll just sit here and contemplate last night's pussy. How'd you guys make out?

**FRIPLY:** No complaints, man. You don't see me on no goddamn red toilet either.

**HENDERSON:** Guess even McCall got laid last night. So how do you like the war now, candyass? Not so bad considering the pussy you get in return ... I'm speaking to you, fuckhead.

**MCCALL:** I stayed on post last night.

**FRIPLY:** Fucking dumb.

**SMITH:** Got to take your passes when you get them, man.

**FRIPLY:** Fucking-A. Man, I screwed till my eyeballs popped out. I'm set for a month.

*(Peters enters. He's drunk.)*

**HENDERSON:** Look what the fucking cat drug in.

**PETERS:** Other way, man.

**SMITH:** You are still fucking bombed.

**PETERS:** I drug in the cat. I drug in the pussy.

**FRIPLY:** If you got a bottle, you damn well better share it.

**PETERS:** Wait a minute.

*(He exits.)*

**FRIPLY:** He's got a fucking bottle.

**SMITH:** He sign in last night?

**HENDERSON:** If he did, he ain't been to bed.

**FRIPLY:** Long as he shares the fucking bottle, man.

*(Peters returns with The Prostitute, who carries a purse.)*

**PETERS:** Ta-da!

**FRIPLY:** Fuck.

**THE PROSTITUTE:** No fuckee!

**PETERS:** Don't sweat it, honey. Listen, guys, which one of you wants to zip up? We need a little ceremony here.

**FRIPLY:** You need a fucking what?

**THE PROSTITUTE:** No fuckee, no—!

**PETERS:** Alright! We love, yes?

**THE PROSTITUTE:** We love.

**PETERS:** Hear that? So who's going to say the magic words?

**HENDERSON:** Man, you really shouldn't have done this. If the Sarge catches her on post—

**PETERS:** He ain't catching shit. You think I wouldn't check my bases, man? Shit. He's in his cadre room, shacked up with a fifth.

**FRIPLY:** You'd better hope he doesn't wake up with a piss-on. Your ass will be grass.

*(McCall begins to wipe and will zip up and leave.)*

**PETERS:** I'll be out of here as soon as one of you assholes gives us a little ceremony. Come on, Friply, goddamn it. You've been trying to shit for two months.

**SMITH:** What the fuck is going on, man?

**PETERS:** We're getting married.

**HENDERSON:** Getting married!

**FRIPLY:** Fuck.

**THE PROSTITUTE:** No—!

**PETERS:** No fuckee! Just wait a goddamn minute, sweetheart. Listen, McCall, do me a favor. Take Rosie here and wait outside a minute. Okay? It'll just take me a minute to set things up.

**MCCALL:** I don't think I—

**PETERS:** You go with him, honey. Okay? You go him.

**THE PROSTITUTE:** No fuckee!

**PETERS:** No fuckee, right. We love. No fuckee him. He's the safest motherfucker in the United States Army. You go him.

*(Peters escorts them out of the latrine.)*

**FRIPLY:** I have seen every fucking thing now.

**HENDERSON:** Married my ass. You are shell-shocked. Fucking drunk is no excuse for this shit.

**PETERS:** Ssshhh. I just want a phony ceremony, man. Quick and simple.

**SMITH:** You can't have a wedding ceremony in the fucking latrine.

**PETERS:** Phony, I said. Henderson, just saw a few words while we hold hands. Don't have to mean shit, long as you stick in a couple "loves" now and then. She understands "love," "fuck" and not much else. Look, I even got a ring.

**HENDERSON:** I don't fucking get it.

**PETERS:** Is it any hair off your ass to say ten goddamn words for us? What's the big deal?

**SMITH:** What's the big deal! You drag a goddamn whore in here while I'm trying to shit and –

**PETERS:** Ten fucking words! Four “loves” and six any goddamn other words you want. Is that too much to ask? Four goddamn “loves.”

**HENDERSON:** Not me.

**PETERS:** For a buddy, man!

**HENDERSON:** Later for that shit.

**SMITH:** Don't look at me, man.

**PETERS:** Friply ...

**FRIPLY:** Maybe.

**PETERS:** Alright!

**FRIPLY:** Maybe! If you tell me what the fuck is going on. I mean, really going on.

**PETERS:** It's too complicated.

**FRIPLY:** Then no deal.

**PETERS:** For a buddy. Four “loves” and six fucking words.

**FRIPLY:** I don't get my ass into no shit I don't know about.

**PETERS:** Okay. It's like this. It's her idea, okay? Certain things she don't want to do until she's married. Look, I kind of

dig her. So what the fuck, right? I told her I had a buddy who was a preacher back in the States.

**HENDERSON:** Fuck, Peters, where do you come up with these fucking whores? All you'll do is give her the goddamn crabs.

**SMITH:** Assuming she's clean to begin with.

**PETERS:** I have a buddy who's a preacher. Okay? That's all there is to it.

**SMITH:** Incredible. You find the only whore in the goddamn universe who won't blow you unless you're married.

**PETERS:** Four "loves" and six fucking words! It's no hair off anybody's ass. She don't know English for shit. I even got a ring.

*(The Prostitute enters. The soldiers quickly begin to wipe and zip up to leave.)*

**PETERS:** It's all set, sweetheart. Chaplain. Friply. We're ready when you are.

**FRIPLY:** Fuck, Peters.

**THE PROSTITUTE:** No f-!

**PETERS:** No fuckee! Goddamn it, man, don't use that word around her. *(to Prostitute)* You, me, only fuckee. Love and fuckee. Marry and fuckee.

**HENDERSON:** *(exiting)* Have a swell honeymoon.

**PETERS:** *(after him)* Be our best man!

*(A beat. Peters turns to Smith.)*

**SMITH:** No me, Peters. No way.

**PETERS:** Don't let me down.

**SMITH:** Get McCall. He's dumb enough. Maybe.

*(He exits.)*

**FRIPLY:** It'll cost you, buddy.

**PETERS:** I'll give you my next ration of toilet paper.

**FRIPLY:** You already owe me half a roll.

**PETERS:** I'll give you the whole fucking roll. No fuckee! We need a ceremony bad, man.

**FRIPLY:** This is nuts.

**PETERS:** Look, it was her idea to come up here in the first place. She wanted to see the post.

**FRIPLY:** I thought she didn't understand English.

**PETERS:** Her girl friend said she wanted to see the post. She's here, ain't she? Be a buddy, man.

**FRIPLY:** You got a bottle, don't you?

**PETERS:** Man, I'm in a hurry here.

**FRIPLY:** No wedding.

**PETERS:** Okay. I got a bottle hidden in Motor Pool.

**FRIPLY:** The full roll of toilet paper and the bottle.

**PETERS:** You really know how to hurt a guy.

**FRIPLY:** You've lucky I recognize true love when I see it. I could insist on seconds.

**PETERS:** Then you'll do it?

**FRIPLY:** In Motor Pool. Just so I see there's a bottle. Besides, even a shithead like you doesn't deserve to get married in a fucking latrine.

**THE PROSTITUTE:** No fuckee!

**PETERS:** No fuckee!

*(They all exit.)*

*(Sgt. Willard enters.)*

**SGT. WILLARDS:** *(to audience)* The fourth interruption. Disorder is obscene.

*(The other soldiers enter with brooms, mops, sponges, etc., for a G.I. party.)*

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Come on, dragasses, we ain't got all night. Little hustle, little hustle. The old man will render his presence at midnight and would be forlornly upset to find that this shithouse is still a shithouse. He wants to see some sparkle. He wants magnificent radiance beaming from these shitters. Do you read me? He wants this shithouse to sparkle like the firmament. He wants this shithouse as immaculate as a church.

**HENDERSON:** We got the picture, Sarge.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** I am happy you get the picture, Henderson. I will be even happier to see you engage some elbow grease. Or is the term too old-fashioned for your comprende?

**SMITH:** What about Peters, Sarge?

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Don't you fret, boy. The old man will take care of Peters.

**SMITH:** I don't think it's fair that—

**SGT. WILLARDS:** May I make a forthright suggestion? Whenever you find yourself asking a question, consider that you are not working with the dedication this man's Army like to see. Read me? This shithouse will sparkle by midnight. I want to think I'm walking into a church. You have four hours. Which, in your case, will be a fucking horserace.

*(Sgt. Willards goes to McCall and removes a paperback book from his back pocket. McCall starts to object but changes his mind.)*

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Did you want to say something? If not, close your mouth.

**MCCALL:** Can I have my book back?

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Tomorrow. If you impress me tonight. Anything else?

**MCCALL:** I don't see why we all have to suffer because of Peters.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Because you could just as easily be dead because of Peters. Because there ain't no fucking individuals in the Army. And most important of all, McCall, because the old man said so.

**MCCALL:** But—

**SGT. WILLARDS:** The only butt in question is yours. If you don't want it in more trouble than it already is, get your ass in gear.

**MCCALL:** Yes, sir.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** You don't call a sergeant "sir," McCall.

**MCCALL:** Yes, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** That's better. McCall, even though I know you do that on purpose, just because you think your fat brain makes you better than the rest of us jerkoffs; just because you think it is very clever to call a sergeant "sir," that is might occasionally slip over his head, and if not at least piss him off a little; even though I know all these things, McCall, and know fucking well that you know that I know – nonetheless, boy, "Yes, sergeant" is still much, much better. **NOW GET YOUR ASS IN GEAR!**

*(Peters enters.)*

**PETERS:** The captain told me to report to you, Peters.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** He did, did he?

**PETERS:** Yes, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Very well. We are having a tiny party, as you can see. How would you like to join us?

**PETERS:** Yes, Sergeant.

*(He moves to join in.)*

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Wait a goddamn minute. Did I tell you to join the party? Or did I merely inquire about your preferences?

**PETERS:** My preferences, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm putting you in charge of these assholes ... Did you say something, Friply?

**FRIPLY:** No, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Good. Peters, my boy, some of your buddies here think it's highly unfair that they have to have a party just because you had one. That isn't very compassionate of them, is it? ... I asked you a question.

**PETERS:** No, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** It suggests a good deal of ignorance about the nature of our organization. Am I right?

**PETERS:** Yes, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Now since your part is responsible for their party, and not the other way around, it is only logical that they clean up this shithouse while you watch. In other words, while you honcho. And why should this be? Because I say so. Am I correct?

**PETERS:** Yes, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Of course, by being honcho, you also get a certain amount of responsibility. If this shithouse doesn't look like a church by midnight, you will be the one who gets crucified. Are we mutually clear on that point?

**PETERS:** Yes, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Very good.

**PETERS:** Yes, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** Any fucking scenes in this book, McCall?

**MCCALL:** No, Sergeant.

**SGT. WILLARDS:** I'll leave it on your bunk.

*(He exits.)*

**FRIPLY:** Fuck.

**HENDERSON:** Way to be, asshole.

**PETERS:** Let me help. I'll mop.

**SMITH:** You won't do shit.

**HENDERSON:** We're very particular about our party guests.

**PETERS:** What can I say? I'm sorry.

**FRIPLY:** Why the fuck didn't you go back to town?

**PETERS:** We were. She just wanted to look around post first.

**FRIPLY:** You need your fucking brains reamed.

**PETERS:** How the hell was I supposed to know the old man would be snooping around? It's fucking Sunday.

**MCCALL:** Could we all shut up long enough to get this place clean?

**FRIPLY:** Fuck you.

**PETERS:** Come on, man, let me help.

**HENDERSON:** Orders are fucking orders. Watch us and suffer.

**FRIPLY:** So what happened to the cunt?

**PETERS:** She's back in town, I guess.

**SMITH:** You don't know?

**PETERS:** Last time I saw her she was climbing in the back of a deuce-and-a-half to hide. I told the old man she'd already made it over the fence. He didn't know the difference. He only saw us from across the fucking parade field.

**FRIPLY:** How noble to save her fucking ass.

**PETERS:** I told her to hit the fence but she ran for the truck instead. If the old man didn't see her, what was I supposed to do? Squeal?

**FRIPLY:** You weren't supposed to bring her fucking ass on post in the first place.

**MCCALL:** I don't intend to clean the whole place by myself.

**FRIPLY:** So fucking don't. Go get your Buddha-book and jack off.

**PETERS:** Give me a sponge.

**MCCALL:** Gladly.

**HENDERSON:** No you fucking don't.

**MCCALL:** He should help.

**HENDERSON:** He's honcho.

**SMITH:** He doesn't get the privilege to help.

**MCCALL:** I'd hardly call it—

**FRIPLY:** Shut the fuck up and get on your sponge. Peters ain't helping us.

**HENDERSON:** McCall, you don't understand shit. You are one fucking idiot.

*(The Prostitute enters. She is holding a grenade.)*

**THE PROSTITUTE:** You die, fuckee G.I.!

*(Henderson instinctively pushes McCall toward The Prostitute ... and quick blackout.)*

*(LIGHTS UP as Sgt. Willards enters and steps forward. McCall's body lies on the floor. As Sgt. Willards reads a letter, the other soldiers lean McCall's body against a toilet and pin a medal on him.)*

**SGT. WILLARDS:** The final interruption. ... Dear Mr. And Mrs. McCall: In posthumous recognition of her heroism – when, by throwing his body upon a live grenade tossed into his billets by an enemy insurgent, Private McCall did absorb the shock and consequences of said grenade's detonation and in so doing did save the lives of four companions – be it hereby declared that Private McCall, by proclamation of Congress and over the signature of the President of the United States, is awarded this nation's highest military honor.

**SMITH:** In Kansas, it's Private McCall Day!

**PETERS:** Everybody loves a parade!

*(The soldiers except Sgt. Willards and McCall exit. They march in unison.)*

**SOLDIERS:** Two, four, six, eight! Who do we appreciate?  
McCall! McCall! MAAAAA ... CALL!

*(Sgt. Willards removes his cap.)*

**SGT. WILLARDS:** I wanted to express my regrets personally,  
ma'am. Your son was a fine soldier. You should be very proud.

*(He salutes the audience. And exits.)*

*(McCall's body leans against a toilet. He opens his eyes.)*

**MCCALL:** Out of the hollow / of the Great Buddha's nose /  
flew a swallow.

*(BLACKOUT. The play is over.)*

## **THE DEATH OF TENG YIN-FENG**

### **THE CAST:**

Teng Yin-feng, a Zen monk, a dying old man

Rin Tin-teng, his student

Pu-tui, his sister, a nun

Wo-fang, a nun

### **THE TIME:**

Late in the 8<sup>th</sup> century

### **THE PLACE:**

Somewhere in Asia

### **THE SET:**

Interior of Teng Yin-feng's modest abode, the ground for a floor.

Floor mats on the ground, a chest, pots of flowers.



*(AT RISE: Teng Yin-feng lies on the ground on his back. Rin Tinteng paces back and forth.)*

**RIN:** How do you feel now?

**TENG:** The same.

**RIN:** Bad, then.

**TENG:** Neither bad, nor good. Dying.

*(Rin paces some more.)*

**TENG:** Different.

**RIN:** How do?

**TENG:** You are making me nervous.

**RIN:** I'm sorry. I guess I'm anxious.

**TENG:** To see me die?

**RIN:** For you to recover!

**TENG:** Impossible.

**RIN:** I have not given up hope.

**TENG:** I hope for nothing.

**RIN:** Then I have enough hope for both of us.

**TENG:** Life, death, it makes no difference.

**RIN:** Not to you, perhaps. You have already found the Way.

But I am just a student. I still have much to learn from you.

**TENG:** You have never learned anything from me.

**RIN:** I have learned everything I know!

**TENG:** Correct.

*(A pause.)*

**TENG:** Where are the children?

**RIN:** What children?

**TENG:** From the school. Who-fang was to bring them.

**RIN:** But why?

**TENG:** To watch me die. It would be educational.

**RIN:** You will not die. You will recover and continue to teach me the Way.

**TENG:** I asked you to tell Wo-fang to bring the children.

**RIN:** I don't think so. I remember nothing about that.

**TENG:** What do you remember?

**RIN:** I remember nothing about the children.

**TENG:** What do you remember about anything?

**RIN:** I remember my lessons. I remember that dukkha is the five aggregates of attachment. I remember that the five aggregates are matter, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness. I remember that the energy combinations of the five aggregates are forever changing.

**TENG:** Do you remember being in your father's loins?

**RIN:** No.

**TENG:** Do you remember being in your mother's womb?

**RIN:** No. But I was not yet a child. I was much too young to remember.

**TENG:** Already you are much too old.

*(A pause. Rin paces.)*

**RIN:** Would you like to sit up?

**TENG:** Why?

**RIN:** Perhaps you would be more comfortable.

**TENG:** I have not mentioned discomfort. But how are you?

**RIN:** Anxious for your recovery.

**TENG:** Then help me sit up.

*(Rin helps Teng sit up.)*

**RIN:** Some tea?

**TENG:** Nothing.

**RIN:** Rice?

**TENG:** Tea, then.

*(Rin fetches tea.)*

**TENG:** I was looking forward to playing with the children one last time.

**RIN:** You will have many more visits with the children.

**TENG:** No. You will have to play with them for me.

**RIN:** You are disheartened because you've been ill. But you will recover.

**TENG:** You still want lessons from me?

**RIN:** Of course.

**TENG:** Then watch me die.

**RIN:** (*bringing tea*) Here. Tea will be soothing.

**TENG:** I need nothing. I'm drinking it to help you.

**RIN:** Yes, perhaps you are right.

**TENG:** It is better to be wrong.

**RIN:** Why?

**TENG:** Then one is right. Um, it does taste good.

*(Teng pours his tea onto the ground.)*

**RIN:** I thought you liked it.

**TENG:** I do. I want it waiting for me.

**RIN:** You are very pessimistic today.

**TENG:** If it is pessimistic to accept fact, then I am pessimistic.

**RIN:** I think we both need some diversion. Do you feel up to giving me a lesson?

**TENG:** No. I want to be amused. It is traditional to amuse the dying.

**RIN:** But I cannot accept your assumption.

**TENG:** Tell me, what's been happening in the marketplace?

**RIN:** The usual rumors.

**TENG:** Tell me again. My memory is worse than yours.

**RIN:** Many speak of a great warrior in the West. Charlemagne. They fear he will spread famine and desolation throughout the East.

**TENG:** They think we'll be conquered by the West?

**RIN:** Yes. But I am not so pessimistic. What do you think?

**TENG:** I cannot think. It is thought that thinks.

**RIN:** I don't foresee being conquered by the West.

**TENG:** Perhaps it could happen. It would depend on where you're looking from.

*(Teng breaks into hysterics over this, bordering on a seizure. Rin is panicked, trying to calm the old man down.)*

**RIN:** Please, you must conserve your strength ... maybe you should lie back down.

**TENG:** *(recovering)* Yes. Help me onto my stomach.

**RIN:** I think you'd be more comfortable on your back.

**TENG:** On my stomach!

**RIN:** Are you sure?

**TENG:** Tell me ... does anything exist after life?

**RIN:** Of course. The energy of the five aggregates merely changes its distribution. Change alone is permanent.

**TENG:** Then energy will want to escape from my body?

**RIN:** That is too complicated for me. I am just a student. What do you think?

**TENG:** My thought thinks that if energy wants to escape, it needs an exit. Help me onto my stomach.

*(Rin helps him onto his stomach.)*

**RIN:** How's that?

**TENG:** Good. Now listen ... did you hear it?

**RIN:** I heard nothing.

**TENG:** Come closer. Anything?

*(Rin moves closer, then quickly away, waving his hand.)*

**RIN:** I smell it.

**TENG:** Do you remember what Yo-poo said on his death bed? That one passed the Soul by passing wind.

**RIN:** But that contradicts the Doctrine of No-Soul and No-Self.

**TENG:** Yes. But why take chances?

**RIN:** Let me roll you over.

**TENG:** No. I want to die on my stomach. It has never been done before.

**RIN:** Yo-poo died on his stomach. Have you forgotten already? You just referred to him.

**TENG:** My memory is worse than yours.

**RIN:** Please, let me turn you over. You don't look comfortable.

**TENG:** Then help me to my feet. I want to die while standing. It has never been done before.

**RIN:** Have you forgotten your lesson about Chung-lug, who died standing up?

**TENG:** Twice already. Tell me again.

**RIN:** I'm putting you on your back.

*(He does this.)*

**RIN:** How's that?

**TENG:** Good.

**RIN:** See there?

**TENG:** Like dying.

**RIN:** When you stop acting so contrary, then I'll be worried.

**TENG:** Prepare to worry.

*(Pu-tui and Wo-fang enter.)*

**PU:** How is he?

**RIN:** Complaining a lot.

**PU:** I made reservations at the crematorium for late in the day, before the crickets begin.

**RIN:** He's not going to die.

**WO:** If he misses his reservation, he must wait a week.

**PU:** But not here. The stink would be unbearable. Down by the river, if that's the case.

**TENG:** Is Wo-fang here with the children?

**RIN:** Wo-fang has come with your sister.

**TENG:** Who?

**PU:** This is Pu-tui. You have until the crickets begin.

**TENG:** Where is Rin Tin-teng?

**RIN:** I am right here. I have remained by your side.

**TENG:** Why isn't he telling Wo-fang to bring the children?

**WO:** The children are in the river.

**RIN:** Can they swim?

**WO:** Some of them.

**PU:** The others can bathe on the bank with dirt.

**TENG:** Where is my sister?

**PU:** Right here. Can't you see me?

**TENG:** I see someone – but I remember my sister as much uglier.

**PU:** He must be getting close.

**RIN:** No! Can't you see me? Look, I'm dancing! I'm dancing to celebrate your recovery! Do you see?

**TENG:** I feel the heavy rumble of elephants marching to the graveyard.

**PU:** We'll be on time.

**WO:** Yes.

**RIN:** You can't die yet! I have too much to learn!

**TENG:** Is someone whispering?

**RIN:** It's Rin Tin-teng! Can't you hear me?

**TENG:** Hello? Is anyone there?

**RIN:** I'm right here beside you!

**PU:** There is nothing you can do. His time is very near.

*(Rin falls to his knees in anguish.)*

**WO:** Why don't you go bathe with the children? It would help.

**RIN:** I'm not leaving him.

*(He touches Teng's cheek.)*

**TENG:** Ah!

**RIN:** He can feel it!

**TENG:** So we break the vows one more time, do we?

**RIN:** It's me, my teacher.

**TENG:** Give me your breast.

*(Rin, shocked, removes his hand and backs away.)*

**TENG:** Where did you go? I don't have the strength to chase you to the pagoda today. I can't even sit up.

**PU:** Accept it. His time has come.

**RIN:** I don't want to accept it. I want to be shown the Way.

**TENG:** Have it your way, then. Just as well. I have only a little time now.

**RIN:** Can't we do something for him?

**PU:** Of course we'll do something for him. Do you think he could make it to the crematorium on his own?

**TENG:** Is Rin Tin-teng there?

**RIN:** Yes!

**TENG:** I see only the night. I hear only the wind. But my student is here, isn't he?

**RIN:** I am beside you!

**TENG:** You must help me.

**RIN:** Just tell me what to do!

**TENG:** If you are there, Rin Tin-teng, help me stand on my head.

**RIN:** What does he mean?

**PU:** He's delirious.

**WO:** His faith is not strong enough to pull him through.

**TENG:** Yo-poo dies on his stomach. Chung-lug died standing up. I shall die standing on my head. It has never been done before.

**WO:** Is Death so horrible, to do this to a great teacher?

**PU:** He was always overrated.

**TENG:** I need your help. Rin? Wo? Is anyone there?

**PU:** Notice he didn't ask for his sister.

**TENG:** Someone help me stand on my head!

**RIN:** He mustn't get excited.

**PU:** Why not? It hastens the end.

**TENG:** I want to stand on my head!

**RIN:** I'll help him. He must calm down.

*(Rin goes to Teng.)*

**TENG:** Who is there? It's you, my student, isn't it? You are going to help your old teacher.

**RIN:** I'll have to prop him against the chest. All of us could move him more gently.

**PU:** He's a raving fool. At death, as through life.

**RIN:** He's your brother.

**PU:** He belongs to the Universe. The five aggregates can do with him what they will.

**TENG:** Put me on my head!

*(Rin will drag him to the chest and help him stand on his head, however awkwardly, propped up against the chest with Rin holding his feet.)*

**TENG:** I don't want a ride! I want to stand on my head!

**WO:** Perhaps he's developed a headache and wants pressure on it.

**PU:** His life has been a headache.

**WO:** At least it will be over before the crickets begin.

**PU:** Thank Buddha for small favors.

**TENG:** Where are we? Who is it who wants to wrestle?

**RIN:** I'm putting you on your head.

**TENG:** Is that the ground? Or the ceiling? The ground! I smell dirt.

**RIN:** Here we go.

*(Teng is now on his head.)*

**TENG:** Ah! Thank you!

*(A pause.)*

**PU:** Any moment now.

**WO:** If he's early, we'll have time to join the children in the river.

**TENG:** Rin Tin-teng? Are you there?

**RIN:** Yes!

**TENG:** I see only the night. I hear only the wind. But there is a difference now. Standing on my head ... it makes a difference.

**WO:** I never knew that would cure a headache.

**TENG:** Listen to me, my student. Listen to me carefully.

**RIN:** I shall listen to the end. Show me the Way, my teacher.

**PU:** The Way is to the crematorium.

**TENG:** There is something I haven't told you yet.

**RIN:** Tell me!

**TENG:** I have already told you that the five aggregates, which is dukkha, are matter, sensation, perception, volition and consciousness. You know about the ever-changing distribution of energies among the five aggregates. You already know the doctrine of No-Soul and No-Self. But there is more.

**RIN:** Show me the Way.

**TENG:** It has just now occurred to me.

**RIN:** He's found the meaning of life!

**PU:** I can hardly wait.

**TENG:** Listen carefully: Life is a nice place to visit ... but I wouldn't want to live there.

**RIN:** I'm not sure I understand.

**TENG:** Whoop! Whoop!

**RIN:** What's the matter?

**TENG:** Whoop-whoop! Whoop!

**WO:** The hiccups, perhaps?

**TENG:** Whoop-whoop-whoop!

**RIN:** I'd better put him down.

*(He releases Teng's feet.)*

**TENG:** Leave me on my head!

*(Rin holds his feet up again.)*

**RIN:** I thought something was the matter.

**TENG:** Whoop-whoop-whoop-whoop!

**WO:** Do you suppose it's like this for all of us?

**PU:** My brother's death is an example only for fools.

**TENG:** Whoop-whoop-whoop!

*(Silence. A pause.)*

**PU:** Looks like it's over.

**TENG:** Rin Tin-teng? Are you still there?

**PU:** I should have guessed he'd play dead.

**TENG:** I don't want to be turned right side up again.

**PU:** His life was a joke. He insists on making his death a joke as well.

**TENG:** My sister would turn me right side up. I'm counting on you, my student. I want to be carried upside down to the crematorium.

**RIN:** I will do whatever you say, my teacher.

**TENG:** I can't remember if you've ever met my sister. She's the ugliest one in the village.

**PU:** I hope the crickets beat him to it.

**WO:** But he'd have to wait for days by the river bank. The body would begin to rot.

**PU:** Exactly.

**TENG:** Don't fail me, my student. Whoop!

**RIN:** You have my word!

**TENG:** Whoop-whoop! Ahhhhhhhhh ... ah!

*(A silence.)*

**WO:** You think maybe?

**PU:** I'm not falling for the same trick twice.

**WO:** It was a very different sound.

**RIN:** *(softly)* Goodbye, my teacher.

**PU:** I'll try tickling his feet.

*(She does. Nothing.)*

**WO:** Looks good.

**PU:** *(to Rin)* Will you help us carry him to the crematorium?

**RIN:** We must carry him upside down.

**PU:** Don't be ridiculous.

**RIN:** He insisted.

**PU:** He's a fool. In death, in life, same difference.

**RIN:** But I gave him my word.

*(Pu pushes Teng over. He falls to the ground.)*

**PU:** There. Now your word has nothing to do with it.

**RIN:** Now I've failed him ...

**PU:** *(to Wo)* Come on, he's going to try and make amends. I recognize the look.

*(Pu and Wo begin to drag away the body.)*

**RIN:** What can I do to restore his faith in me?

**WO:** *(ignoring this, to Pu)* We'll have time to bathe.

**RIN:** Help me! Someone show me the Way!

*(Rin gets up onto his head.)*

**WO:** What is he doing?

**PU:** Like teacher, like student.

*(They exit, dragging out Teng.)*

**RIN:** *(tentatively)* Whoop? Whoop?

*(A pause.)*

**RIN:** *(with increasing confidence)* Whoop. Whoop-whoop.  
Whoop! Whoop! WHOOP-WHOOP!

*(as lights fade to BLACKOUT. The play is over.)*



Charles Deemer

**THE SADNESS OF EINSTEIN**



## **THE SADNESS OF EINSTEIN**

### **THE CAST:**

Robert Manfield, an amateur physicist, 20s

Henry Bruno, his companion, an amateur physicist, 20s

Leonora, a college student and prostitute, 20s

Oskar Gold, a businessman

Hermann, a businessman

Albert Einstein, the physicist (Oskar, Hermann and Einstein are played by the same actor)

### **THE TIME:**

Autumn, 1927

### **THE PLACE:**

Brussels, Belgium

### **THE SET:**

A hotel room in Brussels. Entrance is stage left. A bed is stage right. Upstage, a window looking down on the street. The bathroom is shared and located in the hall (exit stage left).



**ACT ONE**

**1/**

*(AT RISE: ROBERT and LEONORA are in bed, making love, Leonora on top with her back to the audience and a sheet around her. She frantically rides Robert below her HENRY is at the window, looking across the street with a pair of binoculars. Leonora's sexual frenzy will increase to the orgasm indicated below.)*

**HENRY:** The paper this morning called it The Copenhagen Interpretation. Niels Bohr debated Einstein and won. Poor Einstein, nobody believes him any more. The city fathers welcome him as a hero, the greatest genius of his time, they celebrate Einstein Day, but his peers prefer to listen to an unknown from Denmark. The Copenhagen Interpretation.

*(Henry turns to the bed.)*

**HENRY:** For God's sake, woman, aren't you finished yet?

**ROBERT:** I think she's close

**HENRY:** It's time you got dressed.

**ROBERT:** *(to Leonora)* Are you close?

*(Leonora responds with a passionate cry and increases the tempo of her "riding.")*

**HENRY:** *(looking out the window)* One day the world will be

talking about The Oregon Interpretation. We should be across the street right now, telling them about it. The Copenhagen Interpretation is wrong, it has to be. Know what Bohr thinks? That it doesn't matter what quantum mechanics is about. All that matters is that it works. No wonder poor Einstein is in a tizzy. The paper quotes him as saying, "God does not play dice with the universe." Bohr disagrees. Well, God may play dice, all right, but the content of quantum mechanics still isn't something to dismiss. Bohr's close to the truth but he looks reality square in the eye and is afraid to face the social consequences of his own insights.

*(He turns to the bed again.)*

**HENRY:** We don't have all day, Robert.

**ROBERT:** Are you close?

*(As before, Leonora replies with a passionate yelp.)*

**HENRY:** Too much booze last night. I don't know why you're always picking them up. You'd think I bore you.

**ROBERT:** You don't bore me, Henry.

**HENRY:** Then what do you need a woman for?

**ROBERT:** I find them fascinating.

**HENRY:** Does that mean you have to fuck them?

**ROBERT:** Their sexuality is what fascinates me. Look at her. She's in another dimension.

**HENRY:** She's probably still drunk. You shouldn't have ordered that last bottle of champagne.

**ROBERT:** She likes me. She said she wants to have my baby.

**HENRY:** Oh barf!

**ROBERT:** Actually it's Einstein's baby she really wants. That's why she came to Brussels, to get pregnant by Einstein.

**HENRY:** Fat chance.

**ROBERT:** Maybe not.

**HENRY:** I'm sure Einstein has better taste than you do.

**ROBERT:** She's an interesting lady. She likes to hear us talk about physics.

**HENRY:** She can't possibly understand a word.

**ROBERT:** Don't be so sure. She's studying mathematics at the University.

**HENRY:** University, my ass.

**ROBERT:** She's bright, Henry.

**HENRY:** It takes more than "bright" to understand The Oregon Interpretation.

**ROBERT:** She can still wonder what we're talking about. Wonder is a greater gift than understanding.

**HENRY:** Can't you do something to bring her off?

**ROBERT:** Leonora? Are you close yet?

*(Leonora cries out.)*

**HENRY:** Fondle her breasts or something.

*(Robert begins to fondle her breasts.)*

**HENRY:** We don't have all morning. The delegates will be arriving soon.

**ROBERT:** Einstein will be among the last to arrive.

**HENRY:** You can't be sure.

**ROBERT:** The star always shows up late.

**HENRY:** The morning paper calls Bohr the star, with his Copenhagen Interpretation.

**ROBERT:** I think she's close now.

**HENRY:** Pinch her nipples. Talk dirty to her.

**ROBERT:** Here we go!

*(And Leonora rocks furiously on top of Robert, reaching her orgasm. She collapses on top of him.)*

**ROBERT:** Did you see her? No man can come like that.

**HENRY:** Rubbish. It's all show. Women are more theatrical.

*(Henry fetches Robert a robe. Robert gets out from under Leonora but remains in bed.)*

**ROBERT:** I didn't know anyone could be more theatrical than you are, Henry.

**HENRY:** Very funny. Here. Give me a kiss.

*(They peck like old lovers.)*

*(Leonora stirs, grabbing a nearby robe. She throws it over her*

*and exits to the bathroom, taking clothes with her.)*

**HENRY:** Get dressed. We don't have much time.

**ROBERT:** I want to shower.

**HENRY:** I don't think there's time.

**ROBERT:** What time is it?

**HENRY:** Almost nine. They call to order at nine-thirty.

**ROBERT:** Einstein won't arrive before nine-twenty-five.

**HENRY:** We don't want to miss our best crack at him. Better safe than sorry.

**ROBERT:** Where's the paper?

*(Henry fetches it for him.)*

**HENRY:** The Copenhagen Interpretation, they call it.

**ROBERT:** And Bohr debated Einstein and won?

**HENRY:** Consensus: God does play dice with the universe.

**ROBERT:** He does and he doesn't.

**HENRY:** Exactly: The Oregon Interpretation.

**ROBERT:** I'll be curious what Einstein has to say about it.

**HENRY:** It doesn't matter what he has to say about it: we're right, Robert. The scientific community can't deny us that, not when they comprehend what we're saying.

**ROBERT:** It matters what Einstein thinks about it because he

matters as a person.

**HENRY:** We're discussion his worth as a physicist, not as a person.

**ROBERT:** You're a romantic, Henry. You think it matters that someone is a physicist, that it provides some sort of privilege in life. It doesn't.

**HENRY:** Would we be in Brussels if we weren't physicists?

**ROBERT:** We're in Brussels because you were born with the accident of wealthy parents.

**HENRY:** And because we have something to contribute.

**ROBERT:** Einstein matters as a person, is all I'm saying. That's a moral imperative.

**HENRY:** What matters is that we find Einstein and that he understands us.

**ROBERT:** I'd be delighted if he understood us; then he could defeat this upstart Bohr and be the reigning champion again.

**HENRY:** We'll be the reigning champions.

**ROBERT:** Don't be greedy. Our work would be meaningless without the footwork prepared by Einstein.

**HENRY:** And you're a fine one to bring up morality, screwing every where you can get your hands on.

**ROBERT:** Do you think Leonora matters to me?

**HENRY:** You've been spending all your time with her.

**ROBERT:** For God sakes, Henry, what's wrong with amusing

the poor girl? We're probably giving her the best time she's had in her life. Think of the stories she can tell, meeting the great Einstein.

**HENRY:** If she knew anything, she'd talk about meeting us.

**ROBERT:** You're a very greedy genius, Henry.

**HENRY:** Perhaps it's the nature of the beast.

*(Leonora enters, partially dressed.)*

**ROBERT:** How do you feel?

**LEONORA:** Really good.

**ROBERT:** It was good for me, too.

**LEONORA:** Really?

**ROBERT:** Really.

**LEONORA:** I was hoping it would be. I was so wrapped up in myself, I wasn't paying attention.

**HENRY:** Now there's a greedy attitude if I ever heard one.

**LEONORA:** I always get carried away by my own pleasure.

**ROBERT:** Perfectly natural.

**HENRY:** Thank you for being so open-minded. Now perhaps you can get dressed and when can do what we came here to do.

**ROBERT:** I could use a cup of coffee before I shower.

**HENRY:** We don't have time for coffee!

**ROBERT:** Sure we do. You'd like coffee, wouldn't you, Leonora?

**LEONORA:** If it's all right.

**ROBERT:** Of course it's all right.

*(Robert fetches money for coffee.)*

**HENRY:** They'll be arriving any minute!

**ROBERT:** We both take ours black.

**LEONORA:** I'll be right back.

*(She exits for coffee.)*

**HENRY:** At least get dressed.

**ROBERT:** We're right on schedule, Henry. You worry too much. You're a bundle of nerves this morning.

**HENRY:** Of course I'm a bundle of nerves! We come all the way to Brussels to talk to Einstein and you spend your time playing games with a street whore.

**ROBERT:** She's not a street whore. She attends the University in Amsterdam and works part-time in the student whorehouse there.

**HENRY:** Oh barf!

**ROBERT:** She knows about the Schrodinger Equations. She asked some very perceptive questions about them.

**HENRY:** Have you considered what disease she may have given you?

**ROBERT:** She strikes me as a perfectly nice girl. I'm sure she's clean.

**HENRY:** A whore!?

**ROBERT:** She's a whore because she's poor. It's the only way she can afford an education. But she's also bright. Lots of bright girls in Amsterdam earn their way through the University that way. They have a more mature attitude toward sex over there.

**HENRY:** If she had brains, she'd have a scholarship. She wouldn't have to stoop to whoring.

**ROBERT:** It's not the worst way to make a living.

**HENRY:** Name something worst.

**ROBERT:** Being an economist. A sociologist. A politician. Writing drama reviews for the local weekly.

**HENRY:** You still can't be sure she's clean.

**ROBERT:** She seemed perfectly clean to me.

**HENRY:** What is that supposed to mean?

**ROBERT:** It means what I said. I have no evidence that she's diseased in any way.

**HENRY:** But do you have evidence from ignorance or because you performed an experiment and got negative results?

**ROBERT:** The latter.

**HENRY:** Gross me out!

**ROBERT:** Damn it, Henry, you keep taking everything personally.

**HENRY:** How am I supposed to take it?

**ROBERT:** I'm curious. I'm fascinated.

**HENRY:** You ate her out, didn't you?

**ROBERT:** Of course.

**HENRY:** It makes me want to puke.

**ROBERT:** Don't be jealous, it wasn't personal. You brought up the notion of an experiment. That's exactly what it was. I was curious and so I investigated her anatomy, you might say.

**HENRY:** The female anatomy disgusts me. The way they bleed.

**ROBERT:** Well, she wasn't bleeding. I'm curious about the world, is all. Women are in the world, so I'm curious about them, too.

**HENRY:** Women are an aberration. The dinosaurs of the species. How can they survive? They can't even think rationally.

**ROBERT:** They can feel.

**HENRY:** Thinking comes first.

**ROBERT:** Leonora is no dummy, Henry.

**HENRY:** I don't believe you. You're more interested in a whore than in me and the reason we're here.

**ROBERT:** That's not true.

*(But Henry has moved away, hurt.)*

**ROBERT:** Don't do this, Henry.

*(No reply.)*

**ROBERT:** Look, we'll have coffee and then we'll go downstairs and bring Einstein up here when he arrives. How's that?

*(No reply.)*

**ROBERT:** I'll get dressed.

*(Robert fetches his clothes and exits.)*

*(Henry turns back into the room. Leonora enters with the coffee.)*

**LEONORA:** Where's Robert?

**HENRY:** He's taking a shower. He's making sure he's clean.

**LEONORA:** Here's your coffee.

**HENRY:** Thank you.

**LEONORA:** I couldn't remember how you took it. I brought cream and sugar.

**HENRY:** We both take it black. Robert specifically said so.

**LEONORA:** I didn't remember.

**HENRY:** You must have a very short memory span.

**LEONORA:** What?

**HENRY:** Forget it.

*(A pause.)*

**LEONORA:** Why don't you like me?

**HENRY:** What makes you think I don't like you.

**LEONORA:** It's obvious.

*(A pause.)*

**LEONORA:** Do you want to have sex?

*(No reply.)*

**LEONORA:** Do you want to fuck me?

**HENRY:** Astounding.

**LEONORA:** What is?

**HENRY:** Your question. I find it quite remarkable.

**LEONORA:** I just thought you might be feeling left out.

**HENRY:** And what ever led you to that conclusion?

**LEONORA:** You don't seem to like me. I thought maybe because Robert and I have been doing it so much. Don't you want to do it with me?

**HENRY:** No thank you.

**LEONORA:** With both of us then?

**HENRY:** What?

**LEONORA:** You can join us whenever you want. I'm sure Robert wouldn't mind. He's very experimental.

**HENRY:** Astounding squared. To the nth power!

**LEONORA:** What?

**HENRY:** That's becoming our common form of address, "what?" We have so much in common.

**LEONORA:** See, you don't like me.

**HENRY:** Let me ask you something. Do you want to have Robert's baby?

**LEONORA:** Then that's it. You're jealous because I don't want to have yours. I hardly know you. Are you a genius, too?

**HENRY:** Of course I'm a genius. Why would I be in Brussels if I wasn't a genius?

**LEONORA:** You've ignored me since I came up here. You're always scowling at me. I don't think you like me. I must not be your type.

**HENRY:** Perhaps I owe you an apology.

**LEONORA:** What?

**HENRY:** What what?

*(A pause.)*

**LEONORA:** I don't know who's supposed to speak.

**HENRY:** Why should anyone speak?

**LEONORA:** Because we're having a conversation. We can't have a conversation unless we speak.

**HENRY:** What what what?

**LEONORA:** What?

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** Let's start over. I owe you an apology. I thought you were an imbecile.

**LEONORA:** Why?

**HENRY:** Damn. I just changed my mind.

**LEONORA:** What?

**HENRY:** What what?

**LEONORA:** Look, I don't know why you don't like me. But obviously you do, so let's just forget it, okay?

**HENRY:** One question. Why do you want to have Robert's baby?

**LEONORA:** Because he's a genius, and I like him.

**HENRY:** I'm a genius and you don't want to have my baby – thank God!

**LEONORA:** There's no reason to be nasty about it. I don't even know you, except that you spend so much time scowling at me and being insulting. Don't think I don't know what you're doing. You insult me because you think I'm stupid. Well, I'm a math major at the University back home, mister. You don't know a thing about me, so you can just shove your opinions.

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** Well, then. Shall we start over and try again?

**LEONORA:** No. I don't enjoy the way we talk.

**HENRY:** Then what can we do to amuse one another?

**LEONORA:** If you want a blow job, forget it.

**HENRY:** My God, you do have a one-track mind, don't you? You really are a whore.

**LEONORA:** You're jealous because I spend all my time with Robert.

*(Henry laughs.)*

**LEONORA:** I don't know what's so funny. You paid for me. Robert did. I assumed you two were together. I thought you wanted a group scene.

**HENRY:** I shouldn't be laughing at you. I should be laughing at the father of your baby. He's such a romantic.

**LEONORA:** He's very romantic, as a matter of fact.

**HENRY:** Let's go back to the beginning. Did you bring the coffee?

**LEONORA:** What? No! Just forget I even said that. I'm sick and tired of being insulted.

**HENRY:** Actually we began with cleanliness, didn't we? Are you clean, dear?

**LEONORA:** Of course I'm clean. The University gives us weekly checkups.

**HENRY:** The University really runs a whorehouse?

**LEONORA:** Look, I don't like that term. We provide an important service. As a matter of fact, we get as many professors

as students. And we do much better on the National Comprehensives than University branches that don't provide our service. Sexual satisfaction and learning go hand in hand.

**HENRY:** But you haven't been inspected since you came to Brussels. What happened on Wednesday and Thursday?

**LEONORA:** Nothing happened.

**HENRY:** Let me ask you this. How do you know Robert is clean?

**LEONORA:** You don't think he's clean?

**HENRY:** Aha! So you took a risk with him, didn't you?

**LEONORA:** What are you guys trying to pull here?

*(Robert enters, clean and dressed.)*

**ROBERT:** Is my coffee cold?

**LEONORA:** He says you're not clean.

**ROBERT:** Oh Christ, Henry.

**HENRY:** I did not say you weren't clean. I was presenting an hypothesis, trying to show her that she was taking a risk to have sex with you.

**ROBERT:** I'm clean, she's clean. The only one who hasn't showered this morning is you.

**LEONORA:** He's been insulting me ever since you left.

**ROBERT:** Leave her alone, will you?

**HENRY:** I don't want her here.

**ROBERT:** She isn't bothering anyone.

**HENRY:** It's time to take care of business.

**ROBERT:** I told her she could meet Einstein.

**HENRY:** There's no point in it.

**ROBERT:** She'll sit in the corner and listen. What harm can she do?

**HENRY:** She managed to botch things up so far.

**ROBERT:** How? What's she done?

**HENRY:** Distracted your curiosity, let us say. Sexed you into playing this idiotic game about having your child. Or Einstein's child, however it goes.

**LEONORA:** As long as it's not yours, mister! The kid would be an idiot.

**HENRY:** You're an idiot, if you think you'll get pregnant after a few rolls in the sack.

**ROBERT:** It's her fertile time, Henry.

**LEONORA:** My moon's in Libra.

**HENRY:** My cock's up your ass if you don't shut up.

**LEONORA:** Is that what you want? Why didn't you say so in the first place?

**HENRY:** Robert, see what I mean? How in hell can we concentrate on business if we have to deal with that?

**ROBERT:** When Einstein's here, she'll be fine.

*(Henry moves to the window and looks out.)*

**HENRY:** Oh shit, delegates are going into the hotel already!

**ROBERT:** Then let's get to work.

**HENRY:** Einstein may already have entered.

**ROBERT:** He's going to be among the last, trust me. He needs to make a grand entrance after everyone else is there.

*(They are heading for the door.)*

**HENRY:** If you're wrong—

**ROBERT:** Relax. In that case, we'll get him on his way out.

*(Henry exits.)*

**ROBERT:** Leonora, wait here. We'll be right back.

**LEONORA:** I don't like him.

**ROBERT:** He's nervous, is all.

**LEONORA:** I don't care if he doesn't want to go to bed with me but I don't like being insulted.

**ROBERT:** His bark is louder than his bite.

**LEONORA:** Fine. Just tell him to leave me alone.

**ROBERT:** I'll tell him. Just stay put, okay?

*(Robert exits.)*

*(Leonora goes to the window. She picks up the binoculars and looks outside. BLACKOUT.)*

## **2/ A SHORT TIME LATER**

*(LIGHTS UP. The door flings open and OSKAR is pushed into the room, followed quickly by Henry and Robert. Leonora is startled. Oskar is costumed as Einstein.)*

**HENRY:** Here we are, professor. Make yourself at home.

**OSKAR:** That's not so easy under the circumstances.

**ROBERT:** Can I get you coffee?

**OSKAR:** I don't want coffee. I want an explanation.

**HENRY:** We told you: we just want to talk to you.

**OSKAR:** We could have talked on the street. You forced me to come with you.

**HENRY:** Talk at length. Talk physics. It's more private here.

**ROBERT:** If the world were just, professor, we'd be across the street and therefore could hold our discussion in the proper forum. Unfortunately, since we have no reputations, we were not invited to the conference.

**OSKAR:** You are scientists?

**HENRY:** To be specific, we're the greatest two physicists of our generation. You can understand our disappointment in being denied an invitation.

**OSKAR:** I still don't understand.

**HENRY:** Prof. Einstein, remember how young you were yourself when you formulated your great relativity theories. And how unknown. So with us.

**ROBERT:** Please sit down. I'm sorry the room isn't more comfortable.

**OSKAR:** So what do you want to talk about?

**HENRY:** Everything.

*(Leonora finally comes forward.)*

**LEONORA:** Hello. I'm Leonora.

**OSKAR:** Hello.

**LEONORA:** I was wondering—

**HENRY:** You're not here to wonder.

**ROBERT:** Let her have her say, Henry.

**HENRY:** You said she wouldn't be in the way.

**ROBERT:** We do have important things to talk about, Leonora. You understand, don't you?

**LEONORA:** Of course.

**ROBERT:** Say what you have to say and then be quiet and listen. Okay?

**LEONORA:** *(to Oskar)* I was wondering ... can I have your autograph?

**OSKAR:** My autograph?

**HENRY:** No, you can't have his autograph! Now sit down over there and be still – or it's out you go.

**ROBERT:** I'll be sure you get his autograph.

*(Leonora moves to the bed, to sulk but also to listen.)*

**HENRY:** I read this morning's paper, professor. It says Bohr made mincemeat of you yesterday with his Copenhagen Interpretation.

**ROBERT:** Now it wasn't worded that strongly. He beat you in debate.

**HENRY:** That's why it's so important that we talk to you now.

**OSKAR:** At the moment, I'm missing the discussions.

**HENRY:** We'll have you back to the conference before they adjourn for lunch. So shall we begin with a thought experiment, Robert?

**ROBERT:** Why not?

**OSKAR:** A thought experiment?

**HENRY:** Right in your ballpark, professor. We call this thought experiment the paradox of the Quantum Cat.

*(During the thought experiment below, as Henry and Robert become more excited about their ideas, the pace of their exchange in the telling will increase greatly. Their conclusion is not unlike, in energy, the release of Leonora in her orgasm at the beginning of the play.)*

**HENRY:** We have a cat and we place it inside a box. The box is tightly sealed. In the box is also a device that can release a

poisonous gas that will instantly kill the cat.

**ROBERT:** Whether the gas is released or not is determined by a random event. In this case, the random event is the radioactive decay of an atom.

**HENRY:** We have a sample of atoms with a half-life of one hour. We know that in an hour, half the atoms will have decayed. However, whether a particular atom – the one that will release the poisonous gas – decays or not is problematical: a fifty-fifty chance, after an hour. The new Quantum Mechanics tells us this.

**ROBERT:** We perform the experiment that decays the atom or does not decay the atom–

**HENRY:** –but there's no way of knowing which, unless we unseal the box and look inside it.

**ROBERT:** And then we can see for ourselves whether the cat is dead or alive.

**HENRY:** But what if we delay in taking a peek? What if we have to go to the bathroom first, so instead of opening the box to see what happened to the cat, we go to the bathroom instead.

**ROBERT:** And the question is, what does this leave the cat?

**HENRY:** The answer to which, according to Newton and classical physics, is quite easy: it leaves the cat dead or alive, one eventuality of which happened as soon as we did the experiment.

**ROBERT:** As soon as the gas was released or not released.

**HENRY:** And though we have no way of knowing yet, until we look inside the box, the cat is dead or the cat is alive.

**ROBERT:** Either dead or alive.

**HENRY:** But, of course, this is not a description of reality as described by quantum mechanics.

**ROBERT:** Wherein lies the rub.

**HENRY:** For quantum theory tells us the situation is not so simple. According to Bohr and his Copenhagen Interpretation—

**ROBERT:** —which the morning paper says is quite convincing to the conference delegates at large—

**HENRY:** —the cat is neither dead nor alive but instead is represented by a wave function that contains the possibility that the cat is alive and also the possibility that the cat is not alive—

**ROBERT:** —the equation describing the decay contains both probabilities—

**HENRY:** —but neither possibility actualizes until we open the box and look at the results for ourselves—

**ROBERT:** —the wave function collapses at this point—

**HENRY:** —and neither possibility becomes an actuality until we look inside the box—

**ROBERT:** —so that while we're in the bathroom—

**HENRY:** —there is no cat at all—

**ROBERT:** —there is no cat in the box—

**HENRY:** —the only thing in the box—

**ROBERT:** —is the wave function—

**HENRY:** —the probability equation—

**ROBERT:** –so while we're in the bathroom–

**HENRY:** –answering nature's call–

**ROBERT:** –the cat–

**HENRY:** –in fact–

**ROBERT:** –does not exist.

*(A pause.)*

**ROBERT:** In other words, the cat does not exist until we ourselves open the box and look at it – to find it dead or alive. It doesn't have an existence without our participation in determining the end of the experiment. Then we see a dead cat or a live cat.

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** So far, so good?

**OSKAR:** You mean, there's more?

**HENRY:** That's the Copenhagen Interpretation. We create a dead cat or we create a live cat. But what if, in fact, we create both, each in its own universe?

**OSKAR:** What?

**HENRY:** The Oregon Interpretation. We agree that the fate of the cat is not determined until we open the box. While we are answering nature's call, there's no cat in the box, only the wave function probability equation.

**ROBERT:** But once we open the box!–

**HENRY:** –something else entirely has happened–

**ROBERT:** –for at the moment the atom decays, the world splits into two branches–

**HENRY:** –each containing one of the possibilities for the fate of the cat–

**ROBERT:** –a world in which the cat lives–

**HENRY:** –a world in which the cat dies–

**ROBERT:** –and when we open the box to look inside–

**HENRY:** –the wave function also splits in two–

**ROBERT:** –one branch associated with the cat living–

**HENRY:** –one branch associated with the cat dying–

**ROBERT:** –and though we see only one branch for ourselves–

**HENRY:** –the other branch still exists–

**ROBERT:** –in a mode we can't apprehend–

**HENRY:** –so that, in fact, the cat is alive and dead–

**ROBERT:** –simultaneously–

**HENRY:** –at the same time–

**ROBERT:** –rather in two universes at the same time–

**HENRY:** –each with a different actuality–

**ROBERT:** –a dead cat in one universe–

**HENRY:** –a live cat in another universe–

**ROBERT:** –but neither able to perceive the other.

**HENRY:** The Oregon Interpretation!

*(A pause.)*

**OSKAR:** Oregon, huh? Where's that?

**ROBERT:** In the northwestern part of the United States.

**OSKAR:** So that's what you think in Oregon?

**HENRY:** What two of us think.

*(A pause.)*

**OSKAR:** I don't know what to say.

**HENRY:** Think about it.

*(A pause.)*

**LEONORA:** Do you really poison cats?

**HENRY:** Robert!

**ROBERT:** No, we don't poison cats. Just sit and listen, okay?

**LEONORA:** You really don't poison–

**HENRY:** No! But we murder people who interrupt us when we're talking physics.

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** The Oregon Interpretation, Prof. Einstein. The cat exists in two worlds simultaneously, dead in one universe, alive

in another universe. You can imagine the complexity when every possibility branches out this way. Why, there's a universe out there in which you're still working as a clerk!

*(Oskar pulls off his wig.)*

**OSKAR:** And there's a universe where I'm not Einstein – this one!

*(Leonora lets out a little gasp.)*

**OSKAR:** Hello, Leonora. So this is what happened to you.

**HENRY:** You know her?

**OSKAR:** Yes. We met earlier in the week.

**HENRY:** I don't get it. Who are you? Why the disguise?

**OSKAR:** Oskar. The business community declared today as Einstein Day. I attended a breakfast in his honor. I entered the look-alike contest.

**HENRY:** Great, just great. We've been in Brussels two days and have gotten nowhere!

**ROBERT:** Relax, Henry. We've got lots of time.

**OSKAR:** *(to get out)* Since I'm not the professor—

**HENRY:** Wait a minute. How come you know her?

**OSKAR:** Let's just say we did business together.

**LEONORA:** I'm sorry about last night, Oskar.

**OSKAR:** You missed an excellent dinner.

**LEONORA:** I should've called you at the restaurant.

**OSKAR:** Yes, that would have been polite.

**LEONORA:** When I met Robert, him, I just lost track of all time and—

**OSKAR:** I understand. You want a genius to father your baby. Are you two geniuses?

**HENRY:** Quite.

**LEONORA:** I'm really sorry, Oskar. You've been really nice to me. Maybe I can make it up to you?

**OSKAR:** You needn't bother.

**LEONORA:** You've been very sweet and generous. Let me make it up to you. What are you doing for the next half-hour?

**OSKAR:** It doesn't matter. I've been lied to before.

**LEONORA:** I feel terrible. Please: on me.

**OSKAR:** There'd be no charge?

**LEONORA:** What do you say?

**OSKAR:** Where?

**LEONORA:** There's a vacant room just down the hall.

**OSKAR:** I am free for an hour ...

**LEONORA:** *(to Robert)* You don't mind? I mean, I did miss our dinner date.

**ROBERT:** Be my guest.

**LEONORA:** I'll be back in an hour.

**ROBERT:** No rush.

**LEONORA:** You won't miss me?

**OSKAR:** If you two are going to have a love spat—

**ROBERT:** She's all yours. Henry and I have business to take care of.

**HENRY:** Oh really? I'd never have known it.

**ROBERT:** You go on.

**LEONORA:** Will I see you again?

**ROBERT:** If you want.

**LEONORA:** In about an hour?

**ROBERT:** Sure.

**HENRY:** No!

**ROBERT:** Knock on the door first.

**OSKAR:** I don't have—

**ROBERT:** She's on her way.

*(Robert escorts them to the door.)*

**LEONORA:** In an hour—

**ROBERT:** Sure. Have fun.

*(Oscar and Leonora exit.)*

**HENRY:** What is wrong with you?

**ROBERT:** Not a thing.

**HENRY:** First you're fathering her baby; then you're treating her like the whore she is.

**ROBERT:** I paid for her – so theoretically she is a whore.

**HENRY:** Oskar's getting a freebie on your time.

**ROBERT:** It was rude to stand him up. She owes him one.

**HENRY:** I don't want her back here, Robert. I don't like what she does to you.

**ROBERT:** She fascinates me – nothing more.

**HENRY:** I think you're stuck on her.

**ROBERT:** Don't be silly.

**HENRY:** I sense more than curiosity.

**ROBERT:** Mainly curiosity.

**HENRY:** Curiosity killed the cat, Robert. Think about it.

**ROBERT:** Killed the Quantum Cat, do you think?

**HENRY:** Very funny.

**ROBERT:** I think so.

**HENRY:** Well, I don't! I haven't found a single thing amusing in the last two days. We came here for a specific purpose, a

single solitary clear goal that we discussed before we even left the States. If I'd known you'd spend all your time chasing whores, I wouldn't have come.

**ROBERT:** I haven't been chasing whores. I bought her for three days so we'd all be together.

**HENRY:** Three days! You didn't tell me you bought her for three days.

**ROBERT:** Just in case.

**HENRY:** In case what? In case she wanted to have your baby?

**ROBERT:** In case we had problems with Einstein.

**HENRY:** Oh, we have problems in that department, thanks to your lack of interest.

**ROBERT:** The man looks like Einstein. You thought so, too.

**HENRY:** What an idiotic way to honor a man, with a look-alike contest.

**ROBERT:** I don't know – it strikes me as something you'd love, Henry. You'd be ecstatic if the whole world looked like you.

**HENRY:** Not at breakfast. Barf.

**ROBERT:** The city fathers were trying to honor him. Don't blame them for doing their civic duty – even if it is gauche.

**HENRY:** And what do you know about being gauche? You spend the morning eating out a whore, you invite her to spend three days with us–

**ROBERT:** Will you calm down a minute? We do have work to do.

**HENRY:** Suddenly you're interested in what we came here for?

**ROBERT:** We went down there and did our job, didn't we? How were we to know there was a look-alike contest? So we'll wait till their lunch break and get him then.

**HENRY:** It won't be as easy. They trickle in in the morning but at break, they come out in groups. We won't have a chance to isolate him.

**ROBERT:** Maybe we won't, maybe we will.

**HENRY:** Einstein and Bohr will probably come out together, still arguing. And they'll be surrounded by delegates taking sides. It'll be a madhouse at break.

**ROBERT:** Then we'll get him tonight or in the morning. No harm done.

**HENRY:** Oh, of course not, it's not your money that's paying for everything.

**ROBERT:** Not yours either, Henry.

**HENRY:** It's mine by inheritance.

**ROBERT:** Your parents aren't dead yet.

**HENRY:** So what? I'm spending a little now instead of later.

**ROBERT:** I have your father to thank—

**HENRY:** Oh God!

**ROBERT:** And all the cattle as well. They're the ones really financing this.

**HENRY:** You just have to rub it in, don't you?

**ROBERT:** Rub what in, Henry?

**HENRY:** You know perfectly well what I mean.

**ROBERT:** I was just saying that—

**HENRY:** You just love to remind me that my parents aren't cultured.

**ROBERT:** They're millionaires, they don't have to be cultured.

**HENRY:** They're not really that wealthy.

**ROBERT:** Enough to finance their son's escapades.

**HENRY:** You chase whores and I'm on an escapade!

**ROBERT:** Your father thinks physics is an escapade.

**HENRY:** A thought like that is too complex for my father.

**ROBERT:** That's what he told me.

**HENRY:** When?

**ROBERT:** When I was picking you up for the airport. You were late, as usual, so your father and I had a little chat.

**HENRY:** You didn't tell me that.

**ROBERT:** It didn't seem important.

**HENRY:** My father thinks physics, my life, is an escapade — and it isn't important?

**ROBERT:** You regard your father as a stupid farmer.

**HENRY:** Rancher.

**ROBERT:** A baby-sitter of cows, that's what you called him once. A man like that can't be expected to understand physics.

**HENRY:** He really said that this trip was an escapade?

**ROBERT:** "I suppose you boys will be chasing a lot of women over there. Between you and me, it's an escapade I would've enjoyed at your age." His exact words.

**HENRY:** Save me!

**ROBERT:** Well, you can't expect him to believe the truth, even if he suspected it.

**HENRY:** Was my mother there?

**ROBERT:** She was in the barn. She didn't come into the house till you were downstairs and ready to go.

**HENRY:** Why do we get the parents we do?

**ROBERT:** Think of it this way – in another universe, you have different parents. Of course, you might not be a physicist, or even very bright.

**HENRY:** How could parents like that have me? Do you think I was adopted?

**ROBERT:** Genius often has humble roots.

**HENRY:** Why couldn't I have parents like yours?

**ROBERT:** A high-school math teacher couldn't afford to send us to Europe. I think your parents deserve our thanks.

**HENRY:** Not that we're accomplishing anything ...

**ROBERT:** Oh, we will, we will.

**HENRY:** I'd feel like a fool if we don't.

**ROBERT:** It wouldn't be your fault.

**HENRY:** A fool for trusting you. For believing you thought the same way I did about the Oregon Interpretation.

**ROBERT:** The trouble with you, Henry, is you can't take any time off to play. With you, it's all work.

**HENRY:** And who would I play with, might I ask? I could be here alone, for all the company I get.

**ROBERT:** You can play with me.

**HENRY:** I'd feel like I was walking into a second-hand store.

**ROBERT:** I just took a shower.

**HENRY:** Why do you treat me this way?

**ROBERT:** How am I treating you?

**HENRY:** Like a stranger.

**ROBERT:** You don't have to be a stranger.

**HENRY:** All you do is reject me.

**ROBERT:** She means nothing to me. My fascination isn't anything new, you know.

**HENRY:** It's one thing to look at those photographs you save and quite another to pick up a whore in the flesh. You've been

giving all your attention to her.

**ROBERT:** I'm not giving her my attention now.

**HENRY:** What happens when she gets back?

**ROBERT:** She's nothing to me. I'm having fun with her. She's so sincere. So noble.

**HENRY:** Well, that's something I'm not, is noble, and this whole line of talk sounds mighty fishy to me, Robert, I'll tell you that.

*(A pause.)*

**ROBERT:** Well?

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** Oh Christ, why do I let myself give in to you all the time?

**ROBERT:** I don't know, Henry. Why?

**HENRY:** You cause me so much goddamn pain.

**ROBERT:** Want me to go?

**HENRY:** Go where?

**ROBERT:** Out. Anywhere. If you don't want me here ...

*(He starts for the door.)*

**HENRY:** Wait!

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** Please don't go.

*(They slowly approach one another as LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT.)*

**3/ AN HOUR LATER**

*(AT RISE: Robert and Henry are in bed after making love.)*

**HENRY:** What are you thinking?

**ROBERT:** I was wondering, actually.

**HENRY:** Wondering what?

**ROBERT:** Wondering when you were going to ask me what I was thinking.

**HENRY:** You had a premonition?

**ROBERT:** Henry, you usually ask me what I'm thinking when we're done.

**HENRY:** If you'd tell me one time, I wouldn't have to ask.

**ROBERT:** I tell you the same thing every time – it was sweet.

**HENRY:** Yes, it was.

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** Is it very different for you – with a woman?

**ROBERT:** Different, yes. Not as sweet. More technical.

**HENRY:** Technical? I don't understand.

**ROBERT:** Like an experiment, engaging wonder and curiosity – but no passion. There's no passion in it at all.

**HENRY:** For someone as passionate as you are–

**ROBERT:** Only with you, Henry.

**HENRY:** That's such a sweet thing to say. Especially if it's true.

**ROBERT:** Of course, it's true.

**HENRY:** I know. I just like to hear you repeat it.

**ROBERT:** It's true, it's true, it's true ...

*(They embrace. There's a knock on the door.)*

**HENRY:** Oh shit ...

**ROBERT:** I have to let her in.

**HENRY:** Why?

**ROBERT:** I don't want to hurt her feelings.

*(Another knock.)*

**ROBERT:** Just a minute!

**HENRY:** What about my feelings?

**ROBERT:** You're a mature, sensitive, intelligent genius – which means you listen to reason. Sometimes.

*(They get out of bed, quickly slipping on their robes, and Robert goes to the door.)*

**HENRY:** Well, I'm here under protest, I want you to know that.

**ROBERT:** Duly noted.

*(He opens the door. Leonora enters. Her dress is torn, she's disheveled.)*

**ROBERT:** What happened?

**LEONORA:** Oskar doesn't like being stood up.

**ROBERT:** Are you all right?

**LEONORA:** I feel stupid not making him pay. Look at my dress.

**ROBERT:** Come on, you'd better lie down.

*(He escorts her to the bed.)*

**LEONORA:** I think he was jealous.

**ROBERT:** That makes it my fault.

**LEONORA:** No, I didn't mean it like that.

**ROBERT:** Wait'll I get ahold of him—

**LEONORA:** I don't want more trouble. Just promise me you won't let him in here.

**ROBERT:** Of course, I won't.

*(With his back to the audience, Henry slings open his robe, exposing himself to Leonora.)*

**HENRY:** Give me a professional opinion – do you see many men better hung than I am?

**ROBERT:** And so modest.

**HENRY:** Keep out of this. I'm asking the lady for her professional opinion.

**LEONORA:** You're a horse.

*(Henry closes his robe and moves away.)*

**HENRY:** There are more poetic ways of putting it. Unless you two can't get along without me, I think I'll take a shower.

**ROBERT:** We're not going anywhere.

**HENRY:** I should hope not.

*(He grabs his clothes and exits.)*

**LEONORA:** Maybe I'll take a nap.

**ROBERT:** You're sure you're feeling okay? I could call a doctor.

**LEONORA:** No doctor is necessary.

**ROBERT:** Do your customers do this often?

**LEONORA:** Some more than others.

**ROBERT:** Maybe you should stop doing business with them.

**LEONORA:** If I stopped doing business with the weird ones, there'd be no business. The professors are more weird than the students but they pay better.

**ROBERT:** Maybe you should find other work.

**LEONORA:** Please don't say that.

**ROBERT:** It's something to consider.

**LEONORA:** Whenever I meet someone I like, he always tries to get me to do other work. Don't you understand, I'm in business for myself? I have no pimp. The University runs a very clean shop. I do this work because it makes me good money. Better than doing anything else.

**ROBERT:** Money isn't everything.

**LEONORA:** You have to have money to say that. Money is everything to me now. I'm saving my money to go to America.

**ROBERT:** Really? What for?

**LEONORA:** Because America is freedom.

**ROBERT:** Freedom comes from inside, I think.

**LEONORA:** There is much opportunity in America. I am going very soon now. I've been planning this for two years.

**ROBERT:** You've been "working" that long?

**LEONORA:** Ever since I entered the University.

**ROBERT:** You're a very unusual woman.

**LEONORA:** Yes, I am.

**ROBERT:** You probably will have a bright child.

**LEONORA:** With the right father. A genius.

*(A pause.)*

**ROBERT:** You look tired.

**LEONORA:** Maybe I'll take a nap.

**ROBERT:** Good.

**LEONORA:** Robert?

**ROBERT:** Yes?

**LEONORA:** Will I see you in America?

**ROBERT:** I don't think so. America is a very big country.

**LEONORA:** Where do you live in America?

**ROBERT:** In Oregon. It's in the west.

**LEONORA:** You don't look like a cowboy.

**ROBERT:** There aren't many cowboys in the city.

**LEONORA:** I like cowboys in the movies. Maybe I'll come west. Maybe I'll see you in America.

**ROBERT:** It's a big country.

**LEONORA:** It's a big world but I found you in Brussels. Maybe you'll be the father of my child. Are you really as smart as Einstein?

**ROBERT:** It's hard to say. Goodnight, Leonora.

**LEONORA:** Goodnight, Robert. Thank you.

*(A pause. Leonora falls to sleep as Robert watches her, fascinated.)*

*(Henry enters, showered and dressed.)*

**HENRY:** Oh good – you strangled her on the bed.

**ROBERT:** Sshh, she's napping.

**HENRY:** I will not shush. What time is it?

**ROBERT:** They might be taking a break soon.

**HENRY:** Are you going to get dressed?

*(Robert starts dressing.)*

**HENRY:** Does Einstein smoke?

**ROBERT:** I don't know. Why?

**HENRY:** The smokers often gather outside. Of course, we'll have no chance to isolate him.

**ROBERT:** Our best opportunity is probably this afternoon when they adjourn.

**HENRY:** Maybe we should invite him for a drink.

**ROBERT:** We could try that first. If he refuses, we'll be more forceful.

**HENRY:** You'd think he'd welcome allies.

**ROBERT:** Are we allies?

**HENRY:** In a manner of speaking. We disagree with Bohr, as he does.

**ROBERT:** We still don't make reality any less unsettling.

**HENRY:** Well, if Einstein needs reality to be comfortable, he's become senile. He started this mess in the first place. Reality was much more comfortable under Newton.

*(Leonora tosses, making a sound.)*

**ROBERT:** We're being too loud.

**HENRY:** I'm not hushing for a whore.

**ROBERT:** She's trying to earn her way to America.

**HENRY:** On her back, right.

**ROBERT:** She's saving her money. She's quite an enterprising girl actually.

**HENRY:** You didn't give her your address ... ?

**ROBERT:** No.

**HENRY:** Don't.

**ROBERT:** How can you hate women so much? Look at her. She's positively innocent looking when she sleeps. Like a delicate flower.

**HENRY:** Make me barf.

**ROBERT:** That's what the vagina reminds me of, a delicate bud about to flower into spring ...

**HENRY:** Puke to the nth degree!

*(There's a knock on the door.)*

**HENRY:** The word's out that she's in here and all the sadists in Brussels are in the hall.

**ROBERT:** I doubt it.

*(He opens the door. EINSTEIN steps in.)*

**EINSTEIN:** An Oskar someone, a businessman, I forget his full name ... he said that you wish to speak with me.

**ROBERT:** Professor Einstein?

**EINSTEIN:** Yes.

**ROBERT:** Come in, sir. Please come in.

*(Einstein enters. And BLACKOUT. End of Act One.)*



## ACT TWO

### 1/ A SHORT TIME LATER

*(AT RISE: Robert and Henry are concluding the thought experiment of the Quantum Cat. Einstein is listening intently. Leonora is on the bed, doing her nails.)*

**HENRY:** –a dead cat in one universe!–

**ROBERT:** –a live cat in another universe!–

**HENRY:** –though when we open the box–

**ROBERT:** –we apprehend only one universe–

**HENRY:** –and remain ignorant of the other–

**ROBERT:** –though the other exists–

**HENRY:** –the other is as real as this one–

**ROBERT:** –the one we apprehend–

**HENRY:** –because the wave function equation is real–

**ROBERT:** –its probabilities describe a real universe–

**HENRY:** –which can only be a multiple universe–

**ROBERT:** –in which all possibilities exist at once–

**HENRY:** –simultaneously, in the universe as in the equation–

**ROBERT:** –together!

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** We call it The Oregon Interpretation.

**EINSTEIN:** Why is this? You are from Oregon?

**ROBERT:** Exactly.

**EINSTEIN:** Beautiful place. I went fishing there once.

**ROBERT:** In the Pacific?

**EINSTEIN:** No, no – trout fishing. I don't recall the name of the river, it was a long time ago, during my one and only trip to America. I was visiting San Francisco and a friend drove me north to Oregon. Somewhere in the center of the state. The clearest river I've ever seen.

**HENRY:** Did you catch anything?

**EINSTEIN:** No, but my companion did quite well. I would have myself, I'm sure, but I never baited my hook. We were catching more fish than we needed, and I've always thought getting a bite interrupted the serenity of being on the river. So I picked a spot out on a rock, off by myself, and had a wonderful afternoon, very peaceful, dragging my line in the river, while my companions waded around me, hauling in fish. They still tell the story of how everyone caught their limit except me, who didn't even get a bite. They regard me as quite the bad luck fisherman. I never told them I hadn't baited my hook. The fact of the matter is, that afternoon I came across an insight that led eventually, when I was back in Europe, to my theory of gravity. So perhaps I wasn't such a bad fisherman after all.

**ROBERT:** A fisherman of truth, as we are.

**EINSTEIN:** It's a very interesting interpretation you give to the wave function. Considerably more imaginative than Bohr's interpretation.

**HENRY:** More imaginative – and more true.

**EINSTEIN:** Well, it's much too early to know what is true and what isn't. The dialogue about the meaning of quantum mechanics has just begun.

**HENRY:** Truth is not a function of time but of insight.

**EINSTEIN:** Of both, I think. Well, I'd best get back to the conference.

*(Henry moves to block his exit.)*

**HENRY:** Now wait a minute–

**ROBERT:** Calm down, Henry. I'm sure the professor will listen to reason.

**EINSTEIN:** Of course – if you have something reasonable to say.

**ROBERT:** We were hoping you'd consider our hypothesis with as much seriousness as we've had formulating it.

**EINSTEIN:** I'll grant you it's imaginative – the wave function does formulate different actualities, with probabilities for each, and if each probability is taken as its own reality, then it does make a certain amount of sense to ask, if it's real, then where is it? And if it's not here, then where? And so you reply, Over there, in another universe. Do I understand the argument?

**ROBERT:** That's quite a succinct summary of it.

**HENRY:** We accept the wave function equation at face-value: we say, This is the formula and it works. But what does it mean? It can only mean all probabilities have their own reality – hence, a variety of real worlds. Multiple universes.

**EINSTEIN:** But you forget it's the probabilistic approach that I am arguing against in the first place. God does not play dice.

**HENRY:** It's not for you to say what God does and does not do.

**ROBERT:** Now, Henry – remember who you're talking to.

**HENRY:** An old man locked into old concepts, by the sound of it.

**ROBERT:** Please forgive him, professor. Henry's high strung.

**EINSTEIN:** It would be interesting to see what Bohr does with your interpretation. That could be very amusing. Would you mind if I presented the Oregon Interpretation to the conference?

**ROBERT:** We'd be honored.

**EINSTEIN:** I'd present it just as you presented it to me, as a thought experiment. We'd let the delegates decide for themselves.

**HENRY:** That would be wonderful, professor.

**EINSTEIN:** Then that's what I'll do.

**HENRY:** When?

**EINSTEIN:** The first chance I get.

**ROBERT:** Thank you, Prof. Einstein. That's very kind of you.

**EINSTEIN:** Like I said, it's more imaginative than Bohr's interpretation. The conference should have fun with it.

*(He starts for the door.)*

**LEONORA:** Before you go! – can I have your autograph?

**HENRY:** Don't mind her. She's a street woman, if you know what I mean.

**EINSTEIN:** Really?

**ROBERT:** She's a University student. She collects the autographs of famous people.

**EINSTEIN:** I'd be happy to give her my autograph.

*(He approaches the bed.)*

**EINSTEIN:** You collect autographs, do you?

**LEONORA:** Yes.

**EINSTEIN:** Even of physicists?

**LEONORA:** Especially of physicists.

**EINSTEIN:** How strange.

**LEONORA:** History is being made across the street, with so many famous physicists gathered in one place.

**EINSTEIN:** True, you can't find more famous scientists than you'll find across the street right now. How'd you like the autographs of a few dozen of the most important physicists of our time?

**LEONORA:** You mean, of everyone over there?

**EINSTEIN:** Well, I can't promise that – but quite a few would be willing, I'm sure.

**LEONORA:** That would be great!

**EINSTEIN:** No sooner said than done.

**LEONORA:** How can I ever repay you?

**EINSTEIN:** Perhaps we can think of something ... this evening, perhaps?

**LEONORA:** You mean, you want ...? With me?

**EINSTEIN:** I must admit I find you very attractive.

**LEONORA:** You don't know how often I've dreamed of this.

**HENRY:** Excuse me, but–

**ROBERT:** Let them be, Henry. Come on, let's go down for coffee. I'm sure the professor can handle his own affairs.

**EINSTEIN:** A moment alone would be nice, thank you. I'll bring up The Oregon Interpretation at the first session after lunch.

**ROBERT:** We really appreciate it.

**LEONORA:** Robert? Will I see you again?

**ROBERT:** If you want.

**LEONORA:** Of course I do – I'm not sure when. You know what I have to do.

**ROBERT:** Yes, I know. I'll be around whenever you want to see me.

**HENRY:** Oh barf!

*(Robert and Henry exit.)*

**EINSTEIN:** Say tonight at seven?

**LEONORA:** Sure.

**EINSTEIN:** Where would we meet?

**LEONORA:** In the lobby here?

**EINSTEIN:** That would be fine. We could get a room here as well?

**LEONORA:** Yes.

**EINSTEIN:** How much do you charge?

**LEONORA:** Oh, the autographs would be more than enough.

**EINSTEIN:** No, I insist. I want you to treat me like anyone else.

**LEONORA:** Einstein—! I'm so overwhelmed ...

**EINSTEIN:** How much?

**LEONORA:** Well, it depends on what you want to do.

**EINSTEIN:** I want to watch.

**LEONORA:** You mean ... me with someone else?

**EINSTEIN:** No, no. Just you. I want to watch you undress.

**LEONORA:** That's all?

**EINSTEIN:** There was a girl in my village. I was just fifteen and she was perhaps a year older. Our windows faced one another over an alley and at night, on one special night and then for perhaps a hundred or more after that, until she moved away, she would undress by the window and I would watch. I'm sure she knew I was watching. It would usually be on a Friday, when her parents were gone, visiting relatives perhaps, and it was as if she would wait to see the light come on in my study, where I would be reading, I had my own desk even at fifteen, and then I would see her light come on and she would step before the window, in off-light so her body was rather like a mirage, or like the mark of my breath on the window pane, and then she would slowly begin to undress and I would set aside my book, no matter how engrossed I had been in my studies, I would set aside my work to watch her, moving in and out of the light, like an apparition, like a dream, and she would begin to undress ...

(Lights have FADED TO BLACKOUT.)

## **2/ LATE THAT SAME NIGHT**

*(AT RISE: Robert is alone in the hotel room, playing solitaire. Henry enters.)*

**ROBERT:** Any luck?

**HENRY:** Yes and no. The hotel bar's full of physicists, like you thought, but I didn't catch a single reference to The Oregon Interpretation. Not once in two hours.

**ROBERT:** Is he still with her in the room down the hall?

**HENRY:** If he is, they're very quiet. I didn't hear a thing. I didn't knock on the door.

**ROBERT:** Good, you shouldn't have.

**HENRY:** How long are we supposed to wait?

**ROBERT:** He couldn't have mentioned it – not if there was no talk in the bar afterwards. It should've been the main topic of debate.

**HENRY:** I say we knock on the door and ask Einstein himself. At least, we'll know one way or the other. We can end the waiting and get some sleep.

**ROBERT:** No one's keeping you up. You can go to bed whenever you want to.

**HENRY:** Who can sleep without knowing?

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** I'm going to knock on the door.

**ROBERT:** Maybe they're asleep. Maybe he bought her for the entire night.

**HENRY:** We'll find out soon enough. I'll be right back.

**ROBERT:** Henry—!

*(Henry exits. He immediately returns, followed by Oskar.)*

**OSKAR:** Where's Leonora?

**ROBERT:** None of your business.

**OSKAR:** I have to speak to her.

**ROBERT:** You "spoke" to her this morning, and I didn't like what she looked like afterwards.

**HENRY:** She's down the hall, with Einstein.

**OSKAR:** With Einstein?

**HENRY:** Third room on the left.

**OSKAR:** I don't understand.

**HENRY:** Physicists have genitals, too.

**OSKAR:** Third door on the left, you say?

**ROBERT:** You shouldn't disturb them.

**OSKAR:** I must speak to Leonora at once.

*(He exits.)*

**HENRY:** This should prove interesting.

**ROBERT:** All of us should leave the poor girl alone. She's just trying to have a smart kid and earn her fare to America.

**HENRY:** Well, haven't we acquired a conscience all of a sudden? As I recall, it was you, Mr. Blueballs, who picked her up in the first place.

**ROBERT:** I didn't expect her to become community property.

**HENRY:** A whore! Oh, come on now, Robert, are you serious? It's her profession to be community property. That's her entire mode of existence, community property. Anyone with her price can buy her. That's the central axiom of her fucking, pardon the pun, existence.

**ROBERT:** She's earning her way to the states.

**HENRY:** She'll never get to the states.

**ROBERT:** I believe she will.

**HENRY:** You're losing your mind.

**ROBERT:** I think I'll run into her again in the states.

**HENRY:** You asshole – you gave her your address!

**ROBERT:** I didn't. I just have a hunch.

**HENRY:** Well, fuck your hunches.

*(Oskar enters.)*

**OSKAR:** The third room on the left is empty.

**HENRY:** Then I don't know what to tell you.

**OSKAR:** Where else could they be?

**HENRY:** Einstein said he was going to get her autographs of as many delegates as possible. Is there some place they hang out besides the bar?

**OSKAR:** There's a small lounge on the second floor of the hotel. It's for delegates and sponsors only.

**ROBERT:** Then you can get in.

**OSKAR:** Of course.

**ROBERT:** But to find Einstein, not Leonora. You've done enough to her already.

**OSKAR:** What are you talking about?

**ROBERT:** You know very well what I'm talking about. You're not beating her up any more, not while I'm around.

**OSKAR:** She said I beat her up?

**HENRY:** Before you two come to blows, can we get down to more important matters and find Einstein?

**OSKAR:** They won't let you two in the lounge. You have to be a delegate or sponsor. I couldn't even get in without my wig – it's the dress code today.

**ROBERT:** Then you can fetch Einstein for us.

**OSKAR:** I insist on seeing Leonora.

**ROBERT:** Over my dead body.

**HENRY:** Our business is with Einstein! Just go with him, Robert.

**OSKAR:** *(to Robert)* I didn't beat her. You have no reason to be upset.

**HENRY:** Go!

*(Henry shoves them out the door.)*

*(Henry goes to the bed and collapses on it.)*

### **3/ A MOMENT LATER**

*(There is a knock on the door. Henry answers it. It's Einstein,*

*who enters.)*

**EINSTEIN:** (*speaking quickly*) Statistics are only valid in the long run, you see, and this is your error. When I flip a coin to heads or tails, whatever alternative I get, the opposite one does not occur in another universe. This is not what we mean by a fifty-fifty chance of one alternative or another, a heads or a tails, occurring with any single flip of the coin. What we mean is, given a great number of flips, heads and tails will appear in equal numbers. To flip one million heads in succession is not impossible, only highly unlikely. We do not need to hypothesize the creation of alternative universes to justify the existence of both a live Quantum Cat and a dead Quantum Cat within the mathematical parameters of the wave function. We need only to repeat the experiment a great number of times in order to find an equal number of dead cats and live cats.

**HENRY:** You miss the point completely. You ignore quantum mechanics' insight that the observer participates in the result of the experiment. There is no cat at all, either dead or alive, until we open the box to see what has happened. There is only the probability function.

**EINSTEIN:** There is no cat in the box until we look inside? That's absurd.

**HENRY:** It's the only conclusion consistent with the findings of quantum mechanics. If I may say so, Prof. Einstein, you're sounding like a senile old fuddy-dud.

**EINSTEIN:** Senile, perhaps. I had a terrible time with the girl.

**HENRY:** Where is she?

**EINSTEIN:** Disappointed, I expect.

**HENRY:** You couldn't ... ?

**EINSTEIN:** Exactly. Perhaps I was distracted by all this damn Quantum Cat business, and Principles of Indeterminacy and the Participatory Observer ... what is the universe coming to?

**HENRY:** The universes are coming to all things that are possible.

**EINSTEIN:** This universe is getting crazier all the time. Schroedinger told me that if he'd known where all this was leading to, he'd never have developed his damn wave function equations. I don't blame him.

**HENRY:** I'm surprised at you. The Oregon Interpretation is no less revolutionary than your own relativity theories were two decades ago.

**EINSTEIN:** Revolution belongs to the young.

**HENRY:** I'm sorry to hear you say that, professor. We came here expecting to find you an ally, once you understood the theory.

**EINSTEIN:** Confusion belongs to the old.

**HENRY:** You're not that old.

**EINSTEIN:** Old enough not to get it up. That's never happened to me before. I don't know what went wrong. She undressed, just as I asked her to. But she didn't arouse me, my thoughts were off somewhere, lost in a maze of theoretical physics. Sex has always been such a relief from thinking. I can't imagine losing it.

**HENRY:** I'm sure it's not a permanent affliction.

**EINSTEIN:** I hope not. Sex and playing the violin have kept me going.

**HENRY:** I play the bongos.

**EINSTEIN:** Every physicist needs relief from thinking.

**HENRY:** Robert chases women.

**EINSTEIN:** The most common escape, I think.

**HENRY:** Women fascinate him.

**EINSTEIN:** I can understand that.

**HENRY:** Don't you find women – particularly dumb?

**EINSTEIN:** It's all a matter of social training, I think.

**HENRY:** I think they are biologically dumb.

**EINSTEIN:** Then how do you explain Marie Curie?

**HENRY:** I hear she takes male hormones.

**EINSTEIN:** I never heard that.

**HENRY:** Every species has its mutants. Women with brains are mutants.

**EINSTEIN:** Don't sell women short. They reproduce the race.

**HENRY:** Men need wombs, not women. When technology gives us the artificial womb, we'll reproduce by squirting our sperm and coming back in nine months. No muss, no fuss.

**EINSTEIN:** We're a long way from artificial wombs, I think.

**HENRY:** Twenty years ago we were a long way from quantum mechanics. And look at us now. The universe has been stood on its head.

**EINSTEIN:** God does not play dice.

**HENRY:** He gives us all possible worlds at the same time.

**EINSTEIN:** But what does this really mean? What is the meaning of moral action if any action includes its opposite somewhere in another universe?

**HENRY:** The very issues the Solvay Conference should be talking about! Society always turns to physics for its models of behavior. What is our educational system, what is banking, what is food distribution and transportation and the way we organize our job market, if not a direct consequence of the Newtonian universe? We didn't run the world the way we do today in the Middle Ages, before Newton. Newton revolutionized physics, yes, but the social consequences of his mode of thought has had more direct influence on the way we live from day to day in the world than anything else. So what's to happen now, when quantum mechanics shows us that Newton is wrong – or more accurately, that his theories cover only a small special case – what's to happen when the mode of thinking that gives us quantum mechanics is applied to the meaning of money, education, child rearing, food distribution – the list is as long as everything we do in our lives! What's to happen to the world once it recognizes a new vision of reality?

**EINSTEIN:** By then, I hope – if all this you say comes to pass – I hope I am dead.

*(Einstein starts for the door.)*

**HENRY:** Where are you going?

**EINSTEIN:** I'm so depressed, I think I'll try to masturbate.

*(He exits. BLACKOUT.)*

**4/ AN HOUR LATER**

*(AT RISE: Henry is in bed, asleep. The door opens, and Robert and Leonora enter. Robert is carrying a bottle of champagne. They are tipsy.)*

**ROBERT:** Sssssshhhhh ...

**LEONORA:** Sshh!

**ROBERT:** He's sleeping ...

**LEONORA:** Sshh!

*(Robert goes to a chair and Leonora will sit on his lap.)*

**ROBERT:** Come here ...

**LEONORA:** Sshh, sshh, sshh!

**ROBERT:** We have to be very quiet.

**LEONORA:** Sssssssssshhhhhhhhhhh–

*(Robert puts a finger to her lips.)*

**ROBERT:** Very, very quiet – even more quiet than "sshh."  
Okay?

*(Leonora nods, yes.)*

**ROBERT:** If you're quiet, I'll tell you a story. Okay?

*(Nods, yes.)*

**ROBERT:** Shall I tell you about America?

*(She shakes her head, no.)*

**ROBERT:** About my home in Oregon?

*(No.)*

**ROBERT:** About physics?

*(Yes.)*

**ROBERT:** What about physics? About what I was telling you the other night?

*(Leonora nods enthusiastically, yes.)*

**ROBERT:** Then where were we? I told you about how nothing is absolutely real, we only believe things are "real" because our theories tell us they are real.

*(Nods, yes.)*

**ROBERT:** And today, in the world you and I and everyone else lives in, reality is a consequence of a logical pattern of thought perfected two-hundred years ago by Sir Isaac Newton, the most famous scientist of his time.

*(Yes.)*

**ROBERT:** Newton told us that "reality" is "out there." That the universe exists. That this chair we're sitting in exists. We have nothing to do with it. We can observe it or not, as we wish. It has nothing to do with the chair. We are neutral observers. And that's the way the world is run, like this place that just exists and we, as human beings, don't have very much to do with it, unless we want to think logically and proceed logically and change it in some way to help ourselves live more comfortably – but if we were all to fly to Mars, the world would be left behind, because it's just there and has very little to do with us.

*(Yes.)*

**ROBERT:** Well, Leonora, the thing is, in the past few years the Newtonian universe has been blown sky-high because none of Newton's laws work when we look deep inside the atom. A whole new universe reveals itself when we look at the way the smallest things are put together and behave. And we find that the universe has everything to do with us – because the universe doesn't even exist, in fact, unless we are there to look at it!

*(Leonora's hand makes a circle at her temple, the gesture of "this is crazy!")*

**ROBERT:** It sounds crazy, doesn't it? But that's what experiments are telling us – when a physicist observes something, the way he observes it determines what he is going to see. And if he chooses not to observe it at all, then there's no guarantee the things is even there! Now imagine what this means to the world. You and I walk out of this room, and Henry may disappear. He may not exist any more! He may come in and out of existence, only as people observe him. Or maybe he can observe himself, while we're gone, and exist in is own universe but not in ours. This all sounds very scary, doesn't it?

*(As Leonora shakes her head, yes, Henry rolls over and sits up, unnoticed by the others for a moment.)*

**ROBERT:** It's as if all these different universes, yours and mine and everyone else's, existed simultaneously and kept overlapping, my universe overlapping with yours now and yours with mine, but each changing, forever changing, just as "reality" – put in quotation marks – keeps changing. Nothing is really real, nothing is permanent, nothing is stable, nothing is as it used to be.

*(Henry grabs his robe and gets up.)*

**HENRY:** Except you, Robert. You're exactly as you used to be. You haven't changed at all.

**ROBERT:** Want some champagne?

**HENRY:** No. And I wish you'd stay sober. We have some thinking to do.

**ROBERT:** Champagne never hurt my thinking, Henry.

**HENRY:** Einstein came by. He doesn't even comprehend the argument! He gave a rebuttal that was straight out of classical physics. I think he's becoming senile.

**ROBERT:** He's too young to be senile.

**LEONORA:** He couldn't do it with me.

**HENRY:** Mentally senile, is what matters. You should have heard him. He tried to make an analogy between statistics in quantum physics and flipping coins.

**ROBERT:** Did he tell you, "God does not play dice."

**HENRY:** Naturally.

**ROBERT:** Maybe he's become a Christian. Today it would be difficult to be a physicist and a Christian at the same time.

**HENRY:** Einstein is hopeless, which means this entire trip is hopeless, nothing at all has been accomplished, except of course you've no doubt found the love of your life, in which case I find myself a tiny bit in the way here and actually I feel like puking in the face of so much romantic sweetness and light, so if you'll excuse me—

*(Oskar bursts in. He is wearing his Einstein disguise.)*

**OSKAR:** Leonora! I must talk to you.

**LEONORA:** Dear professor, don't worry about it. It happens to men all the time.

**OSKAR:** What?

**LEONORA:** You'd be surprised at how many men can't get it up.

**OSKAR:** This is Oskar, damn it! I can always get it up.

**LEONORA:** I'm not talking to you any more.

**OSKAR:** Tell him the truth.

**LEONORA:** I'm not talking to you!

**OSKAR:** I'm not leaving until you—

**ROBERT:** She said she has nothing to say to you.

**OSKAR:** *(to Leonora)* The truth will set you free!

**ROBERT:** I think you should go.

**OSKAR:** I'm not leaving until you tell him.

*(Robert approaches Oskar, to escort him out.)*

**OSKAR:** Get your hands off me! Leonora!

**ROBERT:** Leave her alone, Oskar.

**OSKAR:** You think you're man enough to remove me?

**ROBERT:** Henry, you want to help me here ... ?

**HENRY:** Why, not at all, I'd just love to see two grown men fight over a street whore.

**OSKAR:** I'm not budging!

*(Pause. Robert is not sure what to do. Finally he tries to get Oskar in a bear hug but is easily stopped. Oskar gets him in a bear hug instead.)*

**HENRY:** Robert, my dear, I thought you were going to throw him out.

**ROBERT:** Get him off me! Henry, please!

*(They struggle, Oskar in control.)*

**LEONORA:** Oskar, stop it! You're hurting him!

**OSKAR:** Tell him the truth!

**LEONORA:** Please—!

**OSKAR:** Tell him!

**LEONORA:** Let him go! I'll tell him!

**OSKAR:** Tell him first!

**ROBERT:** I can't breathe ...

**OSKAR:** Tell him!

**LEONORA:** Oskar didn't beat me!

**OSKAR:** The whole truth!

**LEONORA:** I tore my clothes myself! You didn't beat me!

**OSKAR:** Why!?

**LEONORA:** I wanted him to think you beat me.

*(Oskar lets Robert go. Robert staggers away, getting his breath. Pause.)*

**HENRY:** Brussels gets kinkier all the time. I love it.

**OSKAR:** *(to Robert)* Did you hear what she said? Now tell him why you wanted him to think I beat you.

*(Pause.)*

**OSKAR:** Tell me!

**LEONORA:** Please don't make me.

**OSKAR:** I can squish him like a cockroach.1

**HENRY:** Oh, I like that! Who cares if it's a useless trip, Robert, when it's getting so kinky?

**OSKAR:** Tell him all of it. The truth about today. Why was it so important that you spend time with me today? Tell him!

**LEONORA:** Because I was frustrated—

**OSKAR:** Why were you frustrated?

**LEONORA:** I hadn't been satisfied ...

**OSKAR:** Why? Who hadn't satisfied you?

**LEONORA:** He hadn't ...

**OSKAR:** Who?

**LEONORA:** Robert! Robert hadn't satisfied me ...

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** Leonora, I owe you an apology. That was an Academy Award performance this morning. Wasn't it, Robert? Women are so natural when they fake an orgasm. Like a budding flower, isn't that the image, Robert? The female orgasm is so spontaneous, so mysterious, why women must be in another world during sex, in another realm, in another dimension, in another universe, the way they get off, just one cosmic rolling ocean of pleasure after another, why it makes us men look like real mouse farts, it just—

**ROBERT:** All right! You made your point.

**HENRY:** A baby conceived during an orgasm like that—

**ROBERT:** Just forget it! Just shut up.

*(A pause.)*

**LEONORA:** Robert, I'm sorry. I went to bed with you because you said you were a genius and I didn't know if I'd get to meet Einstein or not and ... well, I'm sorry.

**ROBERT:** Forget it.

**LEONORA:** I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I thought if you thought he beat me, maybe you wouldn't let him come around again and you wouldn't find out. I wanted you to think I was satisfied with you, I know how important that is to a man. I wanted—

**ROBERT:** Forget it!

*(A pause.)*

**OSKAR:** The steak tartar last night was quite good. If you're hungry, you might want to order it tonight. Unless you've already

eaten.

**LEONORA:** I haven't eaten.

**OSKAR:** Then shall we?

**LEONORA:** Maybe I will still have your baby, Robert. Maybe I'll come to America with your baby.

**OSKAR:** Leonora ...

**LEONORA:** Goodbye, Robert. It was very good, mentally, knowing you might be giving me a smart baby.

**ROBERT:** Just get the fuck out of here!

**LEONORA:** Robert, please don't—

**ROBERT:** Out!

*(Oskar escorts Leonora out. A pause.)*

**HENRY:** I wonder what she's name it. Cosmic Orgasm?  
Vaginal Flower? Intuitive  
Energy? Tiny God?

**ROBERT:** I don't think she was faking it.

**HENRY:** Come on, Romeo, they're always faking it. Theatricality's their middle name. Female orgasm, thy name is innuendo.

**ROBERT:** And so what, if she was faking it?

**HENRY:** Nothing at all. You spent lord knows what in order to watch a street whore—

**ROBERT:** A University student.

**HENRY:** –a whore wax in a phony epileptic erotic fit so you could wax poetic about the bullshit cosmic qualities of female sexuality. Robert, spare me! You are losing your mind.

**ROBERT:** I thought she really liked the way I made love.

**HENRY:** Remember the whore in L.A. that time?

**ROBERT:** What whore in L.A.?

**HENRY:** The mute. Only you didn't know she couldn't talk until you fucked her. She kept gesturing, sshh, and leading you into her hotel, up the stairs and to her room, into bed, and you'd screwed her before you found out she was a mute. I found you on the street, white as a ghost, babbling, "Henry, I made love to a mute only I didn't know it until after it was over."

**ROBERT:** So?

**HENRY:** So you didn't find out until afterwards, asshole, it means some very basic communication was missing in the interim. So this isn't the first time you've been deceived. Prick, thy name is gullible.

**ROBERT:** I didn't mind her not talking. Until the end. She seemed to orgasm, she shivered under my tongue, but she didn't make a sound. She was so quiet afterwards, the whole room was quiet. Finally I asked, "Was it good for you?" And she started making this crazy noise, like grunting, like some perverse vocal energy without form, like the Quantum Cat before we look at it perhaps – at first I thought she was mocking me. I swear to God, Henry, she kept grunting at me and only when I saw that there were tears in her eyes, that she was weeping, did it occur to me that maybe it had been good for her only she had no ability to say so. She was mute. Which proved to be the case. She wasn't mocking me, Henry, she was thanking me. I hope she was thanking me. Do you think she was?

**HENRY:** When I found you later, on the street, you were white as a ghost.

**ROBERT:** The loss of language terrifies me.

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** Leonora was using you. She was mocking you.

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** I don't play games with you, Robert.

**ROBERT:** No, you don't.

**HENRY:** Hug me.

*(They embrace. A beat. And HERMANN enters the room, disguised as Einstein. He is a little drunk and carries an open whiskey bottle.)*

**HERMANN:** I give you a toast ... I give you a wake in memory of the Universe ...

**ROBERT:** Prof. Einstein?

**HERMANN:** Brussels has gone crazy. And the situation is hopeless. The watch of the universe has been smashed. It'll never run the same again. Relativity started it: that damn theory gave physicists the nerve to go forward in strange new directions, going wherever the mind's fancy might logically and intuitively take it ... even deep, very deep and deeper still, into the atom itself, and into, deep and deeper into, the particles of the atom itself, in order to find what's really really real, really there, what's what and all that, what's the stuff we have to start with to get all the other stuff – you know what I'm saying? First it's all relative, everything's relative, but that ain't enough, not for Bohr and

Heisenberg and Schroedinger and the rest, oh no, relative ain't enough ... everything is problematical instead, and everything is indeterminate, and everything is goddamn confusing, like that goddamn cat in the box that everyone is arguing about – you know what I'm saying?

*(They just stare at him.)*

**HERMANN:** Want a drink?

*(Robert and Henry move forward, and they begin to pass the bottle, drinking.)*

**HERMANN:** It's a good time to be a young physicist. How old are you?

**ROBERT:** Eighteen.

**HENRY:** Twenty.

**HERMANN:** A good time to be young. Revolution belongs to the young.

**ROBERT:** You're still the champ, professor.

**HERMANN:** Professor?

**ROBERT:** All around the world, they know you're the champ.

**HENRY:** You laid the foundation for everything.

**HERMANN:** You know what I agree with? "God does not play dice."

**HENRY:** But we do, professor.

**HERMANN:** What?

**HENRY:** Humans play dice. And that's why Bohr is wrong and you are right.

**HERMANN:** I am?

**HENRY:** In a sense, yes.

**ROBERT:** What Henry means, professor, is that Bohr doesn't take his own logic far enough. He says the universe is indeterminate – and stops. He doesn't ask himself, How are we to live in such a place?

**HERMANN:** Stay drunk, if you ask me.

**ROBERT:** What's to be done in a universe where nothing is really real and neutrality is impossible and the observer defines the observed?

**HERMANN:** What's to be done?

**ROBERT:** What's to be done?

*(A pause.)*

**HENRY:** *(softly)* Nothing.

*(A pause.)*

**HERMANN:** What did you say?

**HENRY:** Nothing.

**ROBERT:** Nothing's to be done.

**HERMANN:** Nothing? How can nothing be done? That's absurd. Nothing can't be done. Something is done, always, isn't it? I drink whiskey now. Soon I will puke in the toilet. Tomorrow I'll have a hangover.

*(A pause.)*

**HERMANN:** We have to do something.

*(In the sequence below, Robert and Henry will gently "court" "Einstein," touching him, caressing his shoulders, gently rubbing his forehead, soothing him, all very sensual.)*

**HERMANN:** Even a Buddhist monk, for all his contemplation, does something. He passes water. He breathes.

**HENRY:** Yes.

**HERMANN:** So it's not a question of nothing being done. It's a question of how to do something.

**HENRY:** Yes.

**ROBERT:** Yes.

**HERMANN:** It's a question of the proper way to do something, anything. If the universe is indeterminate, if nothing is really real, then it's a question of how to do anything at all, how to do something correctly under the lens of indeterminism, which would suggest that nothing – nothing worthwhile – can be done at all.

**ROBERT:** Yes.

**HERMANN:** It's a question of how to do something at all.

**HENRY:** Yes.

**HERMANN:** Something worthwhile, something that matters.

**HENRY:** Yes.

**ROBERT:** Yes.

**HERMANN:** Against all evidence to the contrary, in an indeterminate universe, how to do something that matters.

**ROBERT:** Yes.

*(A pause.)*

**HERMANN:** How?

**HENRY:** Carefully.

**ROBERT:** Very—

**HENRY:** Very very—

**ROBERT:** Very—

**HENRY:** V e r y c a r e f u l l y ...

*(As they caress "Einstein," Hermann's wig falls off.)*

**HENRY:** What the hell?

**ROBERT:** Who are you?

**HERMANN:** Hermann. Oskar told me all about you. Brussels has become very strange this week, no? So many businessmen wearing wigs, trying to look like Einstein, all the physicists destroying the universe ... I once fancied myself a physicist. But I don't understand any of this.

*(He drinks.)*

**HENRY:** ("let's get out of here") Robert?

**HERMANN:** Oskar says you two are pretty kinky.

**HENRY:** If you'll excuse us ... Robert!

**ROBERT:** I know, Henry. I know ...

**HERMANN:** Is something the matter?

*(Robert and Henry join hands and slowly back away from Hermann toward the door, as the LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT. The play is over.)*

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

In every writing career are works dear to the author that for one reason or another don't appear to be dear to anyone else. For a playwright, these may be plays that never reached the stage or plays that opened and were bombed by the critics and ignored by audiences. The scripts in this volume are such plays.

*The Death Cycle*, a cycle of three one-act plays, was written in Eugene, Oregon, over thirty years ago, shortly after I received my MFA in Playwriting from the University of Oregon. From the beginning, they were conceived as plays to be produced together, and from the beginning they seemed determined to have a life independent from one another. Those few producers who expressed interest restricted their attention to one or two of them, usually *The Stiff*, which received several staged readings early in its life. The entire cycle didn't get into the hands of actors until I had moved to Salisbury, Maryland, late in the 1970s, where the Pemberton Free Theatre provided a staged reading to a miniscule audience. After that, the project disappeared. No one took interest in it, and I stopped showing it around. Coming back to it now, three decades later, I place *The Death Cycle* in the top ranks of my dramatic work. There is no accounting for taste.

*The Sadness of Einstein* reached a slower oblivion. Written almost twenty years ago, it was conceived as the first of a cycle of four full-length plays that followed the story of the same two characters through half a century of life together, a cycle I called *The Quantum Quartet*. This ambitious project began auspiciously. *The Sadness of Einstein* was scheduled to open at the Cubiculo Theatre in Portland, where I was playwright-in-residence. I planned to premier each of the four plays in the quartet on successive years. Unfortunately, the theater went

bankrupt, as ambitious theater companies are likely to do, and my premier crashed with it. A few years later The Empty Space Theatre in Seattle took interest in *Sadness*, scheduling to premier it as part of a new play festival. Unfortunately, the festival lost its grant support, it was cancelled, and another premier died before reaching its audience.

In the meantime, I had discovered hyperdrama, a theatrical form much more conducive to notions of “quantum storytelling” than traditional theater, and the second play in the quartet found itself scorned by newer, even more ambitious, projects. *The Quantum Quartet* never recovered from this change in my dramatic focus. So *The Sadness of Einstein* is left to stand on its own, and in my estimation it stands up very well indeed. There’s no accounting for taste. But I said that already.

I am glad to see these scripts come into print. They obviously have not set the dramatic world on fire and certainly won’t do so now, but they might find a few readers who are as excited about their theatrical energy and themes as I am. For this to happen, of course, they have to be available. Here they are.

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